

Literary analysis of the Flood

On the surface, the Flood Narrative (Genesis 6-9) appears to have some duplications and contradictions such as the number of animals taken on the Ark and the timetable of the Flood. To explain this and deny Mosaic authorship, source critics have proposed that the Flood Narrative was composed of many small textual units from two different sources (J and P), which were woven together by later redactors. Each source wrote with the objective of promoting their own religious views. To understand how the Flood Narrative is divided by hypothetical sources by source critics, examples can be seen at http://www.helpmewithbiblestudy.org/5system_moses/dh11_flood.aspx. Source critics expect duplication, contradictions, and mythological material from the combining of two different sources dated 400 years apart (P was hypothetically dated 400 years later than J).

Literary analysis of Genesis 6-9 would indicate otherwise.

The literary structure of the Flood Narrative is a detailed and organized **chiasm**. Furthermore, the contradictions pointed out by skeptics are not contradictions at all and instead fit into this designed narrative. The structure of the Flood Narrative exhibits the following:

1. The literary unit has symmetrical inclusions, which designate a beginning and an end.
 - A. The primary genealogy (Noah) sets the boundaries of the whole literary unit.
 - B. The narrative has a prologue and epilogue, and
 - C. The secondary genealogy (Noah's sons) encapsulates the body of the narrative.
2. The whole literary unit has a symmetry that is parallel in concept and equivalent in number.
3. The chiasm ascends towards doom and recedes from it.
4. A general summary of the literary structure can be seen in this form:
 - a. Primary genealogy (Gen 5:32)
 - b. Prologue (Gen 6:1-8)
 - c. Secondary genealogy (Gen 6:9-10)
 - d. Before the Flood (Gen 6:11 – Gen 7:10)
 - x. The Flood (Gen 7:11- Gen 8:19)
 - d. After the Flood (Gen 8:20 – Gen 9:17)
 - c. Secondary genealogy (Gen 9:18-19)
 - b'. Epilogue (Gen 9:20-27)
 - a'. Primary genealogy (Gen 9:28-29)

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The following is a more detailed example (1) (2) of how the structure of the Flood Narrative can be examined. This example is presented so that the ascent and decent of the narrative can be seen.

Explanations of this structure can be seen at www.helpmewithbiblestudy.org/5system_moses/dh11_flood.aspx.

But God remembered Noah (Gen 8:1-5)	
The Flood rises (Gen 7:17-24)	The Flood subsides (Gen 8:6-12)
Entering the ark (Gen 7:11-16)	Leaving the ark (Gen 8:13-19)
God's second decree to Noah: The preservation and primary purpose of animals (Gen 7:1-10)	God's third decree to Noah: Sacrificing to God (Gen 8:20-22)
The preservation and second purpose of animals (Gen 6:21-22)	The second purpose of animals: Food for man (Gen 9:1-7)
God's first "My covenant with you": A resolution to destroy life (Gen 6:11-20)	God's last "My covenant with you": The Noahic Covenant: blessing and preservation of life (Gen 9:8-17)
The secondary genealogy: Shem, Ham, and Japheth (Gen 6:9-10)	The secondary genealogy: Shem, Ham, and Japheth (Gen 9:18-19)
Prologue: The sin of man (Gen 6:1-8)	Epilogue: The sin of man (Gen 9:20-27)
The primary genealogy: The beginning of the genealogy formula where the age and descendants are listed (Gen 5:32)	The primary genealogy: The ending of the genealogy formula where the age of death is listed (Gen 9:28-29)

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A detailed analysis of the chronological dating of the Flood is also revealing. The supposed contradictions that destructive critics point out do not exist when examined carefully:

The Chronology of the Flood (3)

Summary	Event	Date	Genesis
Waiting in the ark 7 days (Gen 7:7, 10)	1. Noah entered the ark	Month 2, day 10	7:7-9
	2. 7 days later: Rain began falling	Month 2, day 17	7:10-11
Water continued for 150 days (Gen 7:24)	3. 40 days later: Heavy rains stopped	Month 3, day 27	7:12
	4. 110 days later: Prevailing waters receded and the ark rested on an Ararat mountain	Month 7, day 17	7:24; 8:4
Water receded in 150 days (Gen 8:3)	5. 74 days later: Tops of mountains visible	Month 10, day 1	8:5
	6. 40 days later: Raven sent out, and a dove sent out and returned	Month 11, day 11	8:6-9
	7 days later: Dove sent out again and returned with a leaf	Month 11, day 18	8:10
	7 days later: Dove sent out a third time and did not return	Month 11, day 25	8:12
	22 days later: Water receded	Month 12, day 17	8:3
Earth dried in 70 days	Noah saw dry land	Month 1, day 1	8:13
	Land completely dry, and Noah exited the ark	Month 2, day 27	8:14-19
Total: 377 days	Noah and his family spent 1 year and 17 days in the ark		

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The days that are mentioned are themselves a literary design. (4) For each numbered day, there is an ascending and descending parallel which point to the apex in a chiastic fashion. This precise and purposeful design cannot be explained by destructive critics.

The Flood crests, the ark rests, God remembers Noah (Gen 8:1)	
150 days prevail (7:24)	150 days waters abate (8:3)
40 days of the Flood (7:12, 17)	40 days first birds sent out (8:6)
7 days till the Flood (7:10)	7 days next bird sent out (8:10)
7 days till 40 day storm (7:4)	7 days last bird sent out (8:12)

Furthermore the chronological dates themselves are paired and have a literary design (5).

The **complete** date is given when Noah **enters** the Ark.

Now Noah was six hundred years old when the flood of water came upon the earth. (Gen 7:6)

In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on the same day all the fountains of the great deep burst open, and the floodgates of the sky were opened. (Gen7:11)

The month and day is given when God **remembers** Noah.

In the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, the ark rested upon the mountains of Ararat. (Gen 8:4)

The water decreased steadily until the tenth month; in the tenth month, on the first day of the month, the tops of the mountains became visible. (Gen 8:5)

The **complete** date is given when Noah **leaves** the ark.

Now it came about in the six hundred and first year, in the first month, on the first of the month, the water was dried up from the earth. Then Noah removed the covering of the ark, and looked, and behold, the surface of the ground was dried up. (Gen 8:13)

In the second month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, the earth was dry. (Gen 8:14)

Literary analysis of the Flood (page 5)

It is highly doubtful that destructive critics, who believe that the narrative was the synthesis of fragments from principally two sources, J and P written 400 years apart, can explain the beauty, preciseness, and organization of the literary structure of the Flood narrative. Destructive source critics never considered the literary unity of the narrative in their hypothesis. When read within its context and literary structure, the apparent contradictions and supposed doublets do not exist.

Destructive critics have long considered the Flood a myth or perhaps a local flooding in the Tigris-Euphrates valley that grew into a legend and associate the biblical account with other ancient Mesopotamian flood accounts. Two of the earliest writings discovered are the Atra-hasis Epic (1646-1626 BC) and the Gilgamesh Epic (650-700 BC). There is an earlier Sumerian version (2000 BC) but only 1/3 of the fragments are in possession. All three ancient accounts appear to be variations of the same account.

While the extra-biblical ancient Mesopotamian flood accounts are similar, they do not resemble the biblical account of the Flood. The biblical account differs obviously by:

- 1) The Flood was motivated by a judgment of mankind's morality.
- 2) The dates of the Flood were specified with complete dates.
- 3) The length of the Flood was significantly longer and detailed.
- 4) The size of the ark was significantly larger and had a seaworthy design.

In addition, the biblical account differs significantly in the portrayal of God. In the biblical account:

- 1) There is only one monotheistic Creator God who is omniscient and omnipotent. Other accounts feature polytheism.
- 2) God has a supreme concern for humanity. Other accounts toy with and have little concern for mankind.
- 3) God lives and judges by an impeachable moral standard. Other accounts do not demonstrate any moral standard; gods break their own vows.

Yet Mesopotamia was not the only culture that had a legend of a catastrophic flood that destroyed all of mankind except a few who escape in a boat. Other cultures had their Noahic hero: Manu for the Hindus, Fah-he for the Chinese, Nu-u for the Hawaiians, Tezpi for the Mexican Indians, and Manabozho for the Algonquins. A diverse variety of cultures had a flood legend: aborigines of the Andaman Islands in the Bay of Bengal, the Battaks of Sumatra, the Kurnai – a tribe of Australian aborigines, the Fuji Islanders, the natives of Polynesia, Micronesia, New Guinea, New Zealand, New Hebrides, the ancient Celts of Wales, the tribesmen of Lake Caudie in Sudan, and the Greenlanders. (6)

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There is great debate whether the Flood was a worldwide or local catastrophe. In light of the number of legendary stories across diverse cultures and geography, would a local flooding in the Tigris-Euphrates valley explain this?

If Moses authored the Pentateuch, then the Flood narrative is dated around 1440 BC. The Mesopotamian flood accounts are therefore the earliest accounts of a flood. Destructive critics believe that the author of Genesis rewrote the Mesopotamian account with a Jewish theological interpretation. The details of the Flood account suggests otherwise: either the two accounts are of different events or the Mosaic account is an accurate narrative of the original catastrophic event that predates and gives rise to the Mesopotamian and worldwide legends.

When studied in its context, the Flood Narrative is a complete and whole literary unit; it is difficult, if not impossible to identify any fragments let alone fragments from disparate sources.

References:

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Summary of the Atra-hasis Epic

The Atra-hasis Epic is a literary form of Sumero-Babylonian traditions about the creation of man and the Flood. It took about a century to gather and join the fragments that make up the three tablets of this epic. Despite having the much of the text, the epic is incomplete and has many gaps especially in the third tablet. This is a paraphrase from a translation found in James R. Battenfield, "Atra-hasis: A Survey," *Grace Theological Journal* (Spring, 1971), p. 3-22.

Tablet I

The epic begins at a time when only gods inhabited the universe. Of the seven great Anunnaki (generic term for gods), three senior gods are the main character gods in the epic: Anu, Enlil and Enki. They cast lots to determine where each will rule: Anu, the senior most god, rules from heaven, Enlil rules from earth, and Enki rules from Apsu, a subterranean body of water.

On earth, the Igigi (lesser gods) are assigned the task of digging canals. After 40 years of grumbling and complaining, they rebel and burn their tools. The Igigi approach and surround Enlil's temple to demand freedom from their task. Instead of going to war, Enlil summons the Anunnaki, and a settlement is reached: Lullu-man will be created to do the chores the Igigi once had. Nintu, the birth-goddess, is called upon to create man, Lullu-man. She takes the remains of We-ila, a god of intelligence fetched from heaven by Anu and who is killed, and combines him with clay provided by Enki and the spit of the Igigi. Ten months later, seven pairs of male and female humans are born.

In the ensuing years, mankind grows in population and creates a noise that ultimately disturbs Enlil's sleep. Enlil decides to reduce the number of humans by sickness and summons Namtara the plague god. Atra-hasis, the king of humans, beseeches Enki to stop the plague. Revealed by Enki, Namtara received offerings from Atra-hasis and the plague was stopped.

Tablet II

Loosing his sleep again, Enlil decides to use drought / famine to eradicate humans. Adad the storm god is summoned to withhold his rain. Atra-hasis seeks the help of Enki who reveals Adad as the cause of the drought. After a temple is built for Adad, the drought is rescinded.

For the moment, Enlil is able to sleep again, but is later unable to for a third time; he suspects that the humans are being aided. The drought is resumed and Atra-hasis again prays to Enki for help. Enki intervenes and sends a whirlwind type of phenomena that transports water and fish to the starving humans. Enlil now knows that Enki has been thwarting his plans of destruction and decides that since water saved man, water shall be the means of his destruction. Confronted with his efforts of saving man, Enki promises to Enlil not to interfere any more.

Tablet III

Enki however is not bound by his promise. Seeking Enki, Atra-hasis is warned that a flood will come in 7 days. To survive the flood, Atra-hasis must destroy his home and use its materials to build a strong roofed boat and provision it. Atra-hasis understands that the flood is the result of two gods who are very angry at each other and that he must leave earth and live with his god Enki.

The flood arrives and lasts 7 days and 7 nights. Atra-hasis is able to save his family, birds, and animals. The destruction is complete and the Nintu the birth goddess mourns the loss. But Enlil sees Atra-hasis' boat and is angry at the Igigi, who he mistakenly believes, assisted in Atra-hasis' survival. Because the gods had decided and made an oath to rid earth of man, Enlil cannot understand how man survived. Anu points out that only Enki, whose realm is the sea, could save man. Enki steps forward and freely admits his deeds.

The Epic of Gilgamesh

The Gilgamesh Epic (650-700 BC) is the Babylonian version of a Mesopotamian flood account. Translated by George Smith, the account is recorded on Tablet XI and is similar to the account found in the earlier Sumerian tablets (2000 BC) and Atrahasis Epic (1646-1626 BC).

In a quest for immortal life, Gilgamesh searches for the immortal Utnapishtim. Taken over water by the ferryman Urshanabi, Gilgamesh meets Utnapishtim who reveals why he is immortal: he escaped the flood sent by the gods, and he begins to recount his story.

Speaking from behind a wall, the god Ea (Enki) warns Utnapishtim about the impending flood and instructs him to tear his home down and build a boat in the shape of a cube. He was also directed to "make all living things go into his boat" Utnapishtim builds the boat in 2 days and the flood starts the next day. The gods escape to heaven and grieve at the loss of humanity. The flood lasted 7 days and nights where upon Utnapishtim's boat rests on Mount Nimush. After 7 more days, Utnapishtim sends his birds out to see how the flood is receding. He makes an offering to the gods who are attracted to his sacrifice. Discovering that humans survived the flood, the god En-lil is furious, but admits that famine would be a better way of controlling mankind's population. En-lil decides to bless Utnapishtim and his wife with immortality.

The Epic of Gilgamesh – Tablet XI: The Story of the Flood

This version reduces the number of tablet lines,
de-emphasizes the poetic nature of this story, and
does not identify the words with questionable translation.

Gilgamesh spoke to Utnapishtim, the Faraway:

"I have been looking at you, but your appearance is not strange--you are like me! You yourself are not different--you are like me! My mind was resolved to fight with you, but instead my arm lies useless over you. Tell me, how is it that you stand in the Assembly of the Gods, and have found life!"

Utnapishtim spoke to Gilgamesh, saying:

"I will reveal to you, Gilgamesh, a thing that is hidden, a secret of the gods I will tell you! Shuruppak, a city that you surely know, situated on the banks of the Euphrates, that city was very old, and there were gods inside it. The hearts of the Great Gods moved them to inflict the Flood. Their Father Anu uttered the oath (of secrecy), Valiant Enlil was their Adviser, Ninurta was their Chamberlain, Ennugi was their Minister of Canals. Ea, the Clever Prince, was under oath with them so he repeated their talk to the reed house:

'Reed house, reed house! Wall, wall!

O man of Shuruppak, son of Ubatutu:

Tear down the house and build a boat! Abandon wealth and seek living beings! Spurn possessions and keep alive living beings! Make all living beings go up into the boat. The boat which you are to build, its dimensions must measure equal to each other:

its length must correspond to its width. Roof it over like the Apsu.

I understood and spoke to my lord, Ea:

'My lord, thus is the command which you have uttered I will heed and will do it. But what shall I answer the city, the populace, and the Elders!'

The Epic of Gilgamesh (page 2)

Ea spoke, commanding me, his servant:

'You, well then, this is what you must say to them:

"It appears that Enlil is rejecting me so I cannot reside in your city, nor set foot on Enlil's earth. I will go down to the Apsu to live with my lord, Ea, and upon you he will rain down abundance, a profusion of fowl, myriad(!) fishes. He will bring to you a harvest of wealth, in the morning he will let loaves of bread shower down, and in the evening a rain of wheat!"

Just as dawn began to glow the land assembled around me - the carpenter carried his hatchet, the reed worker carried his (flattening) stone, ... the men ... The child carried the pitch, the weak brought whatever else was needed.

On the fifth day I laid out her exterior. It was a field in area, its walls were each 10 times 12 cubits in height, the sides of its top were of equal length, 10 times 12 cubits each. I laid out its (interior) structure and drew a picture of it.

I provided it with six decks, thus dividing it into seven (levels). The inside of it I divided into nine (compartments). I drove plugs (to keep out) water in its middle part. I saw to the punting poles and laid in what was necessary.

Three times 3,600 (units) of raw bitumen I poured into the bitumen kiln, three times 3,600 (units of) pitch... into it, there were three times 3,600 porters of casks who carried (vegetable) oil, apart from the 3,600 (units of) oil which they consumed (!) and two times 3,600 (units of) oil which the boatman stored away.

I butchered oxen for the meat(!), and day upon day I slaughtered sheep.

I gave the workmen ale, beer, oil, and wine, as if it were river water, so they could make a party like the New Year's Festival. ... and I set my hand to the oiling(!).

The boat was finished by sunset.

The launching was very difficult. They had to keep carrying a runway of poles front to back, until two-thirds of it had gone into the water.

Whatever I had I loaded on it:

whatever silver I had I loaded on it, whatever gold I had I loaded on it. All the living beings that I had I loaded on it, I had all my kith and kin go up into the boat, all the beasts and animals of the field and the craftsmen I... had go up.

Shamash had set a stated time:

'In the morning I will let loaves of bread shower down,... and in the evening a rain of wheat! Go inside the boat, seal the entry!'

That stated time had arrived.

In the morning he let loaves of bread shower down, and in the evening a rain of wheat. I watched the appearance of the weather--the weather was frightful to behold! I went into the boat and sealed the entry. For the caulking of the boat, to Puzuramurri, the boatman, I gave the palace together with its contents.

Just as dawn began to glow there arose from the horizon a black cloud. Adad rumbled inside of it, before him went Shullat and Hanish, heralds going over mountain and land. Erragal pulled out the mooring poles, forth went Ninurta and made the dikes overflow. The Anunnaki lifted up the torches, setting the land ablaze with their flare. Stunned shock over Adad's deeds overtook the heavens, and turned to blackness all that had been light. The... land shattered like a... pot.

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All day long the South Wind blew ..., blowing fast, submerging the mountain in water, overwhelming the people like an attack. No one could see his fellow, they could not recognize each other in the torrent.

The gods were frightened by the Flood, and retreated, ascending to the heaven of Anu. The gods were cowering like dogs, crouching by the outer wall. Ishtar shrieked like a woman in childbirth, the sweet-voiced Mistress of the Gods wailed:

'The olden days have alas turned to clay, because I said evil things in the Assembly of the Gods! How could I say evil things in the Assembly of the Gods, ordering a catastrophe to destroy my people!! No sooner have I given birth to my dear people than they fill the sea like so many fish!'

The gods--those of the Anunnaki--were weeping with her, the gods humbly sat weeping, sobbing with grief, their lips burning, parched with thirst.

Six days and seven nights came the wind and flood, the storm flattening the land. When the seventh day arrived, the storm was pounding, the flood was a war--struggling with itself like a woman writhing (in labor). The sea calmed, fell still, the whirlwind (and) flood stopped up.

I looked around all day long--quiet had set in and all the human beings had turned to clay! The terrain was as flat as a roof.

I opened a vent and fresh air (daylight!) fell upon the side of my nose. I fell to my knees and sat weeping, tears streaming down the side of my nose. I looked around for coastlines in the expanse of the sea, and at twelve leagues there emerged a region (of land).

On Mt. Nimush the boat lodged firm, Mt. Nimush held the boat, allowing no sway. One day and a second Mt. Nimush held the boat, allowing no sway. A third day, a fourth, Mt. Nimush held the boat, allowing no sway. A fifth day, a sixth, Mt. Nimush held the boat, allowing no sway.

When a seventh day arrived I sent forth a dove and released it. The dove went off, but came back to me; no perch was visible so it circled back to me. I sent forth a swallow and released it. The swallow went off, but came back to me; no perch was visible so it circled back to me.

I sent forth a raven and released it. The raven went off, and saw the waters slither back. It eats, it scratches, it bobs, but does not circle back to me.

Then I sent out everything in all directions and sacrificed (a sheep). I offered incense in front of the mountain-ziggurat. Seven and seven cult vessels I put in place, and (into the fire) underneath (or: into their bowls) I poured reeds, cedar, and myrtle. The gods smelled the savor, the gods smelled the sweet savor, and collected like flies over a (sheep) sacrifice.

Just then Beletili arrived. She lifted up the large flies (beads) which Anu had made for his enjoyment(!):

'You gods, as surely as I shall not forget this lapis lazuli around my neck, may I be mindful of these days, and never forget them! The gods may come to the incense offering, but Enlil may not come to the incense offering, because without considering he brought about the Flood and consigned my people to annihilation.'

Just then Enlil arrived. He saw the boat and became furious, he was filled with rage at the Igigi gods:

'Where did a living being escape? No man was to survive the annihilation!'

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Ninurta spoke to Valiant Enlil, saying:

'Who else but Ea could devise such a thing? It is Ea who knows every machination!'

La spoke to Valiant Enlil, saying:

'It is yours, O Valiant One, who is the Sage of the Gods. How, how could you bring about a Flood without consideration? Charge the violation to the violator, charge the offense to the offender, but be compassionate lest (mankind) be cut off, be patient lest they be killed. Instead of your bringing on the Flood, would that a lion had appeared to diminish the people! Instead of your bringing on the Flood, would that a wolf had appeared to diminish the people! Instead of your bringing on the Flood, would that famine had occurred to slay the land! Instead of your bringing on the Flood, would that (Pestilent) Erra had appeared to ravage the land! It was not I who revealed the secret of the Great Gods, I (only) made a dream appear to Atrahasis, and (thus) he heard the secret of the gods. Now then! The deliberation should be about him!'

Enlil went up inside the boat and, grasping my hand, made me go up. He had my wife go up and kneel by my side. He touched our forehead and, standing between us, he blessed us:

'Previously Utanapishtim was a human being. But now let Utanapishtim and his wife become like us, the gods! Let Utanapishtim reside far away, at the Mouth of the Rivers.'

They took us far away and settled us at the Mouth of the Rivers.

"Now then, who will convene the gods on your behalf, that you may find the life that you are seeking! Wait! You must not lie down for six days and seven nights."

Soon as he [Gilgamesh] sat down (with his head) between his legs sleep, like a fog, blew upon him.

Utanapishtim said to his wife:

"Look there! The man, the youth who wanted (eternal) life! Sleep, like a fog, blew over him."

His wife said to Utanapishtim the Faraway:

"Touch him, let the man awaken. Let him return safely by the way he came. Let him return to his land by the gate through which he left."

Utanapishtim said to his wife:

"Mankind is deceptive, and will deceive you. Come, bake leaves for him and keep setting them by his head and draw on the wall each day that he lay down."

She baked his leaves and placed them by his head and marked on the wall the day that he lay down. The first loaf was dessicated, the second stale, the third moist(?), the fourth turned white, its ..., the fifth sprouted gray (mold), the sixth is still fresh. the seventh--suddenly he touched him and the man awoke.

Gilgamesh said to Utanapishtim:

"The very moment sleep was pouring over me you touched me and alerted me!"

Utanapishtim spoke to Gilgamesh, saying:

"Look over here, Gilgamesh, count your leaves! You should be aware of what is marked on the wall! Your first loaf is dessicated, the second stale, the third moist, your fourth turned white, its ... the fifth sprouted gray (mold), the sixth is still fresh. The seventh--at that instant you awoke!"

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Gilgamesh said to Utanapishtim the Faraway:

"O woe! What shall I do, Utanapishtim, where shall I go! The Snatcher has taken hold of my flesh, in my bedroom Death dwells, and wherever I set foot there too is Death!" Home Empty-Handed

Utanapishtim said to Urshanabi, the ferryman:

"May the harbor reject you, may the ferry landing reject you! May you who used to walk its shores be denied its shores! The man in front of whom you walk, matted hair chains his body, animal skins have ruined his beautiful skin. Take him away, Urshanabi, bring him to the washing place. Let him wash his matted hair in water like ellu. Let him cast away his animal skin and have the sea carry it off, let his body be moistened with fine oil, let the wrap around his head be made new, let him wear royal robes worthy of him! Until he goes off to his city, until he sets off on his way, let his royal robe not become spotted, let it be perfectly new!"

Urshanabi took him away and brought him to the washing place. He washed his matted hair with water like ellu. He cast off his animal skin and the sea carried it off. He moistened his body with fine oil, and made a new wrap for his head. He put on a royal robe worthy of him. Until he went away to his city, until he set off on his way, his royal robe remained unspotted, it was perfectly clean. Gilgamesh and Urshanabi boarded the boat, they cast off the magillu-boat, and sailed away.

The wife of Utanapishtim the Faraway said to him:

"Gilgamesh came here exhausted and worn out. What can you give him so that he can return to his land (with honor)!"

Then Gilgamesh raised a punting pole and drew the boat to shore.

Utanapishtim spoke to Gilgamesh, saying:

"Gilgamesh, you came here exhausted and worn out. What can I give you so you can return to your land? I will disclose to you a thing that is hidden, Gilgamesh, a... I will tell you. There is a plant... like a boxthorn, whose thorns will prick your hand like a rose. If your hands reach that plant you will become a young man again."

Hearing this, Gilgamesh opened a conduit(!) (to the Apsu) and attached heavy stones to his feet. They dragged him down, to the Apsu they pulled him. He took the plant, though it pricked his hand, and cut the heavy stones from his feet, letting the waves throw him onto its shores.

Gilgamesh spoke to Urshanabi, the ferryman, saying:

"Urshanabi, this plant is a plant against decay(!) by which a man can attain his survival(!). I will bring it to Uruk-Haven, and have an old man eat the plant to test it. The plant's name is 'The Old Man Becomes a Young Man.' "Then I will eat it and return to the condition of my youth."

At twenty leagues they broke for some food, at thirty leagues they stopped for the night. Seeing a spring and how cool its waters were, Gilgamesh went down and was bathing in the water. A snake smelled the fragrance of the plant, silently came up and carried off the plant. While going back it sloughed off its casing.

At that point Gilgamesh sat down, weeping, his tears streaming over the side of his nose.

"Counsel me, O ferryman Urshanabi! For whom have my arms labored, Urshanabi! For whom has my heart's blood roiled! I have not secured any good deed for myself, but done a good deed for the 'lion of the ground!' Now the high waters are coursing twenty leagues distant,' as I was opening the conduit I turned my equipment over into it (!). What can I find (to serve) as a marker for me! I will turn back (from the journey by sea) and leave the boat by the shore!"

The Epic of Gilgamesh (page 6)

At twenty leagues they broke for some food, at thirty leagues they stopped for the night. They arrived in Uruk-Haven.

Gilgamesh said to Urshanabi, the ferryman:

"Go up, Urshanabi, onto the wall of Uruk and walk around. Examine its foundation, inspect its brickwork thoroughly-- is not (even the core of) the brick structure of kiln-fired brick, and did not the Seven Sages themselves lay out its plan! One league city, one league palm gardens, one league lowlands, the open area of the Ishtar Temple, three leagues and the open area of Uruk it encloses.

This ends Tablet XI. The Epic of Gilgamesh continues with Tablet XII which can be easily found on the Internet.