

The Epic of Gilgamesh, the Teachings of Siduri and How Siduri's Ancient Advice Can Help Guide Us to a Happier Life, Third Edition

Peter Dyr

Copyright © 2013 Peter Dyr

Smashwords Edition, License Notes

Thank you for downloading this free eBook. You can reproduce, copy and distribute this book as you wish, provided it remains in its complete original form. If you find this free eBook enjoyable, educational and/or helpful, please consider sharing it with your friends.

Important note on copyright: The original text from “The Epic of Gilgamesh” was created, transmitted and written down by multiple anonymous contributors around 3,000-4,000 years ago. All translations used in this book were either by the author (Peter Dyr) or are in the public domain. Public domain translations of the original cuneiform include those of Morris Jastrow and Albert Clay for their translations in "An Old Babylonian Version of the Gilgamesh Epic on the Basis of Recently Discovered Texts" by Morris Jastrow and Albert T. Clay (New Haven: Yale University press, 1920). The author has also extensively re-written the prose of Bernarda Bryson Shahn's translation in "Gilgamesh: Man's First Story" by Bernarda Bryson (Henry Holt & Company, 1966) to fit within the same shortened poetic form of the original Old Babylonian stanzas, and then used these reconstructed verses to fill in the gaps in the Old Babylonian texts. All additional writing, analysis and commentary is by Peter Dyr.

Dedicated to Morris Jastrow, Albert Clay and Bernarda Bryson for their tireless work translating these ancient tablets, and to my wife and daughter for their love, support and inspiration.

This book contains the complete text for the Epic of Gilgamesh based, as much as possible, on the original Old Babylonian tablets. It also discusses both the teachings of Siduri and how Siduri's ancient advice may help guide us to a happier life.

Chapter 1. Prologue, Introduction and Analysis



King Gilgamesh, from the Epic of Gilgamesh

The Epic of Gilgamesh is the first great work of literature. We are extremely fortunate to still possess fragments of the original Old Babylonian version of the Epic of Gilgamesh thanks to the methods the ancient Sumerians of Mesopotamia used when they first invented writing. The Sumerians made wedge shaped letters in soft clay that we call cuneiform. This was originally invented around 5,000 years ago as a method for keeping track of taxes paid, in the form of grains and livestock, to the central city temples.

The Sumerians and their ancestors created the Epic of Gilgamesh, a story of gods, kings, battles, friendship, loss, the fear of death, the search for immortality and advice on how one should live life. It is probable that this story had been verbally transmitted for a very long time before the invention of writing, but we have no way of knowing the exact date when the story actually originated or how many original contributors there were. What we do know is that the story encompassed a large number of concepts, ideas and philosophies and was considered important enough that it was told from generation to generation for hundreds of years, before being immortalized in clay around 1,800 BC. Unfortunately, the original “Old Babylonian” version of the Epic of Gilgamesh is incomplete, making it difficult for us to piece together the exact story our ancient ancestors considered so important. However, several important fragments of the original Epic have been recovered and differ in significant ways from later more complete versions. One of the most fascinating of these original fragments is the Sippar tablet which was discovered near the city of Sippar, on the Euphrates river upstream of the Babylonian region in present day Iraq. The tablet is comprised of two fragments, one of which is currently located in the British Museum in London (BM 96974) and the other in the Vorderasiatisches Museum in Berlin (VAT 4105). The Sippar tablet contains the earliest recorded advice (found on the larger VAT 4105 fragment) given to Gilgamesh by a beautiful young girl called Siduri, on how we should live our lives. Interestingly, in a later version of the Epic of Gilgamesh (referred to as the “Akkadian” version) Siduri’s advice was removed from the Epic and much of her original role was given to Utnapishtim, an immortal wise old man. One theory for the diminishment of Siduri’s role is that Siduri being young, female and working class (wine maker), and Utnapishtim being old, male and high class (wise man/immortal) may have played a role, and may suggest possible cultural differences between Sumerian culture and Akkadian culture. Specifically, this change may highlight a degree of ageism, sexism and/or classism in Akkadian culture, and the removal of Siduri’s advice could represent the first recorded case of censorship.

Siduri’s words were recorded long before any other religious text, including the Bible, the Koran or any eastern philosophies (including Buddhism) and represent a very different perspective to the religious texts

used today. Siduri was pro-wine, pro-feasting, pro-music, pro-dancing, pro-joy, pro-sex and pro-family. Wouldn't the world be a better place if more people today would heed Siduri's ancient advice?

In this book I have re-introduced Siduri's teachings, and the original Old Babylonian fragments into the Epic of Gilgamesh, while using the later Akkadian text to fill in the gaps in the original story. I have tried to remain faithful to the original events, concepts and philosophies our ancient ancestors found so important. I have also included a discussion of Siduri's teachings and how we can, if we so wish, live our lives according to Siduri's original ancient advice.

In this updated Third Edition I have re-written the Akkadian prose to more closely resemble the shortened poetic verse of the Old Babylonian texts, added additional analysis of the rest of the Epic and included a new section at the end of the book that contains various informative discussions, from multiple contributors, regarding Siduri's philosophies and underlying concepts within the Epic of Gilgamesh. Discussions of Siduri and her philosophies are included in a few very short chapters at the beginning of the book, analysis of the rest of the Epic is incorporated into Chapter 6, the complete text for the Epic of Gilgamesh is contained within Chapters 7 to 9, and Chapter 10 contains the epilogue and the new multiple contributor discussions section.

Chapter 2. Who Was Siduri?



Stone Relief of Siduri as a Goddess

To the ancient Babylonians Siduri was a Goddess of wine, merry-making and wisdom. She lived in a tavern on the shore of the sea, beyond which was the "Land of Life". Siduri is referred to in the Epic of Gilgamesh as "the Refresher" or "the girl whose drinks refresh the soul". However, despite being given the status of a Goddess, it is probable that Siduri was just a regular girl who lived in Mesopotamia 5,000 years ago, and who's message resonated so strongly with so many people that over the hundreds of years between her advice first being introduced into the Gilgamesh Epic and it actually getting recorded in cuneiform on the Sippar tablet (following the first invention of writing by the Sumerians) that she became increasingly seen as a supernatural God-like entity. Some refer to her as a "Prophet" as an honorary title due to the impact her words have had on them and a "Sidurian" is simply one who tries to live their lives according to Siduri's ancient advice.

Siduri's teachings form the basis for Sidurism, the Church of Siduri and contemporary Sidurianist philosophy. In addition to discussing Siduri and her teachings, this book also includes the complete Epic of Gilgamesh (contained in Chapters 7-9) which provides the background story which acted as a vessel

verbally carrying Siduri's words from person to person through pre-history until they could eventually be recorded in clay.

Chapter 3. Sidurian Philosophy I: What is Sidurian Philosophy?

We know very little about Siduri except that her message was considered important enough to verbally transmit for hundreds of years, from generation to generation, before the invention of writing, over 5,000 years ago, and finally get recorded, in clay, on the Sippar tablet around 4,000 years ago, in the original Old Babylonian version of the Epic of Gilgamesh. What was her message, and why did it get included into our earliest recorded literature? It was a message about accepting our mortality, living a life full of joy and ultimately focusing on family "*Look at the child that is holding your hand, and let your wife delight in your embrace. These things alone are the concern of men*". Sidurian philosophy is the careful analysis and interpretation of Siduri's ancient advice and how they might help guide us to a happier life, and Sidurians are people who try to follow Siduri's ancient advice.



The Sippar Tablet that contains Siduri's teachings

Chapter 4. Sidurian Philosophy II: The Teachings of Siduri

The following is a translation of the original teachings of Siduri as recorded on the Sippar tablet (pictured above) representing the earliest recorded advice on how we should live our lives:

*Beside the sea Siduri lives,
the woman of the vine, the maker of wine;
Siduri sits in the garden at the edge of the sea
And where she sits she sees Gilgamesh coming towards her,
the flesh of the gods in his body,
but despair in his heart,
she barred her gate against him.*

*But Gilgamesh called to her,
"Young woman, maker of wine,
why do you bolt your door
for I am Gilgamesh
who seized and killed the Bull of Heaven,
I killed the watchman of the cedar forest,
I overthrew Humbaba who lived in the forest,*

and I killed the lions in the passes of the mountain.”

Then Siduri said:

*“If you are that Gilgamesh
Why is despair in your heart
and why do you come here wandering over the pastures
in search of the wind?”*

Gilgamesh answered her,

*“Despair is in my heart,
Enkidu my brother
whom I loved,
the end of mortality has overtaken him.
I wept for him seven days and nights
Because of my brother I am afraid of death,
because of my brother I stray through the wilderness
and cannot rest.*

But now

*young woman, maker of wine,
since I have seen your face
do not let me see the face of death
which I dread so much.”*

Siduri said,

*“Gilgamesh, whither are you wandering?
Life, which you look for, you will never find.
For when the gods created man, they let
death be his share, and life
withheld in their own hands.
Gilgamesh, fill your belly,
Day and night make merry,
let days be full of joy,
dance and make music day and night.
And wear fresh clothes,
And wash your head and bathe.
Look at the child that is holding your hand,
And let your wife delight in your embrace.
These things alone are the concern of men.”*

Chapter 5. Sidurian Philosophy III: Deconstructing and Interpreting the Teachings of Siduri

Siduri's words come to us from the beginning of recorded history, but what exactly was her message? How we deconstruct the brief text on the Sippar tablet is open to individual interpretation, and a major caveat of the following section is that it represents my analysis of her words, and I respect that others may reach different conclusions. In my perspective, the three core concepts of Siduri's philosophy are: Understanding, Joy and Family.

Understanding. Siduri tries to understand Gilgamesh, his motivations, his pain at the loss of his brother and his dream for immortality, and she advises him to understand that we must all eventually die and must accept our mortality. Siduri teaches us first to try to understand others in our lives, what their motivations are and can we see things from their perspective. If we wish to follow Siduri's ancient teachings, we should make every effort to live with understanding in our lives, and make sure that our colleagues, friends and family feel that we appreciate their point of view.

Dale Carnegie elegantly developed this concept of Understanding in his extremely popular book "How to win friends and influence people" and one of his key suggestions was that we should look to understand and sincerely appreciate other people and their perspectives. Carnegie advocated sincere appreciation but was extremely disapproving of flattery, which is at its core insincere. If we can find nothing to sincerely appreciate then perhaps we are not looking hard enough! Siduri and Carnegie teach that we should make every effort to find common ground that will genuinely interest us and let us understand the world through the eyes of our friends, colleagues and family. The Sidurian concept of Understanding is one of most important abilities we can possess and represents a skill that, if regularly practiced, should dramatically improve our interactions with others and help guide us towards a happier life.

Joy. Siduri tells Gilgamesh to "*Fill your belly. Day and night make merry, let days be full of joy, dance and make music day and night*". We should consider heeding Siduri's advice and living lives full of music, dancing, good food, good wine and general merriment. However, while seeking a life full of joy, Siduri also advises us to keep our daily responsibilities in mind and "*wear fresh clothes, and wash your head and bathe*". It is unclear exactly how far we can interpret Siduri's words on minding to our daily responsibilities, but it may be prudent for us to include attending to our mental, physical and financial well-being as a foundation to build future Joy on. We must be healthy if we are to dance day and night, and good food and wine require a stable source of income! Nevertheless, we can, while attending to our daily responsibilities, consider making every effort to introduce Joy into our lives, and do what makes us happy.

Joy, specifically, the concept that we should look to promote joy in our lives, was developed into its most extreme form by the Hedonistic philosopher Aristippus of Cyrene (one of the students of Socrates) who held that the sensation of pleasure was the highest good. Some have claimed that Siduri promoted Hedonism and her advice to Gilgamesh was the first recorded advocacy of Hedonism and the general Carpe Diem (seize the day) concept. While Siduri was the first recorded to advocate the Carpe Diem concept, she did not support unbridled Hedonism and immediately following her instructions to seek joy and merriment, she then advised Gilgamesh to also tend to more mundane responsibilities. Therefore, at most, Siduri promoted "Responsible Hedonism" and should we wish to follow Siduri's advice we should bear this distinction in mind. Indeed, the Sidurian concept of Joy, or "Responsible Hedonism", can help guide us towards a happier life as long as we do not fall into the trap of irresponsibility!

Family. Siduri ends her advice to Gilgamesh with "*Look at the child that is holding your hand and let your wife delight in your embrace. These things alone are the concern of men*". In this, Siduri ends on a very strong pro-family message, the general implication for us being that we should get married, have a family and make sure our children and significant others are happy. Specifically, that we should pay attention to our children and ensure our significant others are delighted in our embrace. We can interpret "embrace" in both its platonic and sexual forms, although the latter interpretation of Siduri's teachings would appear to be the one most often associated with delight and making a new family. It is interesting to note that while Gilgamesh sought physical immortality, Siduri suggested he abandon his quest and instead focus on family. Richard Dawkins in "The Selfish Gene" suggests that through our children we pass on the essence of who we are. These genes, or as Dawkins called them "immortal coils", give us a form of genetic immortality through our children and our children's children. This drive to procreate is the core purpose of life, not just for humans, but for all life on this planet, and only by achieving our fundamental biological purpose to procreate can we achieve the deepest happiness and contentment with our lives.

Gilgamesh's mother (Ninsun) was even more explicit regarding the importance of getting married and starting a family:

*"Ninsun implored him:
"O Gilgamesh,
Cease your wandering.
Stay here my son,
And take a wife,
Have a child that you can lead by the hand.
This is the purpose of life""*

In addition to the focus on having children, it is important to recognize that Siduri's advice can also be interpreted as including the edification of children, in this way covering both the nurture and the nature aspects of creating and raising a new family, and thereby contributing to the progressive development and evolution of culture in the future generations.

On a personal note, the Sidurian concepts of Understanding, Joy and Family have dramatically improved my life. Specifically, I have found the Sidurian concept of Understanding to be one that has improved my marriage and helped me in my work. Trying to understand things from my wife's point of view has made her significantly happier and she has reciprocated, making me happier. At work, I was tasked to give a presentation to a group of highly skeptical colleagues, with little chance of a successful outcome. I discarded my original presentation and re-created one from scratch, trying to find and mention areas of collaborative interest for each person, by name, in the group. It took a lot of time, thought and effort, but the change was incredible, skeptics became supporters and the proposal was approved.

I have found the Sidurian concept of Joy to be a pleasure to introduce. I purchased and play singing and dancing video games with my wife and daughter, dance with them and I must admit to enjoying Siduri's support for feasting and drinking wine! I have also kept my responsibilities in mind, working hard, socializing with friends and making sure I stay healthy.

The desire for a family is one that I have agreed with for many years, and while on a superficial level sleep deprivation and stress can be regular annoyances, there is no deeper source of happiness in my life than my family. For me at least, Siduri's teachings have worked and continue to work, and although you inhabit a different world, and your interpretations of her words may differ, I suspect her ancient advice will nevertheless work for you too.

While Siduri's words are over 4,000 years old (the oldest recorded advice) we can still heed her words and try to live with more understanding, joy and appreciation of family in our lives. Although ancient, good advice is eternal, and Siduri's teachings can help guide us to happier lives today.



Statue of Siduri

Chapter 6. Analysis of the Rest of the Epic of Gilgamesh

While a major focus of this book is on the teachings of Siduri, there are also a large number of additional concepts in the rest of the Epic of Gilgamesh that are interesting to discuss. I will try to expand on a few of them here, although this is far from a comprehensive list:

*"The city of Gilgamesh was Erech,
The most magnificent of all seven Sumerian cities,
And Gilgamesh was its king."*

- There are a couple of interesting points here. First, "Erech" is a city referred to in the Book of Genesis as an ancient city in the land of Shinar. "Shinar" probably derives from the Akkadian Sumeru which means "native land", and the modern consensus is that Erech refers to the Sumerian city-state of Uruk, which is located in modern day Iraq.



Ruins of Uruk

Thanks to the Epic of Gilgamesh, Uruk is the first city that we have detailed descriptions of its layout, giving us our first recorded urban planning. Second, Gilgamesh appears to have been an actual historical king, rather than just a fictional character. Sumerian texts indicate that Gilgamesh was the fifth king of Uruk, the first king of the Uruk dynasty, and his reign was around 2500 BC, suggesting the Epic of Gilgamesh was orally transmitted for around 700 years before being recorded in clay.

*"[Erech]
A city of temples, brick houses and open groves of trees.
Towering walls protected it from evil,
From enemies, floods and from wild beasts,
But most of all,
They protected Erech from Humbaba,
A monster who dwelled in a nearby mountain,
A beast who could breathe fire."*

- This may be the first written record of the fire-breathing beast/dragon myth.

*"The mother of Gilgamesh was the pale Ninsun,
Herself listed among the goddesses,
A gentle queen,
Who had the gift of prophecy,
And could read dreams."*

- This may be the first recorded case of a psychic, or someone with the gift of prophecy.

*"Gilgamesh understood his dream.
A wildman was sitting before a woman,
Her loins he embraced, her essence he opened."*

*The wildman forgot the place where he was born.
Six days and seven nights,
The wildman continued,
To cohabit with the woman,
Till his innocence was lost,
And to the wild,
He could no longer return."*

- The may be the first recorded "sex scene", which interestingly enough, results in the loss of innocence for Enkidu and his inability to return to the wild.

*"As Gilgamesh knelt helpless,
His breast exposed to the fury of Enkidu,
Strangely enough,
Enkidu lifted him to his feet.
They clasped hands, they embraced.
"I salute you, Gilgamesh,
You are a lion and a great fighter"
"Welcome to my city,
O godlike Enkidu!"
They thereupon pledged eternal friendship,
The King and the wildman from the steppes
Sent by the gods to destroy him.
The elders of Erech stared wondering.
But perfect was the friendship of Gilgamesh and Enkidu.
Gilgamesh called him "my younger brother"
Ninsun looked upon him as an adopted son."*

- This is almost certainly the first recorded "bromance". Some have even gone so far as to suggest that Gilgamesh and Enkidu were homosexual, although there is no direct evidence to suggest that Gilgamesh and Enkidu's relationship was anything other than a deep platonic friendship between men.

*"But Ishtar shrieked:
"Father, you will create the Bull of Heaven,
Or I will destroy the door to the Underworld,
The dead will rise up and join the living,
They will swarm and eat everything,
There will be famine and death on the earth""*

- This may be the first written record of a threatened "zombie" Armageddon.

*"But the Bull seemed indestructible,
For hours they fought,
Till Gilgamesh dancing in front of the Bull,
Lured it with his tunic and bright weapons,
And Enkidu thrust his sword,
Deep into the Bull's neck,
And killed it."*

- This may be the first written "lesson" on bull fighting.

*"A wail split the air,
They saw Goddess Ishtar,
Crouched on the highest city wall,
She cursed them:
"Woe to you Gilgamesh,
Who dishonored my name,
Woe to you Enkidu,
Who killed my Bull"
In anger Enkidu tore off the Bull's leg,
And threw it at the Goddess, shouting
"Receive this offering in your face,
O terrible Ishtar""*
- Almost certainly the first recorded usage of the "in your face" insult.

*"Gilgamesh cut the poles,
Then with care crossed the waters of death.
As the boat came to rest,
Gilgamesh leaped out,
And approached his ancestor:
"I am Gilgamesh,
King of Erech,
And you are my ancestor.
I have travelled far to find answers.
I have been told you know the secrets,
Of life and of death.
My dearest friend,
My brother Enkidu,
The fate of mortal men overtook him,
O Utnapishtim,
I was overcome by terror and grief,
And now,
I roam the wilderness because of the fear,
The paths and shores of unknown places, saying
'Must I die too?'"*
*Utnapishtim replied:
"O Gilgamesh,
Do we build houses to last forever?
Do brothers share their inheritance to last forever?
When the Gods assemble,
They alone decree the destinies of men.
But sit down and listen,
And I will tell you a story.
Many many years ago,
I lived in Shuruppak,
A city full of vice,
Full of arguing and shouting,
Their commotion disturbed the Gods,
Especially Enlil,
Enlil was enraged.
He assembled the Gods:*

*They make too much noise,
I cannot sleep,
I plan to destroy the people of the earth,
And get some rest.
I have sent a hurricane,
To wipe out humanity,
A flood that will drown,
Every living thing.
No one is to survive'
Then one night,
I heard a voice,
Much like my lord Ea,
From the wall of my hut:
'Listen,
Hear,
Man of Shuruppak,
Son of Ubartatu,
Abandon everything,
Build a ship
To save life,
To escape the storm,
Let him take onto the ship,
Seed of every living thing,
Of creeping things and flying things,
Domestic creatures and wild beasts,
And all those creatures that eat grass,
And his wife and his daughter'
I received the dimensions for a great ship,
The height and width and breadth.
I laid the keel of the great ship,
And built the framework,
According to the measurements,
And with the help of workmen,
Built and loaded the great ship.
Then the storm descended,
Six days and six nights the tempest raged,
Demons of rain ran this way and that.
And across the land water roared.
Light became blackness.
The earth was broken.
Even the Gods were terrified,
Great Ishtar wept and addressed Enlil:
"Why did I not stop you?
How could I acquiesce to such evil?
Allow the destruction of my people?
My children,
Who now lie like dead fish in the sea?
On the seventh day the storm ceased,
All around me was water,
No land in sight.
Silence everywhere.*

*Slowly the waters began to recede,
My boat caught and held fast,
At the top of a mountain.
Once the water had receded further,
I stood on the earth,"*

- This is the probable origin of the "Noah's Ark" biblical story, with Utnapishtim's role replaced by Noah in the Old Testament.

*"Gilgamesh,
I will tell you,
A secret of the gods.
At the end of this river,
There grows a plant.
With a strong smelling flower,
But a stem of painful thorns.
Any mortal that can hold this plant,
And eat of it,
Youth will return to him,
This secret I do tell you..."
Gilgamesh tied heavy stones to his feet,
And entered the river,
The water was thick,
He could not see.
But he caught the strong scent of the plant's flower,
He was drawn to it.
He touched it.
It scratched and hurt his hands,
But he pulled it out by its roots.
He returned to the boatman,
Once they tasted of the flower,
All weariness dropped from them.
They journeyed back towards Erech"*

- A friend of mine asked me if the plant referred to in the Epic of Gilgamesh might be the cannabis plant. This is a fun theory to consider. On one hand the budding flower of the cannabis plant has a very strong and distinctive scent, and at low doses tetrahydrocannabinol (THC, the active ingredient in cannabis) can, in some, induce feelings of rejuvenation, stimulation and youth. Advocates of this theory point out that when consumed, the budding cannabis flower will slowly release THC and provide an effect that lasts for an extended period of time, perhaps long enough to "rejuvenate" Gilgamesh and his colleague on their journey back to Erech. But the plant in the Epic is also described as having thorns, and cannabis plants have no thorns, providing evidence against this hypothesis. It was suggested to me that the "thorn" concept may have been added to explain why no normal man could grasp this precious plant, although it is unclear if this explanation is sufficient to explain the thorn problem. Nevertheless, despite the debatable thorn issue, still, it is possible that in our earliest recorded literature, the 'secret of the gods', the 'plant of youth', with the strong smelling flowers, which once consumed induces extended feelings of rejuvenation, was indeed the cannabis plant.

*"They found a fresh pool of water,
And decided to rest.
After Gilgamesh bathed in the spring,*

*He saw a serpent at his feet,
The snake grabbed the plant of youth,
And escaped into the earth."*

- Possible pre-cursor to the serpent in the biblical Garden of Eden. This comparison is reinforced by the knowledge that Adam and Eve had eternal youth in the Garden of Eden, until a snake intervened, and Gilgamesh had the plant of youth, until a snake intervened.

*"Ninsun implored him:
"O Gilgamesh,
Cease your wandering.
Stay here my son,
And take a wife,
Have a child that you can lead by the hand.
This is the purpose of life""*

- Ninsun's pro-family advice seems to closely parallel Siduri's, again suggesting that one of the key messages our ancestors wanted to transmit to following generations was a pro-family one.

*"A hole opened in the earth,
A strange form emerged,
A man made of plants and vines.
It was Enkidu!*

*The brothers embraced,
"My brother,
Tell me of the Underworld,
In which you dwell.
How is it with kings, have you seen them?"*

Enkidu replied:

"I have seen them, the kings wear no crowns, theirs is the lot of servants"

"How is it with heroes, have you seen them?"

"I have seen them, their parents hold their heads, their wives weep over them."

"What of the man having but one son, have you seen him?"

"I have seen him, his portion is but one glass of water."

"What of the man who had two sons; have you seen him?"

"I have seen him, he has a good house of bricks over his head and a loaf of bread each day"

"What of the man who had three sons, have you seen him?"

"I have seen him, daily he is refreshed from the waters of the deep."

"What of the man who had eight sons, have you seen him?"

"I have seen him, he has a great house of stone, and statues of his image,

His name is proclaimed on standards, in red and in gold,

Daily gifts and tributes are his reward!"

"Enkidu, what of the man who had no sons, have you seen him?"

"I have seen him, he lies unburied at the foot of the wall,

Cast-off crusts of bread are his portion.""

- Possible pre-cursor to the biblical "Go forth and multiply" message.

*"As such did Gilgamesh die,
A mortal man's death.
Even so,*

*His life was not as an empty wind,
An everlasting name he had made for himself.
When he was gone the people mourned him,
But they also sang of his adventures and quests,
Dancers acted out his deeds,
Singers set them to music,
And poets recited them,
Scribes wrote it all down on tablets of clay,
Sculptors carved his face in stone,
And painters illustrated the great story in houses and temples,
Finally Erech and its walls slowly crumbled and melted into the earth.
Other cities and languages came into being,
But everywhere was repeated the name of Gilgamesh.
And when people heard the name and asked,
"Who was this Gilgamesh?",
They were answered:
"He who sees all,
He who knows all,
He who stands seven feet high,
One-third man,
Two-thirds god,
Most glorious among heroes,
Most eminent among men,
And Enkidu was his brother.""*

- It is interesting to note that the Epic of Gilgamesh was the first "meta-story" in that it, at the end, described its own writing and effect through the ages.

Chapter 7. Gilgamesh and the Background on His Quest for Immortality

The next three Chapters include the complete text for the Epic of Gilgamesh, with Siduri's teachings re-introduced into Chapter 8.

*Between night and day,
The world of Gilgamesh,
Hemmed in by the mountains of Mashu,
Circled by the Bitter River,
That flowed unceasingly,
And had no beginning and no end.
None knew what lay beyond,
As to touch its waters was death.*

*To the west was the void,
Into which the sun set.
The sun passed under the earth,*

*And into the Eastern Garden,
Where his home was.
So much was known.*

*The Gods were everywhere,
Great Anu of the skies,
Ea of the sea,
Shamash of the sun,
Sin of the moon,
Adad, voice of thunder,
And the mighty Ishtar,
Goddess of Love,
Delight in her friendship,
Fear the terror of her wrath.*

*The city of Gilgamesh was Erech
The most magnificent of all seven Sumerian cities,
And Gilgamesh was its king.*

*A city of temples, brick houses and open groves of trees.
Towering walls protected it from evil,
From enemies, floods and from wild beasts,
But most of all,
They protected Erech from Humbaba,
A monster who dwelled in a nearby forest,
A beast who could breathe fire.*

*Our story begins in Erech,
A company of Elders met with the Gods.
Most eminent of the elders approached Anu:
"O Lord Anu, we must dissent,
About Gilgamesh our King,
He continues to build Erech's city walls,
Higher, ever higher,
It has become a burden,
And we need rest,
Parents no longer see their sons,
Our girls languish without lovers,
Marriages have stopped,
We do nothing but build,
There is no happiness!"*

*Anu replied:
"I like the high walls,
I like Gilgamesh,
A very fine man and perfectly fearless.
He wrestles with lions,
Tames them with his bare hands,
This I have seen.
And he is part God,
He knows best."*

*But Goddess Ishtar pleaded:
"Father, listen to them
I will not see my girls without love,
Help them!"*

*Most eminent of the elders said:
"Indeed, will you listen to our plan,
for we do have a plan.
We want you to create a man,
Taller than even Gilgamesh,
More powerful than Gilgamesh.
A wild beast of a man,
To come to the earth,
And destroy the king.*

*And as the elders explained,
Goddess Ishtar commanded Aruru,
Goddess of the human form,
Who took clay in her hands,
And molded a man,
Unkempt and savage in his looks,
With horns like a beast,
And carried him in her arms,
To the depths of the cedar forest,
Laid him on the earth.
Thus came to be Enkidu.*

*When Enkidu awoke,
He knew not who he was,
Or where he had come from.
He ate and he drank,
And began to enjoy his new life.*

*He knelt by a pool,
He listened and watched,
A gazelle came to drink,
That Enkidu so admired.
He reached out and touched,
This gentle-eyed creature,
It became his first friend.*

*The pool became his home,
He watched the animals,
Touched them and tamed them.
He learned he could run like the gazelle,
But not fly with the birds.*

*One evening a lion came to the pool,
The other animals fled,
But Enkidu remained.*

*The lion's yellow eyes looked at him,
And the beast leaped on him.
Its claws ripped his flesh,
And Enkidu cried out with pain.
He wrestled the lion,
And felt his first anger,
And the mighty strength in his muscles.
He bent the lion backwards,
He twisted its neck.
It fell to the ground roaring,
And lay there until its mouth began to foam,
Enkidu felt pity for the lion,
As he knew it was thirsty,
He carried water in his hand,
To slake the lion's thirst.
He cleaned the lion's wounds,
Caressed its mane,
And cared for it through the night.
In the morning the lion limped away,
But soon it returned,
And also became Enkidu's friend.*

*Into the hut of his father,
A young hunter ran,
And hid in the corner.
His father asked him:
"What troubles you my son?"*

*The hunter cried out:
"Father, I have seen a man of terrifying sight,
A man of Godly strength,
Who opened my traps,
And freed the animals.
Hair springs wild from his head,
He has the horns of a beast,
And he is taller and more powerful than even our King.
I was humbled with fear!"*

*His father, a shepherd, told him:
"Son, if what you say is true,
We must report it to the King.
But if you have lied,
We will be in disgrace"*

*Thus travelled shepherd and son,
To the city of Erech,
But when they arrived,
Rumors already abounded,
Of a wildman taller than a giant,*

Thank You for previewing this eBook

You can read the full version of this eBook in different formats:

- HTML (Free /Available to everyone)
- PDF / TXT (Available to V.I.P. members. Free Standard members can access up to 5 PDF/TXT eBooks per month each month)
- Epub & Mobipocket (Exclusive to V.I.P. members)

To download this full book, simply select the format you desire below

