

Lecture Outcomes

- 1) Appreciate the influence of Gilgamesh on later epic, including Homer's Iliad and Odyssey
- 2) Compare the Biblical Flood Story to Gilgamesh's
- 3) Explain how the Assyrians and Babylonians changed the quality of Inanna into Ishtar
- 4) Appreciate how Gilgamesh introduces two key themes in Western literature: The Heroic Struggle and the Epic Descent (into Hell/Underworld)
- 5) Understand the Mesopotamian answer to the Question of Life

Epic of Gilgamesh

- King of Uruk in 3rd millenium B.C.E.
- Assyrian relief from 750 B.C.E.
- Sumerian story, retold by Akkadians, Assyrians, Hittities,



Prologue

- Resembles opening of Homer's *Odyssey*
- Shamash gave him perfect Body; Two thirds God, One third Man.
- Built the Walls of Uruk



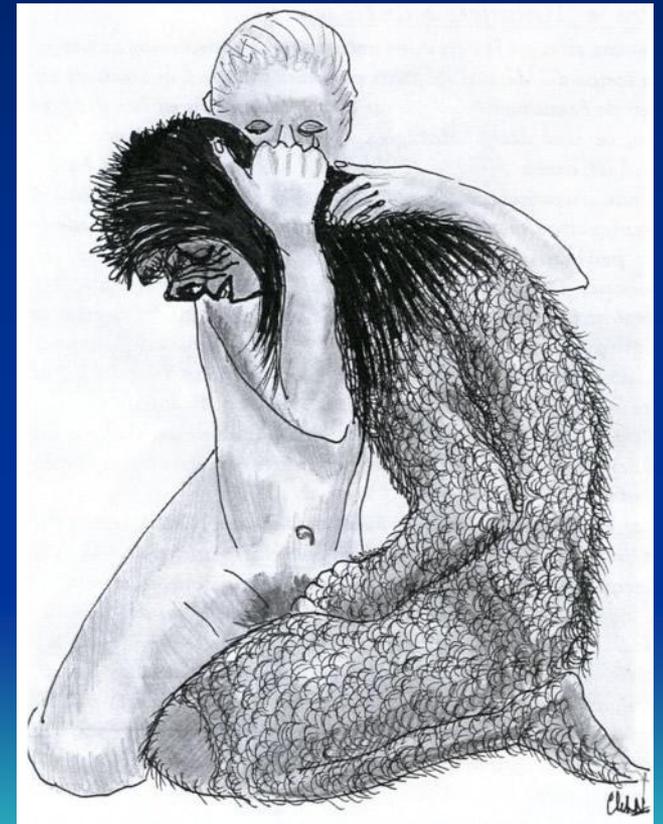
Justice and the King

- The people cry out against Gilgamesh
- Shepherd-King Metaphor (Dumuzi; Gilgamesh; Biblical Patriarchs and King David; Homer and Plato)



Enkidu Civilized

- Coming of Enkidu
 - People pray to the Gods
 - Enkidu and the animals
 - Enkidu is civilized—
sexual seduction as in
Eve story?



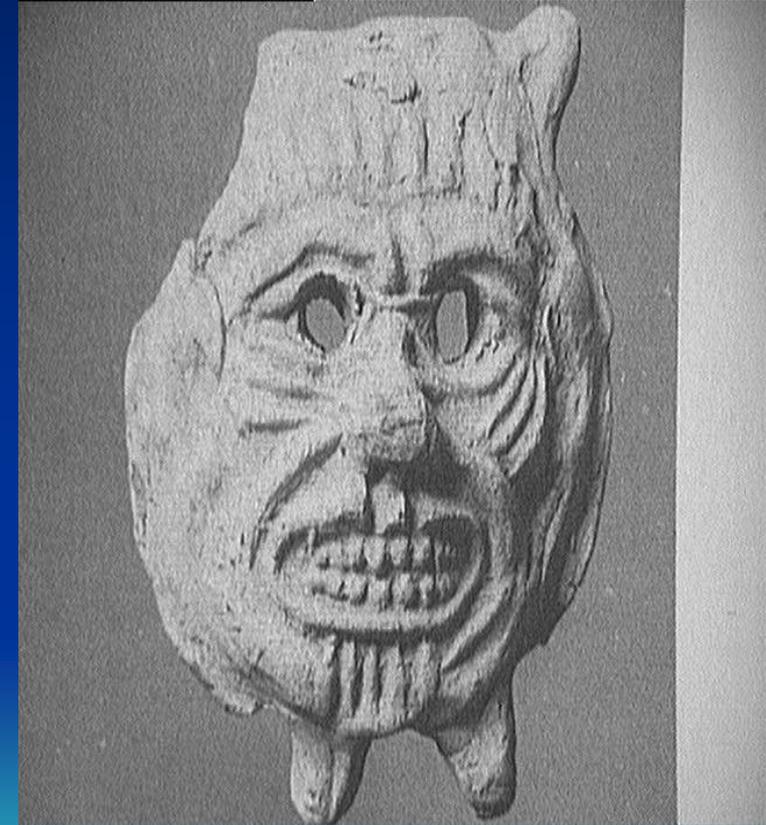
Enkidu and Gilgamesh

- Combat between Enkidu and Gilgamesh
- Gilgamesh demands the Bride
- Gilgamesh conquers Enkidu, but Enkidu civilizes Gilgamesh.
- Dreams: (like Bible); Enkidu interprets as Joseph did for Pharaoh; Kingship not everlasting Life; Deal justly with servants and before Shamash



Humbaba and the Cedar Forest

- Desire for Fame
- Sacrifices a kid to Shamash
- Prayer of Goddess mother, Ninsun, to Shamash (Thetis to Zeus in *Iliad*)
- “When two go together each will protect himself and shield his companion, and if they fall they leave an enduring name.”
- “Teeth are Dragon’s fangs...countenance is like a lion...his look crushes the trees and reeds”



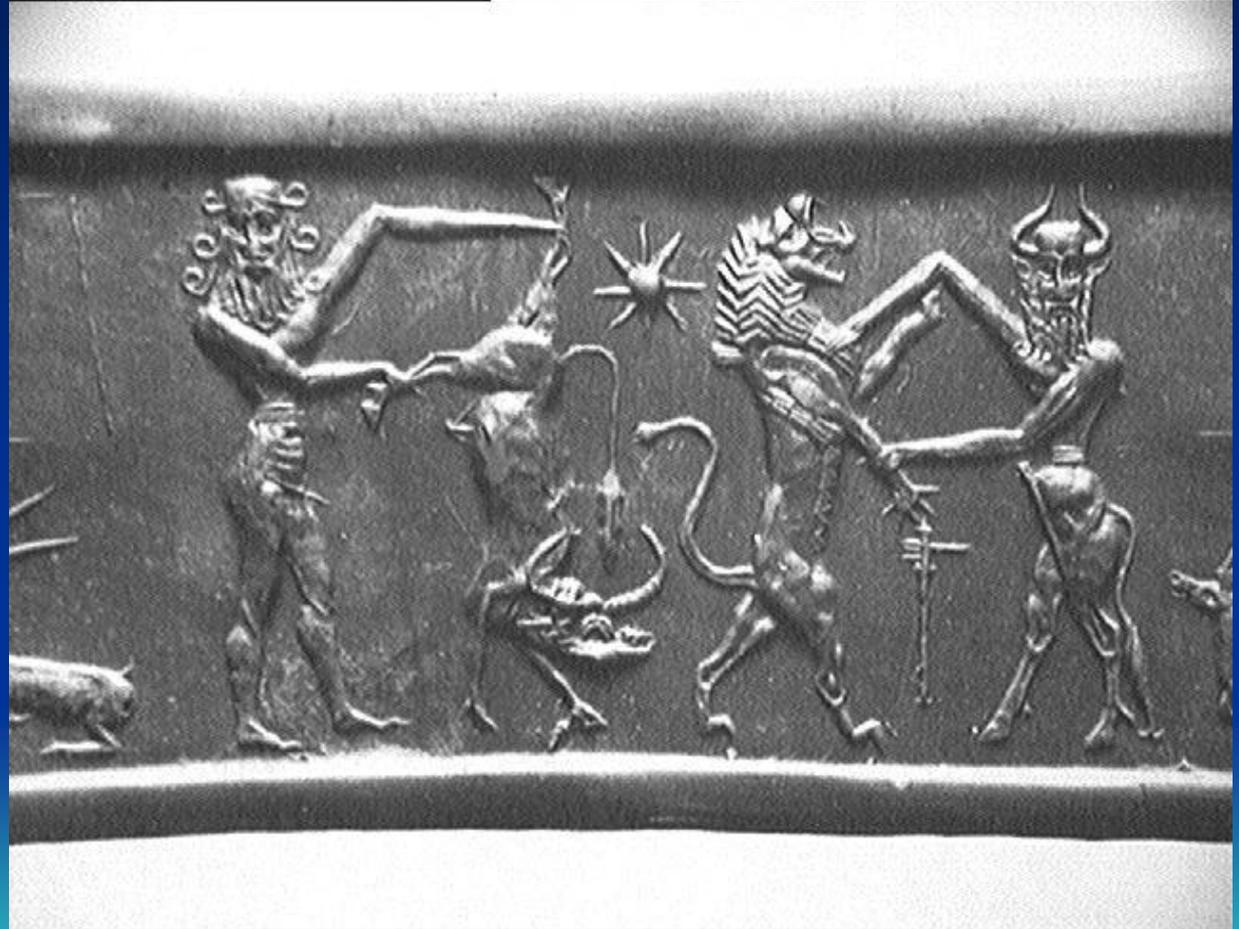
Supplication of Humbaba



- Gilgamesh cuts Cedar
- Humbaba gives “Eye of Death”
- Defeated Humbaba supplicates
- Enkidu urges death
- Death of Humbaba
- Political Metaphor for Possession of Lebanon’s Cedar Forests?

Ishtar and Bull of Heaven

- Seduction
- Rejection
- Ishtar prays and threatens Anu
- Bull of Heaven
- Enkidu Insults
- Political Conflict: Two guilds, prostitutes and Armourers?



Death

- Ekidu gets ill
- Curses Gate of Forest; Curses Hunter, Harlot (despair of Knowing)
- Curses withdrawn
- Dream of Death; dust for food and clay for meat; clothed like birds; darkness
- Mourning of Gilgamesh: "the dream has shown that misery comes at last to the healthy man, the end of life is sorrow."



- The Man-Scorpion opened his mouth and said, speaking to Gilgamesh, 'No man born of woman has done what you have asked, no mortal man has gone into the mountain; the length of it is twelve leagues of darkness; in it there is no light, but the heart is oppressed with darkness. From the rising of the sun to the setting of the sun there is no light.' Gilgamesh said, 'Although I should go in sorrow and in pain, with sighing and with weeping, still I must go. Open the gate of the mountain.'

Scorpion Guardian and 12 Leagues of Darkness



Siduri: Carpe Diem

- Garden of Gods; Siduri, woman of Wine; “When the gods created man they allotted to him death, but life they retained in their own keeping. As for you, Gilgamesh, night and day, dance and be merry, feast and rejoice. Let your clothes be fresh, bathe yourself in water, cherish the little child that holds your hand, and make your wife happy in your embrace; for this too is the lot of man.”



Utnapishtim and Flood Story

- Urshanabi,
Boatmen
- Utnapishtim
(Ziusudra, Noah)

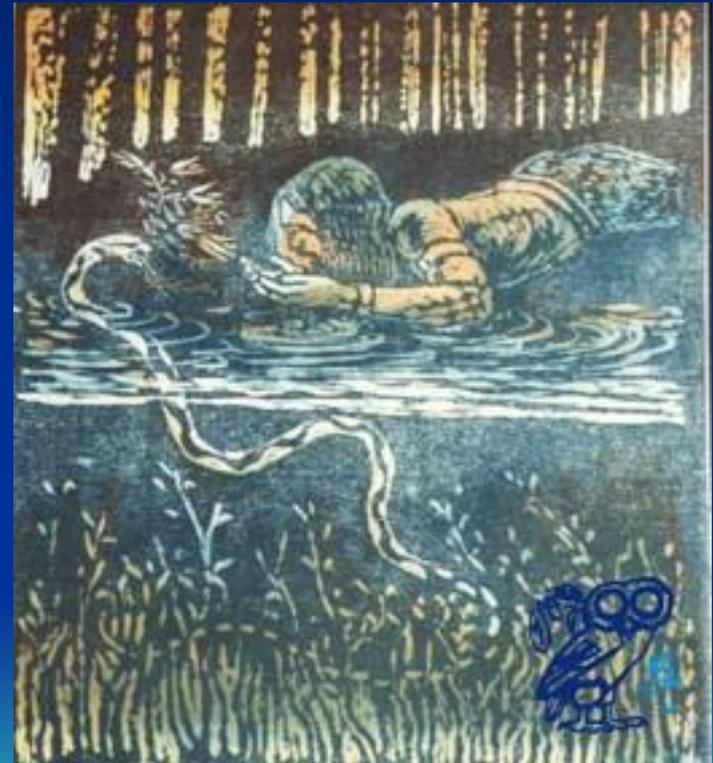


Compared to Biblical Flood

- Noise disturbs Enlil's Sleep
- Utnapishtim Dream from Ea
- Square Arc, roofed deck, seven decks; pitch to seal
- Ishtar regrets
- 7 Days
- Dove, Swallow, Raven
- Sacrifice
- Utnapishtim made Immortal
- Man's Wickedness
- Noah is advised by God
- Rectangular, roofed deck, 3 decks; pitch
- 40 days and nights
- Raven circles, Dove returns, Dove returns second time with olive leaf; fourth time it doesn't return
- Sacrifice
- Covenant

Loss of Immortality

- Sleep of Gilgamesh
- Loss of Plant of Youth to Serpent
- Inscription on Stone on Walls



Conclusion

- Inanna reduced to a sex goddess (Ishtar) who is dangerous and threatening
- Moral message of Biblical Flood is more explicit, but the story is the same
- Gilgamesh is driven to seek fame—which is the Heroic Challenge
- He goes to the Underworld but fails to secure immortality. Mortality is unavoidable.
- In view of Mortality: Pleasure, Friendship, Accomplish Memorable Deeds and Service to Civilization

