

## Goddess in The Epic of Gilgamesh

By

**Lect. Uday Ahmed Abd-Alrazaq**

College of Arts, Dept. of Social Science, Wasit University-Iraq E-Mail:

[uahmed@uowasit.edu.iq](mailto:uahmed@uowasit.edu.iq)

### Abstract

This study deals with several characters of the mentioned deities in the epic and the most important roles they played. Several deities were mentioned in the epic, among them major deities such as Anu, Anil, Aya, Ishtar, and Shamash, and inferior deities such as Nanson, the mother of Gilgamesh, Urue the creator, and the deities entrusted with the creation of the flood like Adad, Ninurta, and others. As well as dealing with the roles of some deities who had important roles in the epic, namely: Gilgamesh's mother, the deities Nanson, who interpreted his dreams and provided advice and guidance to him, and the deity Shamash, who helped the two friends Gilgamesh and Enkido on their journey to the Cedar Forest, in their homes to the beast Khambaba and their unharmed return to Uruk, as for the role of Ishtar It was portrayed in her attempt to seduce Gilgamesh and subjugate him to her charm and power, as the paper demonstrates the relationship between the content of the epic and the Mesopotamian material thinking that linked human existence and the existence of the deity.. Although the non-deal with the deities showed as ideal beings with a good moral tendency, but rather as transcendent beings who work for themselves and do not care for what harm or damage the human except to the extent that it affects them negatively or positively. Therefore, the human did not see a way to deal with them without ensuring their assistance or standing through difficult times and obstacles. The dealing relate to the abuse of the compelled to preserve the safety and stability of his life.

**Keywords:** Deities , the Epic of Gilgamesh.

### Introduction

In the text of the Epic of Gilgamesh, many deities were mentioned, some of whom had important roles in the epic, as well as other deities, who had side roles, which confirm the connection of the epic to Mesopotamian thought, and links the human world with the world of the deities. Also, the whole life and the human life that cannot be separated from each other.

What are the deities mentioned in the epic? How the relationship deals with the epic heroes Gilgamesh and Enkidu, with it? What is the basis for their behavior or dealing with it? Is there a starting point and desire to win the favor and approval of the deities, or to achieve their own goals and interests? What are the most important roles played by the deities in the lives of these two heroes and in their adventures?

This is what we would like to answer through this paper, which is divided into two sections: the first - presents the most important deities mentioned in the epic, whether those that have large roles or those mentioned for Mama or in small roles. The second-deals with the most important roles of the deities in the epic, as focus was placed on the roles of each of the deity Shamash and the two other deities Ishtar and Ramat-Nansen, who is the mother of Gilgamesh.

We hope that we will succeed in answering these questions so that we will have a complete the idea contained in the epic and its relationship to the thought of Mesopotamia

### *The Most Important Mentioned Deities in The Epic of Gilgamesh*

#### *The Deity Anu*

One of the most important deities mentioned in the epic is the deity (Anu), who is the deity of the sky and the chief deity in the ancient Mesopotamian religion, as Uruk is the center of his worship. Also his famous temple is located in the religious neighborhood called (Ay-Anu) (Botero, 2005: p. 50). It was mentioned in the epic when his daughter, the deity Ishtar came to him, complaining to him about Gilgamesh and 'Enkidu's treatment of her, as the epic wanted that with what it says:

"O my father, Gilgamesh cursed me and insulted me (humiliated me)  
Gilgamesh enumerates the wickedness, shame, and obscenity" (Baqir, 1986: p. 112).

As for the request she made to her father, it was to give her a celestial bull to punish Gilgamesh with it (Baqir, 1986: pp. 112-113), as she chose this animal because of its strength and sanctity, and perhaps she wanted to put Gilgamesh between two options: Either kill the celestial bull he faces the wrath of the deity for killing a holy being, or letting him wreak havoc in Uruk, facing the wrath and vengeance of her people against him, and although Ishtar spoke to her father in the presence of her mother (Anntum) in order to win her to her side like any other girl, the response of the deity Anu was contrary to what she hoped. When he told her that she was to blame for what happened, she presented herself to Gilgamesh, saying to her:

Wasn't you the reason? Did you not harass the king, Gilgamesh, and you reap the fruit?  
Gilgamesh enumerates your indecency, your shame, and your iniquities (Makawi, 2008: p. 133).

Apparently, the deity Anu was sympathetic to Gilgamesh, being the first person to reject Ishtar, as he was able to ignore the splendor of Ishtar and withstand her temptation, in contrast to others who succumbed to her temptation and lustful desires. Their exposure results to peril and turning them into monstrosities (Ahmed, 1988): pp. 140-141).

But Ishtar, with what she was known for, rejected the words of Anu, and her impatience reached the point of threatening her father with the worst thing he feared, which was to break the walls of the underworld to make the dead flee from it, and their return to life would upset the cosmic balance as well as incite terror and panic in the world of the living. If her threat includes the following:

If you don't give me the Celestial Bull  
Let's break down the gates of the underworld  
And I make the tops of them the bottoms  
And let the dead rise and eat like the living  
And the dead become more numerous than the living (Hanoun, 2017: 154).

He had to hurry to descend upon her desire in order to prevent the harm that could be caused by his refusal, but he did not do so without conditions rather he made it obligatory for her to store a large amount of food to avoid the consequences of the descent of the celestial bull, whose descent seems to cause drought and drought.

celestial, by saying she has :

If I do what you want from me, and I give you the Celestial Bull,  
I dwelt in the land of Uruk for seven lean years  
Have you collected fruits for these lean years?  
Have you prepared the fodder for the livestock? (Makawi, 2008: p. 134)

As for the cause of the drought that Anu warned about, the epic did not disclose it, but the reason was likely the process of his creation that caused - apparently from the text - to withdraw the fertility of the universe. The result of that was a severe wave of bad harvests and drought.

### ***The Deity Anntum***

This deity is the wife of the deity Anu, and her name is the feminine form of his name. She is also worshiped in the same temples in which this deity is worshiped in the city of Uruk (Botero, 2005: pg. 50). She was mentioned during the coming of Ishtar to her father to incite him against Gilgamesh and Enkidu (Baqir, 1986: p. 112), and seems that the reference to it came to emphasize the role of the mother in the 'girl's life, as she always stands by her children, especially daughters among them, and contributes to softening the heart of the father who may not be flexible enough with the demands of his children.

### ***The Deity Ishtar***

As for Ishtar, she is (Inanna) in the Sumerian language, it is the most important of the deities mentioned in the epic, whose father is the deity Anu whose mother is Anntum. Although, other aphorisms consider her a daughter of the deity Sin (Nana), the deity of the moon (Botero, 2005: pp. 52-53). The epic indicated that she was trying to seduce Gilgamesh, but the latter strongly refused to do so, directing her a torrent of insults, reminding her of her former lovers who did not hesitate to betray them despite the love and attention they gave her (Hanoun, 2017: pp. 152-153), which angered her. Because she was not accustomed to being rejected, especially by a human being, she decided to punish him by implementing the power of her father, who created for her a celestial bull capable of causing terror and panic in Uruk; her apparent goal was to humiliate Gilgamesh in front of his flock if he failed to accept her. He deterred the celestial Bull, but the latter repelled it and killed it with the help of Enkidu.

### ***The Deity Shamash***

As mentioned in the epic, the deity Shamash, the sun deity, the deity Utto in Sumerian, is mentioned, and in contrast to some of the aphorisms that refer to him being the son of the deity Sin and the brother of the deity Ishtar (Al-Hiti, 1995, p. 19). The epic does not show according to several texts, he is considered the protector deity of the kings of the first dynasty of Uruk (Baqir, 2009: p. 340). The prostitute indicated that he was Gilgamesh's patron by saying:

Gilgamesh is looked after by Shamash and loves him". " (Hanoun, 2017: 84)

### ***The Deity Ai***

She is the wife of the deity Shamash, and she was mentioned in the epic in the supplication of Nansun addressed to the deity Shamash for her son, who decided to take a trip to the Cedar forest accompanied by Enkidu, as she addressed him by saying:

May your bride (Ai) remind you of him (Makawi, 2008: 105)

### *The Deity Ramat-Ninson*

She is the mother of Gilgamesh and the wife of Lukal Pinda, who was mentioned as one of the kings of Uruk before Gilgamesh. Regarding that, the reference to her in the epic is as one of the first references to the mother queen in the texts of the Mesopotamian civilization. What made her one of those Gilgamesh consults when making a decision (Sammar, 2021, p. 2), from her nickname: The blessed cow (Ahmed, 1988: pg. 56). Also, it was indicated that she is a deity, which explains 'Gilgamesh's physical formation, which was indicated that two-thirds of it From the deities, and the rest of it is from humans (Hanoun, 2017: p. 75), and he is the one who inherited it from his father.

### *The Deity Oruro*

She is one of the deities entrusted with creation, which seems to be the specialty of females in the Mesopotamian traditions.

You are the deity Oruro, you created humans,  
Now create what (the deity Anu) said,  
Let a shroud ignite his heart  
Let them compete, and Uruk enjoy peace (Hanoun, 2017: p. 77)  
As for how the creation took place? The epic referred to this as follows:  
I imagined in her heart a picture of Anu  
Oruro washed her hands  
And I took a fist of clay and threw it into the wilderness  
In the wilderness I created the mighty Enkidu  
The descendants of Ninurta (Baqir, 1986: pp. 78-79)

### *The Deity Ninurta*

This deity is for war, in addition to being the one who is entrusted with dams (Kremer, 1971: 126-127), as it was referred to in the epic several times. The first of which was when referring to the creation of Enkidu, as he was referred to as the of descendant Ninurta (Professor Taha Baqir indicated in the margin (69) that the word descendant in the translation is not certain because the word qisru" mentioned has several meanings, including that he means in medicine an essence or a summary. (See: Baqir, 1986, pg. 79), as well as a reference to his role in causing the flood, by opening dams Which caused the tyranny of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers and their branches (Ali, p. 86), as well as revealing the role of Aya in revealing the secret of the flood to Utto Napishtim, when he informed Enlil that it was he who should be suspected:

And who is the one who manages something other than (Aya)?  
He also knows (Aya) everything that is being made (Makawi, 2008: p. 199)

### *Enlil*

There are deities mentioned in the story of the flood that Uto-Napishtim told Gilgamesh and included in the twelfth tablet of the epic. Among these deities, Enlil, the deity of air, who is considered the second greatest deity in the ancient religion of Iraq, his temple (Ai-Kur) is located in the city of Nippur ( Nafer) (Sumerian) (Botero, 2005: p. 51), as the story indicated that he and other deities contributed to the decision to bring about the flood (Ali, no date: p. 69) and that he became angry after he learned that there were survivors of it by saying:

Which breath (this one) came out?

What was (should have) humans survived the disaster? (Hanoun, 2017: p. 2018)

Consequently, he perceived this as a challenge to his power by one of the deities, as it is impossible to escape the flood without the assistance of the deities. This gets us to a theological dilemma, namely the contradiction that arises in the course of human existence. Is the result of the contradiction between the deities, and in the existence of different wills determine their fate, and the deities, especially the two deities Ishtar and Aya, blamed Enlil for his decision to annihilate humans, as deity Aya admitted that the news of the flood reached Utto Napishtim through him, but not by informing him about it directly, but rather through the dream that he looks at in countries Mesopotamia is one of the ways by which the deities communicate with humans. As a result of criticism and blame for Enlil for his cruelty and haste, he agreed to grant Otto Napishtim and his wife a special privilege, which is to grant him the immortality mark that is granted only to the deities as a reward for his role in saving humanity:

In the past, it was Otto-you spit a human being  
Otto Napishtim and his wife have become like us deities (Hanoun, 2017: p. 219)

### *The Deity Aya*

The deity Aya, which is the emphatic name of the Sumerian deity (Enki), the deity of water and wisdom (Murtkat, 1985: pp. 44-45), was mentioned several times in the epic. The most important of which was referring to his role in saving humanity from the flood when he revealed to Uta - Nabsha what the deities agreed on. It was done in a pun, as it reads:

Oh wall listen to me,  
Oh wall of reeds, pay attention to my words  
Demolish your house and build a ship  
Abandon the money and save the soul (Ali, p. 72)

But Uta-Nabshah, as the city's sage, had to be knowledgeable of all facets of the issue, as well as how to respond to queries from city residents who may dispute the merits of the ship he is constructing. From perplexity to Ota - Nabsha when they ask him to embark with them on a ship that cannot fit everyone, Aya had to answer Otto Napishtim's inquiries and disclose the path to redemption if he encountered such a situation, as he talked to him saying:

Tell them like this: I know that Enlil hates me  
I can't live in your city anymore  
And I will not turn my face to the land of Enlil and dwell therein  
I will return (go down) to the Apso  
I live with Aya  
You will be showered with abundance and abundance  
It is the groups of birds, and the wonders of fish  
The country will be filled with fruits and bounties  
In the evening the entrusted one will shower you with whirlwinds with rain of wheat (Baqir, 1986: 152).

It is noted from the text that whoever wants to give Uta-Nabsha an excuse for his action can convince the people of Shruppak. There is nothing better than informing them that his keeping away from them will save them from 'Enlil's wrath and ensure that they get abundant blessings. But the words of deity whatever accept interpretation as well, they indicate To what will happen to the city when the flood storms it, by referring to the flood, rain, and fish that will fill the city, and here he wants to avoid lying, which is considered a reprehensible matter even though the pun itself is also a lie.



### *Other Deities*

Several deities were also mentioned, including Nisaba and Samuqan, who were likened to them by Enkidu (Makawi, 2008: p. 68), as well as other deities who were mentioned as those responsible for the events of the flood, according to what Otto Napishtim told Gilgamesh, and they are each of the deities The storms are Adad, and Ayrakal who removed the pillars, and Ninurta who herniated the levees (Hanoun, 2017: 2014).

### *The Roles of The Deities of The Epic, and The Most important of Them*

Nanson and her interpretation of Gilgamesh's dreams and her support for him and his friend

The epic refers to this woman's talents and wisdom, which included the interpretation of dreams, which is one of the things that a small number of people, notably priests, are concerned with, since dreams are viewed as messages from the unseen that may forewarn people of future occurrences. It seems that Gilgamesh had the ability to communicate with the unseen through dreams, and his mother was the one who explained them to him.

Mom, last night I had a dream  
I've seen that I'm a wanderer among the heroes  
The stars of the sky appeared  
One of them fell to me like a meteor from the sky  
I wanted to lift it, but it weighed me down  
I wanted to shake him, but I couldn't move him  
The people of Uruk gathered around him  
People crowded around him and defended him  
The heroes met him  
Before my companions feet...  
I loved him and bowed as I bow to a woman  
I lifted it up and put it at your feet  
So I made him an equal to me (Baqir, 1986: pp. 86-87).

Here, we find that the dream refers to a meteor with great strength, which suddenly fell on Gilgamesh, and Gilgamesh could not lift him or move him, and due to his great strength, he attracted the residents of Uruk to him, including those close to Gilgamesh, and Gilgamesh himself loved him after he met him and brought him To his mother, who made him a son to her like Gilgamesh, and 'Nanson's interpretation of the dream came close to the content of the dream itself, as she interpreted the meteor as a loyal friend and friend who helps his friend in times of distress, and that he will accompany you and will not abandon you.

This was not Gilgamesh's only dream. Gilgamesh told his mother another dream, which was that he found an ax that was thrown in the middle of Uruk and around it a large crowd of people, but after carrying it to his mother, she made her an equal to him, so his mother interpreted that as follows:

That ax that I saw a man  
As for that you loved her and bowed down to her as you bow down to a woman  
Which makes me equal to you  
His expression is that he is a strong friend who helps a friend who will come to you  
He is the strongest in the country and very determined  
He is as strong as Anu's determination (Baqir, 1986: p. 87).

The recurrence of the dream is in the Mesopotamian civilization a kind of mechanism by which the message contained in the dream is conveyed to the person concerned, and he often needs someone who understands or interprets this message, as we saw that 'Nanson's mother Gilgamesh was the one who interpreted 'Gilgamesh's dreams, but I joined After that, she had another person, Enkidu, who had the skill of interpreting dreams, perhaps through Ninson herself, after he lived under her tutelage.

2- Shamash and his assist for Gilgamesh and Enkidu on their journey to the Cedars Forest

One of the most important roles of the deities in the epic is the role of the deity Shamash (Al-Qutbi, 2000, p. 213) in it, as he contributed to Gilgamesh and 'Enkidu's arrival in the Cedar Forest and their victory over Khumbaba (Khawa) and their return to Uruk safely. To help them although this matter is present in the beliefs and religious thought of Mesopotamia, which sees that humans need the help of the deities in facing the challenges and difficulties that confront them, but this thought did not go beyond the logic of cause and effect in dealing with these matters. The success of Gilgamesh and Enkidu did not have taken place without 'Shamash's help, and 'Shamash's help would not have occurred without a reason, and this reason lies in the function of the deity Shamash as a protector deity for the kings of the first Uruk dynasty and as a guardian of Gilgamesh (about the protective deity (see: Al-Bayati, 2001: pp. 17-21), as well as the effect of the 'mother's supplication to soften his heart and push him to respond to her request to help her son and his friend, but this matter was not without sacrifice, as submitting a request to the deities in the beliefs of Mesopotamia requires offering them an offering, which is what they did on their way to the cedar forest, as they dug a well and a sacrifice An offering, then they did the same When they passed the entrance to the forest, and after they lay down, Gilgamesh had a dream, and he found it necessary to tell it to his friend, who seems to have become an expert in interpreting dreams. He told his friend what he said:

I rested the mountain on my shoulder, the mountain collapsed on me, and pressed me down

Asthenia encircled my legs, brilliant luster overcame my arms

There was a man like a lion who approached me, filled the earth with light, brightness and beauty, seized my upper arm, pulled me from under the mountain (Al-Hamdani, 2017, pp. 228-229).

Enkidu only calmed Gilgamesh and informed him that the dream heralds their victory over KKhumbaba (Al-Hamdani, 2021: p. 230). As for the incandescent light, it is definitely the light of Shamash, who will be present in the hard time.

The role of the deity Shamash did not stop in supporting them during their journey to the Cedars Forest, but rather helped them in their struggle with KKhumbaba, for if it had not been for his intervention against KKhumbaba, the latter would have eliminated them, as the strong winds stirred up against him and seized him and paralyzed his movement, so he surrendered to them and begged them to forgive him in exchange for him becoming a follower Gilgamesh and makes the Cedar Forest at his disposal, so these words affected the same Gilgamesh who hesitated and refrained from killing him for a while, had it not been for Enkidu, who warned him of this decision, which might lead to counterproductive results on them (Hanoun, 2017: p. 143). Enkidu stands in such a position, does the matter stem from his psychological formation and from the

effects of the environment in which he was raised in the wilderness of Uruk, or does it have anything to do with his experiences and knowledge, because KKhumbaba may not be sincere in his sympathy, as this may be a maneuver by him in which he gains time to be able to strike them at the crucial moment, and we must also wonder why Gilgamesh acquiesced to 'Enkidu's objection, whether it stemmed from his desire to please his friend, or to convince him of what he said because of his realization that Enkidu had the ability to clarify what KKhumbaba was holding on to them, and this is what we cannot easily perceive.

### ***Ishtar and her confrontation with Gilgamesh and his friend Enkidu***

As for the role of the deities Ishtar in the epic, it was an evil role in the eyes of the hero of the epic Gilgamesh, although the thought of Mesopotamia did not consider evil as an absolute evil, but rather a relative evil linked to a certain point of view and that the deities are the same. Humans also commit evil (Kibra, Bella: p. 152), so 'Ishtar's behavior was rejected by Gilgamesh and his friend Enkidu, but it was acceptable from the point of view of the goal that Ishtar seeks, based on her role as a deities of lust (Maidier, 2009: p. 36 - 38). Therefore, the epic dealt with its behavior in accordance with the general view of Mesopotamia and not based on Gilgamesh's position on it and his assessment of its behavior. Which the thought of Mesopotamia does not believe in, as the Ishtar presentation included the text:

Come, Gilgamesh, and be my beloved whom I have chosen  
Grant me (your fruit) your seed that I may enjoy  
You will be my husband and I will be your husband  
I will prepare for you a chariot of lapis lazuli and gold  
Its wheels are of gold and its horns are of bronze  
Thunderbolt demons will be tied to drag her instead of huge mules  
And in our house, you will find the aroma of rice smelling in it if you enter it  
If you come to our house  
Your feet will receive the threshold and the bench  
Rulers, kings, and princes will bow before you  
And they will give you royalty from the produce of the mountain and the plain  
Your goats will give birth to three and your goats will give birth to twins  
Your donkey will outrun the mules in pregnancy  
The horses of your chariots will have the highest reputation in the first place  
And your bull will have no equal while he is in the yoke (Baqir, 1986: p. 108-109).

Gilgamesh refused her offer, which is something Ishtar did not know before, and the question here is: Why did Ishtar get so angry, even though she did not hear anything from Gilgamesh except what betrays her truth? She herself described her behavior as shameful and immoral.

Was she mad because she heard that from someone else, or because a human has no right to insult a god, or because Gilgamesh's position may be the basis for a new way of life that is the opposite of the way that celebrates the pleasures and temptations that Ishtar offers, even though it doesn't give those things for free and instead takes what a person has of strength in exchange?

? So, he becomes empty from within, losing the vitality that he owned, and as a reward for that, the celestial bull was sent down to punish Gilgamesh with it, but the latter succeeded, he and his friend In eliminating him, despite his roaring power, which caused death and destruction in Uruk (Makawi, 2008: p. 155-156), which prompted Ishtar to climb the fortified walls of Uruk and jump over the balconies of houses, releasing her curses on Gilgamesh:



Woe to Gilgamesh who defiled me and insulted me because he killed the celestial Bull !  
When Enkidu heard this saying from Ishtar,  
He cut off the thigh of the right celestial bull and threw it in its face and said:  
If I caught you, I would do to you as I did to him  
I would tie your bowels to your side (Baqir, 1986: p. 115)

Here, the deities issued their judgment with the death of Enkidu (Al-Ahmad, 1983, pg. 409), and this came - it seems - because he alone committed a sin against the deities, by throwing him the thigh of the celestial bull in the face of the deities Ishtar, while Gilgamesh acted against her was not a sin against the deities as much as What was an expression of freedom about something related to his life.

## Conclusion

In the text of the Gilgamesh Epic, there are many deities, some of whom had important roles in the epic, as well as other deities that had side roles, which confirms the "epic's connection to Mesopotamian thought, which links the human world with the world of the deities and his life with hers, so that they can never be separated."

One of the most important roles of the deities in the Epic of Gilgamesh is the role of 'Gilgamesh's mother, the deities Ninson, who interprets his dreams as well as provides advice and guidance to him as she is an expert in life and knowledge of governance affairs.

The epic also included another important role for one of the deities, the deity Shamash, who is seen as the father of the founder of the first dynasty of Uruk and its protector deity. Besides to being the patron deity of Gilgamesh, as he contributed to Gilgamesh and Enkidu reaching the Cedar Forest, and their victory over Khumbaba (Khwawa). As well as their return to Uruk safely.

As for the role of the deities Ishtar in the epic, her role was evil in the eyes of the hero of the epic Gilgamesh. Although the thought of Mesopotamia did not look at evil as an absolute evil, rather its view was similar to the view of modern thought to it, that is, as a relative evil linked to the point of view. Certainly, 'Ishtar's behavior was rejected by Gilgamesh and his friend Enkidu, but it was acceptable from the point of view of the goal that Ishtar seeks, based on her role as a deities of lust.

What the epic presents about the roles of deities in 'people's lives can be understood in light of Mesopotamian beliefs and religious thought, which sees that humans need the 'deities' help in all the challenges and difficulties they face in their lives.

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