



**MYTHS FROM
MESOPOTAMIA**

**CREATION, THE FLOOD
GILGAMESH
AND OTHERS**

A new translation by Stephanie Dalley

ATRAHASIS

TABLET I

OBV i When the gods instead of man¹
Did the work, bore the loads,
The gods' load was too great,
The work too hard, the trouble too much,²
The great Anunnaki made the Igigi
Carry the workload sevenfold.³
Anu their father was king,
Their counsellor warrior Ellil,
Their chamberlain was Ninurta,
Their canal-controller Ennugi.
They took the box (of lots) . . . ,
Cast the lots; the gods made the division.⁴
Anu went up to the sky,
[And Ellil (?)] took the earth for his people (?).
The bolt which bars the sea
Was assigned to far-sighted Enki.⁵
When Anu had gone up to the sky,
[And the gods of] the Apsu had gone below,
The Anunnaki of the sky
Made the Igigi bear the workload.
The gods had to dig out canals,
Had to clear channels, the lifelines of the land,
The Igigi had to dig out canals,
Had to clear channels, the lifelines of the land.
The gods dug out the Tigris river (bed)
And then dug out the Euphrates.
[] in the deep
[] they set up
[] the Apsu
[] of the land
[] inside it
[] raised its top
[] of all the mountains
They were counting the years of loads;

[] the great marsh,
 They were counting the years of loads.
 For 3,600 years they bore the excess,
 Hard work, night and day.
 They groaned and blamed each other,
 Grumbled over the masses of excavated soil:⁶
 'Let us confront our [] the chamberlain,
 And get him to relieve us of our hard work!
 Come, let us carry [the Lord (?)],
 The counsellor of gods, the warrior, from his
 dwelling.
 Come, let us carry [Ellil],
 The counsellor of gods, the warrior, from his
 dwelling.'
 Then Alla made his voice heard⁷
 And spoke to the gods his brothers, (*gap of about 8 lines*)
 ii 'Come! Let us carry
 The counsellor of gods, the warrior, from his
 dwelling.
 Come! Let us carry Ellil,
 The counsellor of gods, the warrior, from his
 dwelling.
 Now, cry battle!
 Let us mix fight with battle!'

The gods listened to his speech,
 Set fire to their tools,
 Put aside their spades for fire,
 Their loads for the fire-god,
 They flared up. When they reached
 The gate of warrior Ellil's dwelling,
 It was night, the middle watch,
 The house was surrounded, the god had not
 realized.
 It was night, the middle watch,
 Ekur was surrounded, Ellil had not realized.
 Yet Kalkal was attentive, and had it closed,
 He held the lock and watched [the gate].
 Kalkal roused [Nusku].
 They listened to the noise of [the Igigi].
 Then Nusku roused his master,

Made him get out of bed:
 'My lord, your house is surrounded,
 A rabble is running around your door!
 Ellil, your house is surrounded,
 A rabble is running around your door!'

Ellil had weapons brought to his dwelling.
 Ellil made his voice heard
 And spoke to the vizier Nusku,
 'Nusku, bar your door,
 Take up your weapons and stand in front of me.'
 Nusku barred his door,
 Took up his weapons and stood in front of Ellil.
 Nusku made his voice heard
 And spoke to the warrior Ellil,
 'O my lord, your face is (sallow as) tamarisk!⁸
 Why do you fear your own sons?
 O Ellil, your face is (sallow as) tamarisk!
 Why do you fear your own sons?
 Send for Anu to be brought down to you,
 Have Enki fetched into your presence.'
 He sent for Anu to be brought down to him,
 Enki was fetched into his presence,
 Anu king of the sky was present,
 Enki king of the Apsu attended.
 The great Anunnaki were present.
 Ellil got up and the case was put.
 Ellil made his voice heard
 And spoke to the great gods,
 'Is it against me that they have risen?
 Shall I do battle . . . ?
 What did I see with my own eyes?
 A rabble was running around my door!'

Anu made his voice heard
 And spoke to the warrior Ellil,
 iii 'Let Nusku go out
 And [find out] word of the Igigi
 Who have surrounded your door.
 A command . . .
 To . . .'
 Ellil made his voice heard

And let man bear the load of the gods!
They called up the goddess, asked
The midwife of the gods, wise Mami,
‘You are the womb-goddess (to be the) creator of
mankind!
Create primeval man, that he may bear the yoke!
Let him bear the yoke, the work of Ellil,
Let man bear the load of the gods!’
Nintu made her voice heard
And spoke to the great gods,
‘It is not proper for me to make him.
The work is Enki’s;
He makes everything pure!
If he gives me clay, then I will do it.’
Enki made his voice heard
And spoke to the great gods,
‘On the first, seventh, and fifteenth of the month
I shall make a purification by washing.
Then one god should be slaughtered.
And the gods can be purified by immersion.
Nintu shall mix clay
With his flesh and his blood.
Then a god and a man
Will be mixed together in clay.
Let us hear the drumbeat forever after,¹⁰
Let a ghost come into existence from the god’s
flesh,¹¹
Let her proclaim it as his living sign,¹²
And let the ghost exist so as not to forget (the
slain god).’
They answered ‘Yes!’ in the assembly,
The great Anunnaki who assign the fates.

On the first, seventh, and fifteenth of the month
He made a purification by washing.
Ilawela who had intelligence,¹¹
They slaughtered in their assembly.
Nintu mixed clay
With his flesh and blood.
They heard the drumbeat forever after.

- A ghost came into existence from the god's flesh,
 And she (Nintu) proclaimed it as his living sign.
- v The ghost existed so as not to forget (the slain god).
 After she had mixed that clay,
 She called up the Anunnaki, the great gods.
 The Igigi, the great gods,
 Spat spittle upon the clay.
 Mami made her voice heard
 And spoke to the great gods,
 'I have carried out perfectly
 The work that you ordered of me.
 You have slaughtered a god together with his
 intelligence.
 I have relieved you of your hard work,
 I have imposed your load on man.
 You have bestowed noise on mankind.
 I have undone the fetter and granted freedom.'
 They listened to this speech of hers,¹³
 And were freed (from anxiety), and kissed her feet:
 'We used to call you Mami
 But now your name shall be Mistress of All
 Gods.'
- Far-sighted Enki and wise Mami
 Went into the room of fate.
 The womb-goddesses were assembled.
 He trod the clay in her presence;¹⁴
 SBV She kept reciting an incantation,
 For Enki, staying in her presence, made her recite
 it.
 When she had finished her incantation,
 She pinched off fourteen pieces (of clay),
 (And set) seven pieces on the right,
 Seven on the left.
 Between them she put down a mud brick.¹⁵
 She made use of (?) a reed, opened it (?) to cut the
 umbilical cord,¹⁶
 Called up the wise and knowledgeable
 Womb-goddesses, seven and seven.
 Seven created males,
 Seven created females,

Atrahasis made his voice heard
 And spoke to his lord,
 'How long (?) [will the gods make us suffer]?
 Will they make us suffer illness forever?'

Enki made his voice heard
 And spoke to his servant:
 'Call the elders, the senior men!²³
 Start [an uprising] in your own house,
 Let heralds proclaim . . .
 Let them make a loud noise in the land:
 Do not revere your gods,²⁴
 Do not pray to your goddesses,
 But search out the door of Namtara.
 Bring a baked loaf into his presence.
 May the flour offering reach him,
 May he be shamed by the presents
 And wipe away his "hand".²⁵

Atrahasis took the order,
 Gathered the elders to his door.

Atrahasis made his voice heard
 And spoke to the elders,

viii 'I have called the elders, the senior men!
 Start [an uprising] in your own house,
 Let heralds proclaim . . .
 Let them make a loud noise in the land:
 Do not revere your gods!
 Do not pray to your goddesses!
 Search out the door of Namtara.
 Bring a baked loaf into his presence.
 May the flour offering reach him;
 May he be shamed by the presents
 And wipe away his "hand".'

The elders listened to his speech;
 They built a temple for Namtara in the city.
 Heralds proclaimed . . .

They made a loud noise in the land.
 They did not revere their god,
 Did not pray to their goddess,
 But searched out the door of Namtara,
 Brought a baked loaf into his presence.

The flour offering reached him.
 And he was shamed by the presents.
 And wiped away his 'hand'.
 The *šuruppu*-disease left them,
 [The gods] went back to their [(regular) offerings]
 (2 lines missing to end of column)

(Catchline)
 600 years, less than 600 passed.

TABLET II

- OBV i 600 years, less than 600, passed²⁶
 And the country became too wide, the people too
 numerous.
 The country was as noisy as a bellowing bull.
 The God grew restless at their clamour,
 Ellil had to listen to their noise.
 He addressed the great gods,
 'The noise of mankind has become too much.
 I am losing sleep over their racket.
 Cut off food supplies to the people!
 Let the vegetation be too scant for their hunger!²⁷
 Let Adad wipe away his rain.
 Below (?) let no flood-water flow from the
 springs.
 Let wind go, let it strip the ground bare,
 Let clouds gather (but) not drop rain,
 Let the field yield a diminished harvest,
 Let Nissaba stop up her bosom.
 No happiness shall come to them.
 Let their [] be dejected.'
 (gap of about 34 lines to end of column)
- ii (gap of about 12 lines at beginning of
 column)
 'Call the [elders, the senior men],
 Start an uprising in your house,
 Let heralds proclaim . . .

Let them make a loud noise in the land:
 Do not revere your god(s)!
 Do not pray to your goddess!
 Search out the door of Adad,
 Bring a baked loaf into his presence.
 May the flour offering reach him,
 May he be shamed by the presents
 And wipe away his "hand".
 (Then) he will make a mist form in the morning
 And in the night he will steal out and make dew
 drop,
 Deliver (?) the field (of its produce) ninefold, like
 a thief.⁷²⁸

They built a temple for Adad in the city,
 Ordered heralds to proclaim
 And make a loud noise in the land.
 They did not revere their god(s),
 Did not pray to their goddess,
 But searched out the door of Adad,
 Brought a baked (loaf) into his presence.
 The flour offering reached him;
 He was shamed by the presents
 And wiped away his 'hand'.
 He made mist form in the morning
 And in the night he stole out and made dew drop,
 Delivered (?) the field (of its produce) ninefold, like
 a thief.

[The drought] left them,
 [The gods] went back [to their (regular) offerings].

- SBV iii Not three epochs had passed.
 The country became too wide, the people too
 numerous.
 The country was as noisy as a bellowing bull.
 The gods grew restless at their noise.
 Enlil organized his assembly again,
 Addressed the gods his sons:
 "The noise of mankind has become too much,
 Sleep cannot overtake me because of their racket.
 Command that Anu and Adad keep the (air)
 above (earth) locked,
 Sin and Nergal keep the middle earth locked.

As for the bolt that bars the sea,
 Ea with his *lahmu*-creatures shall keep it locked'
 He ordered, and Anu and Adad kept the (air) above
 (earth) locked,

Sin and Nergal kept the middle earth locked.

As for the bolt that bars the sea,
 Ea with his *lahmu*-creatures kept it locked.

Then the very wise man Atra-hasis

Wept daily.

He would carry a *maššakku*-offering along the
 riverside pasture,

Although the irrigation-water was silent.

Half-way through the night he offered a sacrifice.

As sleep began to overtake him (?)

He addressed the irrigation-water:

'May the irrigation-water take it, may the river
 carry it,

May the gift be placed in front of Ea my lord.

May Ea see it and think of me!

So may I see a dream in the night.'

When he had sent the message by water,

He sat facing the river, he wept (?),

The man wept (?) facing the river

As his plea went down to the Apsu.

Then Ea heard his voice.

[He summoned his *lahmu*-creatures] and addressed
 them.

(for the next 36 lines see Supplement 1 on pp. 338–9)

- OBV iv Above, [rain did not fill the canals (?)]
 Below, flood-water did not flow from the springs.
 Earth's womb did not give birth,
 No vegetation sprouted . . .
 People did not look []
 The dark pastureland was bleached,
 The broad countryside filled up with alkali.³⁰
 In the first year they ate old grain
 In the second year they depleted the storehouse.³¹
 When the third year came,
 Their looks were changed by starvation,

Their faces covered with scabs (?) like malt.
 They stayed alive by life.
 Their faces looked sallow.
 They went out in public hunched,
 Their well-set shoulders slouched,
 Their upstanding bearing bowed.
 They took a message [from Atrahasis to the gods].
 In front of [the assembly of the great gods],
 They stood [and]
 The orders [of Atrahasis they repeated]
 In front of []

(gap of about 32 lines to end of column)

SBV

- iv [600 years, less than 600 years, passed.
 The country became too wide, the people too
 numerous.]
 He grew restless at their noise.
 Sleep could not overtake him because of their
 racket.
 Ellil organized his assembly,
 Addressed the gods his sons,
 'The noise of mankind has become too much.
 I have become restless at their noise.
 Sleep cannot overtake me because of their racket.
 Give the order that *šuruppu*-disease shall break
 out,
 Let Namtar put an end to their noise straight
 away!
 Let sickness: headache, *šuruppu*, *ašakku*,
 Blow in to them like a storm.'
 They gave the order, and *šuruppu*-disease did break
 out.
 Namtar put an end to their noise straight away.
 Sickness: headache, *šuruppu*, *ašakku*,
 Blew into them like a storm.
 The thoughtful man, Atrahasis³²
 Kept his ear open to his master Ea;
 He would speak with his god,

So that no vegetation sprouts, no grain grows.
 Let *ašakku* be inflicted on the people,
 Let the womb be too tight to let a baby out!
 They cut off food for the people,
 Vegetation . . . became too scant for their stomachs.
 Adad on high made his rain scarce,
 Blocked below, and did not raise flood-water from
 the springs.

The field decreased its yield,
 Nissaba turned away her breast,
 The dark fields became white,
 The broad countryside bred alkali.

Earth clamped down her womb:
 No vegetation sprouted, no grain grew.
Ašakku was inflicted on the people.

The womb was too tight to let a baby out.
 v Ea kept guard over the bolt that bars the sea,
 Together with his *lahmu*-heroes.
 Above, Adad made his rain scarce,
 Blocked below, and did not raise flood-water from
 the springs.

The field decreased its yield,
 Nissaba turned away her breast,
 The dark fields became white,
 The broad countryside bred alkali.

Earth clamped down her womb:
 No vegetation sprouted, no grain grew.
Ašakku was inflicted on the people,
 The womb was too tight to let a baby out.

(*gap of 2 lines*)

When the second year arrived
 They had depleted the storehouse.
 When the third year arrived
 [The people's looks] were changed [by starvation].
 When the fourth year arrived
 Their upstanding bearing bowed,
 Their well-set shoulders slouched,
 People went out in public hunched over.
 When the fifth year arrived,

They served up a daughter for a meal,
Served up a son for food.

[]
Only one or two households were left.
Their faces were covered with scabs (?) like malt,
The people stayed alive by life.
They took a message []
Entered and []
The order of Atrahasis []
Saying, 'How long []

(gap of about 36 lines to end of tablet)

OBV

- v He (Ellil) was furious [with the Igigi,]
'We, the great Anunna, all of us,
Agreed together on [a plan].
Anu and [Adad] were to guard [above],
I was to guard the earth [below].
Where Enki [went],
He was to undo the [chain and set (us) free],
He was to release [produce for the people].
He was to exercise [control (?) by holding the
balance (?)].'³⁴
Ellil made his voice heard
And [spoke] to the vizier Nusku,
'Have the fifty (?) *lahmu*-heroes (?) . . . fetched
for me!
Have them brought in to my presence!
The fifty (?) *lahmu*-heroes (?) were fetched for him.
The warrior [Ellil] addressed them,
'We, the great Anunna, [all of us],
Agreed together on a plan.
Anu and Adad were to guard above,
I was to guard the earth below.
Where you [went],
[You were to undo the chain and set (us) free],
[You were to release produce for the people],
[You were to exercise control (?) by holding the
balance (?)].'

[] [] .

And spoke to his brother gods,
 'Why should you make me swear an oath?
 Why should I use my power against my people?
 The flood that you mention to me—
 What is it? I don't even know!
 Could I give birth to a flood?
 That is Ellil's kind of work!
 Let him choose []
 Let Shullat and [Hanish] march [ahead]
 [Let Erakal pull out] the mooring poles
 Let [Ninurta] march, let him make [the weirs]
 overflow.

(gap of 2 or 3 lines to end of column)

viii (gap of 31 lines)

The assembly []
 Do not listen to []
 The gods gave an explicit command.
 Ellil performed a bad deed to the people.'

(Catchline)

Atrahasis made his voice heard
 And spoke to his master,

TABLET III

OBV i (gap of about 10 lines)

Atrahasis made his voice heard
 And spoke to his master,
 'Indicate to me the meaning of the dream,
 [] let me find out its portent (?)'
 Enki made his voice heard
 And spoke to his servant,
 'You say, "I should find out in bed (?)"'.³⁶
 Make sure you attend to the message I shall tell
 you!
 Wall, listen constantly to me!
 Reed hut, make sure you attend to all my words!
 Dismantle the house, build a boat,

Everything there was []
 Everything there was []
 Pure ones []
 Fat ones []
 He selected [and put on board.]
 [The birds] that fly in the sky,
 Cattle [of Shak]kan,
 Wild animals (?) [] of open country,
 [] he] put on board
 [] . . .
 He invited his people []
 [] to a feast.
 [] he put his family on board.
 They were eating, they were drinking.
 But he went in and out,
 Could not stay still or rest on his haunches,
 His heart was breaking and he was vomiting bile.
 The face of the weather changed.
 Adad bellowed from the clouds.
 When (?) he (Atrahasis) heard his noise,
 Bitumen was brought and he sealed his door.
 While he was closing up his door
 Adad kept bellowing from the clouds.
 The winds were raging even as he went up
 (And) cut through the rope, he released the boat.

iii (6 lines missing at beginning of column)

Anzu was tearing at the sky with his talons,
 [] the land,
 He broke []
 [] the Flood [came out (?)].
 The *kašūšu*-weapon went against the people like an
 army.
 No one could see anyone else,
 They could not be recognized in the catastrophe.
 The Flood roared like a bull,
 Like a wild ass screaming the winds [howled]
 The darkness was total, there was no sun.
 [] like white sheep.
 [] of the Flood.

[
 [] the noise of the Flood.
]

[Anu (?)] went berserk,
 [The gods (?)] . . . his sons . . . before him
 As for Nintu the Great Mistress,
 Her lips became encrusted with rime.³⁷
 The great gods, the Anunna,
 Stayed parched and famished.
 The goddess watched and wept,
 Midwife of the gods, wise Mami:
 'Let daylight (?) . . .
 Let it return and . . .!
 However could I, in the assembly of gods,
 Have ordered such destruction with them?
 Ellil was strong enough (?) to give a wicked
 order.³⁸
 Like Tiruru he ought to have cancelled that
 wicked order!³⁹
 I heard their cry levelled at me,
 Against myself, against my person.
 Beyond my control (?) my offspring have become
 like white sheep.⁴⁰
 As for me, how am I to live (?) in a house of
 bereavement?
 My noise has turned to silence.
 Could I go away, up to the sky
 And live as in a cloister(?)?
 What was Anu's intention as decision-maker?
 It was his command that the gods his sons
 obeyed,
 He who did not deliberate, but sent the Flood,
 He who gathered the people to catastrophe
 []

iv (3 lines missing at beginning of column)

Nintu was wailing []
 'Would a true father (?) have given birth to the
 [rolling (?) sea

'His grief is mine! My destiny goes with his!
 He must deliver me from evil, and appease me!
 Let me go out in the morning (?) []
 []
 vi Let these flies be the lapis lazuli of my necklace
 By which I may remember it (?) daily (?)
 [forever (?)].'

The warrior Ellil spotted the boat⁴³

And was furious with the Igigi.

'We, the great Anunna, all of us,

Agreed together on an oath!

No form of life should have escaped!

How did any man survive the catastrophe?'

Anu made his voice heard

And spoke to the warrior Ellil,

'Who but Enki would do this?

He made sure that the [reed hut] disclosed the
 order.'

Enki made his voice heard

And spoke to the great gods,

'I did it, in defiance of you!

I made sure life was preserved []

(5 lines missing)

Exact your punishment from the sinner.

And whoever contradicts your order

(12 lines missing)

I have given vent to my feelings!'

Ellil made his voice heard

And spoke to far-sighted Enki,

'Come, summon Nintu the womb-goddess!

Confer with each other in the assembly.'

Enki made his voice heard

And spoke to the womb-goddess Nintu,

'You are the womb-goddess who decrees destinies.⁴⁴

[] to the people.
 [Let one-third of them be]

[]
 [Let another third of them be]

NOTES TO ATRAHASIS

Text: Lambert and Millard 1969, Moran 1987.

When a speech in the translations breaks off because of a gap in the tablet, inverted commas are not closed so as not to imply the precise point at which the speech ends. Indentation shows, when the text resumes after a gap, whether the speech is thought to continue. The original texts have no punctuation, and since it is not always clear when a speech begins or ends even in a perfectly preserved text, the translator occasionally has to make an arbitrary decision. Words and phrases which require detailed philological argument have not been discussed: oversimplification from a scholarly point of view is inevitably the result. These remarks apply to all translations in this book. A summary of references to research on details of the text of *Atrahasis* is given by Moran 1987, to which add Wiggermann 1986 and Wilcke 1999. OBV Enki is replaced by Ea, the later form of the name, in SBV.

1. The format of the opening line 'When . . .' may be compared with the *Epic of Creation* and with the *Theogony of Dammu*. The meaning of this line is disputed. The translation in the original edition as 'When the gods like men' was justified by a supposed grammatical comparison with a line in II. ii, which is invalid; but it finds support in a recension of the text 1,000 years later (Lambert 1969a).
2. Play on words 'load' and 'trouble', *šupšik/šapšaqu*.
3. Or, 'The seven great Anunnaki made the Igigi . . .'
4. Land was divided for inheritance among sons in ancient Mesopotamia by casting lots. Burkert 1983, 53 has pointed out similarities with *Iliad*, XV. 187–193, Poseidon's speech to Iris telling how the earth was originally divided by lot into three domains.
5. The crucial part played by Enki's bolt and his *lahmu*-heroes is discussed in note 26.
6. For *kalakku* meaning 'excavated soil' see AHw *Nachträge*, s. v.
7. This common formulaic phrase says literally 'made/did his mouth', commonly translated 'opened his mouth'. However, it is clear from related phrases in the *Epic of Creation* and *Anzu* (see note 23 to *Anzu*) that the verb implies 'to utter', never 'to open', and 'mouth' has an extended meaning 'speech', attested in various contexts. The Akkadian phrase is alliterative, *pāšu ēpuš*.
8. The same metaphor occurs in the *Descent of Ishtar*.
9. Ennugi: a variant text has Annugal.
10. Perhaps means 'heartbeat, pulse'.
11. Perhaps a play on the words *eṭemmu* 'ghost' and *ṭēmu* 'intelligence'.
12. Moran 1970 translates: 'Let her inform him while alive of his token, And so that there be no forgetting, the ghost shall remain.' The meaning of the lines is ambiguous.
13. Wording identical to these four lines occurs in *Anzu*, I. iii.
14. Brick-making procedure is described. The brick god, Kulla, was created

- by Enki who pinched off clay for the purpose, according to an incantation called 'When Anu created heaven'.
15. The brick may symbolize the prototype of man's creative ability. One of the names of the mother goddess Belet-ili is 'lapis lazuli brick', and it may be relevant that the bun-shaped 'plano-convex' brick used in early dynastic Mesopotamia resembles the bulge of pregnancy and was widely used for building despite its inappropriate shape. See Woolley/Moorey 1982, 45–6. There is no evidence to support the suggestion (Lambert and Millard 1969, 153) that a brick structure used as a birth stool is intended.
 16. Verb translated 'made use of (?)' perhaps *bedû*; see AHW *Nachträge*, s.v.
 17. Possibly 'crowned' or 'veiled'—the midwife covers her own head in the next episode, but the meaning is uncertain. The word occurs only in the singular.
 18. The translation of the following lines largely follows Wilcke 1985a, 295 ff.
 19. Possibly there is a small gap in the text here.
 20. The word used for 'staff' here also means a term or recurrent period of time.
 21. Or, 'She shall name Mami as their . . .'
 22. Six hundred years is a round number in the sexagesimal system used by the ancient Mesopotamians. As a numerical unit, 600 was the simple noun *nēru* in Akkadian. Repetition of a number seems to occur as a literary device, e.g. in *Gilgamesh*, VI. ii. 'you dug seven and seven pits for him', or XI. 'arranged the jars seven and seven'.
 23. See AHW *Nachträge*, s.v. *sillūnu*.
 24. Probably refers to the concept which was prevalent in Mesopotamia of a personal god and goddess for each person.
 25. 'Hand (of a god)' is a common Akkadian expression for a disease. For the verb, see AHW *Nachträge*, s.v. *šukkulu*.
 26. The structure of Tablet II is difficult to see. OBV and SBV may diverge, and the point at which they overlap is uncertain. Particularly mystifying is the repeated description of six years of famine in SBV v. and vi. A fragmentary tablet from Babylon (Lambert and Millard 1969, 116 ff.) implies that Ea's *lahmu*-heroes, who were in charge of the bolt that guarded the sea, went out of control and let out fish which broke the bolt and nourished mankind (with F. Wiggermann 1986, 286, reading *lāh-mi-ka/šū* instead of *šam-mi-ka/šū* 'his plants').
 27. These lines were used in an incantation against drought according to a neo-Assyrian compilation (Lambert and Millard 1969, 28).
 28. See AHW, s.v. *tušūm*. 'Ninefold' perhaps echoes the nine months of pregnancy and the nine days in which the brick was put down, in Tablet I. 'Thief' or, 'a benefactor', *šarrāqi* or *šarrāki*.
 29. For this passage see Moran 1987, who shows why, in the flood episode, Ea/Enki had to communicate with Atrahasis by means of the reed hut, because he had been sworn to secrecy.
 30. These lines refer to salination, the crystallization of salts on the topsoil when drainage of irrigation water is inadequate.

31. See Moran 1985.
32. Note the literary strategem which defies literal chronology by featuring Atrahasis as the same mortal in recurrent crises 600 years apart.
33. Or: '[Will you] cut off sickness?'
34. Literally: 'by weighing with (?) the *ašqulālu*', following AHW *Nachträge*, s.v. *ašqulālu*; and see Glossary, s.v.
35. See Veenhof 1975–6.
36. See von Soden 1979, 32.
37. The translation takes the noun as *pulhītu* 'scab' and the verb as *arāru* 'to rot, discharge putrid liquid'.
38. See Moran 1981.
39. This reference is not understood.
40. See AHW, s.v. *šuppu*. Presumably means, 'like sacrificial sheep'.
41. The drowning of masses of dragonflies is alluded to also in Ut-napishtim's speech in *Gilgamesh*, X. vi.
42. The symbolism of the flies is not certain. According to Parpola 1983, 316, fly-shaped beads were used in self-flagellation by devotees of Ishtar to induce ecstasy, but he quotes no evidence. Kilmer 1987 takes them as symbolic of death and of bravery in battle. A text fragment included in Campbell Thompson 1930, plate 59, says that all the gods of Uruk turned into flies when they abandoned Uruk, so possibly there is an allusion in this passage to a previous event when the gods abandoned mankind. See also *Gilgamesh*, note 139.
43. The word used for 'boat' here, *makurru*, implies a large cargo vessel shaped like the gibbous moon.
44. At this juncture the gods replaced *lullū*, primeval man who had no natural life-span, with mortal man. Therefore the Flood marks the transition from primeval men who lived for centuries, to men whose lives decline in old age, as now. See Wilcke 1999 and George 1999.
45. These are classes of female devotees attached to temples who were not usually allowed to bear children.
46. This type of line is often found at the start of oral narrative: cf. *Gilgamesh*, *Anzu*, and *Erra and Ishum*.
47. Brief colophons also exist for the first and second tablets of *Atrahasis*. Elsewhere in this volume the translator has selected colophons arbitrarily, particularly if they are well preserved and interesting, in order to illustrate the kinds of information which they can provide.