

The Epic of Gilgamesh: Tablet II

Tablet II. The Taming of Enkidu

The prostitute takes Enkidu to a shepherds' camp, where he is instructed in the ways of men and becomes the shepherds' watchman. A passing stranger tells him how in Uruk Gilgamesh exercises droit de seigneur at wedding ceremonies. Enkidu, shocked by this practice, enters Uruk and interrupts the proceedings. Gilgamesh and Enkidu fight until Enkidu accepts Gilgamesh's supremacy, whereupon the pair become firm friends. In search of fame and glory Gilgamesh proposes an expedition to the Forest of Cedar, ignoring Enkidu's warning of the dangers. They kit themselves out with weapons. Gilgamesh announces his plans to the assembly of Uruk. The elders try to dissuade him.

[Enkidu] was sitting before her, ...

II I

A lacuna follows the opening line of Tablet II, and when the text resumes the lines are still not fully recovered. The big Old Babylonian Pennsylvania tablet (P) supplies a better-preserved account, though one that partly overlaps with Tablet I:

While the two of them together were making love, P 46
he forgot the wild where he was born.

For seven days and seven nights
Enkidu was erect and coupled with) *Shamhat. P 50

The harlot opened her mouth,
saying to Enkidu:
'As I look at you, Enkidu, you are like a god,
why with the beasts do you wander the wild? P 55

'Come, I will lead you to Uruk-the-Town-Square,
to the sacred temple, the home of Anu!
Enkidu, arise, let me take you
to the temple Eanna, the home of Anu, P 60

'where [men] are engaged in labours of skill,
you, too, *like a man*, will find a place for yourself.'

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Her words he heard, her speech found favour: P 66
the counsel of a woman struck home in his heart.

She stripped and clothed him in part of her garment, P 70
the other part she put on herself.

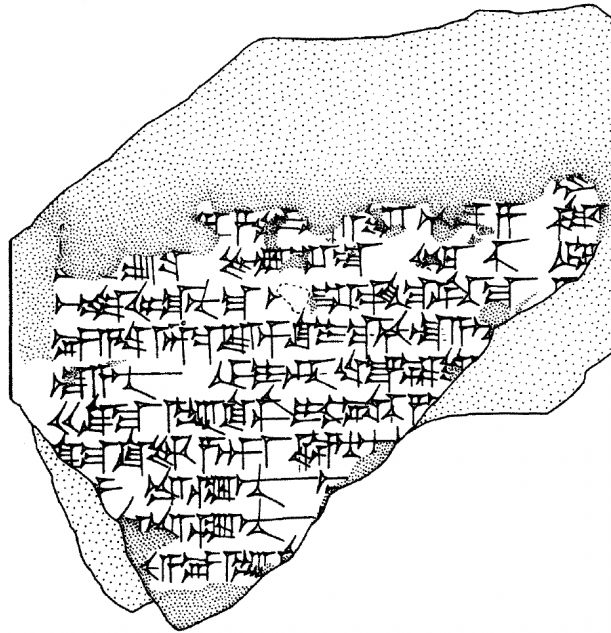
The text of Tablet II resumes:

By the hand she took him, like a god [she led him,
to the shepherds' camp, the site of the sheep-pen.
The band of shepherds was gathered around him,
talking about him among themselves:

II 36

'This fellow—how like in build he is to Gilgamesh,
tall in stature, proud as a battlement.
For sure it's Enkidu, born in the uplands,
his strength is as mighty as a rock from the sky.'

40



3 'For sure it's Enkidu, born in the uplands'.

Bread they set before him,
ale they set before him.
Enkidu ate not the bread, but looked askance.

45

Here Tablet 11 becomes fragmentary again, and the episode is best taken from the Old Babylonian Pennsylvania tablet:

How to eat bread Enkidu knew not,
how to drink ale he had never been shown.

P 90

The harlot opened her mouth,
saying to Enkidu:

P 95

'Eat the bread, Enkidu, essential to life,
drink the ale, the lot of the land!'

Enkidu ate the bread until he was sated,
he drank the ale, a full seven goblets.
His mood became free, he started to sing,
his heart grew merry, his face lit up.

P 100

P 105

The barber groomed his body so hairy,
anointed with oil he turned into a man.
He put on a garment, became like a warrior, P 110
he took up his weapon to do battle with lions.

The text of Tablet 11 resumes again:

[When at night the shepherds lay sleeping,
[he struck] down wolves, he [chased off lions.] II 60
Sleeping lay the senior shepherds,
their shepherd boy Enkidu, a [man wide] awake.

[A certain] fellow had [*been invited*] to a wedding,
[to] Uruk-the-Sheepfold [*he was going*] for the [*banquet.*] 64

Here another lacuna intervenes in Tablet 11, which the Old Babylonian tablet again helps to fill:

Enkidu was having his pleasure with *Shamhat. P 135
He lifted his eyes, caught sight of the man,
and thus he spoke to the harlot:

*Shamhat, bring the man over: P 140
why he came here, let me learn his reason.'
The harlot hailed the man,
went up to him, spoke to him:

'Where do you hurry to, fellow? P 145
What is your journey so toilsome?'
The fellow opened his mouth,
saying to Enkidu:

'I was invited to a wedding banquet, P 150
it is the lot of the people to contract a marriage.
I shall load the ceremonial table
with tempting foods for the wedding feast.

'For the king of Uruk-the-Town-Square, P 155
the veil will be parted for the one who picks first;
for Gilgamesh, the king of Uruk-the-Town-Square,
the veil will be parted for the one who picks first.

'He will couple with the wife-to-be, P 160
he first of all, the bridegroom after.
By divine consent it is so ordained:
when his navel-cord was cut, for him she was destined.'

At the fellow's words his face paled in anger. P 166

* * *

Off goes Enkidu, with *Shamhat following. P 175

He entered the city of Uruk-the-Town-Square,
and a crowd gathered around.
He came to a halt in the street of Uruk-the-Town-Square, P 180
all gathered about, the people discussed him:
'In build he is the image of Gilgamesh,
but shorter in stature, and bigger of bone. P 185
For [sure it's the one who] was born in the uplands,
animals' milk is what he was suckled on.'
In Uruk they held regular festivals of sacrifice, P 190
young men made merry, set up a *champion*:
for the fellow whose features were fair,
for Gilgamesh, like a god, was set up a rival. P 195
For the goddess of weddings the bed was laid out,
Gilgamesh met with the maiden by night.
Forward came (Enkidu), he stood in the street, P 200
blocking the path of Gilgamesh.

The text of Tablet 11 becomes legible once more:

The land of Uruk was standing [around him,] II 103
the land was gathered [about him.]
A crowd was *milling about* before [him,] 105
the menfolk were thronging [around him.]
Like a babe-in-arms they were [kissing his feet,]
already the fellow
For the goddess of weddings was ready the bed,
for Gilgamesh, like a god, was set up a substitute. 110
Enkidu with his foot blocked the door of the wedding house,
not allowing Gilgamesh to enter.
They seized each other at the door of the wedding house,
in the street they joined combat, in the Square of the Land.
The door-jambs shook, the wall did shudder, 115
[in the street Gilgamesh and Enkidu joined combat, in the Square of the Land.]
[The door-jambs shook, the wall did shudder.]

Another lacuna intervenes, again partly to be filled by the Old Babylonian Pennsylvania tablet:

Gilgamesh knelt, one foot on the ground,
his anger subsided, he broke off from the fight. P 230
After he broke off from the fight,
said Enkidu to him, to Gilgamesh:

'As one unique your mother bore you, P 235
the wild cow of the fold, the goddess Ninsun!
High over warriors you are exalted,
to be king of the people Enlil made it your destiny!' P 240

At this point the Old Babylonian Pennsylvania tablet ends. Its sequel, the Yale tablet (Y), is less well preserved. In the first intelligible episode Enkidu is speaking to Gilgamesh:

'Why do you desire to do this thing?
... anything ... do you want so much? Y 15
Let me ,
a feat that never was done in the land.'
They kissed each other and formed a friendship.

After another lacuna Tablet 11 resumes with an episode in which Gilgamesh introduces Enkidu to his mother:

'The mightiest [in the land, strength he possesses.] 162
[His strength is as mighty as a] rock from the sky,
he is tall in [stature, proud as a battlement.],
The mother of Gilgamesh [opened her mouth to speak,] 165
sa ying to [her son—]
Wild-Cow Ninsun [opened her mouth to speak,]
[saying to Gilgamesh:]
'My son, in his gate ,
bitterly you ' 169

* * *

'You hold , 172
... in his gate
'Bitterly he ,
Enkidu possesses no [kith or kin.] 175
Shaggy hair hanging loose
he was born in the wild and [has] no [brother.]'
Standing there, Enkidu heard [what she said,]
and thinking it over, he sat [down weeping.]
His eyes brimmed with [tears,] 180
his arms fell limp, [his] strength [ebbed away.]
They took hold of each other and ,
they [linked] their hands like
Gilgamesh ,
to Enkidu he spoke a word, [saying:] 185

‘Why, my friend, [did your eyes] brim [with tears,
 your arms fall limp, [your strength *ebb away*?]’
 Said Enkidu to him, [to Gilgamesh:]
 ‘My friend, my heart is aggrieved ...
 ‘Through sobbing [my *legs* do] tremble, 190
 terror has entered my heart.’

The Old Babylonian Yale tablet fills the gap in the standard version:

Gilgamesh opened his mouth,
 saying to Enkidu: Y 90

* * *

‘..... ferocious *Humbaba,
 ... [let us] slay him, [so *his power*] is no more! Y 97

‘In the Forest of Cedar, [where *Humbaba] dwells,
 let us frighten him in his lair!’ Y 100

Enkidu opened his mouth,
 saying to Gilgamesh: Y 105

‘I knew him, my friend, in the uplands,
 when I roamed here and there with the herd.

F or sixty leagues the forest is a wilderness,
 who is there would venture inside it?

‘*Humbaba, his voice is the Deluge,
 his speech is fire, and his breath is death! Y 110

Why do you desire to do this thing?
 An unwinnable battle is *Humbaba’s ambush!’ Y 115

Gilgamesh opened his mouth,
 saying to Enkidu:

‘I will climb, my friend, [*the forest’s*] slopes.’ Y 119

The text of Tablet II resumes:

Enkidu [opened his] mouth [to speak, saying to Gilgamesh:] II 216
 ‘[My friend], how can we [go to the home of Humbaba?]

So to keep safe the cedars,
 Enlil made it his lot to terrify men.

‘That is a journey [which must not be made,
 [that is a man who must not be looked on.]

He who guards the [Forest of Cedar, his reach is wide,] 220
 Humbaba, his voice is the Deluge.

'His speech is fire, his breath is death,
 he hears the forest murmur at sixty leagues' distance.
 Who is there would venture into his forest?
 Adad ranks first, and Humbaba second. 225

'Who is there would oppose him among the Igigi?
 So to keep safe the cedars,
 Enlil made it his lot to terrify men;
 if you penetrate his forest you are seized by the tremors.'

Gilgamesh opened his mouth to speak, 230
 saying [to Enkidu:]
 'Why, my friend, do you speak like a weakling?
 With your spineless words you [make me] despondent.

'As for man, [his days] are numbered,
 whatever he may do, it is but wind, 235
 ... exists not for me

'You were born and grew up [in the wild:]
 even lions were afraid of you, [you experienced] all.
 Grown men fled away [from your presence,]
 your heart is tried and [tested in] combat. 240

'Come, my friend, [let us hie] to the forge!'

A short lacuna follows. It can be filled from the Old Babylonian Yale tablet:

'[Let] them cast [us hatchets] in our presence!' Y 162

They took each other by the hand and hied to the forge,
 where the smiths were sitting in consultation.

Great hatchets they cast, Y 165
 and axes weighing three talents apiece.

Great daggers they cast:
 two talents apiece were the blades,
 one half of a talent the crests of their handles,
 half a talent apiece the daggers' gold mountings. Y 170
 Gilgamesh and Enkidu bore ten talents each.

He bolted the sevenfold gates of Uruk,
 he convened [the assembly,] the crowd gathered round .
 . . . in the street of Uruk-the-Town-Square,
 Gilgamesh [*seated himself on*] his throne. Y 175

[In the street of Uruk]-the-Town-Square,
 [the crowd was] sitting before him.
 [Thus Gilgamesh] spoke
 [to the elders of Uruk]-the-Town-Square:

<p>[Hear me, O elders of Uruk-the-Town]-Square! [I would tread the path to ferocious *Humbaba,] I would see the god of whom men talk, whose name the lands do constantly repeat.</p> <p>I will conquer him in the Forest of Cedar: let the land learn Uruk's offshoot is mighty! Let me start out, I will cut down the cedar, I will establish for ever a name eternal!</p> <p><i>The text of Tablet II resumes:</i></p> <p>[Then Gilgamesh spoke] [to the young men of Uruk-the-Sheepfold:]</p> <p>'Hear me, O young men [of Uruk-the-Sheepfold,] O young men of Uruk, who understand [<i>combat!</i>] Bold as I am I shall tread the distant path [to the home of Humbaba,] I shall face a battle I know not.</p> <p>'[I shall ride] a road [I know not:] give me your blessing as I go on my journey, [so I may see again] your faces [in safety,] and return [glad at heart] through Uruk's gate!</p> <p>'On my return [I will celebrate] New Year [twice over,] I will celebrate the festival twice in the year. Let the festival take place, the merriment begin, let the drums resound before [Wild-Cow] Ninsun!</p> <p>Enkidu [offered] counsel to the elders, and the young men of Uruk, who understood <i>combat</i>:</p> <p>'Tell him not to go to the Forest of Cedar! That is a journey which must not be made, that is a man [who must not be] looked on. He who guards the Forest of Cedar, his [<i>reach</i>] is wide.</p> <p>'This <i>Humbaba</i>, [his voice is the Deluge,] [his speech is fire,] his breath is death! [He hears] the forest murmur [at sixty leagues' distance:] [who is there would venture] into his forest?</p> <p>'[Adad ranks first, and Humbaba] second: [who is there would oppose him] among the Igigi? [So to keep safe the cedars,] Enlil made it his lot to terrify men; if you penetrate his forest you are seized by the tremors.'</p>	<p>Y 180</p> <p>Y 185</p> <p>II 258</p> <p>260</p> <p>265</p> <p>270</p> <p>275</p> <p>280</p> <p>285</p>
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