

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Hebrew-Sumerian Myth Parallels

According to the Bible, Adam and Eve were the first man and woman. But the story is inconsistent; Cain went to the land of Nod to find a wife. If the Hebrew scribes of 600 BC used sources that showed Adam and Eve came from heaven they may have been unable to accept such report and rewrote the story to more credible form. By 600 BC few really believed in a factual kingdom in the skies. Adam and Eve could then have no other origin but to be created out of the dust of the earth.

On the other hand the Hebrew story contains details which are not remembered in other traditions, although the Greek myth of Danaus hints at some parallels — in marriage among cousins compared to marriage among brother and sisters, in the betrayal by Aegyptus (with the Oc name) compared with Eve's betrayal by the serpent, and in the banishment of Danaus compared with the banishment of Adam and Eve from the Garden. Even so, the story reduces the seriousness of Eve's sin. She ate an apple rather than committed adultery. And a living spirit personality who caused her sin is reduced to a mythological serpent.

In order to throw light upon this unusual episode in world history, to show the strength of the biblical parallels with myth, and to probe the depth of events suggested in the Bible, I shall now consider the Sumerian stories. Those accounts contain many of the elements found in the Bible but uncensored by monotheistic views.

Adam and Eve were located in a specific geographical site; Dumuzi and Inanna were located in Erech. Adam and Eve were given charge over the earth; Dumuzi and Inanna had charge over earthly affairs. Adam and Eve were cautioned against disobedience; Dumuzi and Inanna broke the divine laws. However, Adam and Eve had responsibility for the biological propagation of mankind; Dumuzi and Inanna did not play such unique role. The pithy account of Genesis is suggestive in a number of ways but we cannot see the reality through the brevity of the story.

The Sumerian god Dumuzi and his goddess mate Inanna were part of a divine retinue. They came from the heavens. They and their counterparts in Babylonia and Greece are not recognized as the first man and woman. They are gods living on earth among earth mortals. Prior mortal existence is clearly recognized in the pagan myths.

If we accept the theory that the Hebrew scribes borrowed from their Sumerian or Babylonian neighbors we must ask why the story was altered. Usually borrowers do not alter elements so dramatically, although they may embellish them.

Dumuzi and Inanna were not the parents of mankind; they were members of a pagan pantheistic household. The Hebrew scribes not only rejected the godlike status; they also made them the first human mortals.

These profound changes in the story seem more than mere borrowing from one culture to another. Perhaps the Hebrew scribes had sources which were different from the regional myths; perhaps they inherited other accounts. Those accounts then contained elements not found in the myths of surrounding people. If so, the scribes did not alter the character of the Babylonian and Sumerian myths; rather they edited a unique tradition.

We must remember that the Hebrews were a devout people dedicated to a highly personal God. They would not play with their sources indiscriminately, but they might modify to reflect their understanding. If the Hebrew scribes had access to a different tradition, perhaps one that corresponded more closely to the reality of those remote days, how were they so fortunate? What was the path of transmission?

Partial estimate of this question is afforded by the Hebrew *Don* verb. The evolution of the Hebrew language had to be highly conservative in order to preserve the clear identity among the *Don* words we observe today. Therefore preservation of Semitic accounts of origins may have been equally conservative.

Since this present work is not intended as an exhaustive scholarly study I shall not consider the Babylonian tale of Thammuz and Ishtar, nor the Greek myth of Adonis and Aphrodite. The Babylonian story more closely parallels the Sumerian, while the Greek Adonis and Aphrodite probably were borrowed from the Phoenicians or other pagan Semites. The Sumerian myth is the most ancient available to us and the one which most closely reflects original events. The fruits of my presentation are in the exceptional insights into the reality of those ancient times, rather than in academic study of pagan distortions.

In the following discussions I use material from Samuel Noah Kramer's translations of the Sumerian cuneiform texts, *History Begins At Sumer*, and *Mythologies Of The Ancient World*^{JHBS,MAW}. A version adapted to more popular appeal may also be found in *Inanna, Queen of Heaven and Earth*. This last contains more recent material but neglects other, important, elements^{IQHE}. Important information also exists in *The Gilgamesh Epic*^{GEOTP}.

In the Sumerian clay tablets one recognizes stylized writing with repetitious phrasing, describing the actions of Inanna, Dumuzi, and other participants, set in poetic form with much literary embellishment. Some elements of the tale are contained in one story while other, more crucial, elements are contained in other stories. The order of events is difficult to follow with no attempt at coherent structure, written as literary pieces rather than factual reports. In spite of these difficulties the stories contain surprising wealth of detail to show Eve's transgression and Adam's grief.

Dumuzi is the shepherd god of Erech, a leading city of ancient Sumeria. Inanna is the tutelary goddess of Erech, Dumuzi's wife. She shares in guarding and protecting the earthly domain.

But something is amiss. Inanna is dissatisfied with the status of the city and of herself; she is anxious to increase the welfare and prosperity of the city and to exalt her name. She feels frustrated because other gods have heavenly powers while she does not. Enlil, the Creator god, has given those powers to others but she is left short. Inanna expresses it in one poem.

The fate of the Annunaki, the great gods, Enlil has confirmed as your right. Me, the woman, why did you treat me differently? Me, the holy Inanna, where are my powers?

Inanna compares herself to the Annunaki, the great gods. She holds a holy position. But she is deprived of the powers necessary to accomplish her task; she feels cheated. She sees the gods in display of their powers but cannot understand why she has been deprived of power for executing her commission. Something is wrong; conditions are not to her liking. She feels overwhelmed by the task.

What were the real problems faced by Adam and Eve? Were they isolated from active communication with, and support from, celestial realms? Were they so burdened by the difficulties of their assignment they felt cheated? Did they struggle with a confused and degraded planet, the result of earlier rebellion? Did Eve grope for solutions to the appalling problems they faced? Did she try to circumvent the rules of their mission in expectation of achieving quicker results?

The Sumerian stories cast some light on these questions.

Inanna decides to go to Abzu of Eridu to consult Enki, the god of wisdom and the god of the abyss.

What is Abzu of Eridu?

Eridu is the Sumerian home of the gods. Although a Sumerian city carried this name we should not misunderstand its celestial significance. The city of Eridu was believed by the Sumerians to be the oldest city on earth, a highly sacred place. They named it after the celestial headquarters, a place with the greatest veneration. This custom was common in olden times. Mt. Zion is the oldest and most sacred location in the land of Israel; the name was borrowed from the celestial home of the Hebrew God, Ps 9:11. Mt. Olympus was the sacred mountain in the north of Greece, also named after the home of the Greek gods.

Sumerian scholars believe that *Abzu* meant the Deep Water, the Great Deep. Today we call it Space.

Abzu of Eridu was the holy mount of assembly in the far north, Ps 48:2 and Isa 14:13, the home of divine administration in the skies.

Inanna consulted with the one who was the god of wisdom and of the abyss. Eve was tempted by the serpent, that most subtle of the beasts. He told her she would become wise if she ate of the forbidden fruit. If the serpent was symbolic of that ancient fallen Prince, the one we know as the Devil, would he not also be the god of the great abyss? See the *Book of Revelation*, Chapter 20.

At Abzu in Eridu, at the great seat of celestial administration in Deep Space, Enki and Inanna sit down together at a banquet. During the course of the meal Enki becomes drunk and offers all the divine laws to Inanna. She readily accepts

the heavenly tablets and departs for Erech in the *Boat of Heaven*. After her departure Enki sobers up and realizes he has given away the divine treasures. He sends his messenger Isimud to retrieve them but Inanna manages to keep them through several stop-overs where the *Boat of Heaven* is intercepted by Isimud. She finally delivers them safely to Erech amid great joy and feasting.

Eve was told she would not die if she ate of the forbidden fruit. Her eyes would be opened and she would be like God in knowing good and evil. When Eve saw the fruit would make her wise she ate of it.

In another form of the tale Inanna is a demanding and aggressive personality. Dumuzi must contend with Enkimdu, the farmer-god, for Inanna's affection and is successful only after bitter quarreling and threats of violence. The Sumerian story suggests that Inanna placed her affections on someone other than Dumuzi. It suggests that Eve began a relationship with someone other than Adam.

We see that the biblical story is not isolated from the Sumerian account; elements are parallel in both. The roots of the story are the same but the memory is different.

Enki is the god of wisdom; the serpent would make Eve wise.

Inanna is entrusted with the divine laws; Eve is entrusted with parenthood of the earth.

Inanna carries away the divine laws; Eve disobeys God.

Eve is misled by the serpent; Inanna is seduced by the farmer-god. The serpent led Eve to betray her trust. Her action in turn led to the sin of Adam. She ate of the forbidden fruit first; he ate second. Inanna has her allegiance diverted.

In both accounts it is the female who first takes action, not the male. Inanna violated the rules in taking the divine laws from Eridu; Eve violated the commandment of God when she ate of the fruit.

In the Sumerian stories Inanna is identified as goddess of both love and war. Eve gave us amorosity but her actions also led to numerous wars among mankind.

The Sumerian tales suggest that Adam and Eve came from the celestial realms. On the other hand, the story of Inanna's space journey with the divine laws may represent her original voyage to this world entrusted with the guardianship of the earth. The unsatisfactory conditions of this planet pushed Eve into finding substitutes to accomplish her assignment, but it involves consort with another man. Not wise to the dangers, she heeds the sophistries of the evil one. Her resulting act was calamitous.

In the Sumerian myth a certain Shukallituda planted a garden which gave him a great deal of trouble. Although he tended it carefully the plants withered away; the garden turned desolate. He turned his eyes to heaven where he observed and learned the divine laws. Thereafter his garden blossomed in profusion.

This small segment of the myth shows a garden that is not fruitful until the caretaker learns to follow the divine laws. It may be a moralistic passage about the Garden of Eden.

At that point Inanna, weary with her travels through heaven, lies down to rest her tired body not far from the garden of Shukallituda. The latter spies the sleeping goddess nearby and copulates with her. Upon awakening Inanna realizes that a disastrous deed has been done; trouble will now afflict the earth. She seeks the advice of Enki, but here the story stops at a break in the clay tablet. We do not know the advice he gave her.

This segment of the Sumerian myth reveals Eve's problem. She violated a fundamental prohibition. She committed a great sin. She copulated with a mortal man, someone other than Adam.

The Hebrew scribes did not include this segment in their accounts. They may have had trouble accepting that their ancient venerated mother would have committed such a deplorable act. On the other hand they had to reconcile their notions of Adam and Eve as the first man and woman. How could Eve copulate with someone else if there were no other human beings? Did the scribes resolve all these difficulties with the apple, the forbidden fruit? When one first partakes of such fruit does he not become wise? Is this the hidden meaning of the Genesis story?

We do not know the full reasons behind this act, whether out of simple temptation, or from conscious determination. The myths show that Inanna was dissatisfied; Eve was also. The wily serpent may have suggested copulation with another man. Perhaps Eve thought this would provide a faster route to accomplish the divine goals.

How could she do it? How could she, with her vast experience, hailing from celestial worlds, fall into this insidious trap?

According to the clay tablets the goddess Inanna *from the great above set her mind to the great below*. The great lady, the beautiful Inanna, abandoned lordship and ladyship; the love goddess abandoned heaven and earth; to the nether world she descended.

Eve performed a terrible deed. She took her mind away from the heavenly purposes, away from the divine plan, away from the sacred order. She set it to quick solutions. She abandoned her position as the heavenly representative; she forsook the path of righteousness. She cast herself and her spouse, that great man, into the abyss. She had to die as any mortal would die; Adam had to experience death and the grave.

Inanna gathered all the divine laws, the crown of the shepherdess, her beautiful locks of hair, the holy measuring rods, the golden rings, the breast plate which said come man, come, the ointment which said let him come, let him come, all of them together, and descended into the netherworld. There she was stripped of all her possessions and left naked, as naked as Adam and Eve were in the Garden. Inanna drove Dumuzi into the netherworld where she had to contend for his release year by year.

The Sumerian tale, when compared with the Genesis account, offers deep insight into the role of this pair and the nature of their transgression.

The divine laws were the social and moral guides Adam and Eve were to observe and to promulgate to the inhabitants of the earth. Eve betrayed those laws when she copulated with a mortal man.

The crown of the shepherdess represents the power of world rule exercised by Adam and Eve in their caretaking of the earth.

The beautiful locks of hair signify the outstanding beauty of that divine pair.

The holy measuring rod represents the knowledge of material (not materialistic) science she and Adam were to offer to the people of this planet.

The purpose of the golden rings is not certain but may signify their oath of loyalty to one another, now betrayed. Possibly it represents the magical power of the pair remembered in other folk tales.

The breast plate and the ointment represent the newly endowed powers of amorosity which were to give spiritual joy to sexual union, but which now has become so perverted throughout the world.

Inanna sends her vizier, Ninshubur, to heaven to implore Enlil to spare her the fate of death, but in the confused story Enki is the one who finally saves her. Inanna must descend into the nether world, the grave, but she is saved from eternal death. Adam and Eve are denied the tree of life; they must die like ordinary mortals. Like Inanna and Dumuzi they are spared eternal extinction and go on to resurrection in the heavens.

In the Sumerian tale Inanna is the one who betrays; not Dumuzi. In the Bible Eve succumbed to the wiles of the serpent; she betrayed, not Adam. Inanna fastens the eye of death upon Dumuzi; she speaks the words against him, the words of wrath, the words of guilt. Eve brought the fate of death upon herself and her mate.

Inanna gives Dumuzi into the hands of the demons. Dumuzi weeps. He lifts his hands toward heaven and pleads that he may escape the fate of seizure by the demons.

Adam and Eve hide among the trees of the Garden where the voice of God comes walking on the breeze of the day, inquiring of their whereabouts. In the Sumerian tale Dumuzi hides among the plants of the garden and implores his sister, Geshtinanna, to tell no one of his hiding place. He fears the demons. He lays down among the buds and dreams a dream. It awakens him and he wonders, was it a dream or was it a vision? He rubs his eyes with his hands; he is dazed. He tells the dream to his sister, Geshtinanna.

He saw rushes rise up all about him, sprout all about him. But one reed, standing alone, bows its head for him. Of the reeds standing in pairs, one is removed. In the wooded grove tall trees rise fearsomely all about him.

The dream goes on. He sees water poured upon the holy hearth; the flame is extinguished. He sees the stand removed from the holy churn. He sees the holy cup fallen from the peg. His shepherd's crook has vanished. The falcon holds a lamb in its claw. The young goat drags its beard in the dust. The sheep paws the ground with bent limbs. The churn lies shattered, no milk is poured. The cup lies shattered. Dumuzi lives no more. The sheepfold is given to the wind.

His sister tells him the dream is not favorable; Dumuzi is about to meet his doom. The rushes rising all about him mean outlaws will attack him. The one reed standing alone is his mother bowing her head for him. The one reed removed from the pair is the loss of Inanna.

All the articles of the home, the holy churn, the holy cup will be removed. No longer will fire burn on the hearth. No longer will he be shepherd of the lands; the shepherd's crook will be removed. The sheepfold will be given to the wind.

Henceforth must the earth suffer the misfortunes of erratic weather. No longer will animals coexist in peace with one another. The flocks will be subject to disease and hardship.

Dumuzi is assailed by demons. The first enters the sheepfold and strikes Dumuzi on the cheek with a piercing nail. The second enters and strikes him with the shepherd's crook. The third enters and the stand for the holy churn is removed. The fourth enters and the cup falls from the peg. The fifth enters and the holy churn lies shattered; no milk is poured. The cup lies shattered. The sheepfold is given to the wind.

Adam and Eve are banished from the Garden. Cherubim are assigned to guard the Garden and the tree of life.

Before Adam's fall a mist goes up to water the ground, but afterwards he must till the ground with the sweat of his brow. The tree of life is taken from him; no longer is he immortal; he must die like any man.

Dumuzi's heart is filled with tears; he goes forth to the plain. Adam must leave the Garden. Dumuzi fastens a flute about his neck and gives utterance to a lament. *Set up a lament, Oh plain, set up a lament!*

Dumuzi suffers; Adam suffers.

Inanna transgresses; Eve transgresses.

Inanna sleeps with a mortal man; Eve eats of the forbidden fruit.

Inanna fastens the eye of death upon Dumuzi; Eve gives Adam to eat of the fruit.

Inanna descends into the netherworld, the grave, and drags Dumuzi down with her; Adam and Eve are denied the fruit of the tree of life and must die as any mortal.

Dumuzi and Inanna are the shepherds of Erech; Adam and Eve are the caretakers of the Garden and of the earth.

Dumuzi learns of his fate in the garden; Adam learns of his fate in the Garden.

Dumuzi knows that terrible conditions will now afflict the world; Adam is told that he must toil and die like any man. His fall brings on a great deluge and sin to the world.

The greater detail of the Sumerian stories sharply strikes graphic views of the momentous events of those far-off days. Although buried in literary embellishments they are vivid in portrayal.

The Sumerian accounts provide more colorful detail but they fail to tell us that Dumuzi was the father of mankind. Dumuzi and Inanna are gods living on earth among earth people. They have been entrusted with great responsibility; they are shepherds of the human flock, but they are not the first man and woman.

When the two stories are laid out side by side, with all the elements exposed, we acquire deeper insight into those events. A reality lies behind the stories that offers a window into that remote time.