

Compare some ancient creation stories with Genesis.¹

Summarize this presentation.

The biblical creation and flood narratives belong to the book of Genesis in particular, and the books of the law in general. Genesis explains (a) Who is God? (b) What is man? (c) How did God establish Israel as his people? and, (d) How did the law come to govern his chosen people?

There are other similar and more ancient narratives about the creation and flood other than the one in the Bible. They originate from the same area of the world as the events of the Bible. It is likely that the author of Genesis deliberately presents a point-of-view that corrects and counters the ones prevalent among the neighbors of Israel.

Genesis sets the record straight about the real God and his relationship with man. Although there are many striking similarities between Genesis and other creation-flood narratives, the differences are even more striking. God has absolute power and no rivals. Although man is made in God's image, God is not in any way the image of man. God loves man and wants the best for him; however, there is no danger that man can ever overcome God—man's only realistic choice is to serve and obey the one creator.

The purpose of Genesis is not to provide (a) an explanation of where dinosaurs come from, nor, (b) a technically specific, cosmological and geological scientific research paper on the origins of the universe. Any attempt to force Genesis to do so will both fail and also completely miss the point of the text.

Identify the God of Genesis.

God created the world for his own purposes. He created man as the center of all creation because he loves him. God did this so that he could choose Israel and give them the law to govern them.

1. All rights reserved. Copyright © The Grey Burro, GreyBurro@ScriptureOnline.org.

Genesis depicts a single God of creation who is in absolute control. He has no rival. He is no danger of being overcome or even deceived. He is quite loving and sympathetic, but also demanding and uncompromising. As the creator and designer of all things, he also absolutely establishes the rules of operation for the creation. The creation has two choices: submit, or, suffer permanent punishment and destruction. There is no hope for avoiding his judgment.

Identify the people of God.

Israel originates from the beginning of the creation. The nation of Israel is not an accidental mistake, but was part of God's plan from the beginning. The people of Israel are selected from the fathers of all people, both Adam and Noah. God wants everyone to worship him, and the selection of Israel is intended to accomplish this purpose.

From Adam, and Noah, God sequentially selects narrower and narrower subgroups of people, first Abraham, then Isaac, then Jacob, and then Joseph. He makes promises to each of them to accomplish his purposes. This leads to the nation of Israel and the law.

Identify the rules for the people.

Not one part of law is mentioned in Genesis. However, the events in Genesis lead directly to the eventual delivery of the law. The continuation of the Genesis narrative, and that of Exodus and the other books of the law, is seamless.

Furthermore, many fundamental elements of the law are previewed in Genesis, like circumcision (Genesis 17:9-14), sacrifice (Genesis 4:2-6), the priesthood (Genesis 14:18), tithing (Genesis 14:20), the temple in Jerusalem (Genesis 14:18), and Israel as the chosen people (Genesis 12:1-3, 14:19, 17:3-8). Genesis provides context for the law.

Consider other ancient creation and flood narratives.

It is virtually certain that Genesis is not the only ancient story about the creation or the flood, nor even the oldest example. These narratives originate from the same general time and place as Genesis, the area near the two great rivers, the Tigris and Euphrates.

It is possible that the ancient Israelites and the author of Genesis had no knowledge of these other stories. However, their similarities make this possibility unlikely. The similarities are beyond coincidental. There is nothing to lose in admitting that Genesis is not unique nor the most ancient such narrative. In fact, there is a lot to gain.

These other ancient creation and flood stories include:¹

1. The *Gilgamesh Epic*² is an adventure. Gilgamesh seeks to find eternal life. The gods try to stop him.
2. The *Sumerian Flood Story*³, *Ziusudra*, or the *Eridu Genesis* is an epic poem. The gods first create man and the animals. Then they decide to destroy them. Ziusudra escapes destruction in a boat.
3. The *Enuma Elish*⁴, *When on High*, or the *Babylonian Genesis* is a religious poem. The gods engage in a great battle against each other.
4. The *Atrahasis Epic*⁵ is an epic poem. The gods decide to destroy mankind. Atrahasis builds a boat. He escapes destruction.

Following are several important ancient near eastern excerpts that illustrate the similarities and differences with Genesis.

-
1. There are other related texts, but these are most of the more full examples.
 2. English translations are in *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, edited by James B. Pritchard, second edition, corrected and enlarged (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1955), pp. 72-99; *Near Eastern Religious Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, edited by Walter Beyerlin, translated by John Bowden, The Old Testament Library (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1978), pp. 93-97; *Documents from Old Testament Times*, edited by D. Winton Thomas (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1958), pp. 17-26; and Heidel, pp. 1-101.
 3. English translations are in *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, pp. 89-90; *Near Eastern Religious Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, pp. 93-97; and Heidel, pp. 102-6.
 4. English translations are in *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, pp. 60-72; *Near Eastern Religious Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, pp. 80-84; and *Documents from Old Testament Times*, pp. 3-16.
 5. English translations are in *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, pp. 104-6; *Near Eastern Religious Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, pp. 90-93; and Alexander Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1949), pp. 106-16.

Excerpt 1. *The Gilgamesh Epic.*

Summarize the Gilgamesh flood excerpt.

The Gilgamesh narrative is an ancient Sumerian and Babylonian adventure from between 2500 to 1000 BC.

In the beginning of the narrative, Gilgamesh is a heroic king on an adventure. At the end of the adventure, he goes to visit a wise old man named Utnapishtim.

Utnapishtim tells Gilgamesh about a great flood. The gods sent the flood to destroy the entire earth.

Gilgamesh wants to learn how Utnapishtim found the secret to live forever. The secret to eternal life is a thorny plant. Utnapishtim gives this plant to Gilgamesh.

After this, Gilgamesh returns home. But, on the way home, a snake steals the plant from him. Gilgamesh has to return home without it.

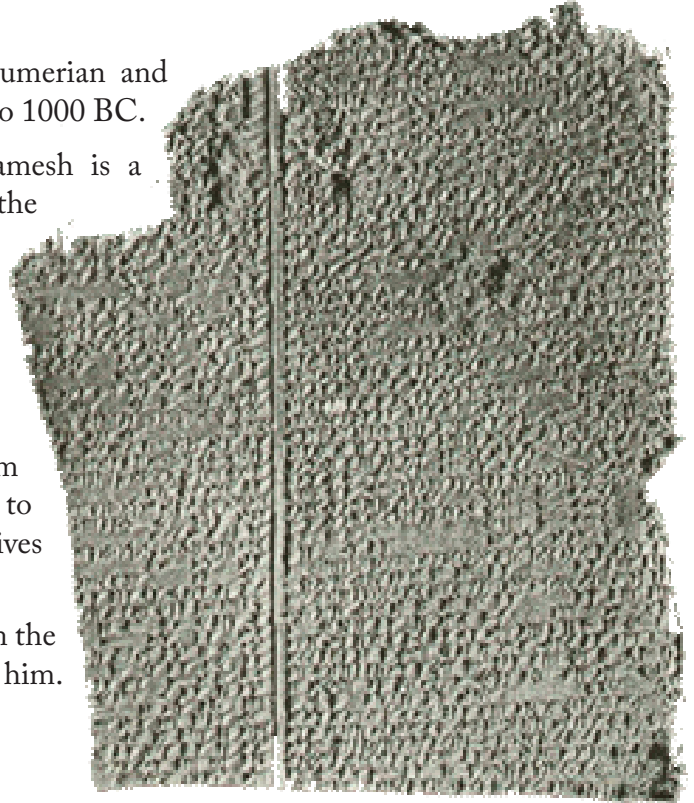
Read the Gilgamesh flood excerpt.

Gilgamesh¹ spoke to Utnapishtim² the Distant,

I look at you with amazement, Utnapishtim!
Your appearance has not changed. It is like mine.
Your nature has not changed. It is also like mine.
However, you left this life.
My heart is still struggling with everything.
Those things no longer bother you.
Tell me. How did you come to live here?
How did you get eternal life with the gods?

Utnapishtim then spoke to Gilgamesh,

I will reveal it to you, Gilgamesh.
It is a mysterious story.
I will tell you about the mystery of the gods.
You know the city of Shurippak.



1. *Gilgamesh* is a man. He is the main character. He is looking for Utnapishtim. He wants to live forever.
2. *Utnapishtim* the Distant is a wise old man. He knows how to live forever.

It is on the bank of the Euphrates River.
 That city was corrupt.
 The gods within it decided to bring about a flood.
 These were the great gods.
 They were: the father, Anu¹;
 the counselor, the warrior Enlil²;
 the leader, Ninurta³;
 and the champion, the god En-nu-gi.
 Ea⁴ was the lord of unfathomable wisdom.
 He argued with them.
 He told a reed hut about their plan,
 Reed hut, reed hut! Clay structure, clay structure!
 Listen, reed hut! Pay attention, clay structure!
 Man of Shurippak. Son of Ubara-Tutu.
 Build a house. Construct a ship.
 Forget your possessions. Take care of your life.
 Abandon your goods. Save your life.
 Bring every living seed into the ship.
 As for the ship that you will build,
 Measure its dimensions carefully.
 Its width and length will have certain proportions.
 Then launch it into the sea.

I listened. I spoke to Ea, my lord,
 I will do as my lord commanded.
 I will observe. I will fulfill the commands.
 But what explanation should I give to the city,
 to the people, and to the elders?

Ea opened his mouth and spoke.
 He spoke to me, his servant,
 Man, answer them like this,
 I know that Enlil hates me. I cannot live in your city any more.
 I cannot live on Enlil's territory any more.
 I will go down into the deep.
 I will live with Ea, my lord.
 He will pour down a rich blessing on you.
 He will grant you lots of birds, fish,

-
1. *Anu* is god of the sky and the father of the gods. He agrees to destroy mankind.
 2. *Enlil* is the god of the air, breath, and war. He is the leader of the gods that want to destroy man.
 3. *Ninurta* is the god of war. He agrees to destroy mankind.
 4. *Ea* is the god of the city of Eridu. He helps Utnapishtim avoid death by building a boat.

Herds of cattle, and a harvest.

Shamash¹ has set a time. In the evening, the rulers of darkness
will pour down a destructive rain.

The early morning appeared.
The land gathered around me.

[Four lines are broken here. It is not possible to translate them.]

The child brought some pitch.
The strong brought what was needed.

On the fifth day, I drew the design.
It was 60 meters tall.

The area of the deck was one acre.

I added a roof. I closed it in.

I built it with six levels.

This made seven floors in all.

I divided the interior into nine partitions.

I drove water stoppers into it.

I selected a pole. I stored up supplies.

I covered the outside with 100,000 liters of pitch.

I used 100,000 liters of asphalt on the inside.

Workers brought 100,000 liters of oil in containers.

I separated 30,000 liters of oil for sacrifices.

The boatmen stored the other 70,000 liters.

I killed ox for the temple of the gods.

I killed sheep every day.

Cider, oil, and sweet wine.

I gave the workmen something to drink. It was like river water.

It was a feast like new year's day.

I brought oil in my hands to the god Shamash.

[...] the ship was completed.

The work was difficult [...].

[...] above and below.

The ship sank into water two-thirds of its height.

I loaded whatever I had in it.

I put all the silver.

I put all the gold.

I put living creatures of every kind.

I put all my family and relatives.

I put all the game of the field, beasts of the field, and the righteous.

1. *Shamash* is the god of the sun and justice. Shamash seems supportive of Utnapishtim.

Then I left.
 Shamash set a definite time,
 The rulers of darkness will send a destructive rain in the evening.
 Then enter the ship. Shut the door.
 The definite time came.
 The rulers of darkness sent a destructive rain in the evening.
 I saw the storm approaching.
 I was afraid to watch the storm.
 I entered the ship. I shut the door.
 I let Purur-bel, the boatman, guide the ship.
 I trusted the great house and its contents to him.
 The dawn appeared.
 A black cloud rose up from the horizon.
 Adad¹ thundered in it.
 Nabu and the king of the gods were in front of it.
 The destroyers passed the mountain and country.
 Nergal, the great, pulled up the anchor.
 Ninerta came along. He broke the dikes.
 The Anunnaki² raised their torches.
 They lit the world with light.
 Adad brought the storm. It reached the sky.
 He turned the light into darkness.
 He broke the land like a pot [...] .
 The storm blew violently. It blew fast.
 It came over the people like a battle.
 No one could see his brother.
 No one from heaven could recognize anyone.
 The gods were afraid of the storm.
 They ran away to the heaven of Anu.
 The gods crouched down like dogs.
 Ishtar³ cried out like a pregnant woman.
 The lady of the gods lamented with a loud voice,
 The world of old has been turned back into clay.
 I agreed to this evil in the assembly of the gods.
 Why did I agree to this evil in the council of the gods?
 I destroyed my own people.
 What I have created?

-
1. *Adad* is the god of the storm and the rain. He brings the flood. He stops the rain.
 2. The *Anunnaki* is the council of the great gods. They agree to destroy mankind.
 3. *Ishtar* is the goddess of fertility. Ishtar seems to regret supporting the flood.

It fills the sea like the spawn of fish.
The Anunnaki cried with her.
The gods bowed and cried.
Their lips were covered [...] .
For six days and nights the wind blew.
The storm and the flood overwhelmed the country.
The seventh day came. The flood, the storm, and the battle subsided.
They fought it like a great army.
The sea became quiet. The hurricane and the storm stopped.
I looked out the window.
The light fell on my face.
All mankind had turned back into clay.
The [...] was level as a roof.
I bowed. I sat down. I cried.
My tears ran down my face.
I looked in every direction for the edge of the ocean.
After twelve days, there was a strip of land.
The ship landed on Mount Nisir.
The boat stuck on Mount Nisir. It did not move.
The boat stuck on Mount Nisir the first day. It did not move.
The boat stuck on Mount Nisir the third day. It did not move.
The boat stuck on Mount Nisir the fifth day. It did not move.
The seventh day came.
I sent out a dove. I let it go.
The dove flew back and forth.
There was no resting place. It returned.
I sent out a swallow. I let it go.
The swallow flew back and forth.
There was no resting place. It returned.
I sent out a raven. I let it go.
The raven flew away. It saw that the waters had receded.
It ate. It crowed. It did not return.
I sent everything to the four winds. I offered a sacrifice.
I poured a libation on the mountain peak.
I placed seven plus seven censers.
I poured cane, cedar, and incense in them.
The gods could smell it.
The gods smelled the incense.
The gods gathered around the sacrificer like flies.
The great goddess arrived.
She lifted up the great jewels.

Anu made them according to her wishes,
Gods who are present! I will not forget my necklace.
I will remember these days. I will never forget them.
Bring the gods to the offering.
Enlil may not come to the offering.
The flood is his fault.
He destroyed the people.

Enlil arrived.
He saw the ship. He was angry.
He was angry with the gods. His anger was against the gods of heaven,
Have any of the mortals escaped?
No one was supposed to survive the destruction.

Ninurta opened his mouth and spoke.
He spoke to Enlil, the warrior,
Who could plan anything without Ea?
Only Ea knows everything.

Ea opened his mouth. He spoke to Enlil, the warrior,
Warrior! Wisest among the gods.
If you were thinking, why would you bring this flood?
Lay sins on the sinner. Lay wickedness on the wicked.
But be merciful. Do not destroy everything.
Be considerate. Do not ruin everything.
Instead of a flood, let the lions eat mankind.
Instead of a flood, let a wolf eat mankind.
Instead of a flood, destroy the land.
Instead of a flood, disease kill the people.
I did not reveal the secret of the great gods.
I gave Atrahasis a dream.
He learned the secret of the gods.
Now consider him.

Enlil came into the ship.
He took my hand. He led me out.
He brought my wife out.
He made her kneel beside me.
He touched our foreheads.
He blessed us,
Until now, Utnapishtim was only human.
Now Utnapishtim and his wife are like gods to you.
Utnapishtim will live in the distance.

He will live at the mouth of the rivers.

They took me away. They let us live far away at the mouth of the rivers.

Analyze the Gilgamesh flood narrative.

The similarities with the Genesis flood and the flood of Gilgamesh are striking. The gods choose to destroy mankind with a flood. They instruct Utnapishtim to build a large boat to save himself and his family. Utnapishtim gathers two of every type of animal into the boat. All mankind except Utnapishtim is destroyed. The boat lands on top of a mountain after some time. Utnapishtim does not leave until sending out several birds.

The differences are also striking. The power of the gods has geographic limitations. The gods are in disagreement with each other over the flood. They fight with each other over their strategy. Ea uses Enlil to continue to destroy mankind even after the flood. The gods lose control because of the sacrifice of Utnapishtim. Utnapishtim is elevated into a god afterwards.

Excerpt 2. *The Sumerian flood.*

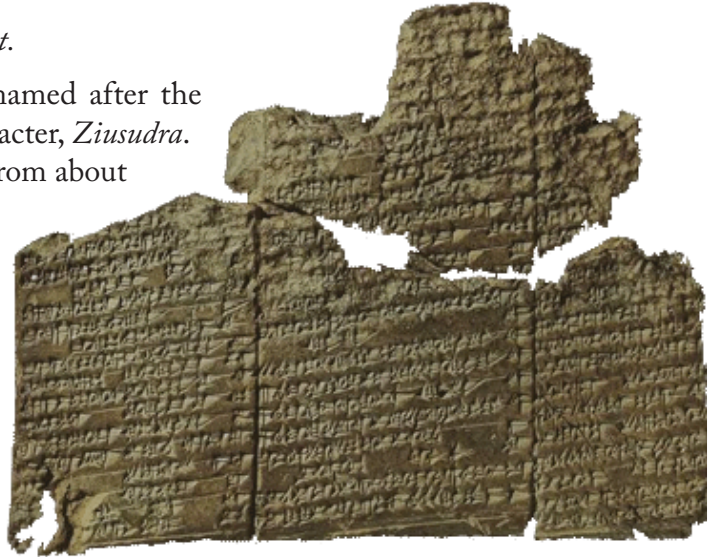
Summarize the Sumerian flood excerpt.

Some call this the *Eridu Genesis*, named after the city of Eridu, or after the main character, *Ziusudra*. This narrative originates in Sumer from about 2150 BC. The text is quite broken.

The gods make people and the animals. They establish cities and assign them to gods.

The gods have a meeting. They decide to destroy the world with a flood.

The great king *Ziusudra* survives the flood in a boat. The gods then give him eternal life.



Read the Sumerian flood excerpt.

[About 36 lines are missing.]

[...] sets up [...]

I will [...] destroy mankind.

For Nintu, I will stop the destruction of my creatures.

I will return the people from where they live.

Let them build many cities.

I will refresh myself in their shade.

They will lay the bricks of many cities in pure places.

They will establish temples in pure places.

They will arrange the [...] fire quenching.

They will perfect the divine rites and the exalted powers.

They will irrigate the earth.

I will bring them success.

Anu¹, Enlil², Enki³, and Nintu⁴ made the black-headed people.

They also made animals multiply everywhere.

They made herds of four-legged animals on the plains.

1. *Anu* is god of the sky and the father of the gods.

2. *Enlil* is the god of the air, breath, and war.

3. *Enki* is the god of the water.

4. *Nintu* is the mother goddess.

It was good.

[About 32 lines are missing.]

I will oversee their work.

[...] The builder of the land will dig a solid foundation.

The [...] of kingship descended from heaven.

The exalted crown and throne of kingship descended from heaven.

They perfected the divine rites and the exalted powers.

They laid the bricks of the cities in holy places.

They announced their names.

They distributed [...].

They gave the first city, Eridu, to the leader Enki.

They gave the second city, Bad-tibira, to the Mistress.

They gave the third city, Larag, to Pabilsa.

They gave the fourth city, Zimbar, to the hero Utu¹.

They gave the fifth city, Suruppag, to Sud.

They announced the names of these cities.

They distributed the [...].

They watered the river [...].

They cleaned [...] the small canals.

[About 34 lines are missing.]

[...] the seat in heaven.

[...] flood.

[...] mankind.

He made [...].

Then Nintu [...].

Holy Inana² made a lament for its people.

Enki counseled himself.

Anu, Enlil, Enki and Nintu made all the gods of heaven and earth take an oath.

They swore in the name of Anu and Enlil.

In those days, Ziusudra³ the king, was the priest [...].

He made [...].

He was humble, committed, reverent [...].

Day by day, he stood constantly at [...].

He brought many dreams [...].

He took an oath.

He invoked heaven and earth.

1. *Utu* is the god of the sun.

2. *Inana* is the goddess of love and fertility.

3. *Ziusudra* is a great king and priest. He survives the flood. He gains eternal life.

The gods [...] a wall on the land. Ziusudra, stood at its side. He listened,

The side wall is standing at my left side [...].

I will speak words to the side wall.

Listen to my words.

Pay attention to my instructions.

A flood will sweep over the [...] in all the [...].

We have made a decision.

We will destroy the seed of mankind.

The verdict cannot be revoked.

It is the word of the divine assembly.

The order is announced by Anu and Enlil.

No one can overturn it.

They will cut off the kingship.

Everyone should rest their heart about this.

[About 38 lines are missing.]

All the windstorms and gales rose together.

The flood swept over the [...].

The flood swept over the land.

The waves and windstorms rocked the huge boat for seven days and seven nights.

Utu the sun god came out.

He illuminated the heaven and the earth.

Ziusudra drilled an opening in the huge boat.

The hero Utu entered the huge boat with his rays.

Ziusudra the king prostrated himself before Utu.

The king sacrificed oxen.

He offered many sheep.

[About 33 lines are missing.]

They made you swear by heaven and earth

Anu and Enlil made you swear by heaven and earth.

More and more animals got off.

They went onto the earth.

Ziusudra the king bowed before Anu and Enlil.

Anu and Enlil treated Ziusudra kindly [...].

They granted him life like a god.

They brought eternal life down to him.

They wanted to preserve the animals and the seed of mankind.

They settled Ziusudra the king in an overseas country.

It was the land of Dilmun.

It is where the sun rises.

[About 39 lines are missing.]

Analyze the Sumerian flood narrative.

This narrative also is similar to the flood narrative in Genesis. The main character is a righteous man. Ziusudra also saved himself and the animals in a large boat. The text includes lists of cities and their leaders.

Again, the gods are numerous, each with different limited scopes of power. In the end, Ziusudra becomes himself a god.

Excerpt 3. *The Enuma Elish.*

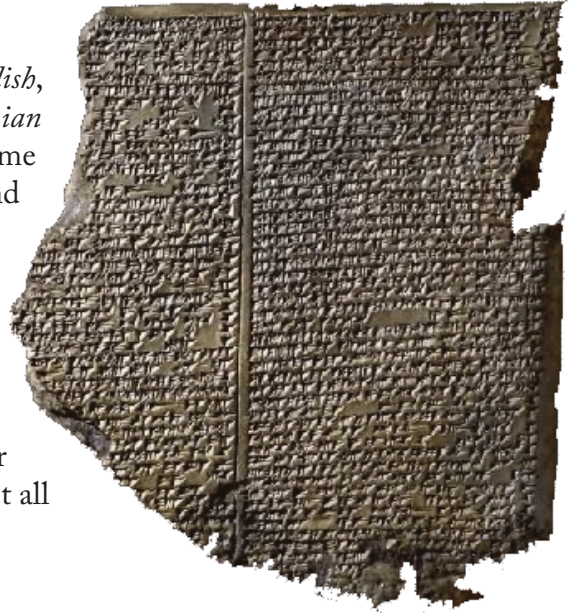
Summarize the Enuma Elish excerpt.

This narrative is also known as the *Enuma Elish*, which means, *When on high*, or the *Babylonian Genesis*. This narrative originates some time between 2000 and 1000 BC. The text was found in Assyria, but the narrative is probably from a much earlier period.

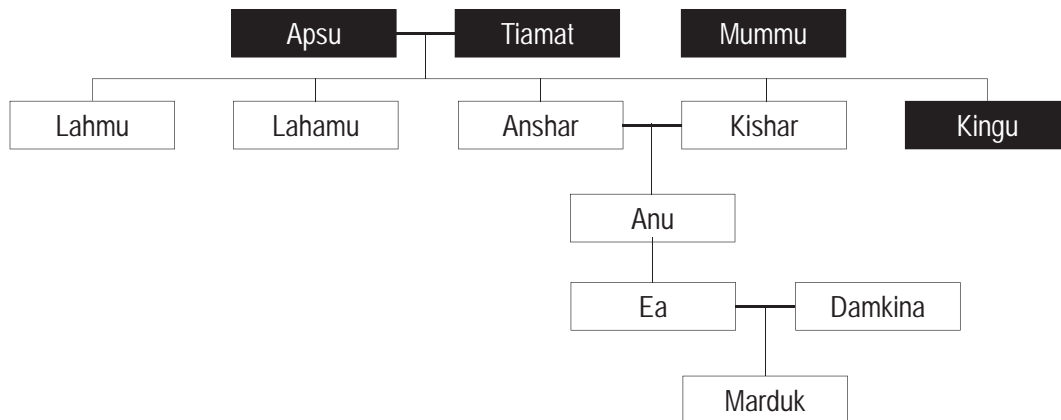
Apsu and Tiamat create everything, including the gods.

Some of the other gods, who are their children, rebel against them. Apsu, Tiamat, their advisor Mummu, and their son Kingu, go to war against all the other children.

A terrible fight breaks out.



Examine the family tree of the gods.



Read the Enuma Elish excerpt.

When it was on high, the heavens had not yet been named.

The firm ground below had not been given a name.

There was nothing but the beginning: Apsu¹ created them.

Also, there was mother Tiamat². She bore them all.

1. *Apsu* is the god of fresh water and the water inside the earth. He creates the world from nothing.

2. *Tiamat* is the goddess of salt water and the ocean. She also creates the world from nothing.

Their waters came together to form one.
 No reed house was built. No marshes had appeared.
 There was not a single god that had come about.
 They had no name. They had no destiny.
 Then the gods were formed inside their waters.
 Lahma and Lahamu¹ were created. They were called by name.
 This was before they grew in age and size.
 Anshar and Kishar² were formed. They were greater than the others.
 They extended time. They added on to the years.
 Anu³ was their heir. He rivaled his ancestors.
 Anu was Anshar's first born. Anu was Anshar's equal.
 Anu gave birth to his image, Ea.
 Ea⁴ was the master of his fathers.
 He had great wisdom, understanding, and strength.
 He was more powerful than Anshar, his grandfather.
 He had no rival among the gods. They were his brothers.
 The divine brothers banded together.
 They disturbed Tiamat. They surged back and forth.
 They put Tiamat in a bad mood.
 They created trouble in heaven.
 Apsu could not calm them down.
 Tiamat was speechless about them.
 Their behavior was upsetting to [...].
 They were obnoxious. They were tyrants.
 Apsu gave birth to the gods.
 He cried out to his advisor, Mummu⁵,
 Mummu! My advisor! You make me happy.
 Come here. Let's go see Tiamat.
 They went. They sat down in front of Tiamat.
 They had given birth to the gods. They shared advice about the them.
 Apsu opened his mouth.
 He spoke to Tiamat,
 Their behavior upsets me.
 I get no relief during the day or at night.
 I will destroy them. I will ruin their actions.

-
1. *Lahmu* and *Lahamu* are brother and sister. They are created by Apsu and Tiamat.
 2. *Anshar* and *Kishar* are both brother and sister, and husband and wife. They are created by Apsu and Tiamat.
 3. *Anu* is the god of the sky. He is the son of Anshar.
 4. *Ea* is the god of the earth. He is the son of Anu and the grandson of Anshar.
 5. *Mummu* is the god of wisdom and knowledge. He is the advisor of the gods.

I will make it quiet again. Let's get some rest!
Tiamat heard these things.
She was angry. She responded to her husband.
She was upset. She was really mad.
It made her depressed,
 What is this? Should we destroy what we created?
 They have caused a lot of trouble. But, let's be nice.
Mummu gave an answer. He advised Apsu.
His advice was [...] and unmerciful,
 My father, destroy them. You need to stop their mutiny.
 Then you can be calm during the day. You can have rest at night.
Apsu heard this. His face glowed.
He planned evil against his sons, the gods.
He hugged Mummu's neck.
He got down on his knees. He kissed Mummu.
They made a plot together.
Their first born, the gods, heard about it.
When they heard it, they were worried.
They became quiet. They did not say a word.
He was the most wise, accomplished, and resourceful.
Ea was all wise. He saw through their plot.
He created his own master plan.
He made a crafty scheme. It was better than theirs.
He recited it. He left it in the waters.
He poured sleep on him. He was sound asleep.
He made Apsu lay down. He was covered with sleep.
The advisor Mummu could not move.
He loosened his headband. He removed his crown.
He took off his halo. He put it on himself.
He bound up Apsu. Then he killed him.
He tied up Mummu. He put him in prison.
He did this to Apsu. He established himself.
He took hold of Mummu. He held him by a rope.
Ea overcame. He walked on his enemies.
He was in his holy room. He rested in complete peace.
He named his temple Apsu.
He created his shrine in that place.
He and his wife, Damkina, lived there.
They were in the room of fate. It was their house of destiny.

He created a god. He was the most skilled and wise god.
 Marduk¹ was created in the heart of Apsu.
 Ea was his father. He created him.
 Damkina was his mother. She bore him.
 He sucked the breast of a goddess.
 His nurse filled him with power.
 He was handsome. His eyes sparkled.
 He walked with authority. He was mature.

Ea was his father. Ea saw Marduk.
 He was proud. His heart was happy.
 He made him complete. He made him twice divine.
 He was better than the other gods. He was great all over.
 Each part of him was stunning. He was beyond knowing.
 He could not be understood. He was difficult to know.

He had four eyes. He had four ears.
 He moved his lips. Fire came out.
 His ears were huge.
 He had the same number of eyes. They could see everything.
 He was the highest of gods. He was the tallest.
 Every limb was enormous. He was very tall,

My little son! My little son!
 My son. The sun. Sun of heaven.

He wore the crown of ten gods. He was the strongest.
 They threw their flashes at him.
 Anu came forward. He bore the four winds. He made the tornado.
 He made streams to upset Tiamat.
 The gods had no rest. They suffered through the storm.
 They plotted evil in their hearts.
 Tiamat was their mother. They spoke to her,

Apsu was your husband. They killed him.
 You did not help him. You stayed still.
 He created the terrible four winds.
 Your vital parts were diluted. We can have no rest.
 Consider Apsu, your husband.
 Think about Mummu. He was defeated. You are left alone.
 [...] You walk around upset.
 [...] without end. You do not love us!
 [...] our eyes are pinched.
 [...] without end. Let us have rest!
 [...] to battle. Avenge them!

1. *Marduk* is the god of vegetation and judgment. He is the son of Ea and Damkina.

[...] Make them like the wind!
These words made Tiamat happy,
[...] you have given. We will make monsters.
[...] and the gods in the middle [...]
[...] let's fight against the gods [...]

They got together. They marched beside Tiamat.
They were in a rage. They plotted all day and night.
They are ready to fight. They growl and shout.
They formed a council. They prepared to fight.

Their mother is Hubur¹. She makes everything.
She created special weapons. She bore monster snakes.
They have sharp teeth. They have long fangs.
She filled their body with venom instead of blood.
The dragons roar. She made them terrible.
She put crowns on them. She made them like gods.
Whoever looks at them will suddenly die.
When they stand up, no one can get away.

She setup the Viper, the Dragon, and the Sphinx,
The Great Lion, the Mad Dog, and the Scorpion Man,
Mighty Lion Demons, the Dragon Fly, and the Centaur.
They have weapons that kill everyone. They are fearless in battle.
Her orders were firm. No one could disobey.
She brought eleven creatures like this.

She picked some gods. They were her firstborn. They formed the council.
She elevated Kingu². He was the chief.
He lead the ranks. He commanded the council.
He prepared the weapons. He advanced to combat.
He was the commander in battle.
He trusted the fight to him. He sat in the council,

I cast the spell for you. I put you at the top of the council of the gods.
I give you full power to advise the gods.
You are the best. You are my only partner.
What you say trumps the god princes.

1. *Hubur* is another mother of the gods.

2. *Kingu* is another son of Tiamat.

She gave him the tablets of fate. She put them on his chest,
Your command cannot be changed. Your word will stand.

Kingu was seated. He had the rank of Anu.
The gods were his sons. They stated the result,
Your word will put out the fire.
It will humble the powerful weapon. Its power is potent.

Tiamat gave power to her work.
She prepared to fight the gods. They were her children.
Tiamat made trouble. She avenged Apsu.

She prepared for battle. Ea heard about it.
Ea heard about this matter.
He became completely silent. He sat still.
He thought further. His anger decreased.
Anshar was his ancestor. He approached him.
He came to his grandfather, Anshar.
He repeated Tiamat's plot,

My father. Tiamat bore us. But she hates us.
She setup the assembly. She is furious.
All the gods rally to her.
Even your children march with her.
They gather with Tiamat. They march beside her.

[The story continues]

Evaluate the Enuma Elish.

The gods create the world out of nothing. They are quite powerful.

However, even though the gods are extremely powerful, their power still has its limits. The gods can even be killed and die. They have huge rivalries with each other. They go to war against each other. Their power shifts from time to time. The gods are themselves created and have children with each other, forming extensive family relationships. Their motivations are not always pure.

Excerpt 4. *Atrahasis*.

Summarize the Atrahasis flood excerpt.

This flood narrative originates sometime between 2000 and 1600 BC in Babylon.

The gods are upset that the people make so much noise. The gods decide to bring a great flood.

The great hero Atrahasis appeals to the god Ea. He builds a boat to stay alive. He builds the boat according to specific designs. He loads every type of living creature into the boat.

Read the Atrahasis flood excerpt.¹

[Lines are missing from the beginning of the broken tablet.]

The land became large. The people became numerous.
The land roared like wild ox.

Because of their noise, he is disturbed.
He cannot sleep because they are so loud.

The god was upset by their noise.
Enlil² heard their shouting.

Enlil opened the assembly.
He spoke to the great gods of the assembly,

Do not arrange for them.
The people have not diminished.
They are more numerous than before.

The noise of mankind is annoying.
Their sound is disturbing.
They are so loud that I cannot sleep.

Cut off figs from these people.
Keep vegetables from their stomachs.

[...] There will be chills.
Pestilence will put an end to their noise.
It will blow on them like a storm.



1. This is an arrangement from a fragmentary text. It is difficult to know the correct order of the different tablets that make up this narrative.
2. *Enlil* is the god of the air, breath, and war.

They will have aches, chills, and fever.
Adad¹ will make the rain scarce.
He dammed up the flood.
It would not rise from the source.
The wind blew.
It opened up the [...] .
Let the clouds hold back.
The sky will not pour rain.
The land will keep its crops.
It will turn the chest of Nisaba².
The fields turned white during the night.
The plain brought salt.
No plant grew. No grain sprouted.
Fever came on the people.
The womb was bound. It could not have children.
The second year arrived.
[...] the barns.
The third year arrived.
The people became hostile in their [...] .
The fourth year arrived.
Their places became cramped.
Their wide [...] became too narrow.
They wandered in the streets. They were downcast.
The fifth year arrived.
The daughter looked for her mother's entrance.
The mother would not open the door for her daughter.
The daughter watched her mother's balances.
The mother watched her daughter's balances.
The sixth year arrived.
They prepared to eat the daughter.
They prepared to eat the child.
They were full [...] .
One house ate another.
They covered their faces like the ghosts of the dead.
The people held their breath.
They received the message [...] .
They entered [...] .

1. *Adad* is the god of the storm and the rain.

2. *Nisaba* is the goddess of grain.

[There are lines missing here.]

In the morning, he will make it pour down.
It will last through the night.
He will make it rain.
It will come on the field like a thief. [...]

Adad created it in the city [...].
This is what they said. They called [...],

They made a huge noise [...].
They were not afraid [...].

[There are many missing lines here.]

Enki¹ opened his mouth.
He spoke to Enlil,

Why did you command [...]?
I will stretch my hand out to the [...].
You commanded the flood [...].
Who is he? I [...].
I give birth to my people.

[There are many missing lines here.]

The man Atrahasis² has wisdom.
He pays attention to his lord Ea³.
He talks with his god.
His lord, Ea, talks to him.

Atrahasis opened his mouth. He spoke to Ea his lord,

Lord. Mankind cries out.
You anger consumes the land.
Ea. Lord. Mankind groans.
The anger of the gods consumes the land.
Yet you created us.
There will be aches, dizziness, chills, and fever.
[...] show me the meaning of the dream.
So that I can seek its [...]

Ea opened his mouth.
He spoke to his servant Atrahasis,

You said, 'Let me seek [...].'
I am about to give you a task.

-
1. *Enki* is the god of the water.
 2. *Atrahasis* is a wise man. The gods give him eternal life.
 3. *Ea* is the god of the earth.

Pay careful attention to it.
Wall, listen to me.
House, guard all my words carefully.
Destroy the house. Build the ship.
Renounce all worldly goods.
Keep yourself alive!
You will build a ship.
[...] will appear in the land.
[...] Pray to your goddess.
[There are many missing lines here.]
[...] Like the vault of [...] .
[...] Strong above and below.
[...] Close [...] .
[...] At the appointed time. I will inform you.
Enter the ship. Shut the door of the ship.
Bring grain into it. Bring your goods and possessions.
Bring your wife, your family, your household, and the craftsman.
Bring beasts and creatures of the field. Bring those that eat plants.
I will send them to you. They will close the door.
Atrahasis opened his mouth. He spoke to Ea his lord,
I have never built a ship.
Draw a design of it on the ground.
I will look at the design. Then I will build the ship.
[...] Draw on the ground [...] .
[...] I will do what you commanded me [...] .
[There are many missing lines here.]

Analyze the Atrahasis flood narrative.

The gods decide to destroy mankind with a great flood. Atrahasis is a righteous man, so they preserve him by instructing him to build a large boat. He and his family are preserved along with all the animals on the boat.

There are many gods, and their power is distributed. The gods destroy mankind because they are noisy and too numerous. The gods have little regard for the welfare of mankind, and seem to enjoy torturing them.

Draw some conclusions.

Contrast the gods of other creation narratives with the God of Genesis.

In the Mesopotamian narratives, the gods are not all-powerful. They commit evil. They act more like really strong but flawed people.

The gods do have the power to create, but some gods create other gods, so they themselves are part of the creation. The gods disagree with each other, and they even go to war against each other. The gods are stronger than the people, but people still trick or overpower them. The gods get angry for fairly weak reasons, for example, the people are too loud or too numerous. The gods are afraid of each other, and sometimes even certain people.

The gods are distant and mostly disinterested in human lives.

The God of the Bible is all powerful. He answers to no one. He loves people. He absolutely creates the world and everything in it, but himself is not created. He is alone in power, with no rival, and he does not create other gods. He expects absolute obedience because he says so—there are no exceptions. He loves man; he wants to be merciful; he shows compassion; he never misbehaves.

Contrast the message of other creation narratives with Genesis.

Genesis creates a completely different picture of creation using metaphors familiar in the ancient world. Genesis is a radical departure from the Mesopotamian view of the gods. The scriptures do not just borrow cultural metaphors. Genesis destroys them. It gives a completely different way to understand them.

Genesis is polemic literature, poking holes in the prevailing wisdom of the cultures surrounding Israel. It retells the creation and flood in a way that dismisses the false pretensions of idolatrous culture.

According to Genesis, the God described is the real one. Others are counterfeit.

The world did not create itself. It is not an accident. The world is not just mythical, philosophical, or meaningless. It is the deliberate creative product of a loving and all-powerful god.

God created the universe for all the people and particularly for *me*. He wants a relationship with me.

God does not have to contend with any forces. He did not ask for anyone's consent. He does not need anyone's permission. He alone created the world. It was for his purposes. He did it intentionally. He did it because he wanted to do it. He answers to no one.

The ocean, the earth, the wind, the sky, the sun, the moon, the stars, the plants, weather, man, the animals, life, and the snake present no threat to god. They offer no competition to him. Nothing competes with him. He *created* them. They are not *alive*. They are *not* gods. They exist for the benefit of man. They are not foes to be defeated. They are not objects of worship.

God is intrinsically good. He is all good. What he creates is all good, even *very good*. He defines what is good.

God is stable. He is reasonable. He communicates what he wants. He is not hiding the rules of engagement. He says what he means. He means what he says. He acts consistently. He deliberates. He is not capricious, cruel, inconsistent, or unpredictable. He is not random. He wants to bless you. He does not trap or trick you. He likes you.

Do not appease god out of fear. Do not worry about what crazy thing God might do next.

You are created in his image. However, do not worship people or images. His creatures should worship *him*, not his image. *He* created *his own* image. *Live* as he commands. *This* appeases him. God is invisible. He cannot be reduced to an image made with human hands.

God does not need a temple to be worshiped. The entire world is his temple. You are his temple. He does not need you to feed him, care for him, or give him anything. *He* does not need *you* to survive. He gives *you* everything that *you* need.

He does not interact with kings or priests alone. Specially appointed heroic people do not provide exclusive access to him. Everyday, normal, average people can walk and talk with him.

Defend the point of view that Genesis presents: God is absolutely in control. Obey him. Love him. Be grateful for him. Accept and extend his mercy. Serve him. Accept the biblical view of the world. Do not accept the one that the world offers.

Examine some related works.

1. *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*. Edited by James B. Pritchard. Second edition, corrected and enlarged. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1955.
2. *Documents from Old Testament Times*. Edited by D. Winton Thomas. London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1958.
3. Heidel, Alexander. *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1949.
4. *Near Eastern Religious Texts Relating to the Old Testament*. Edited by Walter Beyerlin. Translated by John Bowden. The Old Testament Library. Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1978.
5. Wenham, Gordon J. *Genesis 1-15*. Word Biblical Commentary, volume 1. Waco, TX: Word Books, 1987.