

A Synopsis of the Babylonian Creation Myth¹

Fresh-Water *Apsu* and Marine-Water Mummu-*Tiamat* com-
mingled and produced the gods

Lahmu and Lahamu

Anshar and Kishar

Sky Anu

Nudimud = Earth and Water God Ea, “the all-wise” and
Enki (Wisdom)

They became one big noisy family! So noisy and dysfunc-
tional that Father Apsu could not stand it. He wanted the two
generations of the gods silenced — by killing them:

Their ways are verily loathsome unto me. By day I find
no relief, nor repose by night. I will destroy, I will wreck
their ways, That quiet may be restored, Let us have rest!”

Vizier Mummu advised:

Do destroy, my father,” the mutinous ways. Then shalt
thou have relief by day and rest at night! When Apsu
heard this, his face grew radiant because of the evil he
planned against the gods, his sons.

But Ea, learning of Grandfather Apsu’s desire to silence/
eliminated the family, slew Apsu before Apsu could slay
them. The murdered Apsu becomes Ea’s abode. The god
Kingu (also called Weila) married “widow” Tiamat and
inspired Tiamat to avenge Apsu’s death. Concurring with
Kingu, Tiamat sought to destroy her offspring, so her children
and grandchildren wanted to kill her before she can kill them.
But Tiamat was too powerful for any or all of them until

Marduk (“My son, the Sun! The Sun of the heavens”) was born of Ea and Daminkina. The mighty Marduk was strong enough to slay Tiamat. He used the four winds (Whirlwind, Hurricane, Cyclone, Tornado) and four horsemen (Swift, Relentless, Trampling, Killer), which “bearing poison they were versed in ravage, in destruction skilled” (see Tablet III, lines 30-66, *ANET* 61–67).

When Tiamat opened her mouth to consume him [Marduk], he drove in the Evil Wind that she close not her lips. As the fierce winds charged her belly, her body was distended and her mouth was wide open. He released the arrow, it tore her bell. It cut through her insides, splitting the heart. Having thus subdued her, he extinguished her life. . . . With his unsparing mace he crushed her skull . . . he split her like a shellfish into two parts: Half of her he set up and ceiled it as sky.²

This creation story asserts that creation was born out of violence. Violence *was* normative, therefore violence *is* normative—it is the way of the gods/God and it the way of heaven and earth. This “theology of violence” perpetuates itself down to modern times in a number of religions and, in my opinion, contributed to the violence of September 11.

NOTES

1. See <http://www.sacred-texts.com/ane/enuma.htm>. The Biblical creation stories in Genesis 1-2 offered an alternative to the Babylonian perception of ultimate reality. For the Israelite theologians who crafted the Genesis story, God’s

creation transformed chaos into cosmos, simply by the power of the word: “and God said, ‘Let there be . . . ’” It was radically non-violent. The pre-existent Power (in Hebrew the noun for “God” means “power”), through a word created Wisdom (Proverbs 8:22). And then, with Wisdom, “the Power” made it all. It was all good! Non-violence was normative in the act of creation and within the creation, itself. To read the biblical stories of creation without consideration of their original purpose can only result in a misreading of the texts and a misunderstanding of their intent. The “Big Bang” which concerned the theologians who crafted the Genesis creation stories was not the theory of contemporary astronomers but the “big bangs” when Ea slew Apsu and Marduk “with his unsparing mace crushed her [Tiamat’s] skull” (Tablet IV, line 130). Neither the Babylonian creation myths or the biblical creation stories were concerned about factual scientific accuracy for specialists in cosmogony. They were making faith statements about the nature of ultimate reality. For Babylon creation was characterized by violence in heaven and on earth; for Jerusalem creation came about by words and wisdom without any hint of violence in heaven or in Eden.

2. Marduk was the state god of Babylon to whom were transferred the exploits of the storm and creator god, Enlil, the chief god of Nippur. Marduk becomes the creator of *lulu* “human beings.” *Lulu* is a mixture of clay and the blood and spirit of Kingu, who was condemned for instigating Tiamat to avenge the death of Apsu. (See Tablet VI, *ANET* p. 68)