

BABYLONIAN CREATION

From the Enuma Elish, 2050-1750 BC

Before anything had a name, before there was firm ground or sky or the sun and moon there was Apsu, the sweet water sea and Tiamat, the salt water sea.

When these two seas mingled, they created the gods Lahmu and Lahamu, who rose from the silt at the edge of the water. When Lahmu and Lahamu joined, they created the great gods Anshar, Kishar and Anu. From this generation of gods there arose mighty Ea and his many brothers.

Ea and his brothers were restless - they surged over the waters day and night. Neither Apsu nor Tiamat could get any rest. They tried to plead with the gods to tread softly, but powerful Ea didn't hear them. Apsu decided the only way to have some peace was to destroy Ea and his brothers. He began to plot their demise with some of the first generation gods. But Ea heard of their plans and struck him down first. This began a war among the gods.

Tiamat was furious that her mate was killed, and she began producing great and ferocious monsters to slay Ea and his brothers. She created poisonous dragons and demons and serpents. She created the Viper, the Sphinx, the Lion, the Mad Dog and Scorpion Man. The chief of them all was called Kingu. He led the army of Tiamat's monsters into heaven against Ea and his brothers to avenge Apsu's death.

While Tiamat fashioned her army, Ea and the goddess Damkina created the great god Marduk. Marduk was the most powerful creation ever. He towered over the others. He had four eyes and four ears and could see and hear everything in creation.

His eyes flashed with lightning and when he spoke he breathed fire. He was fearless and radiant. The gods covered before him. "You are the Great Sun!" they cried.

Ea and the gods told him of the advancing army. They needed his help to defeat them. "I will fight for you but after the war is over I shall rule the universe on high!"

The gods agreed. Marduk made ready for battle. He gathered the four winds to clear the path to Tiamat.

Marduk burst out of the sky in his flaming chariot pulled by his team Killer, Crusher, Unyielder and Fleet. He held the royal scepter and ring, covered in golden armor. He rode into battle bearing his bow and arrows and a mighty thunderbolt. Marduk was glorious to behold. He struck fear in the hearts of all of Tiamat's brood. The sea waters of Tiamat swirled together and formed a vast and fearsome dragon. She opened her mouth wide to scream.

Before she could utter a word, Marduk cast a hurricane into her mouth. She swallowed it and the hurricane almost burst her apart from the inside.

Before she could cast a single spell, Marduk let one of his arrows fly; it cut her neatly in half. Tiamat's monsters trembled as she died. Marduk raised half of her body to the heavens to form the sky and the other half formed the earth.

Marduk was victorious, and now the undisputed king of the universe. No one ever questioned his rule. He created the days of the year, the planets and their paths in the heavens, the stars and their constellations and the moon and her moods. He became the sun and gave all the gods their responsibilities.

After a time he decided to create a creature that could serve the gods and bear the burden of hard work looking after the earth. Marduk first created a structure from bone, left over from the bones of the dead monsters from the war. Then he formed the flesh around it and breathed life into it.

Man was given his name. He took up residence on the earth while the gods ascended to heaven. Thus the gods were freed from eternal labor.

