

who looks after the decision of all that is.

[An early gloss adds, "That is Osiris, while as to all that is, that is eternity and everlastingness."]

...

I fulfilled all my desires when I was alone,
before there had appeared a second to be with me in this place;
I assumed form as that great soul wherein I started being creative
while still in the Primeval Waters in a state of inertness,
before I had found anywhere to stand.

I considered in my heart, I planned in my head how I should make
every shape

—this was while I was still alone—I planned in my heart how I
should create

other beings—the myriad forms of Khopri—and that there should
come into being their children and theirs.

So it was I who spat forth Shu and expectorated Tefnut
so that where there had been one god there were now three as well
as myself

and there were now a male and a female in the world.

Shu and Tefnut rejoiced thereat in the Primeval Waters in which
they were.

After an age my Eye brought them to me and they approached me
and joined my body, that they might issue from me.

When I rubbed with my fist my heart came into my mouth in that
I spat forth Shu and expectorated Tefnut.

But, as my father was relaxed . . . ages . . . serpents . . .

I wept tears . . . the form of my Eye; and that is how mankind came
into existence.

I replaced it with a shining one [the sun] and it became enraged with
me when it came back and found another growing in its place.

[R. T. Rundle Clark, *Myth and Symbol in Ancient Egypt*
(London, 1959, 1978), pp. 77, 79, 93.]

MESOPOTAMIA: *Enuma Elish* and the World Parent

One of the world's oldest written creation myths is the Babylonian *Enuma Elish* ("When on high"), composed no later than the reign of Nebuchadrezzar in the twelfth century B.C.E. and perhaps much earlier. It is in part a creation myth and in part a celebration of the high god Marduk. As a creation myth, it contains several familiar motifs: the emergence of order from chaos, the primal waters

as a source of creation, a war in heaven, the emergence of a king god, and the creation of earthly matter from the body of the first mother, the world parent. The war in heaven is repeated in many cultures, perhaps most notably in the war between the Olympians and the older Titans in Greek mythology, in which Zeus, like Marduk, emerges in the end as undisputed king of the universe.

The *Enuma Elish* begins:

"When on high [*enuma elish*] heaven and earth had not yet been named."

It goes on to relate how Apsu, the primordial freshwater, and Mummu (Mother) Tiamat, the great saltwater body, "commingled" and so produced the silt deposits Lahmu and Lahamu, which we call "land." The union of Lahmu and Lahamu led to the first family of gods, Anshar and Kishar and their son Anu, who in turn fathered a young family of deities led by Ea. Ea and his brothers reveled in their existence and roamed over the commingled waters, creating wild winds that disturbed their ancient grandparents Apsu and Tiamat. When Apsu made plans to curb the play of the young gods, he was killed by them. This infuriated Apsu's mate, Tiamat, and she created horrifying monsters to help her take revenge. Anshar, Anu, and Ea made battle against these monstrous forces but were unable to subdue them. Meanwhile, Ea's consort Damkina gave birth to the great god Marduk, whom Ea called "my son, the Great Sun."

Seeing that his father and the others would lose the battle, the young Marduk sensed an opportunity. He offered to conquer Tiamat if he could be named King of the Gods and the Universe. After testing his powers over the skies, the gods agreed to Marduk's conditions, and Marduk, now the powerful storm god, took up his thunderbolt and charged the furious waters of Tiamat. The ancient goddess herself had taken the form of a monstrous dragon of the deep. In a terrible struggle, Marduk, the new sky god, defeated the ancient mother of the primordial waters and "divided her like a shell-fish" to form Heaven and Earth. Marduk then proceeded to turn what had been the chaotic creation presided over by Apsu and Tiamat into an ordered process by which Tiamat became a de facto world parent.

Out of her head Marduk made a mountain. Her eyes became the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, her breasts hills, her nostrils reservoirs. Marduk then established Babylon as his temple city and the unified

home of the gods. Out of the blood of Tiamat's son—some say lover—Qingu, Marduk had Ea create humans, who would do the work that the gods preferred not to do.

ISRAEL: Genesis and the Talmudic Lilith

The watery chaos or "deep" (*tehom*) of the Hebrew creation story, part of which was probably composed during and soon after the Babylonian captivity (that is, during the sixth and fifth centuries B.C.E.), owes something to the concept of Tiamat in the Babylonian *Enuma Elish*. If the Tiamat-*tehom* connection is not clear in the official Hebrew creation story, it is evident enough elsewhere in Hebrew scripture. When we read these words from Psalm 89 (9–10), we are reminded of the Babylonian wars in heaven and of the creative splitting of the primal mother, the world parent:

Thou rulest the raging of the sea: when
the waves thereof arise, thou stillest them.
Thou hast broken Rahab in pieces, as one
that is slain; thou hast scattered thine
enemies with thy strong arm.

But if the Babylonian creation myth was meant to establish the rule of Marduk, the Hebrew Genesis seems to be more concerned with the establishment of humanity's role in the universe. Genesis is, in fact, made up of two somewhat distinct myths. Genesis I contains the version composed probably as late as the fifth century B.C.E.; Genesis II is a much earlier text, perhaps as early as 950 B.C.E. The differences to be particularly noted are those that concern the creation of the first humans. The story of the first humans in both of the Genesis versions continues to affect the relationship between men and women today.

Chapter 1

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.

- 2 And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness *was* upon the face of the deep. And the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.
- 3 And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.

...

- 26 And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.

- 27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.
- 28 And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.
- 29 And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat.
- 30 And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat: and it was so. . . .

Chapter 2

Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them.

- 2 And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made.

...

- 7 And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.
- 8 And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed.
- 9 And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil.
- 10 And a river went out from Eden to water the garden; and from thence it was parted, and became into four heads.

...

- 15 And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it.
- 16 And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat:
- 17 But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.
- 18 And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.
- 19 And out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof.