

Celia Hammer: A Love Letter from Uruk

Or, How to become a Scribe in Mesopotamia

NOTES TO THE BOOK

I am including these notes in case there are any readers who want to explore some of the topics raised in the book further.

Please don't get bogged down in this – it is academic stuff. You can just enjoy the book on its own.

All this and much more is available in '**Celia's Library**' – menu option on the website.

I have so far as possible told stories that can be traced through more than one period in our literature. But, all the stories I tell are rooted in the Ancient Near East - a 3000 year civilization stretching from 3500BC – 332BC (approximately).

In 'A Love Letter from Uruk' I begin my exploration of the Ancient Near Eastern tradition in Sumer where writing was invented around 3500BC. Writing was developed to facilitate trade and the Sumerians had to 'discover' that it could also be applied probably first to letter writing and then gradually as a sophisticated tool for the development, implementation and propagation of knowledge.

There are lots of references to later literature in the book, not only in the captions to each chapter but also in the text, demonstrating the interdependence of the entire literary tradition.

[Ch. 1] Scorpions had to come into it because I remember the thrill I felt the first time I read this quote by Esarhaddon, King of Assyria (ruled 681-669 BC), describing the terrain on his campaign to Bazu (East Arabia) speaking *in his own voice*:

"As for the land Bāzu, a district in a remote place, a forgotten place of dry land, saline ground, a place of thirst, one hundred and twenty leagues of desert, thistles, and gazelle-tooth stones, where snakes and scorpions fill the plain like ants — I left Mount Ḫazû... behind me and crossed over to that district to which no king before me had gone since earliest days. By the command of the god Aššur, my lord, I marched triumphantly in its midst."

Celia'sLibrary/AncientNearEast/934-610BCTheNeoAssyrianEmpire/680-669BCEsarhaddon/Le
ichty-TheRoyalInscriptionsofEsarhaddonKingofAssyria680-669BC(Book).pdf

[Ch. 4] I included the rabid dog incident (ch. 4) both because rabies was a real danger at the time, and because I could tie it in to one of those many subsequent references (Harper Lee) that continue to enrich our response to the word 'rabies' and even 'dog':

Celia'sLibrary/AncientNearEast/3800-1595BCSumer/Yuhong-RabidDogsSumerianAkkadian.pdf

Celia'sLibrary/Literature/AmericanLiterature/1900-1999TwentiethCenturyAmericanLiterature/1926-02016HarperLee/HarperLee(1960)-ToKillAMockingbird.pdf

[Ch. 8, 13] Here is the Old Testament version of the story of Cain and Abel (Qain and Habel) and the Sumerian source. The Old Testament story of Cain and Abel was drawn from a Sumerian debate (these were popular in Sumer) between a herder and a farmer. In the debate they conclude, as Ensi confirms in the story, that society needs both herders and farmers. In keeping with the Old Testament theme against syncretism (the worship of other gods), Ensi refers to the implication from the Old Testament story that Qain and Habel worshipped incorrectly – *Celia*.

Genesis 4:1-16 (ESV)

Cain and Abel

4 Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, "I have gotten^[a] a man with the help of the LORD."² And again, she bore his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain a worker of the ground.³ In the course of time Cain brought to the LORD an offering of the fruit of the ground,⁴ and Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and his offering,⁵ but for Cain and his offering he had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his face fell.⁶ The LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen?⁷ If you do well, will you not be accepted?^[a] And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is contrary to^[c] you, but you must rule over it."

⁸ Cain spoke to Abel his brother.^[d] And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him.⁹ Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is Abel your brother?" He said, "I do not know; am I my brother's keeper?"¹⁰ And the LORD said, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground.¹¹ And now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand.¹² When you work the ground, it shall no longer yield to you its strength. You shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth."¹³ Cain said to the LORD, "My punishment is greater than I can bear.^[e]¹⁴ Behold, you have driven me today away from the ground, and from your face I shall be hidden. I shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me."¹⁵ Then the LORD said to him, "Not so! If anyone kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold." And the LORD put a mark on Cain, lest any who found him

should attack him.¹⁶ Then Cain went away from the presence of the LORD and settled in the land of Nod,^[1] east of Eden.

... and the Sumerian debate between the herder and the farmer.

Celia'sLibrary/AncientNearEast/LiteratureoftheANE/Pritchard-ANETAncientNearEasternTexts relatingtotheOldTestament.pdf pg. 41

Dumuzid and Enkimdu: translation

¹⁻⁶"Maiden, the cattle-pen; maiden **Inana**, the sheepfold bending in the furrows. **Inana**, let me stroll with you; the emmer Young lady, let me"

⁷⁻¹¹"I am a woman and I won't do that, I won't! I am a star, and I won't! I won't be the wife of a shepherd!" Her brother, the warrior youth **Utu**, said to holy **Inana**:

¹²⁻¹⁹"My sister, let the shepherd marry you! Maiden **Inana**, why are you unwilling? **His butter is good, his milk is good (2 mss. have instead: He of good butter, he of good milk)** -- all the work of the shepherd's hands is splendid. **Inana**, let **Dumuzid** marry you. You who wear jewellery, who wear *cuba* jewels, why are you unwilling? (**1 ms. adds 2 lines: His butter is good, his milk is good -- all the work of the shepherd's hands is splendid.**) He will eat his good butter with you. Protector of the king, why are you unwilling?"

²⁰⁻³⁴"The shepherd shall not marry me! He shall not make me carry his garments of new wool.

³⁵⁻³⁹These words the farmer to the shepherd. My king, the shepherd, **Dumuzid** to say

⁴⁰⁻⁵⁴"In what is the farmer superior to me, the farmer to me, the farmer to me? **Enkimdu**, the man of the dykes and canals -- in what is that farmer superior to me? Let him give me his black garment, and I will give the farmer my black ewe for it. Let him give me his white garment, and I will give the farmer my white ewe for it. Let him pour me his best beer, and I will pour the farmer my yellow milk for it. Let him pour me his fine beer, and I will pour the farmer my soured (?) milk for it. Let him pour me his brewed beer, and I will pour the farmer my whipped milk for it. Let him pour me his beer shandy, and I will pour the farmer my milk for it.

⁵⁵⁻⁶⁴"Let him give me his best filtered beer, and I will give the farmer my curds (?). Let him give me his best bread, and I will give the farmer my milk for it. Let him give me his little beans, and I will give the farmer my small cheeses for them. (**1 ms. adds 2 lines: Let him give me his large beans, and I will give the farmer my big cheeses for them.**) After letting him eat and letting him drink, I will even leave extra butter for him, and I will leave extra milk for him. In what is the farmer superior to me?"

⁶⁵⁻⁷³He was cheerful, he was cheerful, at the edge of the riverbank, he was cheerful. On the riverbank, the shepherd on the riverbank, now the shepherd was even pasturing the sheep on the riverbank. The farmer approached the shepherd there, the shepherd pasturing the sheep on the riverbank; the farmer **Enkimdu** approached him there. **Dumuzid** the farmer, the king of dyke and canal. From the plain where he was, the shepherd from the plain where he was provoked a quarrel with him; the shepherd **Dumuzid** from the plain where he was provoked a quarrel with him.

⁷⁴⁻⁷⁹"Why should I compete against you, shepherd, I against you, shepherd, I against you? Let your sheep eat the grass of the riverbank, let your sheep graze on my stubble. Let them eat grain in the jewelled (?) fields of **Unug**, let your kids and lambs drink water from my **Surungal** canal.

⁸⁰⁻⁸³"As for me who am a shepherd: when I am married, farmer, you are going to be counted as my friend. Farmer **Enkimdu**, you are going to be counted as my friend, farmer, as my friend."

⁸⁴⁻⁸⁷"I will bring you wheat, and I will bring you beans; I will bring you two-row barley from the threshing-floor. And you, maiden, I will bring you whatever you please, maiden **Inana**, barley or beans."

⁸⁸⁻⁸⁹The dispute between the shepherd and the farmer: maiden **Inana**, your praise is sweet.

⁹⁰A *balbale*.

[Ch. 8] Debra has been paying attention in her English lit class. The metaphor is oblique and complicated, but in the poem Coleridge places the 'Ancient Mariner' in the tradition of Cain (amongst others).

Celia's Library\Literature\1800 - 1850 Romanticism\1772 - 1834 SamuelTaylorColeridge

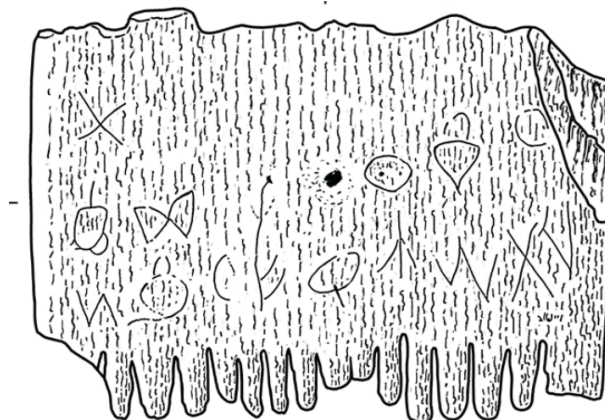
[Ch. 16] I drew this nice domestic detail from a Canaanite lice comb found at Lachish in Israel and has been dated to anywhere between 1900 – 1500BC (This is not exactly the same as Sumer in 2087BC, Debra!).

Debra hasn't been to school in Uruk yet so it's utterly amazing that she can read anything at all, but anyway, her translation isn't very good (if the inscription is the same). The actual inscription on this comb says (carved out of ivory – hence the reference to a tooth):

'May this tooth root out the lice of the hair and the beard'.



Wikipedia(20260524
)-CanaaniteIvoryComl



Daniel Vainstub, Madeleine Mumcuoglu, Michael G. Hasel, Katherine M. Hesler, Miriam Lavi, Rivka Rabinovich, Yuval Goren and Yosef Garfinkel, 2022. A Canaanite's Wish to Eradicate Lice on an Inscribed Ivory Comb from Lachish. *Jerusalem Journal of Archaeology* 2: 76–119.

ISSN: 2788-8819; <https://doi.org/10.52486/01.00002.4>; <https://jjar.huji.ac.il>

Celia'sLibrary/AncientNearEast/Archaeology/Palestine/ChalkValleysandShephelah/Lachish(TellEdDuweir)/VainstubMumcuoglu(2022)-ACanaanitesWishtoEradicateLiceonaCombfromLachish.pdf

[Ch. 17] Abraham draws on two Bilgamesh/Gilgamesh stories here. The beginning of this episode comes from the Epic of Gilgamesh itself. Here,

Gilgamesh is accused of playing unruly games with the young men of Uruk (The Epic of Gilgamesh, translated by A. R. George):

'He has no equal when his weapons are brandished,
His companions are kept on their feet by his contests.'

The remainder of the episode comes from an early Sumerian text 'Bilgamesh and Agga/Akka' that was not included in the later Akkadian version of the Epic of Gilgamesh:

'The envoys of Akka, Enmebaragesi's son,
Came from Kish to Bilgames in Uruk ...' (tr. *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, A. R. George)

[Ch. 18] This episode is Debra's version of Tablet 6 of the Epic of Gilgamesh.

Celia's Library\AncientNearEast\LiteratureoftheANE\Gilgamesh

[Ch. 19] Debra does not know what to make of this episode where God makes his covenant with Abram (his name changed to Abraham only after he became a father). It seems likely to Celia that this episode is instrumental for Debra's decision at the end of the book to continue in the path in which she has begun and which follows that taken by her father, in order to fulfil her own destiny – it may also have supported her during those times when her trust in having been given a task by God and her purpose for being here must have seemed unreal and even silly - until that moment in the back-yard with Leqi and Ilulu ...

Genesis 15:7-21 (ESV)

7 And he said to him, "I am the Lord who brought you out from Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to possess." ⁸ But he said, "O Lord God, how am I to know that I shall possess it?" ⁹ He said to him, "Bring me a heifer three years old, a female goat three years old, a ram three years old, a turtledove, and a young pigeon." ¹⁰ And he brought him all these, cut them in half, and laid each half over against the other. But he did not cut the birds in half. ¹¹ And when birds of prey came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away.

¹² As the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell on Abram. And behold, dreadful and great darkness fell upon him. ¹³ Then the LORD said to Abram, "Know for certain that your offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs and will be servants there, and they will be afflicted for four hundred years. ¹⁴ But I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions. ¹⁵ As for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried in a good old age. ¹⁶ And they shall come back here in the fourth generation, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete."

¹⁷When the sun had gone down and it was dark, behold, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between these pieces. ¹⁸On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, "To your offspring I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates ...

[Ch. 20] The story that Nana relates and that she discusses with Debra, combines elements from the Sumerian and the Old Testament versions of the Tower of Babel. Nana also (naughty!) includes an explanation for the confusion between bricks and cement from a 'midrash' (a rabbinical commentary from about 200AD):

[Sumerian version]

In those days there was no snake, there was no scorpion, there was no hyena,

2. There was no lion, there was no wild dog, no wolf,

3. There was no fear, no terror,

4. Man had no rival.

5. In those days, the land Subur, the place of plenty, of righteous decrees,

6. Harmony-tongued Sumer, the great land of the decrees of princship,

7. Uri, the land having all that is needful.

8. The land Martu resting in security,

9. The whole universe, the people in unison,

10. To Enlil in one tongue [gave praise].

11. In those days the . . lord, the . . prince, the . king,

12., Enki, the . . lord, the . prince, the . king,

13. The . . lord . , the prince ., the . king..

14. ... the day of plenty ...

Man's Golden Age: A Sumerian Parallel to Genesis XI. 1 Author(s): S. N. Kramer Reviewed work(s):Source: Journal of the American Oriental Society, Vol. 63, No. 3 (Jul. - Sep., 1943), pp. 191-194 Published by: American Oriental Society Stable [Man's Golden Age: A Sumerian Parallel to Genesis XI. 1](#)

Celia'sLibrary/Bible/HebrewBible/Genesis/Gen1-11/Genesis11.1-9TheTowerofBabel/Kramer(1943)-ASumerianParalleltoGenXI.1.pdf

Genesis 11:1-9 (ESV)

The Tower of Babel

11 Now the whole earth had one language and the same words. ²And as people migrated from the east, they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there. ³And they said to one another, "Come, let us make bricks, and burn them thoroughly." And they had brick for stone, and bitumen for mortar. ⁴Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth." ⁵And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of man had built. ⁶And the LORD said, "Behold, they are one people, and they have all one language, and this is only the beginning of what they will do. And nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them. ⁷Come, let us go down and there confuse their language, so that they may not understand one another's speech." ⁸So the LORD dispersed them from there over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city. ⁹Therefore its name was called Babel, because there the LORD confused^[a] the language of all the earth. And from there the LORD dispersed them over the face of all the earth.

[Ch. 22] The prayer to Nisaba that Nana pronounces as an example of the correct form to Debra and Leqi isn't actually a prayer it is what is generally known as a 'wisdom' text

(I don't really have it in for translators and certainly not for the translators of ancient languages and broken texts, but I do a little translation myself and I can't help poking fun at the desperate words you sometimes come up with to translate something untranslatable - *Celia*):

The advice of a supervisor to a younger scribe (E-dub-ba-a C): c.5.1.3

"Nisaba has placed in your hand the honour of being a teacher. For her, the fate determined for you will be changed and so you will be generously blessed. May she bless you with a joyous heart and free you from all despondency. at whatever is in the school, the place of learning."

<https://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?simplesearchword=nisaba&simplesearch=translation&searchword=&charenc=gcirc&lists=>

Celia'sLibrary/AncientNearEast/LiteratureoftheANE/Sumerian/ETCSLTheAdviceofaSupervisor toaYoungScribe.pdf

[Ch. 23] The prescient Ensi is quoting from 'Leviathan' pt. 1 ch. 13 by Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679AD).

'Whatsoever therefore is consequent to a time of war, where every man is enemy to every man, the same consequent to the time wherein men live without other security than what their own strength and their own invention shall furnish them withal. In such condition there is no place for industry, because the fruit thereof is uncertain: and consequently no culture of the earth; no navigation, nor use of the commodities that may be imported by sea; no commodious building; no instruments of moving and removing such things as require much force; no knowledge of the face of the earth; no account of time; no arts; no letters; no society; and which is worst of all, continual fear, and danger of violent death; **and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.**'

[Ch. 23, 24] Debra's description of school in Sumer draws specifically on a praise poem attributed to the son of the king '**Lipit-Eštar's Praise in the Edubba**'. This text includes a lot of grammar and many copies and fragments have been found. It is thought to have been a starter text for Akkadian boys learning Sumerian.

Author(s): H. L. J. Vanstiphout Source: Journal of Cuneiform Studies, Vol. 30, No. 1 (Jan., 1978), pp. 33-61

Published by: American Schools of Oriental Research Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1359932>

How Did They Learn Sumerian? Author(s): H. L. J. Vanstiphout

Source: Journal of Cuneiform Studies, Vol. 31, No. 2 (Apr., 1979), pp. 118-126 Published by: [American Schools of Oriental Research](#)

36. The mighty do not perpetrate robbery,
37. And the strong do not make the weaker ones into hirelings-
38. Thus you established justice in Sumer and Akkad,
39. And made pleasant (the life of) everybody in the Land.
40. Lipit-estar, king of Isin, king of Sumer and Akkad,
41. To Nippur you are the Scribe;
42. To the Ekur, Enlil's house,
- 42a. Lipit-estar, you are its provider;
43. For Enlil and Ninlil you are the love of their hearts;
44. The hero Ninurta is your powerful guard,
45. And vizier Nuska enforces your decisions.
46. You are the Isib-priest for Kes, whom Nintu
- 46a. Truly chose.
47. Installed in Ur, you are the youth who has the attention of Suen.
48. You are the one whom Enki gave the true tiara in Eridu.
49. For holy Inanna in the region of Uruk,
- 49a. You, Lipit-estar, are her heart's delight.
50. Ninisinna in Isin
- 50a. Made you sit on your lofty dais.
51. With a hearty song of joy, in a prosperous regnal year,
52. The prince, the valiant prince surpassing in greatness and nobility,
53. Your father Isme-dagan, king of the land,
54. Stabilized the foundation of your throne,
55. And upon the order spoken by An and Enlil
56. He silenced the loud strife of the foreign countries.
57. You, Lipit-estar, Enlil's son
58. Have put your righteousness on everybody's lips;
59. Your praise shall never disappear from the clay in the Edubba;
60. May every scribe therefore sing of this bliss
- 60a. And glorify (you) greatly,
61. So that your laudation in the Edubba shall not cease.
62. O leading shepherd, youthful son of Enlil,
63. Lipit-estar, be praised!

I've also included the entire text of '**Schooldays**' although it is heavy going, in order to include the references to caning that Debra mentions (sorry Debra, 9 canings), and the teacher's coming to dinner (line 55 onwards) that is described in **ch. 29**.

"Schoolboy, where did you go from earliest days?"

"I went to school."

"What did you do in school?"

"I read my tablet, ate my lunch,
prepared my tablet, wrote it, finished it; then
my prepared lines were prepared for me

(and in) the afternoon, my hand copies were prepared for me.
Upon the school's dismissal, I went home,
Entered the house, (there) was my father sitting.

I spoke to my father of my hand copies, then
Read the tablet to him, (and) my father was pleased;
Truly I found favor with my father.
"I am thirsty, give me drink,
I am hungry, give me bread,
Wash my feet, set up the bed, I want to go to sleep;
Wake me early in the morning,
I must not be late, (or) my teacher will cane me."
When I awoke early in the morning,
I faced my mother, and
Said to her: "Give me my lunch, I want to go to school."
My mother gave me two "rolls," I left her;
My mother gave me two "rolls," I went to school.
In the tablet-house, the monitor said to me: "Why are you late?" I was
afraid, my heart beat fast.
I entered before my teacher, took (my) place.
My "school-father" read my tablet to me,
(said) "The. . . is cut off," caned me.
I . . . d to him lunch. . . lunch.
The teacher in supervising the school duties,
Looked into house and street in order to pounce upon some one, (said) "Your. . . is not. . .," caned me.

My "school-father" brought me my tablet.
What was in charge of the courtyard said "Write," . . . a peaceful place.
I took my tablet, . . .
I write my tablet, . . . my. . .
Its unexamined part my. . . does not know.
Who was in charge of . . . (said) "Why when I was not here did you talk?" caned me. Who was in
charge of the. . . (said) "Why when I was not here did you not keep your head high?"
caned me.
Who was in charge of drawing (said) "Why when I was not here did you stand up?" caned me.
Who was in charge of the gate (said) "Why when I was not here did you go out?" caned me.
Who was in charge of the. . . (said) "Why when I was not here did you take the. . .?" caned me.

Who was in charge of the Sumerian (said) "You spoke. . .," caned me.
My teacher (said) "Your hand is not good," caned me.
I neglected the scribal art, [I forsook] the scribal art,
My teacher did not. . .,
. . . d me his skill in the scribal art.
The. . . of words, the art of being a young scribe,
the. . . of the art of being a big brother, let no one. . . to school."
"Give me his gift, let him direct the way to you,
let him put aside counting and accounting;
the current school affairs

the schoolboys will. . ., verily they will. . . me."
To that which the schoolboy said, his father gave heed.
The teacher was brought from school;

having entered the house, he was seated in the seat of honor.
The schoolboy took the ... , sat down before him;
whatever he had learned of the scribal art,
he unfolded to his father.
His father, with joyful heart
says joyfully to his "school-father":
"You 'open the hand' of my young one, you make of him an expert,

show him all the fine points of the scribal art.
You have shown him all the more obvious details of the tablet-craft, of counting and accounting,
You have clarified for him all the more recondite details of the. . ."
"Pour out for him ... like good wine, bring him a stand,
make flow the good oil in his. . .-vessel like water,
I will dress him in a (new) garment, present him a gift, put a band [a ring] about his hand."
They pour out for him. . . like good date-wine, brought him a stand,
made flow the good oil in his. . .-vessel like water,
he dressed him in a (new) garment, gave him a gift, put a band about his hand.
The teacher with joyful heart gave speech to him:

"Young man, because you did not neglect my word, did not forsake it,
May you reach the pinnacle of the scribal art, achieve it completely.
Because you gave me that which you were by no means obliged (to give),
you presented me with a gift over and above my earnings, have shown me great honor,
may Nisaba, the queen of the guardian deities, be your guardian deity,
may she show favor to your fashioned reed,
may she take all evil from your hand copies.
Of your brothers, may you be their leader,
Of your companions, may you be their chief,
May you rank the highest of (all) the schoolboys,

. . . who come from the royal house.
Young man, you "know" a father, I am second to him,
I will give speech to you, will decree (your) fate:
Verily your father and [mother] will support you in this matter,
As [that] which is Nisaba's, as that which is thy god's, they will present offerings and prayers to her;
the teacher, as that which is your father's verily will pay homage to you;
in the ... of the teacher, in the ... of the big brother,
your ... whom you have established,
your manly [kinfolk] verily will show you favor.
You have carried out well the school duties, have become a man of learning.

Nisaba, the queen of the place of learning, you have exalted."
O Nisaba, praise!

<https://www.worldhistory.org/article/2144/schooldays-sumerian-satire--the-scribal-life/>

[Ch. 27] The ‘Song of the Sword’ that Ilulu sings with his family to celebrate his homecoming. (If you read to the end, you’ll see where Haia got the idea from to treat Ilulu with a delicious (warm) shower!) – *Celia*.

Nibruta-lu, the son of the merchant Lugal-suba, has had this tin axe made for Nergal. Its wooden part is of *arganum* tree of the mountains, a wood which is superior even to the *alal* stone; its stone part is of *antasura*, a stone which has no equal. The arm of the man who strikes with it will never get tired. Should it break, I will repair it for Nergal. Should it disappear, I will replace it for him. May Nergal look after me during my life, and may he provide me with clean water in the Underworld after my death.

THE LITERATURE OF ANCIENT SUMER

Translated and Introduced by jeremy black graham cunningham eleanor robson and gábor zólyomi by Oxford University Press Inc., New York
c Jeremy Black, Graham Cunningham, Eleanor Robson, and Gabor Zolyomi 2004, pg 157.

<https://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=t.5.7.3#>

Celia'sLibrary/AncientNearEast/LiteratureoftheANE/Sumerian/BlackCunninghamRobson(2004)-TheLiteratureofAncientSumer(Book).pdf

[Ch. 23, 36] Here and when he comes to dinner the teacher quotes Sumerian proverbs. This is a tradition which extends into the Old Testament with the Book of Proverbs, and beyond in Ben Sira (Ecclesiasticus), and beyond even then ... - *Celia*

Celia'sLibrary/AncientNearEast/LiteratureoftheANE/Sumerian/SumerianWisdom/ETCSLProverbsCollections1and5.pdf

[Ch. 25] The opening of the mouth ceremony – the induction of a new god in the Ancient Near East was widely practiced and is extensively discussed in the literature.

Christopher Walker and Michael B. Dick: ‘The Induction of the Cult Image in Ancient Mesopotamia: The Mesopotamian *mis pi* Ritual’ pg. 102 in Michael B. Dick(ed.)-Born in Heaven, Made on Earth – The Making of the Cult Image in the Ancient Near East, Eisenbrauns 1999.

Celia'sLibrary/AncientNearEast/ReligionintheANE/Dick(1999)-BorninHeavenMadeonEarthTheCreationoftheCultImageintheAncientNearEast.pdf

[Ch. 26] In this episode just as in the Tower of Babel episode, Nana combines the Sumerian literary tradition (an incantation) with an episode from the Old Testament - a reference to an alternative circumcision tradition to that established by Genesis 17:10 – *Celia*

Exodus 4:24-26 (ESV)

²⁴At a lodging place on the way the LORD met him and sought to put him to death. ²⁵Then Zipporah took a flint and cut off her son's foreskin and touched Moses'^[a] feet with it and said, "Surely you are a bridegroom of blood to me!" ²⁶So he let him alone. It was then that she said, "A bridegroom of blood," because of the circumcision.

and from: Kamadme, the Sumerian counterpart to the Demon Lamashtu:

You are a *kamad*, you are an august queen, you are a wild cow, you know no sacrificial offering. Oh, be gone, ... ! Be gone, depart! Be gone, depart!

Andrew R. George(2018): Kamadme, the Sumerian Counterpart of the Demon Lamaštu

In: Sources of Evil. Studies in Mesopotamian Exorcistic Lore.

Editors: Greta Van Buylaere, Mikko Luukko, Daniel Schwemer and Avigail Mertens-Wagschal

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Celia'sLibrary/AncientNearEast/ReligionintheANE/MesopotamianReligion/BuylaereLuukko(2018)-SourcesofEvil.StudiesinMesopotamianExorcisticLore.pdf

[Ch. 28] Celia's Library \Bible\HebrewBible\Genesis\Gen 14

Genesis 14 (ESV)

Abram Rescues Lot

14 In the days of Amraphel king of Shinar, Arioch king of Ellasar, Chedorlaomer king of Elam, and Tidal king of Goiim, ²these kings made war with Bera king of Sodom, Birsha king of Gomorrah, Shinab king of Admah, Shemeber king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (that is, Zoar). ³And all these joined forces in the Valley of Siddim (that is, the Salt Sea). ⁴Twelve years they had served Chedorlaomer, but in the thirteenth year they rebelled. ⁵In the fourteenth year Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him came and defeated the Rephaim in Ashteroth-karnaim, the Zuzim in Ham, the Emim in Shaveh-kiriathaim, ⁶and the Horites in their hill country of Seir as far as El-paran on the border of the wilderness. ⁷Then they turned back and came to En-mishpat (that is, Kadesh) and defeated all the country of the Amalekites, and also the Amorites who were dwelling in Hazazon-tamar.

⁸Then the king of Sodom, the king of Gomorrah, the king of Admah, the king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (that is, Zoar) went out, and they joined battle in the Valley of Siddim ⁹with Chedorlaomer king of Elam, Tidal king of Goiim, Amraphel king of Shinar, and Arioch king of Ellasar, four kings against five. ¹⁰Now the Valley of Siddim was full of bitumen pits, and as the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled, some fell into them, and the rest fled to the hill country. ¹¹So the enemy took all the possessions of Sodom and Gomorrah, and all their provisions, and went their way. ¹²They also took Lot, the son of Abram's brother, who was dwelling in Sodom, and his possessions, and went their way.

¹³Then one who had escaped came and told Abram the Hebrew, who was living by the oaks^[a] of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol and of Aner. These were allies of Abram. ¹⁴When Abram heard that his kinsman had been taken captive, he led forth his trained men, born in his house, 318 of them, and went in pursuit as far as Dan. ¹⁵And he divided his forces against them by night, he and his servants, and defeated them and pursued them to Hobah, north of Damascus. ¹⁶Then he brought back all the possessions, and also brought back his kinsman Lot with his possessions, and the women and the people.

Abram Blessed by Melchizedek

¹⁷ After his return from the defeat of Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him, the king of Sodom went out to meet him at the Valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley). ¹⁸ And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. (He was priest of God Most High.) ¹⁹ And he blessed him and said,

And Abram gave him a tenth of everything. ²¹ And the king of Sodom said to Abram, "Give me the persons, but take the goods for yourself." ²² But Abram said to the king of Sodom, "I have lifted my hand^[a] to the LORD, God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth, ²³ that I would not take a thread or a sandal strap or anything that is yours, lest you should say, 'I have made Abram rich.' ²⁴ I will take nothing but what the young men have eaten, and the share of the men who went with me. Let Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre take their share."

[Ch. 33] 'After learning the basics of the cuneiform script, students first studied four royal and divine hymns, then moved on to a tentet of heterogeneous Sumerian language literary compositions that Steve Tinney (1999) has dubbed the Decad, which included "The Hymn to the Hoe."'

Piotr Michalowski, "Where's Al? Humor and Poetics in The Hymn to the Hoe." Pp. 195-200 in Why Should Someone Who Knows Something Conceal It? Cuneiform Studies in Honor of David I. Owen on His 70th Birthday, ed. Alexandra Kleinerman Jack M. Sasson.

<https://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/section5/tr554.htm>

Celia'sLibrary/AncientNearEast/LiteratureoftheANE/Sumerian/Michalowski(2010)-WheresAlHumorandPoeticsintheHymntotheHoe.pdf

[Ch. 34] The Sumerian King List is a long document from which the teacher has extracted only that part of the list that was included in the Old Testament. The argument about how the names should be transliterated and how much they actually do correlate with the biblical form of the names are still raging. As this is a novel and not a treatise, Debra is correlating the names without further discussion. Both Debra and Celia love the way our literary heritage can reach way back into the distant past and restore to us those raw elements of our early existence (lamb, ground, rest, descendant, living son ...) that were then and continue to be deeply meaningful as they have been enriched with the implications of our continuing literary history:

'Galumum['lamb']: reigned 900 years
Zugagib ['scorpion']: reigned 840 years
Aripi (or Ademe), son of Mashgag, 720 years
Etana, the shepherd, who went to heaven, who subdued all lands: reigned 635 years
Pilikam: reigned 350 years
Enmenunna: reigned 611 years
Melamkish: reigned 900 years
Barsalnunna: reigned 1200 years

Meskingashir: ruled 325 years
Enmeirgan: ruled 420 years
Lugalbanda: ruled 1200 years
Dumuzi ['living son']: ruled 100 years
Gilgamesh: ruled 126 years ...

Celia'sLibrary/AncientNearEast/LiteratureoftheANE/Sumerian/Barton(1915)-ASumerianSourceoftheF
ourthandFifthChaptersofGenesis.pdf

<https://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=t.2.1.1#>

[Ch. 35] The two letters that Debra describes here, have been inserted by me (not Debra's fault) and come from very different times and places – definitely not Sumer 2087BC. I hope you enjoy them anyway! - *Celia*

<http://www.kchanson.com/ANCDQCS/westsem/yavneh.html>

The Yavneh-Yam letter was found at Mesad Hashavyahu in ancient Philistia near the Mediterranean coast and has been dated to 639 – 609BC. It is recognised the world over by its opening line: 'Your servant is a reaper!' the cry of an ordinary man against the inescapable forces ranged against him:

HEBREW TEXT (Adapted from Gibson 1973:28)

TRANSLATION by K. C. Hanson (Adapted from Albright 1969:320)

י שמע אדני השר

1 Let my lord, the governor, listen

את דבר עבדה עבדך

2 to the word of his servant. Your servant

קצר היה עבדך ב ח

3 is a reaper. Your servant was in

צר אסם ויקצר עבדך

4 Hasar-'Asam, and your servant reaped,

ויכל ואסם בימים לפני שב

5 and finished, and stored (the grain) during the days prior to the sabbath.

ת כא שר כל עבדך את קצר וא

6 When your servant had completed the reaping, and

סם כימם ויבא ח שביהו בן שב

7 stored (the grain) during these days, Hoshabyahu ben-Shobi arrived,

ויקחאת בגד עבדך כא שר כל ת

8 and he confiscated the garment of your servant when I had completed

את קצרי זה ימם לקח את בגד עבדך

9 the reaping. It is already days since he took the garment of your servant.

10 And all my brothers—who are reaping with me—can testify on my behalf,

[*broken off*]

11-14 If I am innocent of any wrong, [give back] my garment; and if not, it is the governor's right to

[consider my case] and send word to him so that he restores the garment of your servant. And do not

let [the plea of your

servant] be displeasing to him . . .

The world's oldest customer complaint comes from the city of Ur (in the direction of the Persian Gulf from Uruk) and is dated to approximately 1800BC - *Celia*

'Tell Ea-nasir: Nanni sends the following message:

When you came, you said to me as follows : "I will give Gimil-Sin (when he comes) fine quality copper ingots." You left then but you did not do what you promised me. You put ingots which were not good before my messenger (Sit-Sin) and said: "If you want to take them, take them; if you do not want to take them, go away!"

What do you take me for, that you treat somebody like me with such contempt? I have sent as messengers gentlemen like ourselves to collect the bag with my money (deposited with you) but you have treated me with contempt by sending them back to me empty-handed several times, and that through enemy territory. Is there anyone among the merchants who trade with Telmun who has treated me in this way? You alone treat my messenger with contempt! On account of that one (trifling) mina of silver which I owe(?) you, you feel free to speak in such a way, while I have given to the palace on your behalf 1,080 pounds of copper, and umi-abum has likewise given 1,080 pounds of copper, apart from what we both have had written on a sealed tablet to be kept in the temple of Samas.

How have you treated me for that copper? You have withheld my money bag from me in enemy territory; it is now up to you to restore (my money) to me in full. Take cognizance that (from now on) I will not accept here any copper from you that is not of fine quality. I shall (from now on) select and take the ingots individually in my own yard, and I shall exercise against you my right of rejection because you have treated me with contempt.'

<https://www.guinnessworldrecords.com/world-records/537889-oldest-written-customer-complaint>

Celia'sLibrary/AncientNearEast/3800-1595BCSumer/Ur(g.Nannar(moon))/Chibber(2018)-TheWorldsFirstCustomerComplaint.pdf

[Ch. 36] The teacher who is so brave with his cane in the classroom comes to dinner. Nervously he shelters behind his extensive knowledge of Sumerian wisdom literature, and quotes several not very applicable proverbs until he settles down under the impulse of Debra's question – the same as the one her father asked her. In '**The Instructions of Shuruppak**' you'll find these proverbs and that first proverb that he (appropriately) quoted when he met Debra [Ch. 23]. You'll notice here too, just like Hamlet's experience with Polonius, that too many proverbs quickly become pedantic and dull - *Celia*

<http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/section5/tr561.htm>

Celia'sLibrary/AncientNearEast/LiteratureoftheANE/Sumerian/SumerianWisdom/ETCSLProverbsCollections1and5.pdf

[Ch. 37] King Shulgi would have run about 200 miles in 24 hours. The occasional comparable feat has been accomplished in our time, suggesting that this episode is 'true'. At that time when there was so much more emphasis on physical strength and endurance, the feat would obviously have been great, but within reach for some people – one of them being their energetic king – who had brains as well as brawn because he commemorated the occasion himself with this poem:

<https://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/section2/tr24201.htm>

A praise poem of Shulgi (Shulgi A): translation

[1-6](#) I, the king, was a hero already in the womb; I, **Culgi**, was born to be a mighty man. I am a fierce-looking lion, begotten by a dragon. I am the king of the four regions; I am the herdsman and shepherd of the black-headed people. I am a respected one, the god of all the lands.

[7-15](#) I am a child born of **Ninsun**. I am the choice of holy **An's** heart. I am the man whose fate was decided by **Enlil**. I am **Culgi**, the beloved of **Ninlil**. I am he who is cherished by **Nintud**. I am he who was endowed with wisdom by **Enki**. I am the powerful king of **Nanna**. I am the growling lion of **Utu**. I am **Culgi**, who has been chosen by **Inana** for his attractiveness.

[16-18](#) I am a mule, most suitable for the road. I am a horse, whose tail waves on the highway. I am a stallion of **Cakkan**, eager to run. (*1 ms.: I am a donkey of Cakkan, who loves running.*)

[19-25](#) I am a knowledgeable scribe of **Nisaba**; I have perfected my wisdom just as my heroism and my strength (*1 ms. has instead: my distinction*). Reliable words can reach (?) me. I cherish righteousness but do not tolerate wickedness. I hate anyone who speaks wickedly.

[26-35](#) Because I am a powerful man who enjoys using his thighs, I, **Culgi**, the mighty king, superior to all, strengthened (?) the roads, put in order the highways of the Land. I marked out the double-hour distances, built there lodging houses. I planted gardens by their side and established resting-places (*1 ms. has instead: I established gardens (?) and resting-places by their side*), and installed in those places experienced men. Whichever direction one comes from, one can refresh oneself at their cool sides; and the traveller who reaches nightfall on the road can seek haven there as in a well-built city.

[36-41](#) So that my name should be established for distant days and never fall into oblivion, so that my praise should be uttered (*1 ms.: spread*) throughout the Land, and my glory should be proclaimed in the foreign lands, I, the fast runner, summoned my strength and, to prove my speed, my heart prompted me to make a return journey from **Nibru** to brick-built **Urim** as if it were only the distance of a double-hour.

[42-47](#) I, the lion, never failing in his vigour, standing firm in his strength, fastened the small *nijlam* garment firmly to my hips. Like a pigeon anxiously fleeing from a snake, I spread my wings; like the Anzud bird lifting its gaze to the mountains, I stretched forward my legs. The inhabitants of the cities which I had founded in the land, lined up for me; the black-headed people, as numerous as ewes, looked at me with sweet admiration.

[48-59](#) I entered the **E-kic-nujal** like a mountain kid hurrying to its habitation, when **Utu** spreads broad daylight over the countryside. I filled with abundance the temple of **Suen**, a cow-pen which yields plenty of fat. I had oxen slaughtered there; I had sheep offered there lavishly (*some mss.: butchered there*). I had *cem* and *ala* drums resound there and caused *tigi* drums play there sweetly. (*1 ms. has instead the line: I the balaj player (?)*.) I, **Culgi**, who makes everything abundant, presented food-offerings there and, like a lion, spreading fearsomeness from (?) the royal offering-place, I bent down (?) and bathed in flowing water; I knelt down and feasted in the **E-gal-mah** of **Ninegal**.

[60-69](#) Then I arose like an owl (?), like a falcon to return to **Nibru** in my vigour. But a storm shrieked, and the west wind whirled around. The north wind and the south wind howled at each other. Lightning together with the seven winds vied with each other in the heavens. Thundering storms made the earth quake, and **Ickur** roared in the broad heavens. The rains of heaven mingled with the waters of the earth. (*1 ms. has instead: The rains of heaven competed with the waters of the earth.*) Small and large hailstones drummed on my back.

[70-78](#) I, the king, however, did not fear, nor was I terrified. I rushed forth like a fierce lion. I galloped like an ass in the desert. With my heart full of joy, I ran (?) onward. Trotting like a solitary wild ass, I traversed a distance of fifteen double-hours by the time **Utu** was to set his face toward his house; my *saj-ursaj* priests looked at me with admiration. (*1 ms. has instead: numerous (?);* I

prayed in the of Enlil and Ninlil.) I celebrated the ecec festival in both Nibru and Urim on the same day!

⁷⁹⁻⁸³ I drank beer in the palace founded by An with my brother and companion, the hero Utu. My singers praised me with songs accompanied by seven tigi drums. My spouse, the maiden Inana, the lady, the joy of heaven and earth, sat with me at the banquet.

⁸⁴⁻⁸⁷ Truly I am not boasting! Wherever I look to, there I go; wherever my heart desires, I reach. (1 ms. adds at least 10 lines: By the life of my father holy Lugalbanda, and Nanna the king of heaven and earth, I swear that the words written on my tablet are at least 4 lines missing or unclear since the days of yore, since, no king of Sumer as great as I has existed for the people.) An placed a legitimate and lofty (some mss. have: golden) (1 ms. has.: good silver) (1 ms. has.: silver) crown firmly on my head.

⁸⁸⁻⁹⁴ In the lustrous E-kur, I seized the holy sceptre and I lifted my head towards heaven on a shining dais, a throne with firm foundation. I consolidated my kingship, subdued the foreign lands, fortified the Land. May my name be proclaimed among the well-guarded people of the four regions! May they praise it in holy hymns about me! May they glorify my majesty, saying:

⁹⁵⁻¹⁰¹ "The one provided with lofty royal power; the one given heroism, power and happy life by Suen of the E-kic-nujal; the one endowed with superior strength by Nunamnir; Culgi, the destroyer of foreign lands, the fortifier of the Land, the purification priest of heaven and earth, who has no rival; Culgi, who is cared for by the respected child of An!"

¹⁰² Nisaba be praised! (1 ms. has instead: Culgi, be praised (?) by An's respected son!)

[Ch. 39,40,41,42,43] The *qabum* (story-teller) tells the Mesopotamian story of the flood. The story in Gilgamesh itself comes from another Mesopotamian epic, The Atrahasis. But we're going with the story in Gilgamesh:

C:\Celia's Library\AncientNearEast\LiteratureoftheANE\Gilgamesh

Epic of Gilgamesh and expedition to Nineveh



"The Flood Tablet", the eleventh tablet of the Gilgamesh Epic describes how the gods sent a flood to destroy the world. Like Noah, Utnapishtim was forewarned and built an ark to house and preserve living things. After the flood, he sent out birds to look for dry land ([British Museum](#)

'The huge importance of the royal libraries found at Nineveh by Layard and Rassam first became widely known in 1872 when, sorting through the Assyrian tablets in the British Museum, the brilliant George Smith came across what remains the most famous of Gilgamesh tablets, the best-preserved manuscript of the story of the Deluge. His reaction is described by E. A. Wallis Budge in his history of cuneiform studies. The Rise and Progress of Assyriology: 'Smith took the tablet and began to read over the lines which Ready [the conservator who had cleaned the tablet] had brought to light; and when he saw that they contained the portion of the legend he had hoped to find there, he said, "I am the first man to read that after two thousand years of oblivion." Setting the tablet on the table, he jumped up and rushed about the room in a great state of excitement, and, to the astonishment of those present, began to undress himself!' One hopes the George Smith who made his discovery public was a figure more composed and fully clad, since the occasion was a formal paper delivered to the Society of Biblical Archaeology in the presence of Mr Gladstone and other notables. This must be the only occasion on which a British Prime Minister in office has attended a lecture on Babylonian literature. Assyriology had arrived, and so had Gilgamesh.'