
ADAPA
AND THE
FOOD OF LIFE

translated by

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[from "Cuneiform Parallels to the Old
Testament" by R.W. Rogers, 1912].

[Summary: Adapa, or perhaps Adamu, son of Ea, had received from his father, the god Ea, wisdom, but not eternal life. He was a semi-divine being and was the wise man and priest of the temple of Ea at Eridu, which he provided with the ritual bread and water. In the exercise of this duty he carried on fishing upon the Persian Gulf. When Adapa was fishing one day on a smooth sea, the south wind rose suddenly and overturned his boat, so that he was thrown into the sea. Angered by the mishap, he broke the wings of the south wind so that for seven days it could not blow the sea's coolness over the hot land. Anu calls Adapa to account for this misdeed, and his father Ea warns him as to what should befall him. He tells him how to fool Tammuz and Gishzida, who will meet him at the gate of heaven. Ea cautions him not to eat or drink anything in heaven, as Ea fears that the food and drink of death will be set before Adapa. However, the food and drink of eternal life are set before him instead, and Adapa's over-caution deprives him of immortality. He has to return to Earth instead.]



TABLET NO.1

He possessed intelligence . . . ,
His command like the command of Anu ...
He (Ea) granted him a wide ear to reveal the destiny of the land,
He granted him wisdom, but he did not grant him eternal life.
In those days, in those years the wise man of Eridu,
Ea had created him as chief among men,
A wise man whose command none should oppose,
The prudent, the most wise among the Anunnaki was he,
Blameless, of clean hands, anointed, observer of the divine
statutes,
With the bakers he made bread
With the bakers of Eridu, he made bread,
The food and the water for Eridu he made daily,
With his clean hands he prepared the table,
And without him the table was not cleared.
The ship he steered, fishing and hunting for Eridu he did.
Then Adapa of Eridu
While Ea, ... in the chamber, upon the bed.
Daily the closing of Eridu he attended to.
Upon the pure dam, the new moon dam) he embarked upon the
ship,
The wind blew and his ship departed, With the oar, he steered his
ship Upon the broad sea . . .

TABLET NO. 2

.....
The south wind when
He had driven me to the house of my lord, I said,
O South wind, on the way I shall to thee ... everything that,
Thy wing, will I break.” As he spoke with his mouth,
The wing of the South wind was broken, seven days
The South wind blew not upon the land. Anu
Called to his messenger Ilabrat:
Why has the South wind not blown upon the land for seven days?
His messenger Ilabrat answered him: “My lord,
Adapa, the son of Ea, the wing of the South wind
Has broken.”
When Anu heard these words
He cried, Help!” He ascended his throne,
“Let some one bring him,”
Likewise Ea, who knows the heaven. He roused him
... he caused him to wear. With a mourning garment
He garbed him, and gave him counsel
Saying: “ Adapa, before the face of Anu the King thou art to go
... to heaven
When thou comest up, and when thou approachest the door of Anu,
At the door of Anu, Tammuz and Gishzida are standing,
“they will see thee, they will ask thee; ‘Sir,’
For whose sake dost thou so appear, Adapa? For whom
Art thou clad in a mourning garment?” ‘In our country two gods



have vanished, therefore
Am I so.' 'Who are the two gods, who in the land
Have vanished?' 'Tammuz and Gishzida.' They will look at one
another and
Be astonished. Good words
They will speak to Anu. A good countenance of Anu
They will show thee. When thou standest before Anu
Food of death they will set before thee,
Eat not. Water of death they will set before thee,
Drink not. Garments they will set before thee,
Put them on. Oil they will set before thee, anoint thyself.
The counsel that I have given thee, forget not. The words
Which I have spoken, hold fast." The messenger
Of Anu came: "Adapa has broken
The wing of the South wind. Bring him before me."
The road to Heaven he made him take, and to Heaven he ascended.
When he came to Heaven, when he approached the door of Anu,
At the door of Ann, Tammuz and Gishzida are standing.
When they saw him, Adapa, they cried: " Help,
Sir, for whom dost thou so appear? Adapa,
For whom art thou clad in a mourning garment?"
In the country two gods have vanished; therefore am I clad
In mourning garments." "Who are the two gods, who
have vanished from the land?"

“Tammuz and Gishzida.” They looked at one another and
Were astonished. When Adapa before Anu, the King,
Drew near, and Anu saw him, he cried:
“Come hither, Adapa. Why hast thou broken the wings
Of the South wind?” Adapa answered Ann: “My lord,
For the house of my lord in the midst of the sea,
I was catching fish. The sea was like a mirror,
The South wind blew, and capsized me.
To the house of my lord was I driven. In the anger of my heart,
I took heed.” Tammuz and Gishzida
Answered ... “art thou.” To Anu
They speak. He calmed himself, his heart was . . .
“Why has Ea revealed to impure mankind
The heart of heaven and earth? A heart
... has created within him, has made him a name?
What can we do with him? Food of life
Bring him, that be man, eat.” Food of life
They brought him, but he ate not. Water of life
They brought him, but he drank not. Garments
They brought him. He clothed himself. Oil
They brought him. He anointed himself.
Anu looked at him; he wondered at him.
“Come, Adapa, why hast thou not eaten, not drunken?
Now thou shalt not live.” ... men ... Ea, my lord
Said: “Eat not, drink not.”
Take him and bring him back to his earth.
... looked upon him.

TABLET NO. 3

“When heard that
In the anger of his heart
His messenger he sent.
He who knows the heart of the great gods

.....

To King Ea to come,
To him, he caused words to be borne.
... to him, to King Ea.
He sent a messenger
With a wide ear, knowing the heart of the great gods,
... of the heavens be fixed.

A soiled garment he made him wear,
With a mourning garment he clad him,
A word he spoke to him.

“Adapa, before the King Anu thou shalt go
Fail not the order, keep my word
When thou comest up to heaven, and approachest the door of Anu,
Tammuz and Gishzida at the door of Anu are standing.