

“Adapa and the South Wind”

Translation by James R Getz Jr.

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... destiny...

Let his speech be... like the speech of Anu!”¹

[Ea]² perfected understanding perfect in [Adapa],

To disclose the cultural order of the earth.

To him he gave wisdom, but did not give him eternal life.

At that time, in those years, he was a sage, son of Eridu.

Ea created him as his follower among humankind.

The sage’s speech ---nobody repudiated.

Clever, foremost in understanding, he was one of the Anunnaki,³

Holy, pure of hands, anointed priest, who always observed the divine rites:

With the cooks he performs does the duty of a cook;

With the cooks of Eridu, the same:

He prepares the food and water of Eridu every day.

With his pure hands, he sets up the offerings table;

Without him the offerings table is not cleared away.

He steers the boat out and does the fishing for Eridu.

At that time Adapa, the son of Eridu,

— Ea dozing, lingering in his bed —

Would open the gate-bolt of Eridu every day.

At the holy harbor, the Crescent Harbor, he embarked in a sailing boat

and without even a rudder his boat would drift (upstream);

Without a punting pole he would steer his boat.

... in the wide sea.

...

fish(?)

Large gap in which the South Wind apparently capsizes Adapa’s boat.

...

“O South Wind...

...By the house of my lord!

“O South Wind, call the other wind your brothers against me,

however many there are, (yet) I shall break your wing!”

As soon as he uttered these words,

¹ Anu is the god of heaven (Sumerian AN = “heaven”), similar to Zeus in Greek mythology. The standard Mesopotamian understanding of the universe was that the world was broken into three zones: 1) the heavens, 2) the earth, and 3) the sweet waters below the earth. Anu was ruler over all the heavens; Enlil was ruler over all the earth; and Ea was ruler of the sweet waters below the earth (aka the Abzu). While the dead also reside below the earth, they seem to inhabit a different region of space than the Abzu.

² Ea is the god of the Abzu and worshipped in the city Eridu. Ea functions as a wise counselor deity, associated with both wisdom and magic.

³ The Annunaki is the Mesopotamian council of the gods. The term is similar to the gods of Mount Olympus in Greek thought.

The South Wind's wing was broken. For seven days
The South Wind did not blow towards the land. Anu
called out to his vizier Ilabrat:
“Why hasn't South Wind blown towards the land for seven days?”
His vizier Ilabrat answered him: “My lord,
Adapa, the son of Ea, has broken South Wind's
wing.” When Anu heard this word,
He cried “Help!”, and rose up from this throne. “Send someone to bring him
here!” Ea, aware of heaven's ways, touched
Adapa, made him wear his hair unkempt, dressed him
in mourning garment, and gave him instructions:
“Adapa, you are to go before King Anu,
you will ascend to heaven. When you have ascended
to heaven, when you have approached the Gate of Anu,
Dumuzi and Gizzida⁴ will be standing at the Gate of Anu.
They will see you and question you: ‘Young man,
for whom are dressed this way? Adapa, for whom
do you wear a mourning garment?’
(And you must answer:) ‘Two gods have vanished from our land, and so
I have done this.’ (They will ask:) ‘Who are the two gods that have vanished
from the land?’ (And you must answer:) ‘Dumuzi and Gizzida.’ They will look at each other
and smile; they will speak a word in your favor
to Anu; they will present you to Anu
when he is in a good mood. When you stand before Anu,
you will be offered the bread of death;
do not eat! You will be offered the water of death;
do not drink! You will be offered a garment;
dress! You will be offered oil; anoint!
Do not neglect the instructions I have given you; keep
to the words that I have told you.” The messenger
of Anu arrived (and said): “Send to me Adapa,
Who broke South Wind's wing.”
He put him on the road to heaven, and he ascended to heaven.
When he ascended to heaven, when he approached the Gate of Anu,
Dumuzi and Gizzida were standing at the Gate of Anu.
They saw Adapa and cried “Help!
Young man, for whom are dressed this way? Adapa,
for whom do you wear a mourning garment?”
(And Adapa answered:) “Two gods have vanished from our land, and so
I have done this.” (They asked:) “Who are the two gods that have vanished from the land?”
(And Adapa answered:) “Dumuzi and Gizzida.” They will look at each other
and smile. When Adapa approached the presence of King Anu,
Anu saw him and cried: “Come! Adapa, why did you break South Wind's
wing?” Adapa answered Anu: “My lord, for my lord Ea's house I was catching fish

⁴ Dumuzi and Gizzida are two “dying and rising gods” who apparently are spending part of the year in heaven (when dead).

in the middle of the sea. He cut the sea in half,
 the South wind blew and drowned me!
 I was plunged into my lord's house. In my fury
 I cursed her." Dumuzi and Gizzida responded from beside him.
 They spoke a word in his favor to Anu.
 Anu's heart was calmed, he grew quiet.
 (Then Anu said:) "Why did Ea disclose to wretched humankind
 The ways of heaven and earth! Why did he give them a
 heavy heart? He is the one who has done this;
 what can we do for him? Bring him the food of life,
 that he may eat!" Adapa was brought the food of life;
 he did not eat. He was brought the water of life;
 he did not drink. He was brought a garment;
 he dressed. He was brought oil;
 he anointed himself.
 Anu watched him and laughed:
 "Come, Adapa, why didn't you eat or drink?
 Didn't you want to be immortal? Alas for inferior humanity!" Adapa responded:
 "But Ea my lord told me: 'Do not eat, do not drink!'"
 Anu responded: "Take him and send him back to his earth."
 ...

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