**The Epic of Gilgamesh is an epic poem from Ancient Mesopotamia and is among the earliest known writings. Scholars believe that it was originally a series of Sumerian legends and poems about the mythological King Gilgamesh, which were later gathered into an Akkadian poem. Gilgamesh may have been a real Sumerian ruler around 2,800 BC, perhaps the King of Ur.**

**The Epic exists today on twelve clay tablets. However, some tablets have never been found, and others are damaged, so the complete poem is still unknown. The poem revolves around the relationship between Gilgamesh, and his friend, Enkidu, who undertakes dangerous quests with Gilgamesh.**

**INTRODUCTION**

Take and read out from the lapis lazuli tablet
how Gilgamesh went through every hardship.

Supreme over other kings, lordly in appearance,
he is the hero, born of Uruk, the goring wild bull.
He walks out in front, the leader,
and walks at the rear, trusted by his companions.
Mighty net, protector of his people,
raging flood-wave who destroys even walls of stone!

Offspring of Lugalbanda, Gilgamesh is strong to perfection,
son of the august cow, Rimat-Ninsun;... Gilgamesh is awesome to perfection…

[This excerpt from the Epic tells the story of the battle with the Forest Monster Humbaba. Ellipses denote missing text. Question marks denote words that may not be translated correctly.]

Humbaba spoke to Gilgamesh, saying:

*..”An idiot' and a moron should give advice to each other,*

*but you, Gilgamesh, why have you come to me!*

*Give advice, Enkidu, you 'son of a fish,' who does not even*

*know his own father,*

*to the large and small turtles which do not suck their mother's milk!*

*Enkidu, when you were still young I saw you but did not go over to you;*

*... you,... in my belly.*

*...,you have brought Gilgamesh into my presence,*

*... you stand.., an enemy, a stranger.*

*... Gilgamesh, throat and neck,*

*I would feed your flesh to the screeching vulture, the eagle, and*

*the vulture!"*

Gilgamesh spoke to Enkidu, saying*:*

 *"My Friend, Humbaba's face keeps changing!”*

Enkidu spoke to Gilgamesh, saying:'

*"Why, my friend, are you whining so pitiably, hiding behind your whimpering?*

*Now there, my friend,...*

*in the coppersmith's channel ...,*

*again to blow (the bellows) for an hour, the glowing (metal)(?)*

*...for an hour.*

*To send the Flood, to crack the Whip."*

*Do not snatch your feet away, do not turn your back,*

*... strike even harder!"*

... may they be expelled.... head fell ... and it/he confronted him...

The ground split open with the heels of their feet,

as they whirled around in circles Mt. Hermon and Lebanon split.

The white clouds darkened,

death rained down on them like fog.

Shamash raised up against Humbaba mighty tempests'--

Southwind, Northwind, Eastwind, Westwind, Whistling Wind, Piercing Wind, Blizzard, Bad Wind, Wind of Simurru,

Demon Wind, Ice Wind, Storm, Sandstorm--

thirteen winds rose up against him and covered Humbaba's face.

He could nor butt through the front, and could not scramble out

the back,

so that Gilgamesh'a weapons were in reach of Humbaba.

Humbaba begged for his life, saying to Gilgamesh:

*"You are young yet, Gilgamesh, your mother gave birth to you,*

*and you are the offspring of Rimnt-Nlnsun (?) ...*

*(It was) at the word of Shamash, Lord of the Mountain,*

*that you were roused (to this expedition).*

*O scion of the heart of Uruk, King Gilgamesh!*

*... Gilgamesh...*

*Gilgamesh, let me go (?), I will dwell with you as your servant (?)*

*As many trees as you command me I will cut down for you,*

*I will guard for you myrtle wood...,*

*wood fine enough for your palace!"*

Enkidu addressed Gilgamesh, saying:

*"My friend, do not listen to Humbaba*

*,*

*[10 lines are misring Apparently Humbaba sees that Gilgamrsh is influenced by Enkidu, and moves to dissuade Enkiu,, saying.]*

*"You understand the rules of my forest, the rules...,*

*further, you are aware of all the things so ordered (by Enlil)."*

*I should have carried you up, and killed you*

*at the very entrance to the branches of my forest.*

*I should have fed your flesh to the screeching vulture, the eagle,*

*and the vulture.*

*So now, Enkidu, clemency is up to you.*

*Speak to Gilgamesh to spare my life!"*

Enkidu addressed Gilgamesh, saying:

*My friend, Humbaba, Guardian of the Cedar Forest,*

*grind up, kill, pulverize(?), and destroy him!*

*Humbaba, Guardian of the Forest, grind up, kill, pulverize(?),*

*and destroy him!*

*Before the Preeminent God Enlil hears...*

*and the ...gods be filled with rage against us.*

*Enlil is in Nippur, Shamash is in Sippar.*

*Erect an eternal monument proclaiming...*

*how Gilgamesh killed(?) Humbaba."*

When Humbaba heard...

[Abour l0 lines are missing.]

*... the forest.*

*and denunciations(?) have been made.*

*But you are sitting there like a shepherd...*

*and like a 'hireling of his mouth.'*

*Now, Enkidu, clemency is up to you.*

*Speak to Gilgamesh that he spare my life!"*

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*Erect an eternal monument proclaiming...*

*how Gilgamesh killed(?) Humbaba."*

*Humbaba heard ...*

*[About 10 lines are missing.]*

*"May he not live the longer of the two,*

*may Enkidu not have any 'share'(?) more than his friend*

*Gilgamesh!"*

Enkidu spoke to Gilgamesh, saying:

*"My friend, 1 have been talking to you but you have not been*

*listening to me,"*

*You have been listening to the curse of Humbaba!"*

... his friend

... by his side

.. they pulled out his insides including his tongue.

... he jumped(?).

...abundance fell over the mountain,

...abundance fell over the mountain.

They cut through the Cedar,

While Gilgamesh cuts down the trees, Enkidu searches through

the urmazallu.

Enkidu addressed Gilgamesh, saying:

*"My friend, we have cut down the towering Cedar whose top*

*scrapes the sky.*

*Make from it a door 72 cubits high, 24 cubits wide,*

*one cubit thick, its fixture, its lower and upper pivots will be out of one piece.*

*Let them carry it to Nippur, the Euphrates will carry it down, Nippur will rejoice.*

*..."*

They tied together a raft...

Enkidu steered it...

while Gilgamesh held the head of Humbaba.

**Questions about the Epic of Gilgamesh**

1 – In the introduction, what does the author want us to know about Gilgamesh?

2 – How does the author decide to tell us about what sort of person Gilgamesh is?

3 – What metaphors are used to describe Gilgamesh?

4 – What insults does Humbaba throw at Gilgamesh?

5 – What threats does Humbaba make?

6 – Which God helps Gilgamesh defeat Humbaba, and how does he do it?

7 – When Humbaba is defeated, he begs for his life. What does he offer Gilgamesh?

8 – Gilgamesh kills Humbabba anyway. How does he do this?

9 – When Humbaba is defeated, Gilgamesh and Enkidu take prizes to a nearby city. Which city?

10 – What two prizes do they bring?

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