

Comparing the Babylonian Enuma Elish Seven Tables of Creation with Genesis 1

by Bob Enyart

See rsr.org/enuma-elish and here's my draft notes on the text...

The Parallels: Creationists have long noted [hundreds](#) of pagan flood accounts that parallel in meant details Genesis 6 - 9, beginning with the most extraordinary in the Babylonian Epic of Gilgamesh. The Enuma Elish Babylonian creation epic has had less attention. (A search [of the major creation ministries](#) shows about a 300 to 60, or five-to-one preference for articles mentioning Gilgamesh over Enuma Elish.) As with various flood accounts, pagan deities embellish the Babylonian creation account. In the beginning, undivided commingling waters were divided and as such they were deified as two gods, Apsu and his consort Tiamat. Apsu, also Abzu, means [deep water](#) and is likely the origin of our word abyss, i.e., without bottom. "[I]n Sumerian and Akkadian mythology it referred to [the primeval sea](#) below the void space of the underworld (Kur) and the earth (Ma) above. [In the] Enuma Elish [Abzu] was a primal being made of fresh water and a lover to another primal deity, Tiamat, a creature of salt water." They were first commingling. Then they were divided. And in a sense, reversing that division, they were united again and "from their union all the other gods were born. He was killed by his son, Ea, which provoked the war of the gods with Tiamat." In the ["older Tiamat myth"](#) story, where Enki (later Ea) recognises that Apsu / Abzu is angry at the chaos the younger gods have created and intends to destroy them, so [Ea] captures Absu himself." With Apsu killed off the name was retained for the subterranean sea. The epic then turns to its second battle between Marduk [Ea] and Tiamat, won by Marduk wielding his great storm-flood weapon. In Tablet 7 after the creation of man we read of him, "who created the earth *on the water* and *made firm* the height of heaven." Genesis involves no wars of idols; it splits open no god's body to make the heavens and Earth; and is vastly more matter-of-fact. This comparison lists items of special interest including those of clear or possible parallel.

The Contrasts: Fate, polytheism, and its fancifulness contrasts with so much matter-of-factness in Genesis.

The Enuma text and other material from *Ancient History Encyclopedia*, [Enuma Elish - The Babylonian Creation Epic - Full Text](#), May 2018, Joshua Mark, retrieved Aug. 4, 2019 [from ancient.eu](#). The first dozen comparisons use the encyclopedia's summary.

Comparing a Summary of the Enuma Elish to Genesis

- Seven tablets, compares to six creation days and the seventh day of rest
- In the beginning there was only water [and, per Bertman, darkness?], cp earth had only "darkness on the face of [the deep](#)" and God hovered over the face of [the waters](#).
- There was only [undifferentiated](#) water that was then [divided](#) into fresh & salty, cps to let there be a firmament (crust) that [divides the waters](#) above and below.
- Tablets of destiny control "the fates" (first record of fate/destiny/"providence"), cps to nothing in Genesis
- Forces of chaos, cp to "without form and void"
- Marduk/Enki commits to defeating Tiamat, cps to Gen. 3 that the seed of the serpent will be defeated
- Tigris and Euphrates rivers flow, cps to the four rivers of Gen. 2 including the Tigris and Euphrates
- Heavens and earth created, cps to Genesis 1:1 [Earth called by the same name as the name of the heavens above; and in Tablet 4 after Marduk's victory by "the Storm-flood, his great weapon", the creation of heaven and earth is again referenced]
- The sixth tablet reports the creation of human beings, cps to man created on the sixth day
- The first man created, to be a helper to the gods, conflates the first man with woman created to be his helper
- Arranged the organization of the netherworld, cps possibly to "the deep" and the firmament (crust) overlying the waters of the great deep

- Tablet 7 ends with praise for the creator's accomplishments, cps to God seeing that the creation was "very good"

Enuma Elish Consistent with Genesis: Bias against the Scriptures by atheopaths and others leads scholars to a backward conclusion. Widely, as does Joshua Mark here, they attempt to discredit Genesis by claiming that the *Enuma Elish* was the source material for the Bible's creation account. To discredit Moses though, you have to *do something other than* provide evidence *consistent with* his account. And that's all that these scholars have done. For if Genesis were true, then within a few centuries of the global flood, scholars would expect that the generations descended from Noah would be aware of the creation, fall, and flood accounts. And further, as documented in Scripture, in their rebellion they would twist God's words and the truth into deception and worship entities of their own creation. The wildly mythological Babylonian account is far more likely to be the derivative account, taken from their gradually blurring societal recollections of the true history of the world. Yet scholars think that the "primitive" Hebrews, whom they deride, retained the core of the idolatrous accounts but without the idols. The extraordinary nature of this state of affairs is not so much that mainstream scholars haven't discredited Genesis. It's that they are fully incapable of recognizing that have done nothing but produce *vast troves of evidence consistent with the Bible*. The source material for the Enuma Elish was the actual creation and flood, as later recorded authoritatively through divine inspiration by Moses. Without performing a search of the literature, it is the author's impression (see for example the Ancient History Encyclopedia) that many critical accounts do not object to this latter explanation because they do even recognize it. In their deep bias these scholars presume that their discoveries consistent with Genesis have thereby discredited it.

Comparisons based on the Enuma Elish Full Text (beginning with the [translation](#) in Oxford professor John Lennox' *Seven Days that Divide the World*)

TABLET I of VII

- **"When on high the heaven had not been named, Firm ground below had not been called by that name."** This startling open of the epic points out that two places had not yet been named, heaven above, and earth below, and that *they would both be called by the same name*. This is exactly the interpretation of Genesis 1 held by Hydroplate Theory advocates before Lennox, an old-earth Christian, ever made public this translation. This opening line, from which comes the title Enuma Elish, compares with Genesis 1 where God names both the ground and the space above it, "heaven". See rsr.org/raqia. And before naming these, God first made the Day Two *raqia* (Earth's crust, in the midst of the deep waters that were on Earth's surface), which on Day Three caused the "dry land to appear". This 48-hour creation and aftermath explains why God refrained from saying, "It is good" on Day Two, until that day's work was completed on Day Three when the dry land appeared.

- **"Their waters commingling as a single body"** compares with prior to Day Two's firmament dividing them

- **"No marsh land had appeared"** compares with prior to Day Three's dry land appearing

We continue now from the [Enuma Elish text](#) that appears in *Ancient History Encyclopedia* as translated by W.G. Lambert. (Based on the uncanny parallels already seen, we can infer that Lambert erred when he translated the above as, "When the heavens did not exist, And earth beneath had not come into being." Lambert obviously couldn't make sense of the more literal translation, as the one that appears in *Seven Days*. (In Alaska on a week-long science cruise I asked Lennox in person about this. He was unaware of this Day Two parallel that I suggested to him from the text in his recently published book. So certainly then, he had not

published that particular translation out of any interest in this matter.) So, apart from a greater commitment to literalness, beginning the entire creation epic with heaven and earth *not yet being named*, and both being called *by the same name*, would have been inexplicable to him, thus his "normalized" translation.

- **Lahamu was formed**, compares to the woman and the serpent, as this Babylonian goddess Lahamu is seen both as a serpent and as a woman.

- [**Lahamu birthed?**] **Ansar and Kisar**, compares to creation of heaven and earth, with Anshar meaning "whole heaven" and Kishar meaning "whole earth".

- [**A battle of the gods ensues**], could compare with the [rebellion](#) of the serpent, Adam, and Eve.

- "**I cannot rest**" so he determines to "**destroy**" "**their sons**", could compare with the judgment of the flood when God said, "My Spirit shall not [abide] with man forever... the sons of God... the Lord saw the wickedness of man was great..." So "Lamech... called his name Noah [*Hb.* rest] saying, 'This one will comfort us...'" [EE appears to lightly conflate creation with the flood as it features the battle between Tia-mat and Marduk with the victory coming when Marduk wields his storm-flood weapon. If so, this too would be consistent with half a dozen or more [creation passages](#) that likewise allude to, or lightly conflate creation with, the flood.]

- "**Destroy... that lawless way of life**", compares to "the wickedness of man was great... every intent... was only evil... The earth was filled with violence"

- "That you may **rest in the day-time and sleep by night!**" God rested on the 7th day and separated the day from the night.

- "Apsû was **pleased** with him" and "God saw everything that He had made, and indeed *it was* very good"

- "What they plotted in their gathering was reported to **the gods, their sons**" with "the sons of God in Gen. 6"

With the deification of the differentiated waters, consider that lines 60 - 76 show one of those destroyed. Before reading that section, consider from the Ancient History Encyclopedia:

The story, one of the oldest, if not the oldest in the world, concerns the birth of the gods and the creation of the universe [and the firm ground below] and human beings. In the beginning, there was only undifferentiated water swirling in chaos. Out of this swirl, the waters divided into sweet, fresh water, known as the god Apsu, and salty bitter water, the goddess Tiamat. Once differentiated, the union of these two entities gave birth to the younger gods.

]

60 Ea, who knows everything, perceived their tricks.

[Ea/Enki, god of the [submerged ocean](#); symbols: turtle, flowing stream of fish. "Enki's temple was E-abzu (house of the abzu), which was also known as E-engur-ra (house of the subterranean water) or E-unir ([Foster 2005](#): 643-644)." "The god Ea (whose Sumerian equivalent was Enki) is one of the three most powerful gods in the Mesopotamian pantheon, along with [Anu](#) and [Enlil](#). He **resides in the ocean underneath the earth** called the abzu (Akkadian *apsû* [BE: abyss]), which was an important place in Mesopotamian cosmic geography. For example, the city of Babylon was said to have been built on top of the abzu. [BE: Iraq, raqa; [etymology](#) "said to be from Arabic *`araqa*, covering notions such as "perspiring, deeply rooted, well-watered" ... might be from or

influenced by Sumerian *Uruk* (Biblical *Erech*), anciently a prominent city in what is now southern Iraq (from Sumerian *uru* "city").]

Sumerian texts about Enki often include overtly sexual portrayals of his virile masculinity. In particular, there is a metaphorical link between the life-giving properties of the god's semen and **the animating nature of fresh water from the abzu**... Ea is the creator and protector of humanity in the Babylonian flood myth *Atra-hasīs* and the *Epic of Gilgameš*. He hatched a plan to **create humans out of clay** so that they could perform work for the gods. But the supreme god **Enlil attempted to destroy Ea's newly created humans with a devastating flood**, because their never-ending noise prevented him from sleeping. But clever Ea foresaw Enlil's plan; he instructed a sage TT named Atrahasis to **build an ark so that humanity could escape** the destruction.]

- 61 He fashioned it and made it to be all-embracing,
62 He executed it skilfully as supreme—his pure incantation.
63 He recited it and **set it on the waters**,
64 He **poured** sleep upon him as he was slumbering **deeply**.
65 **He put Apsû to slumber** as he **poured out sleep**, [BE: to kill these subterranean waters by pouring them out; so they would be no longer, except in remembrance]
66 And Mummu, the counsellor, was breathless with agitation.
67 He **split** (Apsû's) sinews [firmament], **ripped off** his crown, [firmament; might this line use *raqia*?]
68 Carried away his aura and put it on himself. [waters below joined waters above]
69 He bound Apsû and **killed him**; [drained him of his blood/waters]
70 Mummu he confined and handled roughly.
71 He set his dwelling upon Apsû, [set his dwelling upon Apsû? I.e., upon the *raqia*/ground]
72 And laid hold on Mummu, keeping the nose-rope in his hand.
73 After Ea had bound and slain his enemies,
74 Had achieved victory over his foes,
75 He rested quietly in **his chamber**,
76 **He called it Apsû**, whose shrines he appointed. [Ea makes 13 more mentions of Apsû]

[Reevaluate these after completing chart

- "Ea, who knows everything... fashioned... his pure incantation... He recited it and **set it on the waters**" with "Then God said, 'Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters... divided the waters which were under the firmament..."

- "**He put Apsû to slumber** as he poured out sleep, and Mummu, the counsellor, was breathless with agitation. **He split (Apsû's) sinews**" with God putting Adam to sleep to remove a rib.

- "**He bound Apsû and killed him**" perhaps with Cain killed Abel or the woman's Seed inflicting a headwound to the serpent]

- "**Ea and Damkina, his wife**" with God instituting marriage between a man and a woman (See also spouse, seven times, Tablet 1 4x; Tablet II 1x; Tablet IV 2x.)

- "**the chamber of the destinies**" has no parallel. Yet "**the room of the archetypes**" is so interesting!

- "**In pure Apsû was Marduk born. Ea his father begat him**", with the Seed of the woman [shall inflict a headwound on the serpent]

- Marduk was "incomprehensibly wonderful" as would be the Seed of the woman.

- "**The Son, the Sun-god, the Sun-god of the gods.**" with the Seed of the woman, and the Sun to rule over the day.

- **"He made a wave to bring consternation on Tia-mat"** perhaps conflating the flood into their creation epic
- **"our eyes are hollow"** [in sadness, only mentioned to note the sophistication of mankind's early literature]
- **"Let us make demons"** perhaps with the fall of Lucifer and conception of the Nephilim
- **"the gods... unresting by night and day"** implied, after six days of evening and morning work by God resting on the seventh day
- "Mother H(ubur, who forms everything, supplied irresistible weapons, and **gave birth to giant serpents**" with Lucifer appearing as a serpent in Eden.
- The serpents "were **merciless** with poison... she filled their bodies... clothed... with dread... made them godlike. **"Let their onlooker feebly perish"** with the Tempter leading Eve to destruction.
- "She created the Hydra, the Dragon... The Great Demon... Fierce demons" with the conception of the Nephilim and with whatever Adam, Enoch, and Noah may have learned about the angelic rebellion.
- **"Let your commands prevail over all the Anunnaki [BE: who gave to mankind their destinies]. She gave him the Tablet of Destinies... (Saying) 'Your order may not be changed; let the utterance of your mouth be firm.'" No parallel but shows the pagan belief in fate long before that recorded among the Greeks. And, likewise, "After Qingu was elevated and had acquired the power of Anuship, he decreed the destinies for the gods, her sons."**

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- "Mother H(uber... gave birth to giant serpents. They had sharp teeth; they were merciless... She created the Hydra, the Dragon... the Great Demon... fierce demons, the Fish-man" with the serpent, fallen angels (sons of God), and foreshadowing the Dagon idol of the Philistines"
- "I have cast the spell..." and later, "her fury with [your] incantation... [My father] Tia-mat's deeds are too much for me. I perceived her planning, and [my] incantation was not equal (to it)." [and repeated later; along with "Appease Tia-mat with your pure spell" and in Tablet IV "In his lips he held a spell" and Tia-mat "was reciting an incantation, kept reciting her spell"] with nothing, but paganism.
- **"delivered to you the rule of all the gods. You are indeed exalted, my spouse"** with "your husband... shall rule over you."
- "She gave him **the tablet of Destinies**... (Saying) "Your order may not be [sic, be] changed; let the utterance of your mouth be firm... He decreed the destinies for the gods. her sons" with nothing.
- "Take responsibility for whatever you alone have done! You set out and killed Apsû" with Cain killing Abel?
- " The creator of wisdom, the god Nudimmud with soothing words and calming utterance gently answered [his] father Anšar, "My father, deep mind, **who decrees destiny**, who has the power to bring into being and destroy, Anšar, deep mind, who decrees destiny" with nothing.

- "[My father], do not lose hope, send a second person against her. Though a woman's strength is very great, it is not equal to a man's."
- "**stand before Tia-mat, appease her rage**" with offering blood sacrifice to God to appease Him [His wrath]
- "**Address to her words of petition** that she may be appeased" with the entire concept of prayer
- "Marduk, give counsel, listen to your father. You are my son, who gives me pleasure" with the Seed of the Woman, and even with Seth.
- "Drive the storm chariot without delay" as again in Tablet IV, "Be-I took up the Storm-flood, his great weapon" [2x] possible with the flood.
- "Lord of the gods, **Destiny** of the great gods... proclaim for me an exalted destiny... And let me, with my utterance, decree destinies instead of you. Whatever I instigate **must not be changed, nor may my command be nullified or altered**" with nothing (although this was sure picked up by Augustine, Boethius, Aquinas, Luther, Calvin, etc.)

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- "Let them **decree the destiny** for Marduk their avenger" with nothing.
- [repeats lines 11-48 and 156-162, and a bit later, lines 13-66, from Tablet 2]
- "'Quickly, now, **decree your destiny** for him without delay, That he may go and face your powerful enemy.' Kaka went. He directed his steps'... All the great gods who decree destinies gathered as they went" with nothing.
- "**they drank ale**. They strained the sweet liquor through their straws, as they drank beer and felt good," with Noah drinking wine
- They became quite carefree, their mood was merry, and they **decreed the fate** for Marduk, their avenger.

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- [For Marduk] "Your **destiny** is unequalled [repeated]. Henceforth your order will not be annulled" with nothing... It is in your power to exalt and abase. Your utterance is sure, **your command cannot be rebelled against**" with Calvinism, but not Scripture.
- [Marduk] "spare him who trusts in you, but destroy the god who set his mind on evil."
- "Your destiny, Be-I, is superior to that of all the gods, command and bring about annihilation and re-creation."
- "the constellation" 4x
- "Be-I took up the **Storm-flood**, his great weapon, He rode the fearful chariot of the irresistible storm." possibly

with the flood.

- "He was clad in a tunic, a fearful coat of mail, and on his head he wore an aura of terror."

- "Tia-mat cast her spell without turning her neck, in her lips she held untruth and lies"

- "Be-I [Marduk?; lifted up] the **Storm-flood, his great weapon**, and with these words threw it at the raging Tia-mat, "Why are you aggressive and arrogant" perhaps with the flood. [If so, does this epic battle between Marduk, city god of Babylon, against Tia-mat, reach its zenith with a flood? And then, "Tia-mat cried aloud and fiercely, all her lower members trembled beneath her."]

- [Marduk took from Qingu] the **Tablet of Destinies**, which was not properly his"

- "Be-I rested, surveying the corpse [of Tia-mat]... **to divide** the lump by a clever scheme. He **split her into two** like a dried fish: **One half** of her he set up and **stretched out as the heavens**. He stretched [RSR: the other half?] the skin and appointed a watch with the **instruction not to let her waters escape**. He crossed over the heavens, surveyed the celestial parts, and adjusted them to match the Apsû, Nudimmud's abode. Be-I measured the shape of the Apsû and set up Ešarra [Earth's [surface](#) as in 1:2, cp. *raqa?*], a replica of Ešgalla. In Ešgalla, Ešarra [Earth's surface] **which he had built, and the heavens**, He settled in their shrines Anu, Enlil, and Ea." with the waters below the Earth's skin/crust/plate/raqia.

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- "he let the Euphrates and Tigris flow" with those river names in Gen. 2

- "He bored wells to channel the springs."

- "wedged up the heavens—

62 [(Thus) the half of her] he **stretched out** and made it **firm as the earth**.

63 [After] he had finished his work inside Tia-mat,

64 [He spread] his net and let it right out.

65 He **surveyed the heavens and the earth** . . [.] .

66 [. .] their bonds

67 After he had formulated his regulations and composed [his] decrees,

68 He attached guide-ropes and put them in Ea's hands.

69 [The Tablet] of **Destinies** which Qingu had taken..."

117 Marduk opened his mouth to speak

118 And addressed the gods his fathers,

119 **"Above the Apsû, the emerald (?) abode,**

120 **Opposite Ešarra,** which I built for you,

121 **Beneath the celestial parts, whose floor I made firm,**

122 I will build a house to be my luxurious abode.

123 Within it I will establish its shrine,

124 I will found my chamber and establish my kingship.

125 **When you come up from the Apsû** [deep water] to make a decision

126 This will be your resting place before the assembly.

127 When you descend from heaven to make a decision
128 This will be your resting place before the assembly.
129 I shall call its name 'Babylon', "The Homes of the Great Gods",

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83 Who created the earth on the water and made firm the height of heaven.

At 360dayyear.com we describe the writing and calendar gods as invented because they coincided with enormous related changes in man's existence, as the single worldwide perfect calendar of 360 days [changed after the flood](#) to the conflicting regional confusion of their 365 day calendars and the single worldwide language changed to the conflicting 100 or so regional languages after Babel. If before the flood surface waters were almost exclusively freshwater, then after the flood for the first time mankind had to deal with the significant differences (such as for drinking, irrigation, and fishing) between fresh and saltwater. Thus just as the ancients devised writing and calendar gods in response to dealing with extraordinary changes, likewise the Sumerians invented Apsu and Tiamat and even though Apsu means [deep water](#) and became .

From wikimili.com/en/Anz%C3%BB Anzû ... a lesser divinity... was conceived by the pure waters of the Apsu and the wide Earth...

From themythdetective.com/index.php/apsu/ Apsu (Apsû/Abzu) was a creator god of the Mesopotamian, Sumerian, Akkadian, and Babylonian. Depending on which civilization you look into Apsu could be the god of justice, magic, wisdom, and freshwater. Interestingly the word Apsu has a dual meaning of aquifer. Why is this interesting? Read Apsu's story.

See also: "O 'seven heavens', and [seven] earths, seven firmaments ..."

Also, In Judaism, anonymous Qabbalistic authorities declared: "And with them were carved out seven firmaments, seven earths, seven hours and seven times. ... And the seven firmaments: Wilon, Raqia, Shelaqim, Zebbul, Ma'on, Makon, Arabot. And the seven earths: adama, arga, tebel, neshiyya, siyya, heled, 'eretz." This cosmology is certainly rooted in Rabbinical orthodoxy. A Midras praised 'Elohim as the god "who has created seven Raki'im (celestial spheres) and seven earths and seven days and suspended them.."

From BE's HPT chapter for JB: Some in the ancient world did hold a dome cosmology however, and that concept arose when Noah's descendants inherited verbally the creation account and made the exact same error that BioLogos continues to make. For example, the cosmological scheme in the royal court of Assur in

the mid-7th century BC states [Marinus Anthony van der Sluijs, Traditional Cosmology (3); The Global Mythology of Cosmic Creation and...]:

The Upper Heavens are luludanitu-stone... The Middle Heavens are saggilmud-stone... in the lapis lazuli [stone] sanctuary. He made a lamp of electrum shine inside. The Lower Heavens are jasper [stone]. They belong to the stars. He drew the constellations of the gods on them.

Marinus Anthony van der Sluijs, Traditional Cosmology (3); The Global Mythology of Cosmic Creation and... page 212:

In some cases, the available sources do not permit an identification of the hard material from which the sky was thought to have been formed. For example, among the Yorùbá (western Nigeria), “the sky is believed to be a **solid** body, curving over the earth so as to cover it with a vaulted roof”,⁸³⁴ the Ewe (Benin, Togo, and Ghana) regarded the sky as “a **solid** and tangible roof to the earth”,⁸³⁵ and the Haida (Queen Charlotte Islands, British Columbia) believed in a “**solid** firmament, like an inverted bowl”,⁸³⁶ but the nature of the material is not specified in any of these cases. Again, the Inuit of Labrador (northeast Canada) envisioned the sky as “a great dome of hard material arched over the earth”,⁸³⁷ but the “hard material” is not identified.

The types of materials other traditions identify as the fabric of the heavens can conveniently be classified into five categories: ice, bone, ordinary stone, precious stone, and metal. The latter three – or four, if the metaphor of a backbone is included – find counterparts in the physical substance of which the *axis mundi* was thought to be composed.

Far more widespread is the perception that the sky is of a *lithic* or ‘*stony*’ composition. Some Malay and Sakai people (Malaysia) “imagined the firmament to consist of a sort of stone or rock which they called *Batu ham-par*, or ‘Bed rock’, the appearance of stars being caused (as they supposed) by the light which streams through its perforations.”⁸⁴⁴ The Coast Murring (south coast of New South Wales, Australia) noted that, originally, “the sky” was “as hard as a stone”.⁸⁴⁵ In Victoria, the Kurnai, the Wurundjeri, the Walgalu, the Duduroa, the Ngarigo, and the Murring all “held the belief that the earth is a flat surface, surmounted by a **solid** vault – the sky.”⁸⁴⁶ The Banyaruanda (Rwanda) spoke of “a big rock which is the sky we see”, on top of which was situated “another world (*ijuru*) similar to our own, with hills, trees, and rivers. This world may be said to be heavenly only in the sense that it is above the sky ...”⁸⁴⁷

In mythology, the rocky composition of the sky is particularly frequently associated with the episode of the separation of heaven and earth, the lifting up of the sky and the installation of the markers of the cardinal directions. For example, the natives of Kiribati (Micronesia) believe that, prior to the segregation of sky and earth, “The sky was rock, and in some places it was rooted in the land, but in other places there were hollows between.”⁸⁴⁸ When the creator, Na Areau the Younger, desired to discover the contents of the cavity between sky and earth, he “walked on the overside of the sky that lay on the land”, then “knelt on the sky and began to tap it with his fingers, saying”:

Tap ... tap, on heaven and its dwelling places.
It is stone. What becomes of it? It echoes!
It is rock. What becomes of it? It echoes!

⁸⁴⁴ Skeat 1984: 5

⁸⁴⁵ Howitt 1904: 495

⁸⁴⁶ Howitt 1884: 186. This seems to have been “a universal belief among the Australian aborigines”, 1904: 426. It was presumably on this source that Johnson (1998: 13, compare 104) based her statement that most original groups of Australia’s inhabitants conceived of “a **solid** vault or canopy” above the “earth-disc”, beyond which was “the sky-world, a vast, plentiful and beautiful place”: “The vault itself was pictured as being composed of a very hard and durable substance.” 1998: 14. A retelling of a Diēri tradition (central Australia) to the same effect attempts to rationalise the motif of a **solid** sky by means of a thick layer of clouds, telling of a primordial time when “Instead of the present brazen sky, the heavens were covered by a vault of clouds, so dense that it appeared **solid**”, as opposed to the present state of the sky, Gregory 1906: 4.

⁸⁴⁷ Maquet 1954: 166

⁸⁴⁸ Taakeuta of Marakei, in Grimble 1952: 173

Meanwhile, the Kato (Mendocino County, coast of northern California) related:

Before this world was formed there was another world. The sky of that world was made of sandstone rock. Two gods, Thunder and Nagaicho, looked at the old sky because it was being shaken by thunder. 'The rock is old', they said. 'We will fix it. We will stretch it above, far to the east.' Then they stretched the sandstone rock of the sky, walking on the sky as they did so. Under each of the four corners of the sky they set up a great rock to hold it. Then they made the different things which would make the world pleasant for people to live in.⁸⁵²

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the sky made of precious stone

The specific type of stone cited to constitute the present or the former sky is frequently identified as a *precious mineral* of some sort, especially in the more ancient civilisations. The exact hues attributed to the solid sky in such texts vary. A fragment of the cosmological scheme devised by Kišir-Aššur (mid-7th century BCE), the royal conjurer of Aššur, qualifies the three layers of heaven as formed of differently coloured minerals, the precise identity of which is now hard to determine:

The Upper Heavens are *luludānītu*-stone. They belong to Anu. He settled the 300 Igigi inside.

The Middle Heavens are *saggilmud*-stone. They belong to the Igigi. Bel sat on the high dais inside,

in the lapis lazuli sanctuary. He made a lamp of electrum shine inside.

The Lower Heavens are jasper. They belong to the stars. He drew the constellations of the gods on them.⁸⁵³

In Zoroastrian texts, the benevolent deity, Ahura Mazdā, prides himself on the formation of the "ruby" sky:

⁸⁵² Gifford & Block 1930: 79

⁸⁵³ KAR 307. 30-34 = VAT 8917 obv. 30 – rev. 3, tr. Horowitz 1998: 3-4 and repeated in part in the *Great Star List* (AO 8196 IV. 20-22), 278-280, tr. Koch-Westenholz 1995: 202-203; compare Livingstone 1986: 82-83. *Luludānītu* will have been "a variety of multi-coloured stone", *saggilmud* "a ruddy stone", West 1997: 139.

When through me the sky arose from the substance of the ruby, without columns, on the spiritual support of far-compassed light ...⁸⁵⁴

The sky is made from the substance of the blood-stone, such as they also call diamond (al-mâst).⁸⁵⁵

It “looks like a palace, that stands built of a heavenly substance, firmly established, with ends that lie afar, shining in its body of ruby over the three-thirds (of the earth); it is like a garment inlaid with stars, made of a heavenly substance, that Mazda puts on, along with Mithra and Rashnu and Spenta-Ârmaiti, and on no side can the eye perceive the end of it.”⁸⁵⁶

Yet other traditions, perhaps more naturally, preferred a greenish-blue tinge of mineral. Chinese philosophers were wont to identify the sky as jade, as well as gold, from “ancient times”.⁸⁵⁷

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the sky made of metal

Ancient societies that moved beyond the Stone Age into the Bronze and Iron Ages were generally more inclined to analyse the texture of the sky as *metallic*, be it copper, bronze or iron.⁸⁵⁸ In Egypt, for instance, the floor of the sky was perceived as an iron ceiling above the earth, supported by four pillars at the cardinal points and reached by means of the ‘ladder of Horus’.⁸⁵⁹ “I ascend to the sky, I cross over the iron (firmament)”, ex-

⁸⁵⁴ *Bundahišn (Primal Creation)*, 30. 5, tr. West 1880: 121. The absence of “columns” marks a digression from the more usual motif of sky pillars.

⁸⁵⁵ *Dînâ-î Maînôg-î Khiraj*, 9. 7, tr. West 1885: 36; compare Reichelt 1913: 50.

⁸⁵⁶ Ahura Mazdâ to Spitâma Zaraûštra, apud *Avesta: Yašts: Frawardîn Yašt* (13), 1 (3), tr. Darmesteter 1883: 180-181

⁸⁵⁷ de Groot 1892: 270-271. According to the *Yì Jīng (Book of Changes; 9th century BCE onwards?; 17)*, “Heaven is jade, is gold.” Yet the ancient sources themselves do not give a rationale: “One question still requires elucidation, to wit, why jade and gold were, in China, so especially identified with heaven. No satisfactory answer to this is supplied by any of the ancient books; so we can only guess at the reasons. Semi-civilized, simple-minded man naturally cherishes puerile ideas about the Cosmos, the constitution of which he does not at all understand. ... The beautiful azure colour by which many sorts of jade are distinguished from other minerals, may likewise have had some share in establishing this identification.” 1892: 274-275. According to Crawley (1915: 591), the identification was made “since all precious substances are from the sky.”

⁸⁵⁸ “If these adjectives were meant to convey not merely extreme hardness but literally ‘brazen’ or ‘iron’, we must rid our minds of modern views of minerals and think rather of the ancient conception of stone as bone ... and of the ‘birth’ of silver ...” Onians 2000: 249 note 9

⁸⁵⁹ Compare, for the *Pyramid Texts*, Maravelia 2006: 131. The notion of a metallic sky weakens Allen’s (1988: 5) intimation that “In the Egyptian conception, the sky is not so much a solid ‘ceiling’ as a kind of interface between the surface of the Waters and the dry atmosphere.”

See also: themythdetective.com/index.php/apsu.