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« LAMENT FOR UR »
THE GODS AND HUMAN DESTINY

Mesopotamians and Egyptians believed that their destinies were determined by the gods. Drought, hurricanes, sickness, law, and foreign invasion were all attributed to divine intervention. In the "Lament for Ur," the assembly of the gods decides to punish the Sumerian city-state of Ur.

Enlil called the storm.

The people mourn.

Winds of abundance he took from the land.

The people mourn.

Good winds he took away from Sumer.

The people mourn.

Deputed [assigned] evil winds.

The people mourn.

Entrusted them to Kingaluda, tender of storms.

He called the storm that annihilates the land.

The people mourn.

He called disastrous winds.

The people mourn.

Enlil — choosing Gibil (fire god) as his helper —

called the (great) hurricane of heaven.

The people mourn.

The (blinding) hurricane howling across the skies —

the people mourn —
the storm that annihilates the land roaring
over the earth —
the people mourn —
the tempest unshunnable like breaks through
levees,
beats down upon, devours the city's ships,
(all these) he gathered at the base of heaven.
The people mourn.

(Great) fires he lit that heralded the storm.

The people mourn.

And lit on either flank of furious winds
the searing heat of desert.

Like flaming heat of noon this fire
scorched. . . .

The storm ordered by Enlil in hate,
the storm which wears away the country,
covered Ur like a cloth,
veiled it like a linen sheet. . . .

On that day did the storm leave the city;
that city was a ruin.

O father Nanna (the moon god), that town
was left a ruin.

The people mourn.

On that day did the storm leave the country.

The people mourn.

Its people ('s corpses), not potsherds,
littered the approaches.

The walls were gaping;
the high gates, the roads,
were piled with dead.

In the wide streets,
where feasting crowds (once) gathered,
jumbled they lay.

In all the streets and roadways bodies lay.
In open fields that used to fill with dancers,
the people lay in heaps.

The country's blood now filled its holes.
like metal in a mold;
bodies dissolved — like butter left in the sun.

God
mad.

dever to the