

The Displaced Language of Mesopotamia
(by Sellahattin Şep with translation from Khalil Haji)

And the sun turned to the Earth. Ishtar, the Mother Goddess, descended from the heart of the Sun to the Earth. From her hands and from her fertile body two rivers burst forth, white foamed, full breasted. Falling to their knees, the Tigris and Euphrates, gushing, said: Oh, Holy Light traversing the endless sky, it is you that gave birth to us, you who created us. Who sent your light, who caused the earth to flow with life in the empty space between the two flowing rivers. Then, the Sun retired, and the blue sky and tanned earth were buried in darkness once more. And the Moon—child of the Sun, brewer of night and day, sovereign of the tides—was born in the night sky.

And when a bull's horn attains its shape, two horns emerge from the vapor of the Sun's breath.

On a dark night, as the clouds churned, the Moon delivered the seeds it strained from the clouds and fertilized Mother Earth. As the sun broiled, a human being was delivered straight from the warm womb of Mother Ishtar. And the word was written on the face of the dark Earth.

Recognizing the value of the tree, the Human ate of its fruit. Hands reaching out for more brushed against the warm hands of another. There were others here, too, the human realized, warm bodies at one with the soil. By these others, the Human encountered death and thus learned to fear.

A sprout shooting forth from the same soil. The sprout grew, and became a tree. The tree grew, bore fruit, and died. And so Humanity learned that death passes through birth. The human being looked up at the Moon—at how it was born, grew, and died. And then from the Sun's light, its seal imprinted on the human mind, did the human body gain warmth. Longing to be eternal as the Sun and the Moon, to regenerate like the tree, the Human engraved their images onto their bodies.

The Human encountered other creatures; to be more agile, more wise, and stronger than them, to understand them and to know them, they drew pictures of those creatures on the walls of caves. To possess the same power as those creatures, to rule them, they painfully engraved life's lines—the ancestor of writing—the lines of their joy, of their hope, their pain, their fear—humanity's first sacred texts, civilization's first verses, its first meaning, the first seed of life, the first imitation of nature, the birth of art, the first transcript of the magical world, the first temple of faith, the first break to a self-created essence, the first betrayal, the seed of the soil, the womb that swallows the abundant seed, the first law of a man establishing his sovereignty.

But first, the mother god Ishtar was expelled from man's garden of heaven—half of humanity. Man couldn't know that a body, a human could split in two. In a woman's body the seed gave its mercies, the earth's fertility's marks of longing to be in the same body, to be one. The body's images telling of humanity's adventures, turned into pain, hope, and dream verses on a woman's body. From body to body, body to stone, stone to rug, humanity's fate wanders.