

**A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE ORIGIN AND
DIVINE CAUSATION OF DEATH IN ANCIENT
NEAR EASTERN LITERATURE AND IN
THE OLD TESTAMENT**

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Date completed: September 2011

The present dissertation attempts a comparative analysis of both the origin of death in the creation accounts and the divine causation of death in the main flood accounts in the ANE literature and the Hebrew OT. Both literatures are examined for their implicit or explicit conceptions of the origin and divine causation of death. The origin of death in the ANE literature is located in the Egyptian Osirian myth and the Mesopotamian Enki-Ninmah myth, Enûma Elish, Epic of Gilgamesh, and the Adapa legend. The divine causation of death is studied in the Eridu Genesis, Atra-Hasis Epic, Gilgamesh Epic, and Berosus flood story. The origin of death in the OT is located in the creation account of Genesis 1–3, and the divine causation of death is dealt with in the context of the flood story of Genesis 6–9. Two tables outlining the similarities and differences between the individual ANE accounts and the OT are respectively placed at the end of the section on the origin of death in the creation accounts and the divine causation of death in the flood accounts.

Following chapter 1, the introductory chapter, chapter 2 examines the ANE (Egyptian and Mesopotamian) and Hebrew OT creation accounts to discover the origin of death. The two accounts are treated separately. However, in chapter 3 the individual findings of the two accounts on the origin of death are compared and contrasted. I conclude that in the ANE literature death originated with divine decision in war and also in a god-given human mortal nature, whereas in Hebrew literature mortality and death originated with human sinful choice to flout the divine proscription against eating the forbidden fruit.

In chapter 4, on the divine causation of death, the Mesopotamian and Hebrew flood accounts are also treated separately. But in chapter 5 the respective findings of the two accounts are compared and contrasted on the divine causation of death. In both the ANE and Hebrew accounts of the flood there is direct divine agency of the flood event; the flood is a global event involving the physical destruction of humanity, and a human remnant is divinely saved from the inundation. In contrast, in the ANE flood account, god-given *rigmu* (noise), resulting in divine insomnia, seems to be the sole cause of the flood; and the gods are capricious, deceptive, and fearful in the flood. But the Hebrew account portrays human sin as the conditional cause of the flood, *lex talionis* as the judicial principle in the flood judgment, and God is presented as gracious in probation, salvific in intent, and just in retribution.

In conclusion, the twin concepts (origin and divine causation of death) studied in this dissertation find convergence in the ANE account when the gods who created mankind endowed them with mortality; thus, the divine

creators of mankind are at once the causal originators or original causers of death. This convergence is absent from the Hebrew account because at creation humanity was endowed with immortality, not mortality, and mortality and death originated with human sin. In the ANE flood account, human noise, leading to divine insomnia and apparent arbitrary divine will, are the cause of the flood, but in the Hebrew OT flood, human sin is the conditional cause and God, the effectual cause of the flood.