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**Tiamat**

The Babylonian goddess Tiamat appears as one of the primal female forces in the cosmogony of the creation epic *Enuma Elish* (c. 1100 BCE). Tiamat, the primordial saltwater, commingles with the male Apsu, the freshwater ocean, to form new generations of gods. After her consort Apsu is murdered by the new generations of gods, angry Tiamat turns to revenge. *Enuma Elish* represents Tiamat's revenge as the source of disorder and chaos that needs to be subdued by powerful male gods. Specifically, Tiamat is personified as a monster who resorts to lies, black magic, and animal speech. She "illegally" creates several monsters to assist her in her fight, including giant snakes full of venom and sharp teeth, great lions, mad dogs, furious dragons, bison, and the hydra, scorpion-man, and merman. These terrible beings are clothed in the divine splendor in Tiamat's effort to lift them to the status of gods. Tiamat revolts still further in taking on a chief monster, Kingu, as her new husband. All these actions are viewed as illegal because they did not result from a consensus with other gods. Thus, Tiamat transgresses the divine order and introduces chaos into the world.

Tiamat is severely punished for her "disorderly" behavior by a powerful male god, Marduk, and by his supporters. In contrast to Tiamat's illegitimate ways of warring, Marduk resorts to the rightful means that are appropriate for noble deities: thunder, lightning, subduing the winds and floods, and a bow and arrow. Not only is Tiamat killed, but the very means of capturing her symbolize punishment for her actions. She is caught in a net, which suggests that she no longer deserves to be perceived as a goddess who is a primordial mother. Instead, she is portrayed as a savage female being who deserves to be hunted, caught in a net, and killed in a manner reserved for wild animals. The gruesome detail of the cutting of Tiamat's body communicates further the outrage at the goddess's transgression. Her skull is split, her veins cut open, she is disemboweled, her bones crushed. After cutting open her stomach, Marduk stands on her dead body as a sign of final victory. The "disorderly" body of Tiamat becomes a source of order only in her death; the female chaos can be conquered only with the final silencing of death. To this end, Tiamat's corpse is divided, piece by piece, to form the new universe: sky and earth.

While Tiamat is conquered, Marduk is elevated to a supreme role of a sovereign god. He assigns roles to gods, divides heaven and earth, and fixes the universe according to his will.

The story suggests that the primordial female goddess was deservedly punished for introducing chaos into the universe. Only by eliminating the disorderly female passion (or chaos) can the male rational order return. The vanquished body of Tiamat gives rise to the new hierarchy: heaven over earth and male power over female power.

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