



The Descent of Ishtar: both the Sumerian and Akkadian versions

Timothy J. Stephany

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The Mistress of Heaven, the goddess Ishtar, stands in a unique position of supremacy among the goddess figures of the world; and her descent into the underworld is her essential distinctive myth. The primacy of the goddess and her lover, Dumuzi, to the seasonal cycle, and the ritual marriage which was a ceremony of the union essential to civilized life, was not retained within the textual Judeo-Christian tradition. As a result this mythological cycle of the goddess restores the expressive sexual metaphor of agricultural fertility, which merges the domestic concerns of womanhood with the essential productive forces of nature. Included along with this essential seasonal myth are two entirely dissimilar tales concerned with military valor, heroic conquest, and the assumption of absolute power; the partially incomplete Mesopotamian tales of 'The Epic of Anzu' and 'Erra and Ishum'.

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