

The Great Hymn to Shamash

Among the longest and most beautiful of the hymns that have come down to us in cuneiform, this ranks as one of the best products of Mesopotamian religious writing. Shamash was the Sun god worshipped by the Assyrians and the Babylonians. Many viewed him—and revered him—as the god of Justice, as well as the ruler of the entire universe.

1-20...

21. You climb to the mountains surveying the earth,
22. You suspend from the heavens the circle of the lands.
23. You care for all the peoples of the lands,
24. And everything that Ea, king of the counsellors, had created is entrusted to you.
25. Whatever has breath you shepherd without exception,
26. You are their keeper in upper and lower regions.
27. Regularly and without cease you traverse the heavens,
28. Every day you pass over the broad earth. . . .
33. Shepherd of that beneath, keeper of that above,
34. You, Shamash, direct, you are the light of everything.
35. You never fail to cross the wide expanse of sea,
36. The depth of which the Igigi know not.
37. Shamash, your glare reaches down to the abyss
38. So that monsters of the deep behold your light. . . .
45. Among all the Igigi there is none who toils but you,
46. None who is supreme like you in the whole pantheon of gods.
47. At your rising the gods of the land assemble,
48. Your fierce glare covers the land.
49. Of all the lands of varied speech,
- 50.. You know their plans, you scan their way.

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- 51.. The whole of mankind bows to you,
52. Shamash, the universe longs for your light. . . .
88. A man who covets his neighbour's wife
89. Will [. . .] before his appointed day.
- 90.. A -nasty snare is prepared for him. [. . .]
91. Your weapon will strike at him, and there will be none to save him.
92. [His] father will not stand for his defense,
93. And at the judge's command his brothers will not plead.
94. He will be caught in a copper trap that he did not foresee.
95. You destroy the horns of a scheming villain,
96. A zealous [. . .] his foundations are undermined.
97. You give the unscrupulous judge experience of fetters,
98. Him who accepts a present and yet lets justice miscarry you make bear his punishment.
99. As for him who declines a present but nevertheless takes the part of the weak,
- 100.. It is pleasing to Shamash, and he will prolong his life. . . .
124. The progeny of evil-doers will [fail.]
125. Those whose mouth says 'No'-their case is before you.
126. In a moment you discern what they say;
127. You hear and examine them; you determine the lawsuit of the wronged.
128. Every single person is entrusted to your hands;
129. You manage their omens; that which is perplexing you make plain.
130. You observe, Shamash, prayer, supplication, and benediction,
131. Obeisance, kneeling, ritual murmurs, and prostration.
132. The feeble man calls you from the hollow of his mouth,
133. The humble, the weak, the afflicted, the poor,
134. She whose son is captive constantly and unceasingly confronts you.
135. He whose family is remote, whose city is distant,
136. The shepherd [amid] the terror of the steppe confronts you,

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137. The herdsman in warfare, the keeper of sheep among enemies.
138. Shamash, there confronts you the caravan, those journeying in fear,
139. The travelling merchant, the agent who is carrying capital.
140. Shamash, there confronts you the fisherman with his net,
141. The hunter, the Bowman who drives the game,
142. With his bird net the Fowler confronts You.
143. The prowling thief, the enemy of Shamash,
144. The marauder along the tracks of the steppe confronts you.
145. The roving dead, the vagrant soul,
146. They confront you, Shamash, and you hear all.
147. You do not obstruct those that confront you. . . .
148. For my sake, Shamash, do not curse them!
149. You grant revelations, Shamash, to the families of men,
150. Your harsh face and fierce light you give to them. . . .
154. The heavens are not enough as the vessel into which you gaze,
155. The sum of the lands is inadequate as a seer's bowl.....
159. You deliver people surrounded by mighty waves,
160. In return you receive their pure, clear libations. . . .
165. They in their reverence laud the mention of you,
166. And worship your majesty for ever. . . .
174. Which are the mountains not clothed with your beams?
175. Which are the regions not warmed by the brightness of your light?
176. Brightener of gloom, illuminator of darkness,
177. Dispeller of darkness, illuminator of the broad earth.
178. ...

Source: W. G. Lambert, in his book "Babylonian Wisdom Literature" (Oxford, 1960,)I, 127 ff.