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Zecharia Sitchin's Errors: An Overview

by Michael S. Heiser

- [An introduction to Zecharia Sitchin's flawed scholarship and why I feel it is important that these flaws be exposed.](#)

In a nutshell, I'm a trained scholar in Hebrew Bible and ancient Semitic languages and care about my field and its resources. That means I have taken real classes in these languages and the ancient texts from real professors in real universities. I am not stumbling around in the dark. My knowledge isn't just based on the fact that I can use a library. [Getting a Ph.D.](#) in this area really does matter. I know many who come to this website are frustrated by "academese" and a seeming unwillingness (it's more than imaginary) of academics to consider alternative research on the ancient world. I would agree with you that there is a "knowledge filter" in academia (I think of Cremona and Thompson's amazing efforts in "Forbidden Archaeology" when I say that), but that does not justify poor scholarship and fabrication of "data" to prop up ideas. It is illegitimate to complain that academics should look at alternate ideas and then turn around and refuse to look at what the original sources say. Whether you want to accept it or not, when you take Sitchin's interpretations of stories over the word meanings the scribes themselves left us (they made dictionaries back then too!), this justifies academics treating alternate material with disdain. This situation should not be. We should look and be willing to slay academic (and even theological) sacred cows; you should respect the results of centuries of work in the field by people who do this for a living.

- [An analysis of the cylinder seal \(VA 243\) that Sitchin uses to argue that the Sumerians knew there were 12 planets.](#)

This analysis focuses on the demonstrable fact that the "sun" symbol on this seal (which is essential to allegedly depicting the solar system) is not the sun. The actual sun symbol used on literally hundreds of seals, monuments, and other artwork from Sumer and Mesopotamia is shown to the reader via photos and compared to the symbol on this seal. It's not even close. I include examples where Sitchin's symbol occurs side-by-side with the real sun symbol so there can be no mistaking the fact that the Sumerians and Mesopotamians did in fact distinguish these symbols. This analysis erodes the entire foundation of Sitchin's 12 planet hypothesis.

- [A study of the word "Nibiru" and an examination of the nature of Nibiru in cuneiform astronomical texts.](#)

The goal here was to amass for readers every occurrence of the word "nibiru" in ancient cuneiform texts. Fortunately, this is possible because of

the diligent work of the compilers of the well known Chicago Assyrian Dictionary, which bases its entries on exhaustive compilations of all cuneiform material known to the present day (there's a reason its taken decades to compile!). The study shows - from the texts themselves, not my opinion - that "Nibiru" is not a planet beyond Pluto and that the Anunnaki gods are never associated with it. These ideas are fabrications. Additionally, this study briefly details the sources left to us by the Mesopotamian scribes that are of an astronomical nature, and addresses Sitchin's "god to planet" matchups that he uses to reconstruct the cosmology of earth and our solar system. In other words, when Sitchin says "the god Marduk is the planet Nibiru" and proceeds to read this equation (and others) into the Sumero-Akkadian texts to interpret them, I compare such equations to the actual lists in cuneiform where Mesopotamian astronomers struck god = planet equations. Not surprisingly, they don't agree.

- [Zecharia Sitchin's complete misunderstanding of the meaning of the word "elohim"](#)

This study focuses on the fact that, though elohim is morphologically plural (its "shape" or grammatical form is plural), the meaning of the word is almost always singular (one god) in the Hebrew Bible. This is the case over 2500 times. The [same phenomenon is also present in Sumerian and Akkadian](#). The reader does not need to know Hebrew to follow the discussion, as I have color-coded the grammatical features and examples illustrating the truth of this well known (to those who know Hebrew anyway) feature of biblical Hebrew. The section also contains a [response](#) to Erik Parker's (Sitchin's webmaster) attempts to rebut the material. Erik has never studied Hebrew or any ancient language, but he nevertheless tried to respond. It isn't pretty.

- [Zecharia Sitchin's misunderstanding of the word "nephilim"](#)

This study details the impossibility of Sitchin's translations of "nephilim" as "those who came down" or "people of the fiery rockets" in light of Hebrew vocabulary and grammar. I know it sounds mind-numbing, but again I have tried to illustrate the concepts and problems. It also contains a scan of a page from one of Sitchin's books where he could not tell the difference between Aramaic and Hebrew - an amazing mistake if he's an expert.

- [Alleged rocket ships in ancient Mesopotamia and the biblical Babel story](#)

The point of this discussion is to show that Sitchin's translations of certain Sumero-Akkadian words cannot be correct for the simple reason that the ancient Mesopotamian dictionaries (yes, they kept bilingual dictionaries and we have them today) translate the words of their own language in ways that unanimously contradict Mr.Sitchin. You either believe him or the ancient Sumerians / Mesopotamians. Seems like an easy call.

- [An Open Letter to Zecharia Sitchin](#)

My goal here is to set the record straight for all who care about thinking and paying attention to facts (the original sources) in these

matters. I accept the sad truth that many disciples of Zecharia Sitchin will not be swayed by any amount of data from the cuneiform texts. They literally will believe Sitchin over the Sumerians and Mesopotamians themselves. There isn't much I can do or say to such cultic obsessions. On the other hand, there are those out there who really do want to think, are willing to change their minds, and who care about the primary sources. This letter is as much for you as Mr. Sitchin. The facts are these:

- I have had this letter online for two years and it has never been answered. I haven't even seen some sort of resume or transcript proving Sitchin has ever even studied ancient languages. [My CV](#) is on this website.
- I was asked if I was willing to debate Mr. Sitchin two years ago by Art Bell on the air, and was asked again by Coast to Coast's weekend host, Barbara Simpson the same question months later. I accepted immediately; Mr. Sitchin has been silent.
- The only person who has responded to anything on this website has been the intrepid but unprepared [Erik Parker, Sitchin's webmaster](#). To date Erik has not answered the questions below. He has not produced a single text that says Nibiru is a planet beyond Pluto, or that associates the Anunnaki with Nibiru. He has not refuted (or even understood) the points of Hebrew grammar I have introduced regarding "nephilim" and "elohim". (And in fairness, he can't be expected to since he has no language training). He has not explained why the Sumero-Akkadian story of building the tower (Sitchin says rocket ship) has the object being built with bricks, or why such advanced ETs as the Anunnaki came here with internal combustion engines. Most importantly, he has not explained why there has been no effort to arrange any sort of debate. Instead, Erik has attacked my motives and tried to twist parts of my discussions into "agreeing" with Sitchin (which is why I reproduce all our exchanges in whole - so you know who is twisting what). Zero response. Zero substance.

Don't believe me? Have the courage to look through these studies yourself. I have nothing to hide, and always try to give the reader sources to check everything.

Introductory Comments:

The work of Zecharia Sitchin was brought to my attention just over a year ago, shortly after I completed my book, *The Façade*. As a trained scholar in ancient Semitic languages with a lifelong interest in UFOs and paranormal phenomena, I was naturally enthused about Mr. Sitchin's studies, particularly since I had also heard he was a Sumerian scholar. I thought I had found a kindred spirit, perhaps even a guide to navigating the possible intersection of my academic disciplines with ufology, a discipline unfairly ridiculed by the academic mainstream. Unfortunately, I was wrong.

What follows will no doubt trouble some readers. I have come to learn that Mr. Sitchin has an avid following, and so that is inevitable. Nevertheless, I feel it my responsibility as someone who has earned credentials in the languages, cultures, and history of

antiquity to point out the errors in Mr. Sitchin's work. Indeed, this is the academic enterprise. I have yet to find anyone with credentials or demonstrable lay-expertise in Sumerian, Akkadian, or any of the other ancient Semitic languages who positively assesses Mr. Sitchin's academic work.

The reader must realize that the substance of my disagreement is *not* due to "translation philosophy," as though Mr. Sitchin and I merely disagree over possible translations of certain words. What is at stake is the integrity of the cuneiform tablets themselves, along with the legacy of Sumer and Mesopotamian scribes. Very simply, *the ancient Mesopotamians compiled their own dictionaries* - we have them and they have been published since mid-century. The words Mr. Sitchin tells us refer to rocket ships have no such meanings *according to the ancient Mesopotamians themselves*. Likewise when Mr. Sitchin draws connections between Sumero-Mesopotamian gods and stories that simply do not exist in the literature (like insisting the Sumerians believed there were twelve planets and having the Anunnaki living on Nibiru, the supposed 12th planet), my argument with him is one that opposes such fabrications, not just one how words are translated. To persist in embracing Mr. Sitchin's views on this matter (and a host of others) amounts to rejecting the legacy of the ancient Sumerian and Akkadian scribes whose labors have come down to us from the ages. Put bluntly, is it more coherent to believe a Mesopotamian scribe's definition of a word, or Mr. Sitchin's?

I do believe that Mr. Sitchin has done *some kind* of work in the ancient languages (I have never seen academic credentials in the form of degrees or transcripts), but some of the mistakes he makes are at so basic a level of language knowledge that I sincerely doubt he knows ANY of the ancient languages he says he does. I'm guessing that with Hebrew, for example, Mr. Sitchin (being Jewish) can sight-read the language but doesn't understand ancient Biblical Hebrew grammar (much like many English readers don't have a real grasp of the mechanics of English grammar). I have seen little that convinces me that Mr. Sitchin knows any ancient languages, much less demonstrating that he is a language "expert". I say this because of Mr. Sitchin's linguistic mistakes (see below), and because he rarely interacts with scholarly articles pertaining to any linguistic material in the texts he uses. Unfortunately, there are even points he just makes up.

The reader should also know that I believe that the strange phenomena people have experienced in antiquity through the present day with respect to "UFOs" and "aliens" are real. *The Facade* offers an alternative paradigm to these phenomena, one that, contrary to Mr. Sitchin's reconstruction, CAN be defended (if the connections be legitimate) through ancient texts.

Mr. Sitchin's Errors: The Specifics

1) An overview of Cylinder Seal VA 243

A fairly thorough treatment of the problems with Sitchin's interpretation and use of this seal is available (free) as a PDF file [HERE](#).

2) A Study of Nibiru

Again, a few of the basic issues are [explained here](#) with a more lengthy follow-up available in PDF form.

3) Mr. Sitchin insists that "Elohim" in Genesis 1:26-27 is plural, thereby "requiring" us to interpret that passage as supporting his idea that extraterrestrial "gods" (The Annunaki) created humankind. (See *The 12th Planet*, p. 337-338).

Mr. Sitchin's comments in this regard show either a refusal to consider the Hebrew grammar of this passage, or outright ignorance of that grammar (i.e., he just never looked). "Elohim" does NOT always mean "gods" (plural); the meaning of the term is to be determined by grammatical and contextual clues. GRAMMAR is IMPORTANT! Grammar is to language what your graphical internet browser is to the websites on the internet - it is the organizing vehicle that gives meaning to the data -bits of information; without it you'd have to create your own method of obtaining and understanding that information - it would be totally SELF STYLED. Grammar dictates the formation of words, the relationship of words to each other, and the meaning of those words with respect to that arrangement. Without attention to the rules of grammar that have governed the languages of ancient texts, you can make the texts say ANYTHING; grammar is a control against total subjectivity. Sitchin ignores grammar in his work on elohim in this passage (and others). The PDF files below illustrate (from the Hebrew) that "elohim" often refers to a "god" or "God" (proper name). Besides this evidence from the Hebrew Bible, I have also posted examples from ancient Mesopotamian texts (Akkadian) and the famous El-Amarna texts (also Akkadian) where the plural word for "gods" ('ilanu) refers to a single person or god - just as in the case of Hebrew elohim. Why is Sitchin (and others) unaware of this material? Someone trained in the ancient languages would know about this - and if he knows it, why doesn't he tell his readers!?

Here is the [PDF file](#) on Sitchin's erroneous teachings on the word "elohim". The overheads include [examples of the Akkadian](#) word for "gods" (plural *ilanu*) used to refer to SINGLE gods or individuals.

For an expanded treatment of the meaning of Elohim, complete with visual examples (you need not know Hebrew), click on the link below. Mr. Sitchin's webmaster, Erik Parker, attempted to respond to my criticisms of his mentor's work, with disastrous results. In case the reader thinks I am picking on Mr. Parker, it is fair to say the arguments he uses are Sitchin's, not his own (he knows Sitchin's work very well). To really see how poor Sitchin's scholarship is on the word Elohim (as well as those who parrot his work, like Laurence Gardner and William Henry), click [here](#).

4) Mr. Sitchin contends that the word "Nephilim" means "those who came down from above" or "those who descended to earth" or "people of the fiery rockets" (see *The Twelfth Planet*, pp. vii, 128ff.).

These translations, of course, serve his purpose - to see the Nephilim as ancient astronauts. As such it is hard to over-estimate the importance of Sitchin's work here - if he's wrong about the meaning of "nephilim," much of his overall thesis falls.

Unfortunately for Sitchin, such translations are completely out of step with the Hebrew text and the word which is at the base of "Nephilim." Once again ignoring the grammar of the text (and actually making up his own word meaning in this case), Sitchin makes the following errors, addressed in the PDF files below.

Sitchin assumes "Nephilim" comes from the *Hebrew* word "naphal" (as opposed to ARAMAIC - see below) which usually means "to fall." He then forces the meaning "to come down" onto the word, creating his "to come down from above" translation. "Nephilim" - in the form we find it in the Hebrew Bible - COULD come from Hebrew "naphal," but it could ONLY be translated one way in light of the spelling - "those who are fallen" (i.e., either "fallen in battle" - which is out of the question given the context of Genesis 6 - or "spiritually fallen" / evil - which fits the context IF the sons of

God are evil). To see that the sons of God in Genesis 6 were evil divine beings and this cohabitation was evil, one needs only to turn to either Jude 6-7 and II Peter 2:4-6, or the Book of Enoch.

The scholarly reasons for my assertion are demonstrated in the [PDF file](#) on the Nephilim. In short, if you care about the grammar of Hebrew, Sitchin's word meanings CAN'T be correct.

The above file also discusses Sitchin's confusion of the sons of God and the nephilim - and evidence from his own book, *Stairway to Heaven*, that he cannot distinguish between Hebrew and Aramaic! My suspicion behind this apparent blunder is that Sitchin wants to distance the Annunaki from the evil Watchers of ancient Jewish literature (Hebrew Bible, Enoch, and some Dead Sea Scrolls).

5) Mr. Sitchin argues that certain Sumerian terms (and the Akkadian equivalents) refer to flying craft.

Specifically, the terms used by Mr. Sitchin to argue for ancient rockets and space flight are Sumerian "MU" (Akkadian "shamu"; Hebrew "shem") and Sumerian "ME" (see *The 12th Planet*, pp. 130 ff.). Mr. Sitchin argues in turn that the Genesis account of the tower of Babel, where the people wanted to make for themselves a "shem," actually describes the construction of a flying craft/rocket.

There are a number of difficulties with Sitchin's arguments and his use of the languages here.

A. The Meaning of "MU", "shamu", and "shem"

As noted above, the ancient Mesopotamian scribes created dictionaries. Lists of words are a common feature among the thousands of Sumerian and Akkadian cuneiform tablets which have been discovered by archaeologists. Many are just groupings of common words, while others represent an inventory of the word meanings of the languages used in Mesopotamia. These "lexical lists", as scholars call them, were indispensable to the 19th century scholars who deciphered the Sumerian and Akkadian texts, for they were used to compile modern dictionaries of these languages. Today all major lexical texts have been published in the multi-volume set, *Materials for the Sumerian Lexicon*, begun by Benno Landsberger in the 1930s. It is indeed a rare instance where ancient dictionaries of a dead language form the core of the modern dictionaries used by scholars of today. Such is the case for the ancient languages of Sumer and Akkad. Sadly, Mr. Sitchin neglects these resources.

The Meaning of Sumerian "MU"

On pages 140-143 of *The 12th Planet*, we read that Mr. Sitchin defines the Sumerian MU as "an oval-topped, conical object," and "that which rises straight." Mr. Sitchin cites no Sumerian dictionary for these meanings. A check of the dictionaries contained in Sumerian grammars and the online Sumerian dictionary reveal no such word meanings. But why trust modern scholars when we can check with the Mesopotamian scribes themselves?

In his technical but stimulating study of Sumerian and Mesopotamian terminology for the cosmos, *Mesopotamian Cosmic Geography*,

Mesopotamian scholar W. Horowitz lays out the meaning of the Sumerian word "MU" directly as the Mesopotamian lexical lists have it. In discussing the meaning of the Akkadian word "shamu," in his book, Horowitz gathered all the lexical list data for that word. What follows below is his layout. Note that the word "MU" in the left-hand (Sumerian) was among the cuneiform dictionary entries for "shamu." A discussion of the meanings follows the entries. Briefly, "shamu" in Akkadian here means "heaven" (or part of the sky/heavens) or perhaps "rain." According to the scribal tablets themselves, the meaning is not "that which rises straight," or "conical object" (i.e., "rocket ship"). This is the verdict of the scribes themselves, not this writer. The red explanatory insertions are my own:

Equivalences of *šamû*

A number of equivalences of *šamû*⁷ are known from lexical lists and commentaries. In lexical lists, these terms appear in the left "Sumerian" column, indicating that they are non-Akkadian words. Because most of the equivalences only occur in lexical lists, it is not always possible to determine if they are names for heaven or equivalences of the homonym *šamû* meaning 'rain'.

The List K. 2035+ ii 17-33

K. 2035+ (2R 50+) contains a list of equivalences of *šamû*. At present, 17 of these equivalences are preserved:⁸

an	=	šá-mu-ú	si	=	šá-mu-ú
na	=	šá-mu-ú	u _{de} šá _š AŠ	=	šá-mu-ú
me	=	šá-mu-ú	niku _{sm} ENGUR	=	šá-mu-ú
→ mu	=	šá-mu-ú	nikar _{ra} (IM×IM)	=	šá-mu-ú
en _{nu}	=	šá-mu-ú	en _{im} NIM	=	š[á-mu]-ú
g _{is}	=	šá-mu-ú	idim	=	š[á-mu]-ú
im	=	šá-mu-ú	ur ₅ .ra.aš	=	š[á-mu-ú]
si _{msir}	=	šá-mu-ú	du ₁₀	=	š[á-mu-ú]
			*[^u]UR	=	š[á-mu-ú]

A much shorter list of equivalents is found in Nabnitu IV 371-73:⁹

an	=	šá-mu-ú
idim	=	MIN
ur ₅ .ra.aš	=	MIN

Materials for the Sumerian Lexicon #
MSL 16 92

The Equivalences

See below for the meaning of "MU" according to these lexical lists

me (K 2035+ ii 19). Sumerian me is also equated with *šamû* in Izi E i 1 (MSL 13 185), Proto-Aa 71:7 (MSL 14 91), and the commentary of *An Address of Marduk to the Demons* F: 8 (AFO 19 118). In the commentary, the syllable me of the word *melammu* is understood as a name for heaven while lam is equated with *eršetu* 'earth'. Additional examples occur in Kassite-period cylinder seals, where me me is used as a writing for *šamê u eršetim* in epithets (see W. G. Lambert, BiOr 32 222 4.16).

→ mu, giš (K 2035+ ii 20, 22). The name mu is also equated with *šamû* in Izi G i 9 (MSL 13 201) and the catchline to *Emesal II*, where mu is the Emesal equivalent of *šamû* and giš is the standard dialect word:

mu = giš = šá-mu-ú

MSL 4 10:116

Sumerian giš is also equated with *šamû* in Idu II 176 (CAD Š/1 339), and in *Syllabaire S^a* from Emar (Emar 537:208) where giš occurs with a gloss ni-eš (for giš). Another example of giš = *šamû* is found in a commentary explaining the name of one of two horses of the flood: giš.lam.šár.šár = *muštábil šamê u eršetim* 'The One who understands Heaven and Earth' (E. Weidner, AFO 19 110:40).¹⁰ Both mu and giš also occur in the name for the sky or parts of the sky mu.ḥé and giš.ḥé (see pp. 239-38).

Mr. Sitchin goes on to claim (p. 143) that the Sumerian syllable MU was adopted into Semitic languages as "SHU-MU," which he translates as "that which is a MU" (by implication, "that which is a rocket ship"). Allegedly, "SHU-MU" then morphed into Akkadian *shamu* and Biblical Hebrew *shem*. We will consider the Akkadian word first, and then the Hebrew word.

The Meaning of Akkadian "shamu"

Does Akkadian *shamu* come from Sitchin's "SHU-MU"? Does Sumerian even have a word that means "that which is a MU"? Contrary to Mr. Sitchin, Akkadian *shamu* does NOT derive from SHU-MU, nor does *shamu* mean "that which is a MU."

First, Mr. Sitchin's translation of *shu-mu* presupposes that "SHU-" is what's called in grammar a "relative pronoun" (the classification of pronouns in all languages that mean: "that which"). Mr. Sitchin is apparently unaware of Sumerian grammar at this point, because *the Sumerian language does not have a class of pronouns that are relative pronouns!* One need only consult a Sumerian grammar to find this out, such as John L. Hayes, *A Manual of Sumerian Grammar* (p.88).

Second, in light of the fact that there is no "SHU-MU" form in Sumerian (since Sitchin's relative pronoun "SHU-" is concocted), it logically follows that Akkadian *shamu* did not *derive* from a Sumerian "SHU-MU." Nevertheless, Akkadian does have a word *shumu*, but it does not come from Sumerian "SHU-MU" (since that combination never existed in light of Sumerian grammar's lack of the assumed relative pronoun). In fact, the *shumu* of Akkadian undermines Sitchin's entire argument when it comes to the Tower of Babel account (see below for more on Akkadian *shumu*).

Returning to *shamu*, the Akkadian word *shamu* can have multiple meanings, depending on its original root origin. The lexical lists above presuppose a *shamu* that comes from the Akkadian word *shama'u* or *shamamu*, both of which mean "heaven," as in a place or portion of the sky. Notice how similar *shamu* is to both *shama'u* and *shamamu*. Only the extra letter marks them as different, marked either by an apostrophe (*shama'u*) in English or an "m" (*shamamu*). It turns out that our word *shamu* in the lexical lists above is a contraction of either *shama'u* or *shamamu* (the word loses a letter just like in English "didn't" for "did not").

The Meaning of Biblical Hebrew "shem"

As noted above, there is an Akkadian word *shumu*. This word has its own meaning, a meaning that did in fact get absorbed into Biblical Hebrew, from whence Hebrew *shem* originated. Both this Akkadian *shumu* and Hebrew *shem* mean "name" or "renown," the word meanings Mr. Sitchin ridicules in *The 12th Planet* on his way to fabricating rocket ships in Mesopotamia and the Biblical Tower of Babel story. Other than the concocted word origin (SHU.MU), how do we know that Mr. Sitchin's word meanings are wrong? Here are the entries in the gold standard Akkadian dictionary, *The Chicago Assyrian Dictionary* painstakingly produced over several decades by scholars of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago:

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*šumjû

*šumjû (*šamjû*) adj.; diminished, weakened; MA*; cf. *mašû* v.

šam-ša-a inša ul tadaggal katma šap- lša ul tapatte her (the woman in labor's) eyes are weakened, she cannot see, her lips are closed, she cannot open (them) Iraq 31 31:42 (inc.).



šumu (*šu'u, šemu*) s.; **1. name, 2. fame, reputation, 3. (as pronoun, prep., and conj.) any, because (of), 4. offspring, 5. line, item, entry; from Oakk. on; pl. šumû** (ZA 44 32:28, OB) and *šumûtu* (*šumûtu* YOS 1 45 ii 30, ADD 812:15, WT. MU. MEŠ-ni ABL 637:13); wr. syll. (*šu-u* Or. NS 36 116:8 (SB), CT 28 37 K.798 r. 5 (NA), CT 22 129:5, 146:9, VAS 3 9:4 (NB), Lambert BWL 40:30 var., note *še-mu-šu* Gilg. IX ii 1) and MU; cf. *šumšam*, *šumû* C.

Tablets

mu-u mu - šu-mu A III/4:3, also MSL 9 136:618 (Proto-Ak); [še-e] [u]a - nu-bu-u-mu, šu-mu-u-m MSL 14 102:844:1-2 (Proto-Ak); [i-bi-la] [rur]. U8, r[u]r.AKAD. TUN-SAG. TUN-SAG - ap-ša, mu-ru, šu-mu Diri I 267-278, also A VI/1:99-104; [šr] - [šu]-mu Izi H 143.
[ni]g[m]u. [tu]ku - šu šu-mu-[am] i-šu-d, nig. mu. sa, - šu šu-mu-šum u]a-šu-d, nig[m]u.pá. [d]a - šu-šu-šum i-šu-mi-in Nigga BIL B 70ff; m[u] - [šu]-mu. mu. ne - [šu]-um-šu, mu. ne. n[e] - šu-šum-šu-mu Hb. II 105ff; mu. gub. ba - [š]-šir šu-mi Erimuš VI 67; na. rú. a - šu-šir šu-[m], šu-mu zok-šum CT 14 16 K.240 r. 11f. (Uruanna III 188d-e), see MSL 10 70; mu - za-kur šu-mu Hb. II 189; mu. pá. [da] - [š]-šir šu-mu, mu. x - nu-bi [šu]-me Erimuš VI 245f; nig. mu. pá. da - za-kur šu-mu(var. -me) Hb. I 40; [pá(?) - [m]in (- [na]-du-mu) šu-mu Antagal O 1 5; mu. sar. ra - šu-šir šu-mi, šu-mu-šum šu-mi, šu-mu Izi G 53ff; mu. dili. dili - mu a-šum Izi G 60; mu. sig. ga - mu šum-gu, mu. mu. min - mu šu min. mu. dóg. ga - mu šu-šum, mu. nu. dóg. ga - mu šu min Izi G 62ff; [ni]g. nam]. ma, [ni]g. na]. me - mi-in-mu šum-šu Nigga BIL B 46f; nig. nam. bi ... in. na. an. šum - mimma mu-šu ... iddie Ai. III ii 69; for other refs. see mimma lex. section.
teš. bi mu. ni in. sa. eš - miššir šu-šu inšab together they named him (for kingship) Lugale I 35, cf. ibid. XI 28 (- 490); na. gug būru. da mu. bi šé. sa - šumu ina paššir šu-mu šumu šu šumšir when you perforate carnelian, be called by that name Lugale X 17 (- 432), also ibid. XII 18 (- 530), and passim with šumšir, see šumšir A lex.

šumu

section; ama. 'innin. mu. za. da. mu. me. a mu. z. mu. da. pá. dē(?) : šumšir ina šumšir šu-me(?) ul nu-bi without you, my goddess, a name is not given OECT 6 pl. 7 K.4648:13f. (coll. R. Borger); mu. mu. šé ka. ki. su. ub ha. ma. ao. ne (late version; mu. pá. da. mu. šé ka. ki. su. ub ha. ma. ub. (ak). ka. (KID). e. ne) : ana šumšir šu-me-ia šumšir (see šumšir lex. section) Angim IV 9 (- 161); gaba. ra mu. pá. da. mu. šé *Ki. šár maš. a mu. sa. zu hē. em : ana mišir šumšir šu-me-ia Anu širru lu šumšir šu-me-ia-ma' (see šumšir lex. section) TCL 6 51:29f; lu. mu. pá. da in. tok. a lu. mu. pá. da nu. tuk. a : šu šumšir šu-me šu šu šumšir [šu-mi]e la šu. ASKT p. 88-89 ii 32f., see Borger, AOAT 1 7:105f; ki. ni. g. sig. ga m[u. zu] hē. en. pá. da : šur daništi šum-ša šu-šumšir (see šumšir A mng. 7) Lugale XII 9 (- 521), cf. mu. mu. nu. mu. un. pá : šu-mi ul šumšir PBS 1/2 135:30f; mu. ne. ze. l. pá. da : šu-me-ša šumšir you name them one after the other KAR 4 r. 12; ul. dū. a. ta. ni. tur. tur. ra kir. dū mu. pá. da. bi. da. šé : ina ... qerša šumšir šumšir appi u za-kur šu-mu (see qerša lex. section) RA 12 74:27f., for other refs. see šumšir A mngs. 1d, 2a-1'w, 2d-1'; lu. gal. si. la. u. a. šu. da. mu. ni [b. gá. [gá. a] : šuru šu ana šumšir šumšir šumšir šumšir the king who would make himself famous for all ages Lugale XI 13 (- 475); mu. zu. a nir hē. galam. galam (gloss: ga-gu-la-ma) : šumu ana šu-me-ia šu-me-ia let her (štar) rise to (the rank of) your (Anu's) name TCL 6 51:19f; eme. ha. mun mu. dili. gin. (orm) si. ba. ni. šu. si. šá. e : šumšir šumšir šumšir šumšir (see šumšir mng. 4a) JCS 21 5:40; u. da šu. mu. ra. [tar]. ra : šumšir ana šu-me-ia i-šú-šumšir if he asks you my name JRAS 1919 191 r. 14, see Behrens Eollil und Ninlil 31:69; mu. bi. an. ki. a la. ba. an. gá. la. a. meš : mu-šumšir ina šumšir eršet ul šumšir their (the demons') names do not exist in heaven or on earth CT 16 44:96f., cf. ibid. 33:189; kur. igi. nin. ta. mu. un. zu. maš. šum : ina šumšir šumšir šumšir in the upper country your name is exalted. SBH 71 No. 39 r. 17f., also ibid. 19f. and 23f; šu. ta. mu. nam. gal. la : šumšir šu-mu šumšir additional share in the name of the elder brother Ai. VI i 2; 'nin. maš. mu. mu. šé (older recession; nam. mu. šé) ki. ba. l. a mu. un. būr. en. na. gim : [Bēš] šu ana šu-me-ia ana māt šumšir šu šumšir because you, DN, entered the enemy country on my account Lugale IX 17 (- 391).
NU - šu-šú-šú (comm. on En. el. VII 129) STC 2 pl. 52 ii 22; EN. KUR. KUR MU-ŠU. MA - šu-mu MA - šumšir (comm. on En. el. VII 136) STC 2 pl. 57 ii 9f.
[z]i-ru - šu-mu(var. -mu) LTBA 2 2:252, dupl. 1 v 42; [no-ru-š] - [š]-šir šu-mi, [š]-mi šumšir Malku V 219f.

šumu 1e

I had eight gur of barley measured out for PN's flour on your account TIM 2 103:4.

2' in cadasters, personnel records – a' in gen.: *ina tuppi šu-mi išturu* they entered my name in the cadaster TCL 7 09:19, cf. *mala ina tuppi ikkätim šu-mi PN . . . ištassü* wherever in the tablets of ikku duty they read the name of PN OECT 3 39:8; *šum PN ušapšitma šum-šu . . . ušakfir* he had the name of PN erased and his own name inscribed TCL 7 15:11f. (all OB letters): *šum-šu-nu ina fuppät šüt rēšim liqbatu* let them add their names in the register of the attendants ARM 14 66:39; *ša šu-me PN . . . ina pi tuppi šidti šaknu* (a debt note) in which tablet the name of PN is entered KAJ 165:4 (MA): *gabbisunu uptahhir ana šu-ma-a-ti assatar ana šarri bēlija usēbila* I assembled them all, listed them by name, and sent them to the king, my lord ABL 212:7, also, wr. MU. MEŠ-ni-šu-nu *assa[ar]* ABL 537:13, MU. MEŠ-šu-nu *ina libbi egirti šufur* Iraq 25 73 No. 66:8 (all NA); uncert.; canals, plows, and agricultural workers *libbā ša ina MU.MEŠ ina gištāni ša sepiri šafari* as they are listed by name(?) in the tablets of the scribe BE 9 80:6, cf. *libbā ša šafāra ina MU.MEŠ-šu-nu* BRM 2 17:14, also 16 (both NB).

b' *ana šumi* (NB): *ša rittāšu ana MU PN šafratu* (a slave) whose hand was inscribed with PN's name Nbn. 666:3, also BRM 2 2:2 and 4, wr. *šu-um* Dar. 492:2, *ša ritti imittišu ana šu-mu ša PN šafratu u ritti šumēlišu ana šu-mu ša PN šafratu* whose right hand is inscribed with the name of PN and left hand with the name of PN; VAS 5 126:3f., also BRM 2 25:2f., and passim in NB, see *šafra* v. mng. 14; *ša šindu ana MU ša PN nakdā* (a black cow) which carries a mark in the name of PN BE 9 20:2, also VAS 6 135:1; *amēlu ša . . . fuppa ana šu-mi ša mamma iknukuma* a man who has sealed a document in the name of somebody (else) SPAW 1889 828 (pl. 7) ii 5 (NB laws); *tuppu ša PN ana šu-mi-šu iknuku* Nbn.

šumu 2b

85:10, also Nbn. 293:6, cf. *šipirtu ša sepiru ša ana šu-mu ša PN šafratu* YOS 7 19:11; silver *ša ina u'ilti . . . ana šu-mu ša PN šafru* TCL 12 43:35; *ša ana MU ša PN u'ilti e-le-ti* (dates) concerning which a document was drawn up in the name of PN VAS 3 202:2, also VAS 4 38:6; silver *ša ana šu-um ša PN u'ilti i'ila* Evetts Ev.-M. 16:6, cf. BRM 1 66:7, and passim: *adi zēri ša PN ana šu-mu-šu ana šu-mu ša PN; aššatišu u ana šu-mu ša mamma šandma mašira ipuš* (see *maširu* mng. 4d-3') Dar. 379:55f.; shares of a prebend *ina šu-mu ša PN agd ana kaspi ina qāt PN; imšur* (which) he (PN) had purchased in this PN's name from PN; TCL 13 243:11, also BRM 2 24:13.

2. name, reputation – a) with *išū, rašū; bu šari šu-ma-am išū u bit Qatanim šu-ma-am išū* the (royal) house of Mari is famous, and the (royal) house of Qatanum is famous too ARM 1 77:9f., cf. PN *abu šu-ma-am irši [mārū] kalušunu šu-ma-am išū* ibid. 76:16f.; *kabtum ša šu-ma-am išū ibbāš*; an important person who is famous will appear YOS 10 24:3, cf. *āl pāfika ša šu-ma-am išū* ibid. 44:15 (OB ext.); *amīlu šū lu zikar lu sinniš* MU TUK-šī that person, whether man or woman, will become famous CT 38 36:70; *bitu šū MU damiqti* TUK-šī that house will acquire a good reputation CT 39 49:19 (both SB Abu); *inšuma kima rabi amurrim ištēn šu-ma-am arabšū* when I will acquire a unique(?) name as rabi amurrim VAS 16 63 r. 13; MU TUK-šī he will become famous CT 4 5:20 (hemer.).

b) with *leqū*: *bārū šum damiqtim ileqqe* the diviner will become renowned RA 27 149:1, also, wr. *šu-mi damiqtim* YOS 10 46 iv 18 (OB ext.), wr. MU *damiqti* CT 28 43:11, CT 30 44 83-1-18,415:6, CT 31 10 ii 9, TCL 62:21, LÜ.HAL(!) *šu-ma-am ileqqe* YOS 10 18:45; note *atartu*: *zakār šu-mu; šumma sikkat qāli ša imitti ištēt atrat um māni* MU SAL.SIG; *ileqqe* (see *atāru* mng. 1a-5') CT 20 39:5, also (with *zuppuru*, q.v.)

A Word on the Tower of Babel Accounts in both Sumerian and Biblical Literature – The Common Sense of Context

In the absence of any linguistic support for his rocket ships, Mr. Sitchin's supporters might claim a linguistic cover-up. No, scholars aren't hiding "rocket ship" meanings in the cuneiform tablets. In fact, the discerning reader of the Sumerian and biblical Babel accounts need not retreat to linguistics at all to know Mr. Sitchin's theories are nonsensical. Consider first the biblical story of Genesis 11:1-9:

- 1 And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech.
- 2 And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Babylon; and they dwelt there.

3 And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar. 4 And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top [may reach] unto heaven; and let us make us a name (*shem*) lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth. 5 And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men built. 6 And the Lord said, Behold, the people are one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. 7 Let us go; let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. 8 So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they stopped building the city. 9 Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the Lord confounded the language of all the earth there: and from thence did the Lord scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth.

The point here is brief. Note two obvious facts from the plain English:

(1) The people are not building the *shem*; they are building "a city and a tower" (verse 4). The Hebrew words here are not *shem* in either case, they are *'ir* ("city"; pronounced *ghir*) and *migdal* ("tower"). The word *shem* comes later in the verse, and is the purpose for building the city and tower – to make a great name for themselves, just what the Akkadian word *shumu* means!

(2) The tower is being built with *brick and mortar* (verse 3) – what rocket ships are made of bricks and mortar?

Again, Mr. Sitchin's supporters could claim some sort of Christian or Jewish conspiracy to obscure the construction of a rocket ship. If so, then the Sumerians themselves started the cover-up (leaving only Mr. Sitchin correct). Here's their version, from *Enuma Elish* (Tablet VI: lines 59-64):

The Anunnaki set to with hoes

(Unusual tools for rocket-building!)

One full year they made its bricks

(A rocket made of bricks! Sounds like a building to me)

They raised up Esagila, the counterpart to Apsu,

They built the high ziggurat of counterpart Apsu

(A ziggurat, not a *shem* or *shumu*)

For Anu-Enlil-Ea they founded his dwelling.

So, in the very story Mr. Sitchin uses to create a parallel between Sumer and the Old Testament, the Anunnaki are clearly constructing a tower made of *bricks* – not a spaceship.

B. The Meaning of "ME"

To begin his argument, Sitchin quotes the following lines from an unnamed text (p. 130; why doesn't he give sources?). The text is most likely from the *Descent of Inanna*:

She (Inanna) placed the SHU.GAR.RA on her her head.
She arranged the dark locks of hair across her forehead.
She tied the small lapis beads around her neck.
Let the double strand of beads fall to her breast,
And wrapped the royal robe (PALA) around her body.

Although the word "ME" is not in this text, Sitchin insists that the SHU.GAR.RA is a space helmet. The object is surely some type of headgear, as is evident from the statuary Sitchin reproduces in his book (p. 132). That it involves SPACE TRAVEL is a fabrication, based on some presumed connection between it and a passage he quotes on page 136, which describes the ME that Enlil fastens to Inanna's body, objects which Inanna wears for her journeys in the "Boat of Heaven" (and so, for Sitchin, space gear or a space suit). Enlil announces to her:

You have lifted the ME
You have tied the ME to your hands
You have gathered the ME
You have attached the ME to your breast
O Queen of all the ME, O radiant light
Who with her hands grasps the seven ME

Where's the space travel part? That comes with Sitchin's interpretation of the "Boat of Heaven" in which Inanna rides - the MU. Inanna TAKES the ME's with her on her trip in the MU. Naturally, Sitchin's interpretation of the above depends on whether the MU is a flying craft, which even the Mesopotamians would deny (see A. above).

The word ME in other Sumerian texts describing Inanna's journey wearing the SHU.GAR.RA is used dozens of times for objects that are NOT worn. Specifically, the famous text *Inanna and Enki* deals with Inanna's desire to "possess the ME" of Enki. In this work, ME can refer to: (a) abstract ideas, like rulership, godship, shepherdship, priestess-ship, the throne of kingship, dishonesty, kissing, extinguishing fire, etc.; (b) activities, such as love-making, prostitution, slander, plunder, writing, leather-working, arguing, mat-weaving, and washing; and (c) concrete objects, like a black dress, hair, a sheepfold, descendants, etc.

This data is what leads scholars to define "ME" as either "cultural norms (which can be stored like concrete objects) or banners that represent these objects or ideas" (see "Inanna and Enki," pp. 518ff. in *The Context of Scripture, vol 1: Canonical Compositions from the Biblical World*, ed. W. Hallo and K. L. Younger; Brill, 2000). What would love-making have to do with flying in a spaceship? Hair? Washing? Etc.! In all, there are 94 "ME's" in the above text, NONE of which have any clear connection to flight.

For more specific study of the word "ME", see:

Gertrud Farber, *Der Mythos "Inanna und Enki" unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Liste der ME*, Studia Pohl 10 (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1973)

Gertrud Farber, "ME" in *Real-lexikon der Assyriologie*

Richard Averbeck, *The Cylinders of Gudea*, pp. 417-433 in *The Context of Scripture, vol 2: Monumental Inscriptions from the Biblical World*, ed. W. Hallo and K. L. Younger (Brill, 2000)