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# STVDIA ANTIQVA

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A STUDENT JOURNAL FOR THE STUDY  
OF THE ANCIENT WORLD

SPRING 2007  
VOLUME 5, NUMBER 1

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BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY  
PROVO, UTAH

STUDIA ANTIQUA  
A STUDENT JOURNAL FOR THE  
STUDY OF THE ANCIENT WORLD  
BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

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## EDITOR'S PREFACE

Wonderful changes have been taking place at BYU in the study of the ancient world. The most important change is without a doubt the recent addition of the Ancient Near Eastern Studies major, with Hebrew/Old Testament and Greek/New Testament tracks. The first group of graduates from the program are finishing up their final semester this spring, and several have already been accepted to distinguished graduate programs throughout the world. With the new major has come a new club, the Students of the Ancient Near East (SANE). Justin Watkins has served as the president of SANE since its inception, with Dr. Dana M. Pike serving as faculty adviser. Members of SANE have been treated recently to several notable guest speakers, including Dr. Gary A. Rendsburg from Rutgers University, Dr. Peter Flint from Trinity Western University, and Dr. Fayza M. H. Haikal from the American University in Cairo. In addition to these special guests, the club has hosted several lectures from members of BYU's own faculty, including Daniel C. Peterson, John Gee, and Stephen Bay.

This issue of *Studia Antiqua* would not have been possible without the help of the faculty adviser Stephen D. Ricks and production advisers Mel Thorne and Linda Adams. Additionally, each member of the faculty review board has been indispensable. The Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, the ANES program, and the Students of the Ancient Near East have also made contributions without which this issue would not be possible. Our sincerest thanks to them all.

Amidst all of the change, *Studia Antiqua* will itself undergo quite a transformation following this issue as it moves under the umbrella of the Religious Studies Center. Publication will follow the same general schedule (fall and spring issues), but submissions will be accepted year round. Beginning May 1, 2007, papers may be sent at any time to [studia\\_antiqua@yahoo.com](mailto:studia_antiqua@yahoo.com). Deadlines for the fall and spring issues will be announced later. A website is also under construction that will contain PDFs of archived issues, submission guidelines, and style suggestions. Students interested in editing opportunities can contact Daniel McClellan at the above e-mail address.

Daniel McClellan  
Editor in Chief

# HISTORY



# The Power Behind the Crown: Messages Worn by Three New Kingdom Egyptian Queens

Mary Abram

**T**HROUGHOUT the ages and among diverse cultures, the crown has been recognized as a statement of power, honor, and high political or religious office. In the deeply symbolic society of ancient Egypt, the crowns and headdresses worn by royalty represented more than mere emblems of authority. Various symbolisms accompanied the crown's different components. An evaluation of the crowns worn by three New Kingdom queens—Hatshepsut, Nefertiti, and Nefertari—places the pronouncement of royal status as only one of a multi-layered message. These messages even transcend traditional symbolisms of Egyptian iconography. The particular components for each crown chosen by these women actually reveal personal and political agendas. Before reviewing the life and times of these New Kingdom royal figures, however, an outline of standard wear for queens will illustrate how these three individuals conformed with or contested the norm, thus providing the first insight into their respective personalities.

## **The Standard Headdress for Queens**

The two basic headdress elements for queens consisted of the



vulture and uraeus, or cobra representations. This tradition can be traced to the vulture goddess Nekhbet, the protectress of Upper Egypt, and the snake goddess Wadjet who guarded Lower Egypt. The representations of these two goddesses were depicted together and entitled “The Two Ladies.”<sup>1</sup> Together in purpose as well, they protected the two lands of Upper and Lower Egypt. The actual images of these goddesses evolved to headdresses worn by the respective deities when they wished to appear in human form, and the head of the snake goddess could replace the vulture head. “When Wadjyt appeared in human form, she adopted the vulture headdress of Nekhbet, only substituting a uraeus for the vulture head. Later the vulture headdress became used by other goddesses, too.”<sup>2</sup> The vulture was also the sacred animal of the goddess Mut, wife of the sun god Amun.<sup>3</sup> Beginning in the Fifth Dynasty, about 2500 B.C., and lasting throughout pharaonic Egypt, queens wore the vulture headdress as did depicted deities. This insignia on the head of royalty “may have marked a divine aspect of queenship.”<sup>4</sup>

The uraeus, a cobra rearing in a fierce, defensive stance, represented “the fiery eye of the sun god Re” along with the Delta deity Wadjet.<sup>5</sup> The uraeus, an aggressive guardian who protected the king and the gods from their enemies, became the primary emblem worn by kings, and its appearance on the head of a queen implied more than defense. It not only marked her connection with the king and her royal status, but also “carried references to Wadjyt and other female deities on the one hand, and to solar mythology on the other, linking the queen with Hathor as the daughter and eye of Ra.”<sup>6</sup>

Combinations of symbols occurred, beginning in the New Kingdom Eighteenth Dynasty, about 1550 B.C.. Both queens and

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1. M. Lurker, *An Illustrated Dictionary of the Gods and Symbols of Ancient Egypt* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1974), 86.

2. G. Robins, *Women in Ancient Egypt* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 23.

3. Lurker, *An Illustrated Dictionary*, 82, 127.

4. Robins, *Women in Ancient Egypt*, 23.

5. R. Wilkinson, *Reading Egyptian Art* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1992), 109.

6. Robins, *Women in Ancient Egypt*, 24.

goddesses wore two uraei side by side, called the Double Uraeus, and each snake sometimes wore one of the crowns reserved only for kings—either the Hedjet white crown of Upper Egypt or the Deshret red crown of Lower Egypt. These two crowns could express another type of duality. Along with symbolizing geographical rule, the White Crown could “signify the eternal aspect of Egyptian kingship, and the Red its earthly manifestations.”<sup>7</sup> The two crowned uraei might take on a feminine aspect themselves and wear cow horns surrounding a solar disk, a clear identification with Hathor. Such elaborate combinations also developed in connection with the vulture headdress.<sup>8</sup>

Earlier, about 1770 B.C., during the Middle Kingdom Thirteenth Dynasty, queens wore a combination of two feathered plumes with a solar disk center added by the New Kingdom era along with Hathor horns in another version of the crown. The symbolism of these feathers is not certain.<sup>9</sup> The queen wearing them may have attempted an identification with three particular deities: (1) The falcon god Horus who had, from the Pre-Dynastic time of Narmer, been paralleled with the living pharaoh, (2) Maat, the embodiment of truth and order who wore an ostrich plume, or (3) Osiris, the god of the underworld who symbolized resurrection and who characteristically wore the Atef crown consisting of the Hedjet and two feathers topped by a solar disc. Various elements could be added to the Atef crown worn by Osiris, such as ram’s horns, additional plumes, and sun disks. Like the Hedjet and the Deshret, the Atef crown was reserved for the pharaoh who wore it for ritualistic purposes.<sup>10</sup>

## The Queen Who Became King: Hatshepsut

Hatshepsut, who reigned from about 1473–1458 B.C., did not just marry into the royal family; she was born into it, with an impressive

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7. D. Dodson and D. Hilton, *The Complete Royal Families of Ancient Egypt* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2004), 28.

8. Robins, *Women in Ancient Egypt*, 24.

9. Robins, *Women in Ancient Egypt*, 24.

10. D. Silverman, *Ancient Egypt* (New York: Yale University Press, 1997), 109.

genealogy stretching back into the Second Intermediate Period. Her father Thutmose I had married the daughter of Ahmose, the pharaoh who had defeated the Hyksos and established the New Kingdom. Ahmose's wife Nefertari and their son Amenhotep I, Hatshepsut's grandmother and uncle respectively, were later deified and worshipped at Deir al-Madina during the New Kingdom era.<sup>11</sup> Hatshepsut married her brother Thutmose II and outlived him. His young son by another wife, Thutmose III, took the throne while Hatshepsut ruled with him as co-regent. At some point during the next five years, Hatshepsut took total control as pharaoh. She expended a great deal of energy, not only in that role, but in attempts to justify it. She did this mainly through stressing her notable lineage. "Hatshepsut did not attempt to legitimize her reign by claiming to have ruled with or for her husband Thutmose II. Instead, she emphasized her blood line."<sup>12</sup> She insisted that her father Thutmose I had named her as his successor before his death and, in her temple at Deir el-Bahri, documented in relief her divine birth as a daughter of Amun.

The temple . . . contains scenes depicting Hatshepsut's divine birth as the result of a union between her mother and the god Amun, who had appeared in the form of Hatshepsut's father, Thutmose I. This is a clear attempt to legitimize her rights to the Egyptian throne by showing that, like other kings, she had been chosen by the state god Amun.<sup>13</sup>

Hatshepsut's transition from queen to king can be traced in her choice of headdress. In the beginning, her clothing and crown portrayed her as a queen and traditional in appearance. She wore the vulture headdress accompanied by the uraeus to stress her queenship over Upper and Lower Egypt along with her connections with Amun, Hathor, and Mut. The double plumes above this headdress had

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11. Z. Hawass, *Silent Images: Women in Pharaonic Egypt* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 2000), 48.

12. B. Bryan, "The Eighteenth Dynasty before the Amarna Period," in *An Oxford History of Ancient Egypt*, ed. I. Shaw (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 238.

13. J. Malek, *Egyptian Art* (London: Phaidon Press, 1999), 233.

reference to other deities—Horus, Maat, and Osiris.

Seated on a throne, Hatshepsut appeared next as a woman wearing two items previously reserved only for male rulers: the shendjyt pleated linen kilt and the Nemes headdress. This headdress was particularly associated with kings of the Middle Kingdom period.<sup>14</sup> Hatshepsut had already revealed her proclivity to link with former pharaohs and to align herself with the Middle Kingdom, in particular by building her funerary temple at Deir el-Bahri, upon the same site and patterned after the temple of the Middle Kingdom Pharaoh Mentuhotep II.

In her next phase, Hatshepsut assumed a male form entirely. A granite colossus from her temple at Deir el Bahri shows her kneeling to make offerings. Her torso is that of a man's. She wears, like the male pharaohs who preceded her, the White Crown of Upper Egypt and even the Osirian beard. In an even more characteristically male ritual reserved for pharaohs, Hatshepsut runs the Heb Sed race, implying her rejuvenation and continued ability to rule. In this portrayal of sunken relief from her chapel, Hatshepsut wears the pharaonic kilt and the Red Crown of Lower Egypt. In another sunken relief, this one from a fallen obelisk in the temple of Amun at Karnak, Hatshepsut kneels under the hands of Amun. Looking like a man, she takes on another exclusively male crown, the Khepresh, or War Crown, "worn especially by Eighteenth Dynasty pharaohs and associated with the sun god."<sup>15</sup>

Hatshepsut revealed her political ambitions in three phases. First, she commissioned her depiction as queen over both Upper and Lower Egypt. Next, she maintained some feminine characteristics while using her clothing and headdress to pronounce her rule as pharaoh. Finally, she dropped all traces of womanhood, preferring to portray herself as king and only king. This bold move may have caused the later destruction of artwork connected with Hatshepsut. When Thutmose III took over the throne after his step-mother's death, he ordered her name obliterated and many of her monuments destroyed. The campaign against the woman who seized power from him may have been an attempt to restore tradition rather than a personal vendetta.

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14. Silverman, *Ancient Egypt*, 109.

15. Silverman, *Ancient Egypt*, 109.

The purpose of expunging her memory may have been not so much vengeance as a desire to correct an episode—a woman assuming the role of a male king—which was not in accordance with the cosmic order and the ideal world that the king was supposed to uphold. Her images as queen in female dress and regalia were not touched.<sup>16</sup>

Hatshepsut's monuments portray her as a strong-willed woman who possessed the ambition of any pharaoh to the extent of exercising her authority despite tradition. Her determination to achieve her aim to rule Egypt, even suppressing her gender to do so, is the message behind the varied crowns she wore.

### The Revolutionary Queen: Nefertiti

Nefertiti, the Eighteenth Dynasty queen who lived a century after Hatshepsut, achieved modern fame due to the exquisite, sculpted replica of her head found in the ruins of the city she once inhabited. Her image appears more frequently in art than that of any other Egyptian queen.<sup>17</sup> Nefertiti's origins, however, are obscure. She may have been another example of a non-royal woman, like her mother-in-law Queen Tiye, who rose to power. Her father could have been Ay, a possible relative of Queen Tiye and a court official who claimed the throne after Tutankhamun's death.<sup>18</sup>

Nefertiti married Amenhotep IV, the son of Amenhotep III and the woman he married for love, Queen Tiye. The affection between these two may have formed the foundation for later scenes of open expression so prevalent in the art of Amenhotep IV, Nefertiti, and their daughters.

In her early days as queen, Nefertiti wore headdresses in the tradition of her predecessors. One example from Karnak shows Nefertiti as a passive and supportive wife, dressed in a partially

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16. Hawass, *Women in Pharaonic Egypt*, 34.

17. Robins, *Women in Ancient Egypt*, 53.

18. J. Van Dijk, "The Amarna Period and the Later New Kingdom," in *An Oxford History of Ancient Egypt*, 292; Hawass, *Women in Pharaonic Egypt*, 49.

extant headdress and shaking the sistrum, the sacred rattle associated with Hathor.

Traces of the uraeus at her brow and the modius on her wig identify this figure as a queen who shakes a Hathor-headed sistrum behind a much larger figure of the king. . . . Complete, Nefertiti's headdress would have included a sun-disk, horns, and features above her modius (crown base), which, like her sistrum, are attributes of Hathor, goddess of fertility, femininity, and music, and daughter of the sun-god Ra. Representations of Nefertiti shaking a sistrum . . . are found a number of times on talatat blocks from Karnak, and allude to her role as a priestess.<sup>19</sup>

The priestess role was one that Nefertiti continued and even elaborated on later, as evidenced by her varied crowns. One emblem avoided by Nefertiti was the vulture headdress, probably due to its association with Mut, the wife of Amun. Early in his reign, Amenhotep IV initiated a religious revolution, banning the worship of all gods except the sun disk Aten and taking measures to enforce this. He changed his name to Akhenaten and even defaced his own father's monuments by striking the name "Amen" from them.<sup>20</sup> He moved his capital from Thebes, the historical center of the Amun cult, and built an entirely new city at Tell el-Amarna. Art forms changed as well, an unusual occurrence in the Egyptian tradition. These changes introduced by Akhenaten are known today as the Amarna Style. Deity no longer appeared in human or even animal form. The one god, Aten, was represented by a solar orb with rays ending in hands that bestowed blessings on Akhenaten and his immediate family.

Nefertiti supported her husband in his revolution. She added to her name "Nefer-Neferu-Aten" which means "Beautiful is the beauty of the Aten."<sup>21</sup> The queen appeared in reliefs making offerings to the elevated solar deity. In the spirit of innovation characterized by the Amarna era, Nefertiti even devised her own unique crown. This was a

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19. R. Freed, Y. Markowitz, S. D'Auria, *Pharaohs of the Sun: Akhenaten, Nefertiti, Tutankhamen* (Boston: Bulfinch Press/Little, Brown, and Company, 1999), 209.

20. W. Smith, *The Art and Architecture of Ancient Egypt* (Yale University Press, 1998), 174.

21. Hawass, *Women in Pharaonic Egypt*, 49.

tall, straight-edged and flat-topped blue crown. Its color and shape suggest that it was the female version of the Khefresh, the blue leather war crown covered by protective discs and worn by Egyptian kings.<sup>22</sup>

This crown implied power and, in Egyptian iconography, a subjection of enemies or the forces of chaos. The wielding of a mace over a foe's head was another icon of dominion dating back at least to Pre-Dynastic times and the Palette of Narmer. This pose was reserved for kings. Blocks found at Hermopolis, however, reveal Nefertiti on a boat in a smiting position.

The role of smiter had until now been exclusively a king's role, and by implication a man's role. The fact that Nefertiti was allowed to play the part of the king in this ritual must be read as an indication of her increased ritual and/or political importance.<sup>23</sup>

Nefertiti's power may be inferred from other visual evidence such as scenes of riding in a chariot with her husband or "driving her own chariot in kingly fashion."<sup>24</sup>

The characteristic blue crown worn by Nefertiti may have had other connotations of fertility and rejuvenation.<sup>25</sup> Nefertiti wore a flimsy, open robe along with her unique crown, and this could have been her representation of another queenly role. "Some queens had enjoyed a more intimate relationship with the gods. It was recognized that the queen could stimulate or arouse susceptible male deities."<sup>26</sup> Nefertiti, living in a day of greater expression, was apparently more open than previous queens in displaying erogenous zones to assure the continuity of divine offspring through her.

Nefertiti's high profile in the new religious order is further attested in the artifacts from the era. "The king and the queen were the new deity's main officiants, and it was only to them, as representatives of mankind, that the sun-disc extended its arm-like rays in the new

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22. J. Tyldesly, *Nefertiti: Egypt's Sun Queen* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1998), 64.

23. Tyldesly, *Nefertiti*, 62.

24. J. Samson, *Nefertiti and Cleopatra* (London: The Rubicon Press, 1985), 63.

25. Tyldesly, *Nefertiti*, 142.

26. Tyldesly, *Nefertiti*, 58.

religion's principal icon."<sup>27</sup> Even more than sitting passively under the sun disk's beneficent rays, Nefertiti took an active part by making offerings to the Aten herself, and without assistance from the king.

Nefertiti's prominence in what until now had been a king-dominated sphere, is beyond dispute. . . . Women had always been permitted to serve in temples as priestesses, musicians and dancers, and many queens had held honorary positions in the cult of Hathor. . . . Centuries of tradition, however, decreed that the king, and only the king, as chief priest of all cults, should offer to the gods. Within the precincts of Hwt-Benen [a subsidiary of the open temple of Aten east of the Karnak complex] it was Nefertiti and not Amenhotep who took the king's role of priest. . . . Her stance is that of a king offering to a god . . . while the king is nowhere to be seen.<sup>28</sup>

One libation scene reveals Nefertiti wearing the elaborate Atef crown. Both the purification ritual she performs and the crown worn in conjunction with it, were prerogatives of the king.<sup>29</sup> A similar crown, complete with multiple plumes and cobras, solar disks and ram's horns appears in a painting of the god Osiris dated about 1050 B.C.. Nefertiti wearing such a crown, especially while participating in a libation ceremony, emphasizes her significance in the Aten's cult. "The only other woman known to have worn this crown was Hatchepsut in her role as female pharaoh."<sup>30</sup>

Nefertiti wore a variety of crowns. One common element, the cobra, unified them all. A sandstone block from Karnak, completed early in Akhenaten's reign, shows Nefertiti wearing a modius, or crown base, encircled by cobras while Aten's rays reach toward her. The cobra component of Nefertiti's crowns often appeared in multiple forms with one of at least three snakes dangling and played with by her daughter in the limestone relief example from Amarna. Another relief from Amarna, a sculptor's model, shows Nefertiti's characteristic crown draped with two cobras. The cobra, traditionally linked to solar

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27. Malek, *Egyptian Art*, 266.

28. Tyldesley, *Nefertiti*, 58–59.

29. Samson, *Nefertiti and Cleopatra*, 61.

30. Tyldesley, *Nefertiti*, 144.



mythology, was apparently an acceptable symbol in the new religious order. Very likely, the uraeus maintained its protective connotations and Nefertiti's duplications of its form implied increased defense.

The rearing cobra fixed over her forehead coiled up in wait to spit its fiery venom into the eyes of her enemies. Nefertiti sought extra protection by increasing the number of cobras over her brow to two and even adding a further pair at each side of her face in the form of two snakes rearing up from the end of ribbons hanging down from her gold diadem.<sup>31</sup>

Possibly, Nefertiti felt the need for extra protection from these multiple cobras in an era when she and her husband had so drastically altered religion, art, and customs in Egypt. The quick rebound to earlier traditions after Akhenaten's death and the stigma later attached to the Amarna regime seems to validate Nefertiti's concern.

Two relief examples of Nefertiti wearing traditional female crowns are puzzling in a queen dedicated to religious revolution. There may be three explanations for her choice of headdress. First, the representations may have been symbolic of Amarna ideology rather than linked to the past worship of other deities besides the Aten. The solar disk, for instance, could have symbolized the Aten instead of Re, or the horns formerly associated with Hathor meant, in the new regime, power and rejuvenation.

The second explanation is based on a theory that Nefertiti lived after Akhenaten's death and tried to restore the old regime.<sup>32</sup> If this were true, Nefertiti might have kept her old accoutrements for a more auspicious day. The relief of Nefertiti wearing the traditional crown while offering to the Aten behind Akhenaten, however, does not support this theory.

The third possibility is more likely. Nefertiti merely directed the worship of all former goddesses to herself who, with her husband, served as a lens of the Aten.

The royal couple and the Aten together formed a triad that was worshipped, echoing the triads of deities common in traditional religion.

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31. J. Fletcher, *The Search for Nefertiti* (New York: Harpercollins Publishers, 2004), 287–88.

32. Freed, *Pharaohs of the Sun*, 91.

Other evidence shows that private people could address prayers directly to the queen. Thus, Nefertiti played a fundamental role in the Aten cult, filling the gap left by the proscription of traditional goddesses.<sup>33</sup>

The end of Nefertiti's life is even more obscure than its beginning. Shortly after the death of her second daughter, Meketaten, Nefertiti faded from the records.<sup>34</sup> Her eldest daughter Meritaten succeeded her as the Great Royal Wife. Some believe that, at that time, Nefertiti began to rule with Akhenaten as coregent. The Wilbour Plaque, purchased near Amarna in 1881 by Charles E. Wilbour could, if authentic, support this claim.

Although the relief has sometimes been viewed as a forgery, there are compelling reasons to see it as the work of an accomplished artist of the Amarna Period. . . . Carved in the curvilinear, organic, and sensuous late Amarna style, the queen appears mature and forceful. This relief may represent Nefertiti as an active and energetic coregent with Akhenaten.<sup>35</sup>

Besides being coregent, "some scholars believe that Nefernefruaten, an obscure pharaoh said to have ruled briefly following the death of Akhenaten, may have been Nefertiti herself."<sup>36</sup> Others purport that Smenkhkara, the pharaoh before Tutankhamen, was Nefertiti.

An ephemeral king Smenkhkara with the same throne name as Nefertiti/Nefernefruaten appears in some inscriptions from the end of the Amarna Period. . . . The identity of this Smenkhkara is uncertain. Many scholars continue to see him as Nefertiti's male successor, perhaps a younger brother or even another son of Akhenaten, but there is a strong possibility that "he" was actually none other than Nefertiti herself, who, like Hatshepsut before her, had assumed a male persona and ruled alone for a brief period after the death of Akhenaten, with Meritaten in the ceremonial role of great royal wife.<sup>37</sup>

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33. Robins, *Women in Ancient Egypt*, 54.

34. Freed, *Pharaohs of the Sun*, 88.

35. Freed, *Pharaohs of the Sun*, 245.

36. Silverman, *Ancient Egypt*, 88.

37. Van Dijk, "The Amarna Period," 281.

An additional theory claims that the objects “found in the tomb of Tutankhamun may originally have been prepared for the burial of Smenkhkare, an ephemeral ruler who may in fact have been Akhenaten’s great royal wife Nefertiti.”<sup>38</sup> Before Nefertiti’s death, however, she apparently committed an unforgivable act by soliciting a prince from one of Egypt’s great rivals to rule at her side in the place of Akhenaten. This Hittite prince named Zannanza was murdered en route to Egypt. Some believe that Ankhesenpaaten, Nefertiti’s daughter and Tutankhamun’s widow, suggested the Hittite alliance. Others attribute this to Nefertiti as the “one treasonable act—the inevitable outcome of defying maat by the elevation of a woman to supreme power [that] sounded the final death-knell of the Atenist regime.”<sup>39</sup> Due to either her own actions or her association with the king later labeled as a heretic, Nefertiti’s monuments were dismantled or destroyed by Horemheb, the last king of the Eighteenth Dynasty. While mystery and intrigue surround Nefertiti’s final days, one certain image emerges—this revolutionary queen was as diverse, powerful, and unique as her crowns.

### **A Link with Traditional Egypt: Queen Nefertari**

Nefertari, the Nineteenth Dynasty queen who lived about 1270 B.C.E., was the Great Royal Wife and favorite queen of the famous Ramses II. She was the daughter of a Theban nobleman. The monuments built in her honor, notably her temple at Abu Simbel and her tomb in the Valley of the Queens, testify of her husband’s esteem for her. The marriage was a politically shrewd move for Ramses since his progenitor who established the Nineteenth Dynasty was a non-royal general of King Horemheb who was himself a usurper. Besides her noble lineage, Nefertari’s name “recalled a resplendent moment in Egypt’s history and her sobriquet invoked the Temple of Karnak, home of Egypt’s first divine family.”<sup>40</sup>

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38. Hawass, *Women in Pharaonic Egypt*, 52.

39. Freed, *Pharaohs of the Sun*, 91.

40. J. McDonald, *The Tomb of Nefertiti* (Los Angeles: The Getty Conservation Institute and the J. Paul Getty Museum, 1996), 15.

Nefertari wore only the vulture headdress, either alone or topped by the solar disk and double plumes. This latter crown paralleled that of the goddess Isis in a relief of Seti I, Nefertari's father-in-law, making an offering to this particular deity. Nefertari was personally associated in relief with Isis but also aligned with the queen-deity Ahmose-Nefertari. This queen, the wife of King Ahmose who had ousted the hated Hyksos and established Egypt's New Kingdom, obtained a unique status beyond just the Great Royal Wife or chief wife and consort. Ahmose had contributed heavily to the Amun cult at Thebes and achieved for his wife the priestly title of God's Wife of Amun, a religious office inherent with economic power and the highest possible position for a woman.

Part of the function of the god's wife was to play her sistrum before the god, so as to pacify him and avert his potential anger, and also to stimulate him in her role as god's hand, so that he would forever keep the fertility of the universe from flagging.<sup>41</sup>

Ahmose-Nefertari was so revered that she was later worshipped. One depiction shows her wearing the vulture headdress with uraeus and "the black skin of a deity of resurrection."<sup>42</sup> On a stela honoring Ahmose-Nefertari and her son Amenhotep I, the deified queen wore the complete vulture headdress. This is same the headdress worn in every representation of Nefertari, the wife of Ramses II, and she likely chose it to connect with Ahmose's wife.

To her countrymen, Nefertari's name no doubt evoked a wealth of positive associations, above all with the memory of Ahmose-Nefertari, the founder of the Eighteenth Dynasty [who] lived through the glorious days of Thebes' rise to power and her husband's expulsion of Asiatic invaders, the Hyksos. . . . It was probably intentional that Nefertari's chosen headdress—a vulture surmounted by double plumes—was also the headdress favored by Ahmose-Nefertari.<sup>43</sup>

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41. Robins, *Women in Ancient Egypt*, 156.

42. McDonald, *The Tomb of Nefertiti*, 15.

43. McDonald, *The Tomb of Nefertiti*, 15.

Nefertari also served as chief priestess and “the living manifestation of the goddess Hathor.”<sup>44</sup> A relief from the First Pylon of the Temple at Luxor depicts Nefertari standing behind her husband, as a good queen would, and shaking the sacred sistrum associated with Hathor. She wears the vulture headdress with uraeus topped by twin plumes. Traditional hierarchy of scale, giving the man and king greater importance, is evidenced here. Nefertari, apparently, conformed to expectations and used examples from goddesses and revered historical figures to define her own personality. “Unlike Nefertiti, the great royal wife of Rameses II, Queen Nefertari, is never seen to do anything out of keeping with Egyptian traditions.”<sup>45</sup> The repeated use of Nefertari’s vulture headdress reveals her willingness to conform to and even perpetuate established Egyptian ideals. It is no coincidence that, unlike the damages inflicted upon images of Hatshepsut and Nefertiti, only time has defaced the monuments of Nefertari.

## Conclusion

Three prominent Egyptian queens—Hatshepsut, Nefertiti, and Nefertari—lived within the same general era labeled as the New Kingdom by historians. Each queen, however, experienced far different circumstances. Yet, in one unifying gesture, each queen expressed her individual circumstances and aspirations in a visual, defining way. Each queen provided glimpses of her personality while conveying specific messages through the same devise. Hatshepsut took on the regalia of pharaoh. Nefertiti’s unique crown coincided with a unique religious and artistic period in Egyptian history. Nefertari, while lacking the personal power and innovative genius of her predecessors, stood out as the example of Egyptian tradition. In all cases, each queen publicly revealed her private ambitions and reactions to her personal world through the crown she wore.

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44. Hawass, *Women in Pharaonic Egypt*, 53.

45. Hawass, *Women in Pharaonic Egypt*, 52.

# Egyptian Craft Guild Initiations

James L. Carroll

*Initiation seems to have played an important role in Egyptian religion from the beginning of recorded history. Initiations are rites whereby the initiate is symbolically moved from one state of being into another or from one part of the temple into another, the passage involves various trials or tests of knowledge, the rites often deal with death and resurrection, various oaths are taken either of an ethical or of a sacramental nature, and the ceremony itself is usually secret. The initiation paradigm can be seen in the Egyptian funerary literature, the Daily Temple Liturgy, the initiations of the Egyptian priesthood, and the later Isis mystery cult initiations. All these ritual elements can also be seen in modern craft guild initiations, however it is unclear how early this paradigm became part of craft guild initiations. Although it can be shown that craft guilds existed in ancient Egypt from the earliest times, little direct evidence of their nature has remained. However, several elements from the earlier Egyptian initiations show evidence of having been influenced by guild initiations. This indicates that the guild traditions may have adopted the initiation paradigm at a very early stage. If this is the case, then it would have significant ramifications for the origins of modern guild initiations, and would indicate that they are connected to ancient traditions of initiation into the afterlife, and to ancient temple traditions.*

EGYPT stands at an important point in human history. The Egyptian language is one of the two oldest written languages known to man, and is the language of the oldest substantial corpus of religious texts known to man (the Pyramid Texts).<sup>1</sup> But Egypt is not just about

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1. "These 'Pyramid Texts' represent the oldest substantial corpus of religious texts known to mankind" (Jan Assman, "Death and Initiation in the Funerary Religion of Ancient Egypt," in William Kelly Simpson, ed., *Religion and Philosophy in Ancient Egypt*, Yale Egyptological Seminar [New Haven, CT: Yale University Graduate School, 1989], 136).

age, it is about continuity. The Egyptian civilization displayed a remarkable continuity of form and idea for well over 3000 years. Their influence was profoundly felt by the Greeks, the Babylonians, the Hebrews, the Assyrians, and eventually by Rome and most of Europe.

The early Egyptians were a deeply religious people, almost to the point of obsession. They recognized that all things in this life are impermanent and subject to change; and not just to small change but to radical change, change towards chaos, disorder (*isfti*) and ultimately death. Their religious quest was to establish order (*m<sup>3</sup>t*) and permanence in eternity (*n<sup>h</sup>h* or *dt*). The most significant symbol of disorder was death, and the most potent image of permanence was the permanence of self, namely, eternal life which was thus the primary goal of Egyptian religious expression.

But for an Egyptian, eternal life meant more than just existing forever, as we will show, it meant existing forever as a god. This meant doing what the gods do, eating what the gods eat, and being like the gods are. However, to accomplish this, one had to first know what the gods know and one had to be ritually and ethically pure or else one would defile the holy space where the gods dwell. Thus, the Egyptian goal of eternal life was necessarily conveyed by initiations in which the requisite purity and the necessary knowledge were given to the candidates. A thorough understanding of the Egyptian initiation rites is therefore necessary if to understand the religious thought of the ancient Egyptians, and the manner in which they sought eternal life.

In what follows, we will discuss the nature of initiation rituals in general and Egyptian initiations specifically. We will then overview late craft guild initiations, Egyptian funerary initiations, Egyptian temple initiations, Egyptian priestly initiations, and mystery initiations. We will also propose the existence of early craft guild initiations in Egypt which were of similar form to their later counterparts, and we will give several reasons for assuming the existence of such rituals.

## **Egyptian Initiations**

We must begin by asking the question, what is an initiation? The term is difficult to define. Merriam-Webster's dictionary defines

initiation as “the rites, ceremonies, ordeals, or instructions with which one is made a member of a sect or society or is invested with a particular function or status . . . [or] the condition of being initiated into some experience or sphere of activity.”<sup>2</sup> But how can one determine whether a specific religious rite qualifies as an initiation? Since almost every religious ceremony changes someone’s standing in society in one way or another, it is very easy to define all rituals as “initiations.” Such a definition is so broad that the term loses all practical meaning. Should every ordination to office be considered an initiation because it is a “ceremony . . . with which one is . . . invested with a particular function or status”? We do not usually think of initiations in that manner; however, it is unclear how much the term should be limited.

I propose a set of characteristics that many Egyptian initiation rituals have in common: (1) the initiate is symbolically moved from one state of being into another or from one part of the temple into another, (2) the passage involves various trials or tests of knowledge, (3) a central myth is reenacted as part of the initiation in which the secret information needed to pass the tests of knowledge is usually transmitted, (4) the rites often deal with death and resurrection, (5) various oaths are taken, either of an ethical or of a sacramental nature, and (6) the ceremony itself is secret.

There are several Egyptian rites that have the above characteristics: the early Egyptian initiations into various craft guilds, the deceased Egyptian’s initiation into the afterlife as found in their funerary literature, the Egyptian daily temple liturgy, the Egyptian priestly initiations, and the late mystery cults. Perhaps such rites as coronation could also qualify although we will not extensively discuss them here.

## Craft Initiations

There is ample evidence for the use of initiation rites in craft guilds throughout the world, especially during the Middle Ages when they

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2. Philip Babcock Grove, ed., *Webster’s Third New International Dictionary of the English Language Unabridged* (Springfield, IL: Merriam-Webster, Inc., 1993), 1164 (an online version is also available at <http://www.m-w.com/cgi-bin/dictionary/>).



culminated in the European institution of Speculative Freemasonry.<sup>3</sup> But there is also evidence that craft guild initiations existed long before the Middle Ages. Although we know that these early guilds also practiced some form of initiation, there is little evidence for the forms of their various initiations because of the secrecy that these guilds required. Therefore, in Egypt, there is very little contemporary evidence for the initiations of the ancient Egyptian craft guilds save that they existed.<sup>4</sup> However, if the later evidence can be projected back in time, then we could reconstruct the general form of the ancient initiations from their later counterparts for which we have ample

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3. For the rituals of Freemasonry see Malcolm C. Duncan, *Duncan's Masonic Ritual and Monitor* (New York: David McKay Inc., 1866). For a concise description of several of the various theories of the origins of Freemasonry see Albert Gallatin Mackey, *The History of Freemasonry, Its Legendary Origins* (New York: Gramercy Books, 1996). It should be pointed out that there are several theories for the origins of Freemasonry, and the idea that they simply evolved from the guild traditions is by no means the only possibility. It seems most likely that the rituals of Freemasonry were drawn from many sources. This work shows that one of their sources, namely trade guild initiations, had the potential for preserving ancient religious traditions that are related to the temple, and how one enters heaven. The trade guilds are by no means the only possible source for Freemasonry which could have incorporated authentic ancient temple traditions.

4. Of the ancient origins of the craft guilds Jan Assman writes of “a typical craftsman’s examination [which is] attested in the most varied ages and cultures and even found, until recently, in the guilds of modern Egypt” (Assman, “Death and Initiation,” 144). For another example see Henry F. Lutz, “The Alleged Robbers’ Guild in Ancient Egypt” *University of California Publications in Semitic Philology* 10.7 (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1937): 231–42. He writes that it was the “habit of free artisans of the Ptolemaic Period of organizing themselves in private guilds of a distinctly religious character. The various cult-clubs of the guilds . . . celebrated the feast days of their gods, gave financial assistance to their needy members, and saw to it that, when he died, each member received the proper burial rites” (241). The question is, how early did these guild initiations take upon themselves the ritual forms of their later counterparts. It should be pointed out that the idea of the existence of a legal robber’s guild in ancient Egypt has not been universally accepted; however, the similarities between such a guild and Moses 5, and what we find in the Gadianton Robbers of the Book of Mormon should perhaps lead to a reevaluation of this hypothesis. Regardless of whether a robber’s guild existed, Lutz’s research makes it plain that trade guilds of many forms flourished in ancient Egypt.

evidence. We will first discuss the nature of the later guild initiations and then analyze the probability that the ancient guild initiations were similar in form.

The later craft and trade guilds were practical institutions. In order to insure that there was an artificially reduced supply with an increased demand and quality, the secrets of a profession were kept from outsiders.<sup>5</sup> However, in order to insure that these secrets were passed on to the next generation, an apprentice system was instituted. A prospective tradesman would find a master craftsman to apprentice under. Eventually the apprentice would be made a journeyman, and finally after passing several tests of an ethical and a practical nature, the prospective tradesman would be made a master craftsman by his tutor. Membership in the guild was then conferred upon the candidate by an initiation. Such initiations often stressed rebirth, as the initiate was being reborn into his new role as a master craftsman.<sup>6</sup>

If someone who produced inferior work claimed to be a member of the guild, then the quality of the work done by the rest of the guild could be called into question. It was therefore important for the masters in the guild to be able to recognize others who were masters and point out imposters to the general public. To accomplish this, guild initiations developed a system whereby secret information was passed to the initiate so that those who claimed membership in the guild could be tested for this secret knowledge by the rest of the guild. In later times this secret knowledge usually consisted of secret names and mythological interpretations of the working tools of the trade, and sometimes even secret hand signals and handshakes. This secret set of information constituted what we will call the “modes of recognition.” The modes of recognition were transmitted by the presentation of a

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5. For example, the Hippocratic Oath has instructions to teach the craft “to the sons of him who has instructed me and to pupils who have signed the covenant and have taken an oath according to the medical law, but no one else” (Ludwig Edelstein, *The Hippocratic Oath: Text, Translation, and Interpretation* [Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Press, 1943]).

6. This basic pattern can be seen in many medieval craft guilds. Perhaps the most famous of these medieval guilds is Freemasonry, in which all of the above elements can be clearly seen.

central myth or story in play form. As the story was told, the initiate learned the secret modes of recognition. Oaths were usually taken as part of the enactment of the central myth. Sometimes oaths were taken to not overcharge, or to produce substandard work, and sometimes to live by certain moral standards. The Hippocratic Oath taken anciently by medical doctors is a prime example of such an oath.<sup>7</sup>

Such a system is still found today in modern universities. The apprentice, journeyman and master degrees have been replaced with our undergraduate, master, and PhD degrees; tests, proposals and defenses have replaced the various guild trials; transcripts and accreditation procedures have replaced the modes of recognition; however, the graduation clothing and procession rituals have maintained their forms from the earlier initiation rites.<sup>8</sup>

Thus, the later university and guild initiations embody all of our six elements of an initiation: (1) the initiate is moved from his state as an apprentice to a new state of being, namely, he becomes a master craftsman, (2) tests of knowledge include the skills of the trade and various modes of recognition are conveyed to the initiate, (3) a central myth, which could often vary from guild to guild, is reenacted as part of the initiation, (4) rebirth is stressed as part of the new state to which the guild member has attained, (5) various oaths are taken, and (6) in order to protect the modes of recognition, the ceremony itself is secret.

Although all of these elements are present in modern craft guilds, most of these guilds cannot be organizationally traced back beyond the thirteenth century. These later guilds could easily have borrowed their initiations from earlier guild traditions, but without direct evidence this can be difficult to show. It is therefore unclear how soon these

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7. Although many scholars dispute the exact authorship of the writings ascribed to the ancient physician Hippocrates, if the oath was written by him, it was written sometime between 460 and 380 B.C. For the content of the oath see Edelstein.

8. Hugh W. Nibley, "Leaders to Managers: The Fatal Shift." This speech was delivered at the BYU commencement ceremony on 19 August 1983, after Nibley had received an honorary Doctor of Letters degree; it was published as "Leaders to Managers: The Fatal Shift," in *Dialogue: Journal of Mormon Thought* 16.4 (Winter, 1983): 12–21.

elements became part of the earlier trade guilds of Egypt; however, we have no reason to doubt that they were introduced at an early date. If the ancient Egyptian guilds were similar in form to their later counterparts, then their initiations could be reconstructed from the later evidence. Of course any such reconstruction would, of necessity, be highly speculative. However, the numerous similarities between this reconstruction and the other earlier Egyptian forms of initiation make such a reconstruction possible, if not plausible. Further, this theory adds valuable insight into the other forms of Egyptian initiations, which otherwise would be difficult or even impossible to explain or understand.

Jan Assman has pointed out that several elements from the ancient Egyptian funerary texts can be most easily explained if they were influenced by earlier guild traditions.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, those elements in the funerary traditions which were borrowed from the guild traditions must have existed in the trade guilds sometime before they appeared in the funerary literature. The elements of interest include the details of embalming, likely borrowed from an embalmers guild initiation; the details of passing the net, likely borrowed from a net maker's guild initiation; the details of constructing the boat, likely borrowed from a boat maker's guild initiation; and the negative confession, likely borrowed from a priest's guild initiation. Many of these details of passage involve oaths and what appear to be modes of recognition, complete with working tools borrowed from various craft guilds. Several of these elements appear in the funerary tradition at a very early date. If these funerary elements did indeed borrow extensively from a guild initiation, then this would place the origin of the guild initiation tradition as far back in history as the oldest substantial corpus of religious texts known to man.

We will now discuss these other forms of Egyptian initiation. We will evaluate their similarities in form and content to what we know of later guild initiations, and discuss the implications these similarities have to our theorized ancient Egyptian guild initiations.

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9. Assman, "Death and Initiation."

## Funerary Initiations

The earliest funerary texts are the Pyramid Texts,<sup>10</sup> dating from the 5th dynasty; followed by the Coffin Texts, from the Middle Kingdom; followed by the Book of the Dead, in the New Kingdom; followed by such texts as the Book of Breathing Made by Isis, in the Late Period. The Pyramid Texts are primarily concerned with the birth and rebirth of the sun, and the deification of the king in the sky with the sun, while the other texts are more concerned with the death and rebirth of Osiris and the deification of others besides the king. This deification was made possible through mimicking the path that Osiris took to his deification. The main focus of all these texts is to move the initiate into the world of the gods, from the grave, through the horizon, and into heaven itself, teaching him to hear what the gods hear, eat what they eat, sit where they sit, and do as they do: “I hear the words of the gods, I do as they do, I rejoice as they rejoice over my ka, I live on [eat] what they live on.”<sup>11</sup> Thus the funerary rites of ancient Egypt are primarily initiatory in nature and can be seen as a sort of priestly initiation into the realm of the dead which has much in common with the craft guild initiations that we have discussed above.<sup>12</sup>

There are several parts to the funerary initiation. First, before the deceased can undertake his journey to immortality he must be clean physically, ritually, and spiritually. Therefore, rituals of purification are intimately associated with mummification and burial. Next, once the deceased is clean, he must journey across the sky into the afterlife. This passage involves various initiatory tests of knowledge that allow the deceased to pass various obstacles that would otherwise prevent his journey into the presence of the gods. Finally he is reborn and gains

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10. Assman, “Death and Initiation,” 136.

11. Book of the Dead, chapter 153A, in Raymond O. Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead*, ed. Carol Edwards (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1972), 149–52.

12. “Thirty years ago, in a fine study on the Egyptian background of the Magic Flute, Siegfried Morenz expressed the view that a central aspect of Ancient Egyptian burial ceremonies lay in a sort of priestly initiation to the realm of the dead” (Assman, “Death and Initiation,” 135).

eternal life with the gods.<sup>13</sup> We will now discuss these elements from the funerary literature in greater detail, and discuss how they relate to guild initiations.

Mummification was the first step in the funerary initiations and the passage of the deceased into the realm of the dead. The embalming process is related to the topic of initiation in many ways. It not only preserved the corpse, but it transformed it into a new body,

one “filled with magic,” replacing its perishable substances by everlasting ones, resting in the mummy-cover as if it were a kind of magic garment. The Egyptian word for mummy, *sꜥh*, also means “nobility,” or “dignity” and denotes the elevated sphere of existence to which the deceased has been transferred and initiated in the course of the process of embalmment.<sup>14</sup>

The process of mummification was associated with the myth of the mummification of Osiris. Osiris was originally dismembered, and then reassembled in a mythic adaptation of the mummification process.

Embalment and mummification, in the light of the myth of Osiris, are equated with the restoration of life to the body, which had by no means to be ritually dismembered beforehand, since its lifelessness alone was mythically interpreted as dismemberment. Dismemberment is thus a symbol for the disintegration of a living entity and a mythical image for the condition of death itself.<sup>15</sup>

As part of the mummification process the body was washed, clothed, ritually purified, and prepared for its journey. During “the opening of the mouth” rites the various body parts of the mummy were

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13. Taken together these tests and moral judgments represent the manner in which the deceased moves from this life into the next. “Within this ontic distance between the ‘here’ and ‘yonder,’ between visual and mythical reality, lies the initiatory and mystical character of the Egyptian funerary religion. The world of mythical reality stands for a certain knowledge, to which the deceased is initiated, for a cosmic sphere, to which he is transferred, and for a state of being, which he must attain” (Assman, “Death and Initiation,” 137).

14. Assman, “Death and Initiation,” 139.

15. Assman, “Death and Initiation,” 138.

cleansed and touched with a ritual implement in order to give them life. The pyramid texts record: “Teti has purified himself: May he take his pure seat in the sky! . . . Teti’s mouth has been parted, Teti’s nose has been opened, Teti’s ears are unstopped . . . Re will purify Teti, Re will guard Teti from all evil!”<sup>16</sup> Thus, purity was essential to the deceased’s heavenly journey, and it is connected to the idea of life. In images where the deity or initiate was washed, the water was often drawn as ankh signs, the Egyptian hieroglyph for eternal life.

More than simple washing was necessary to create purity. “Purity, in the sense of deliverance from the burdens of earthly existence, may only be attained through knowledge. Purity and knowledge, these two concepts are closely interwoven; does not the deceased assert: ‘I know the names . . . I am pure?’”<sup>17</sup> For this reason the deceased was buried with the various spells that provided the knowledge necessary for the deceased to attain a glorious state in the world of the dead. Thus purity is related to initiation and to the various modes of recognition from the guild initiations. Furthermore, these requirements of ritual purity needed to prepare the deceased to see the face of the god in heaven, have important parallels in the Egyptian temple liturgy, where the deceased must become ritually pure before seeing the statue of the deity in the temple, as will be discussed later.<sup>18</sup>

After the mummy was washed and purified, the deceased was prepared to pass the horizon and enter the heavenly realm.<sup>19</sup> This passage was accomplished in various ways. The deceased may be lifted

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16. Pyramid Texts, Utterance 407, in Miriam Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature, Vol. 1: The Old and Middle Kingdoms* (Los Angeles: Near Eastern Center, University of California, 1975), 43–44.

17. Assman, “Death and Initiation,” 144.

18. This comparison between the ritual purity required to see the statue of the deity in the temple and the ethical purity required for one to see the actual face of the deity in heaven reminds one of Matthew 5:8: “Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.”

19. “The central theme and purpose of the Pyramid Texts is the resurrection of the dead king and his ascent to the sky. The principal stages of his dramatic conquest of eternal life are: the awakening in the tomb from the sleep of death; the ascent to the sky; and the admission to the company of immortal gods” (Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, 30).

up to heaven by the hand of the god, for example in the Pyramid texts we read “[the] hand of Unas in the hand of Re! O Nut, take his [the deceased’s] hand! O Shu, lift him up!”<sup>20</sup> Alternatively, the dead may fly to the heavens, ride a boat, or pass several doors.

The deceased must pass several challenges on his journey to the heavens.

To reach this place “where *Ma’at* is,” this divine abode holding the promise of eternal life and god-like existence, the deceased must undergo a series of examinations: he must rouse the ferryman from his sleep and induce him to make the crossing, he must secure a ferryboat, avoid the catching-net stretched out between heaven and earth and convince the inhabitants of the heavenly world that he is one of them. The only way of successfully withstanding these examinations is through knowledge, for these take place in the form of interrogations.<sup>21</sup>

The world of the dead was a dangerous place, into which the initiate must “integrate himself by means of the spoken word: by appealing, conjuring, intimidating, beseeching, threatening, answering, etc.”<sup>22</sup> Thus the dead passed the 2 ways, 7 gates, 21 portals 14 hills, 12 crypts, field of reeds, field of offerings, door keepers, heralds, councils, judges, ferries, catching net, etc., all by means of initiatory knowledge. “The deceased must not only know the names of all these entities and every detail concerning their nature, he must also have full command of the words needed to face each and every one of them.”<sup>23</sup> Although there were many tests of the deceased’s knowledge, we will focus on three in particular: the ferryman, the net, the various doors and gates, and finally the judgment of the deceased.

The heavens were thought of as a watery world through which the sun travels in a boat, therefore several of the barriers through which the deceased must pass involve water. The deceased must rouse a ferryman from sleep, and convince the ferryman to carry him across the waters.

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20. Pyramid Texts, Utterance 253, Pyramid of Unas, in Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, 33.

21. Assman, “Death and Initiation,” 144.

22. Assman, “Death and Initiation,” 144.

23. Assman, “Death and Initiation,” 143.



This idea is very common in the later funerary texts, but also appears in the earliest versions.<sup>24</sup> Even in the early versions the connection between the funerary texts and the temple liturgy is evident since the ferryman is hailed by the ritualistic “awaken in peace” with which the gods were also greeted each morning by the priests performing the daily cult in the temples. To enlist the ferryman’s aid, the deceased must be able to answer several questions put to him by the ferryman. He must also assemble the boat through the recitation of secret names for the various parts of the boat. For example, the Book of the Dead chapter 99 reads, “Her [the boat’s] planks are the drops of moisture which are on the lips of Babai; her end-pieces are the hair which is under the tail of Seth’ her rubbing-pieces are the sweat which is on the ribs of Babai; . . .” etc.<sup>25</sup> This recitation is similar in form to what we would expect from a boatman’s craft initiation.

Another of the dangers that the initiate must pass on his way to heaven is a fisherman’s net<sup>26</sup> that can trap those who are unworthy of passing into heaven. In some of the versions this net is called a *ḥdt*. This word is also used for a barrier (most likely a sort of veil) that must be passed in the daily temple liturgy just before entrance to the innermost sanctuary, or most holy place. The deceased passes this trial as he did the ferryman, by means of his knowledge as tested by a complex interrogation. The interrogation involves secret names for various parts of the net. For example “I know the reel in it [the net]; it is the middle finger of Sokar. I know the guard-beam in it; it is the shank of Shesmu. I know the valve in it; it is the hand of Isis. . .” etc.<sup>27</sup>

The deceased must also pass several gates: “Stand at the gates that bar the common people! The gatekeeper comes out to you, He grasps your hand, Takes you into heaven, to your father Geb. He rejoices at your coming, Gives you his hands, Kisses you, caresses you.”<sup>28</sup> The

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24. For example see Pyramid Texts, Utterance 270, in Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, 35.

25. Book of the Dead, chapter 99, in Faulkner, *Book of the Dead*, 91.

26. For example see Book of the Dead, Chapters 153A and 153B, in Faulkner, *Ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead*, 149–52.

27. Book of the Dead, chapter 153A, in Faulkner, *Book of the Dead*, 149.

28. Pyramid Texts, Utterance 373, in Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, 41.

gatekeepers are meant to ward off evil in the form of ignorance, impurity, and violence from the realm of the gods. This exclusion of evil insures the holiness of the dwelling place of the gods in heaven. The guardians are dangerous, and if answered incorrectly could cause harm to the initiate. They are often depicted holding knives or swords in order to protect the doorways.<sup>29</sup> The deceased wards off the threat of the guardians “by calling them by name, but also by knowing the names of the gates; he secures unhindered passage by showing proof of his purity.”<sup>30</sup> By answering these questions correctly the deceased proves himself to be a member of the community of the gods, eating what they eat and sitting where they sit, and is thus allowed entrance into heaven. Again, this secret information is reminiscent of the modes of recognition of a trade guild whereby a craftsman showed that he was a member of the guild’s community.

Upon the deceased’s entrance into heaven, the deceased is judged. In the later texts this takes the form of a negative confession where the initiate tells each gatekeeper that he has not committed various sins. In the Book of the Dead, there are two such negative confessions, the first is usually drawn before a representation of a sanctuary, while the second is usually drawn within the sanctuary, illustrating its connection to the temple rites. In the second confession secret names for the guardian deities are given, which the initiate must know just as he must know the names of the parts of the ferry, the net, and the doors. As we will discuss in greater detail later, such secret names for the deities (the working tools of a priest) may indicate that a priestly guild initiation is the source of the negative confession. After the negative confession, the

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29. See Book of the Dead, chapter 144. For an illustration, see Faulkner, *Book of the Dead*, 134–35.

30. Assman, “Death and Initiation,” 147. Medieval guilds also involved giving secret information to pass guarded doors. For example, the Egyptian guardians are reminiscent of the Masonic Tyler and his drawn sword. In Freemasonry this idea is connected with the Cherubim and flaming sword from Genesis 3:21. Sacred Space is often guarded space, according to the Revised Temple Typology element 1: “Sacred or Set Apart Space: The temple is built on separate, set-apart, sacral, or guarded space.” James L. Carroll, “A Revised Temple Typology,” *Hagion Temenos*, ed. Stephen Ricks, 2nd ed. (Provo, UT: BYU Press, 2005).

deceased is lead to a scale where his heart is weighed against a representation of truth. If the deceased passes this test, he is then admitted into the presence of the god.

The questions asked of the deceased before he can pass the ferryman, the net, or the gates have long puzzled Egyptologists. The chapters which deal with these tests of knowledge are full of references and statements that, taken by themselves, make very little sense. Our quotation from the chapter to pass the net is typical. What does it mean for the “reel” of the net to be the “middle finger of Sokar” or for the “guard beam” to be the “shank [leg bone] of Shesmu?”<sup>31</sup> One plausible explanation for these various interrogations and their enigmatic answers is that they originated with various guild initiations. Assman writes,

It thus seems justified to consider whether a dramatic initiatory interrogation, rather than the mere philological need for commentary, underlies these spells. If we may generalize Bidoli’s informative remarks on the matter, it seems reasonable to assume that these spells originated in the initiation rites of various professions, such as: net-makers, bird-catchers, fishermen, carpenters, embalmers (with respect to the “deification of the limbs”) and priests.<sup>32</sup>

Such an explanation would greatly simplify an otherwise mysterious subject. If Assman and Bidoli are correct, these secret names for the various parts of the net could represent a typical mythical usage of the various tools of the guild’s trade. The secret names would have been conveyed to the initiate in a dramatic portrayal of the guild’s central myth, in which the meaning of the names was given. Such secret names could then be used as a mode of recognition for the guild involved. The many connections between the various parts of the net or ferryboat and the body parts of different deities would likely be more understandable if we knew the secret myth that was recited during the initiations. Unfortunately these rituals were not preserved due to their secret nature. These earlier modes of recognition from the guilds could have

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31. Book of the Dead, chapter 153A, in Faulkner, *Book of the Dead*, 149.

32. Assman, “Death and Initiation,” 145.

been borrowed by the funerary literature, but without the secret central myth that would have explained them. Such a borrowing from the guild into the funerary liturgy is not surprising when one considers that in the funerary liturgy the deceased is attempting to find admittance to a sort of “guild of the gods,” by displaying his knowledge of the heavenly modes of recognition and his obedience to the moral requirements of such a guild (as shown in the negative confession and the requirements of purity which we will discuss in greater detail in the section on priestly guild initiations).

Once the deceased has access to the heavens, he can be reborn. The standard initiatory theme of resurrection can be seen in the Pyramid Texts, Utterance 403: “Teti will go in your midst, Teti will live on what you live!”<sup>33</sup> Thus, in Egyptian thinking, the deceased is not only reborn but reborn into a deified state becoming like the gods. However, the deceased has power to be reborn and to become like the gods because of his secret knowledge of the god’s food.

In Utterance 402 we read: “Teti is that Eye of Re, Conceived at night, born every day!”<sup>34</sup> In Mesopotamian theology the dead went to the ground and the ground was therefore the mother deity. In Egyptian theology the dead went to the heavens, and the heavens are therefore represented as the mother deity. The deceased must return to a mother deity because the dead must return to a type of the womb in order to be reborn. On one coffin the sky is depicted as saying to the deceased “I have spread myself over thee, I have born thee again as a god.”<sup>35</sup>

The deceased, now reborn through the sky-goddess as a god himself, is subsequently breast-fed by divine nurses and elevated to the heavens. This ‘sacramental interpretation’ has its roots in a different set of rites than those surrounding the ‘laying of the deceased in the coffin,’ notably in the ‘burning of incense’ (the rising fumes being a symbol of the ascent to the heavens) and in libation (fluids being a symbol of divine milk).<sup>36</sup>

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33. Pyramid Texts, Utterance 403, in Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, 42.

34. Pyramid Texts, Utterance 402, in Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, 42.

35. Assman, “Death and Initiation,” 140.

36. Assman, “Death and Initiation,” 140–41.

Assman believes that the rites that involve the “nursing of the child-god” may have originated in the royal coronation ritual.<sup>37</sup> Thus these rituals of rebirth may have originated with rituals of kingship initiations.

If such an initiation truly existed and actually took the form of a “*naissance mystique*” (mystical birth) with subsequent nursing and elevation to the heavens, then, and only then, may we consider the initiation ceremony to be the source and the prototype of the corresponding funerary beliefs. In this case, the initiation ceremonies of living human beings could not possibly have originated from the rites surrounding the “passage to the next world.” It would, on the contrary, seem more logical, if the initiation rites of ‘this’ world had been transposed, together with their corresponding sacramental interpretations, into the next world.<sup>38</sup>

Either way, this similarity of form clearly connects the guild like rites of kingship with the funerary traditions. A full exploration of the theme of coronation is beyond the scope of the current study,<sup>39</sup> but it is sufficient to point out that kingship can be thought of as a profession in its own right, and coronation as a sort of guild initiation.

In summary, the Egyptian funerary literature contained the knowledge that the deceased would need in order to pass the tests that he would face on his journey to the next life so that he might be reborn like the gods, doing as they did, and living where they lived. Many of these tests consisted of various examinations, and were initiatory in nature.<sup>40</sup> This initiation into the realm of the dead has many things in

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37. Assman, “Death and Initiation,” 141.

38. Assman, “Death and Initiation,” 141–42.

39. See Stephen D. Ricks and John J. Sroka, “King, Coronation, and Temple: Enthronement Ceremonies in History,” in *Temples of the Ancient World*, ed. Donald W. Parry (Provo, UT: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1994), 236–71. Assman writes, “We can therefore hardly go wrong in assuming that the rites explained as the ‘nursing of the child-god’ originated in the royal coronation ritual” (Assman, “Death and Initiation,” 141).

40. These initiatory rites seem to have also been connected in some manner with the rise of Christianity. These rites were so similar to their later Christian counterparts that Assman writes that they “remind one of the Gnosis and must surely represent one of its roots” (Assman, “Death and Initiation,” 144).

common with our theorized Egyptian Guild initiations. For example, there is a primary myth around which the initiations are given (the course of the sun and stars for the Pyramid Texts and the resurrection of Osiris for the later texts). The passage of the initiate is determined by various tests of knowledge, which involve secret names and descriptions, clearly paralleling the craft modes of recognition. The funerary initiations involve requirements of purity, judgment, and expressions of innocence, which have some parallels in the craft oaths, and which may have originated in a type of priestly guild initiation which we will discuss further in the section on priestly initiations. Finally, the funerary initiations involved a ritual rebirth that may have had its origins in the initiation rites of kingship.

It is difficult to know whether the initial idea for “modes of recognition” originated with the trade guilds or with the funerary traditions. However, even if the funerary tradition is the older of the two, it seems clear that the details of the working tools of the net and ferry (and possibly even those of embalming and kingship) were borrowed from the guilds into the funerary tradition and not the other way around. This would indicate that the guild initiations contained modes of recognition much sooner than has previously been thought. But even if the above claim is disputed, the similarities between the later guild initiations and the earlier funerary traditions make it clear that there is an important connection between the two which needs to be explained. Further, the fact that the modes of recognition so familiar to the later guilds can be seen in such early religious texts, witnesses to the antiquity of the tradition and to its association with the themes of purity, entrance into heaven, priesthood, temple, resurrection, and kingship.

## Temple Initiations

It can be shown that “the path of the deceased to Osiris corresponds to the path of the priest on his way to the innermost sanctuary of the god.”<sup>41</sup> “The path of the priest [through the temple] is

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41. Assman, “Death and Initiation,” 149.

furthermore sacramentally explained as an ascent to the heavens. He 'opens the door-wings of the sky in Karnak' and 'sees the mysteries of the horizon.'<sup>42</sup> "It therefore would not seem justified to accept the idea of an initiation for funerary religion . . . on the one hand, while categorically rejecting it for all other forms of Egyptian religion on the other."<sup>43</sup>

In the daily temple rites at Karnack, the priest, dressed in ritual clothing, first lit a torch (which he associated with the eye of Horus), burnt incense (a type of purification ritual), then passed the great pylons which represented the horizon, and progressed to the inner sanctuary. During this passage to the inner sanctuary, the priest awakened the temple, bringing it and its deities to life in a ritual of similar form to the ritual of the opening of the mouth from the funerary literature. Before the doors of the most holy place, the priest passed a *ḥdt*. The meaning of this term is vague in the temple context, however, it is the same word used for the net in the funerary context, and may here be a type of net, cloth, or veil covering the doors of the sanctuary. After passing the *ḥdt*, the priest pulled back the bolt from the door to the holy of holies (which was described as removing the finger of Seth from the eye of Horus), opened the doors of the sanctuary (which were described as "heaven"), and saw the face of the god, which he then presented with offerings (which were also associated with the eye of Horus).

Thus the myth of Osiris, and the myth of the blinding of Horus by Seth and his eventual restoration, serve as a type of central myth that has been overlaid upon the rituals of the temple service. These rituals are clearly related to the funerary liturgy with its purifications, passing of the horizon, ascent to the sky, passing the net, opening the doors, and beholding of the face of the god. The rituals are also interesting from a Judeo-Christian perspective in that they are clearly similar to the path of the Hebrew high priest on the Day of Atonement.<sup>44</sup> This should not be surprising to us, given Abraham 1:26.

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42. Assman, "Death and Initiation," 149.

43. Assman, "Death and Initiation," 149.

44. See Leviticus 16.

According to one idea, “the [earthly] initiation rites, and not vice versa, furnished the prototypes of Egyptian funerary religion: a view which has so far been treated with great reserve.”<sup>45</sup> This may be because we have so much information about the Egyptian funerary religion, and so little about their votive religious rites. However, there are several reasons to believe that the temple initiation rituals were the source for much of the funerary literature. There is enough evidence for this hypothesis that Assman writes that “the AKH-sphere [heavenly realm] is a world of ‘mythical’ values and realities which, in the course of the Old Kingdom, gradually overlaid an even more ancient world of tangible cultic objects and rituals.”<sup>46</sup> Thus, according to Assman, the funerary liturgy, with its transformation to the sphere of the deified dead (the AKH-sphere), was overlaid upon the older temple rites.

As is often the case, causation is more difficult to show than correlation, but which ever tradition preceded the other, the Egyptian rites of the dead and the Egyptian temple rites are clearly connected in some way. The temple rituals are also related to guild initiations since the temple workers were priests, who had undergone specific rituals of initiation into a sort of priestly guild in order to qualify them to officiate in the temples. In Egypt, priesthood was a priest craft, and was often the profession of the individuals involved, and thus the priesthood functioned essentially as a guild engaged in a common profession. Further, the daily temple service can be seen as the work of a guild of house servants taking care of the daily needs of the deities, washing, clothing, and providing them with food.

### Priestly Initiations

There were several gradations or degrees to the Egyptian priesthood. For example, according to the Karnack liturgy, a *w<sup>c</sup>b*, or general priest, can perform the rites that took place before the pylon, as the priest says at this point in the temple liturgy, “*ink w<sup>c</sup>b iw=i w<sup>c</sup>b=kwi*”

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45. Assman, “Death and Initiation,” 136.

46. Assman, “Death and Initiation,” 137.



“I am a priest (*w<sup>c</sup>b*) and I am pure”<sup>47</sup> indicating that only a pure priest could officiate in the rituals which he is then performing. However, when the priest enters the sanctuary proper, the priest declares “*ink ḥm ntr in nsw wd wi r m33 ntr . . . ink bs ntr:w*” “I am a prophet of god (*ḥm ntr*), it is the king who has commanded that I see god. . . . I am an initiate of the gods.”<sup>48</sup> This most likely indicates that a *ḥm ntr* (a word that is consistently translated into Greek as “prophet” and which we have here translated “prophet of god”) was a higher degree of priest than a *w<sup>c</sup>b*, and that a *ḥm ntr* could also function in the lower office of a *w<sup>c</sup>b*. This could also indicate that a *w<sup>c</sup>b* could enter and perform the rites of the outer courts, while only a *ḥm ntr* could perform the rites of the innermost sanctuary. It is unclear whether a *w<sup>c</sup>b* was initiated into his office or whether he was made without an oath, but the above quote clearly shows that a *ḥm ntr* was initiated. This initiation was most likely an initiation into his position as a priest or prophet, and not his daily service in the temple, although we have already shown that this could be seen as a type of initiation. The word *bs*, used for the term “initiate,” has both a knife and walking legs as its determinants. This could indicate both the covenantal and transitional nature of the priest’s initiations.<sup>49</sup>

The Egyptian priesthood can be seen as a trade guild (or priest-craft) in its own right, with its own levels and degrees. Further, its initiations are clearly related to both the Egyptian funerary literature and the guild initiations already discussed. Temple worship was often seen as a type of profession or craft throughout the Ancient Near East, and even in Israel.<sup>50</sup> Therefore, it is not surprising that the Egyptian priestly initiations took the form of a craft initiation.

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47. Translation from the Egyptian by the author, for the Egyptian see Alexandre Moret, *le Rituel du Culte Divin Journalier en Egypte*, ed. Ernest Leroux (Paris, 1902).

48. Translation by the author.

49. For a knife as part of a covenant process see Mark J. Morris, “Simile Curses in the Ancient Near East, Old Testament, and Book of Mormon,” in *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 2.1 (Spring 1993): 124–38.

50. For example, the book of Exodus compares the service that the Children of Israel performed as slave craft laborers for the Egyptians with the temple service that God freed them to perform, see Exodus 1:13,14; 3:12; 4:23; 10:8,9; 12:25; 27:19;

Several primary examples of priestly initiations have been found which allow us to reconstruct the basic form that they took. Unfortunately both of the major examples are from the later periods, but that does not mean that the rites did not exist in earlier periods. The first main text is a Greek papyrus from Oxyrhynchus. Unfortunately it is highly fragmentary but it is still possible to discern that sacrifices and washings were involved: “. . . is washed [. . .] they [. . .] they will] not enter the temple [. . .] it is necessary to initiate the [. . .] in the beginning before him [. . .] they are required to swear [. . .] according to what the second priests [swear in the] presence of the proto[stolites] as a witness: . . .”<sup>51</sup> what follows is very similar in form to the negative confession from the funerary literature. For example: “I will not eat [what is not law]ful for the priests; I will [n]ot cut [. . .] any]thing neither will I c[om]mand another from whom [. . .]” is a representative sample.

The texts from the door jambs of the temple of Edfu are also significant. They too are similar in form to the Book of the Dead's negative confession. Because of this similarity, and their similarity to the Oxyrhynchus text, it is reasonable to surmise with Fairman that upon each door jamb of the Pronaos of the temple of Edfu “is an abbreviated Declaration of Innocence which he [the priest] presumably recited while entering.”<sup>52</sup>

From the above it is clear that priestly initiations existed, and that they consisted of washings, clothings, and a series of oaths of similar form to those of the Negative Confession from the Book of the Dead chapter 125. Therefore the question is not whether such guild-like initiations existed for Egyptian priests, but how early such initiations were introduced. If these initiations were introduced at a sufficiently

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and 31:10. Exodus 31:10 is especially enlightening as the clothes of the priest are called the clothes of service, and include a worker's apron (the ephod). In Hebrew this word for service comes from the same root as the word for work in general, and for the word for slave used to describe the condition of the Israelites in Egypt.

51. As quoted in John Gee, *The Requirements of Ritual Purity in Ancient Egypt* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), 53–54.

52. Fairman, “Worship and Festivals in an Egyptian Temple,” in *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 37 (1954): 179, as cited in Gee, *Requirements of Ritual Purity*, 56.

early date, it becomes reasonable to hypothesize that the Book of the Dead chapter 125 originated from the priestly initiations and not vice versa. This hypothesis has been put forward by both Reinhold Merkelbach and Reinhard Grieshammer, however it has not found wide acceptance. Miriam Lichtheim has argued against this idea; theorizing that the Book of the Dead chapter 125 originated with tomb biographies. John Gee has effectively responded to Lichtheim's criticism of the Merkelbach/Grieshammer hypothesis.<sup>53</sup> Despite these questions about which came first, the similarities between the Book of the Dead 125, the tomb biographies, and the Greco-Roman era priestly initiations can not be denied. It is most likely that all three forms influenced each other in one way or another. For our purposes it is less important which form influenced which as it is to point out that all three are initiatory in character and are related.<sup>54</sup>

The details of the priestly initiations are scarce because they were kept secret; however, the connection between the priestly initiations and the Book of the Dead chapter 125 allows us to hypothesize that the priestly initiations may have also involved secret names for deities such as those found in the Book of the Dead 125. Such a connection could explain the existence of two separate declarations of guiltlessness in Book of the Dead 125. The first could have come from the declaration of worthiness that may have been recited before the priest was actually initiated or admitted into the shrine. The second (usually drawn upon the interior of a shrine figure in the Book of the Dead) could have taken place within the temple itself as part of the actual initiation ritual. Thus the elements of the second declaration of innocence could have been drawn from the covenants taken by the priest upon his actual investiture into the priestly office. In this context it is significant that the secret names for the deities are found in the second declaration and not in the first, since they would represent the secret knowledge which would correspond to the modes of recognition of a craft guild,

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53. See Gee, *Requirements of Ritual Purity*.

54. Gee's refutation shows that the tomb biographies often employ a negative confession in such contexts as worthiness for office, or for entrance into a happy afterlife, both themes of the priestly initiation and the funerary initiation.

which would not be given until the candidate was actually initiated into the guild. This hypothesis is further strengthened by the papyrus of Neferoubenef. In this copy of the Book of the Dead, Neferoubenef is shown about to enter a shrine, dressed in white robes. The second negative confession is then drawn upon the shrine, and when Neferoubenef exits the other side of the shrine, he is dressed as a priest with his head shaved as he approaches the judgment of the dead and the presence of the deity.<sup>55</sup>

Thus, if Merkelbach, Grieshammer, and Gee are correct, Book of the Dead chapter 125 is a borrowing into funerary tradition of an initiation into the priest's office, which can be seen as a type of priestly guild. Whichever form borrowed from the other, the similarities show that the dead's entrance into the presence of god in the heavenly temple was determined by how well the deceased kept the covenants that he made during his priestly initiations in the earthly temple. Those initiations likely involved the candidate's introduction into the presence of the statue of the god in the earthly temple. Because these initiations consisted of washings, clothing, oaths, and secret names for the gods (the working tools of the priest's guild), these initiations took the same form as any other craft initiation, and that the Egyptian priesthood can be seen as a type of craft guild for priests into which the perspective priests were initiated.<sup>56</sup>

## Mystery Cult Initiations

The mystery cults of later antiquity were "initiation rituals of a voluntary, personal, and secret character that aimed at a change of mind through experience of the sacred."<sup>57</sup> Through the initiations the

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55. Suzanne Ratié, *Le Papyrus De Neferoubenef* (Louvre III 93, 1968), plate 17.

56. From an LDS perspective the priesthood originated with Adam, and therefore if we went back far enough, the priesthood would predate the craft guilds, which could be seen as an imitation of the earlier priesthood. For the purposes of the present study however, it is sufficient to show that in Egypt the two were closely related.

57. Walter Burkert, *Ancient Mystery Cults* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), 11.

candidates hoped to receive a closeness to the god/goddess that would allow them to receive favor in life, and a special place in death. We know very little about the mystery cults due to the extreme secrecy under which they operated.

Walter Burkert, one of the world's leading experts in Greek religion, believed that "the institution of mysteries cannot be traced to either Anatolia, Egypt, or Iran" but instead reflected a Greek model of Eleusis or Dionysus or both, which predated the arrival of Egyptian influences. Thus the mystery cults displayed a marked Greek influence, yet it must be remembered that *all* the Greek mystery cults also displayed a strong Egyptian influence.<sup>58</sup> The mystery cult of Isis is of particular interest, and there can be no doubt of the Egyptian influence in this case.

The mystery initiations in the Isis cult were not the central aspect of Isis worship, but were "one element in the much more complex canvas of cults of the Egyptian gods."<sup>59</sup> Unlike the other Greek mystery cults the Isis cult required the presence of a temple and many priests who "performed a daily service from morning to night, solemnly awakening the gods, clothing them, feeding them, and putting them to bed."<sup>60</sup> Although the details of the initiations are not clear, it should be born in mind that they took place within the context of the Egyptian daily temple rites which we have already shown were of an initiatory character, and were related to the Egyptian funerary and guild traditions.

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58. Even Burkert, who argues that the initiations are of Greek origin is forced to admit a strong Egyptian influence on the rituals. For example: "this would suggest some Egyptian influence on Eleusinian cult or at least on Eleusinian mythology right at the beginning of the sixth century, in a context of practical 'healing magic'" (Burkert, *Mystery Cults*, 21). "Modern scholars agree that there were initiation rites for priests at various levels in Egypt, and there were secret rites in which only the higher priests were allowed to participate, but there were no mysteria of the Greek style, open to the public upon application. Yet in the eyes of the Greeks, who admired the aboriginal age of Egyptian civilization, Egypt appeared to be the very homeland and origin of mysteries as such; this is the teaching of both Herodotus and Hecataeus of Abdera" (40). "Isis, among her other civilizing activities, is seen as the founder of mysteries throughout the world" (41).

59. Burkert, *Mystery Cults*, 41.

60. Burkert, *Mystery Cults*, 39.

What little we do know of the Isis mystery initiations comes from “The Golden Ass” by Lucius Apuleius. Usually such rites revolved around some mythical story, and many of the mystery cults dealt with the suffering and rebirth of a deity. Although it is impossible to be sure, it seems likely that the Isis initiations revolved around the myth of Isis’s resurrection of Osiris. Such a connection does seem likely given Lucius Apuleius’ constant references to Osiris. We do know that the initiations involved “signs and tokens,” washings, purifications, the wearing of linen clothing, certain restrictions of diet, secret “charges,” a fast, and the presenting of the candidate “before the face of the goddess.” Then the candidate was brought into the most secret section of the temple. Unfortunately the description becomes very cryptic at this point and we are simply told that

I approached near unto Hell, even to the gates of Proserpina, and after that, I was ravished throughout all the Element, I returned to my proper place: About midnight I saw the Sun shine, I saw likewise the gods celestial and gods infernal, before whom I presented my self, and worshipped them: Behold now have I told thee, which although thou hast heard, yet it is necessar[y that] thou conceal it; this have I declared without offence, for the understanding of the profane.<sup>61</sup>

In other words, he has spoken in code, because that is all that the “profane” or uninitiated are allowed to hear. After these rites the initiate emerged from the temple clothed in ritual clothing and bearing a torch. He then attended a communal feast.

Of course, this description does no more than arouse our curiosity, as it was likely intended to do. Nevertheless, we can see several similarities between these rites and the other initiations already discussed. There are several ritual purifications, clothing in special garments, the lighting of a torch, the procession into the temple, the revelation of the deity within the temple, certain obligations of secrecy and conduct, and a ritual feast. Thus, there is a

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61. Lucius Apuleius, *The Golden Ass*, trans. P. G. Walsh; New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

connection between these rites and both the funerary and liturgical initiations described above, and, therefore, with the guild initiations.

## Conclusions

Initiations are rites whereby the initiate is symbolically moved from one state of being into another, or from one part of the temple into another; the passage involves various trials or tests of knowledge; a central myth is reenacted, which often deals with death and resurrection; various oaths are taken, either of an ethical or of a sacramental nature; and the rituals and modes of recognition are usually kept secret.

Initiation seems to have played an important role in Egyptian religion from the beginning of recorded history. The initiation paradigm can be seen in the funerary literature, the daily temple liturgy, the initiation of the Egyptian priesthood, the later Isis mystery initiations and the later craft guilds.

The Egyptian funerary religion records the initiation of the deceased into the presence of the god. First, the deceased was purified, mummified, washed, and ritually clothed and buried. Then the deceased began his journey to the sky. He moved from the tomb, past the horizon, and mounted to the sky where the deceased passed several tests of knowledge, which included a ferryman, a net, various doors, and, in later times, an ensemble of deities which constituted the negative confession. The deceased then faced judgment for his conduct on earth and then was introduced into the presence of the deity.

The rites that constituted the daily temple liturgy are surprisingly similar to those of the funerary cult. The priest was first washed, cleansed, and clothed in linen. The priest then lit a torch, passed the great pylons in the shape of the horizon, and passed into the sanctuary of the temple which was a representation of heaven. There the priest passed a net or veil, opened the doors of heaven, and beheld the face of the deity.

Before a "prophet" could serve in this capacity, he first had to be initiated. Such initiations likely involved washings, clothing in linen, and certain covenants which were similar in form to the negative

confession, so that a person was judged in death by how well he kept the covenants he made in life.

The Isis mystery initiations seem to have consisted of similar elements to the other initiations. They involved “signs” and “tokens,” the lighting of a torch, the wearing of linen clothes, certain moral obligations or covenants, the revelation of the deity within the temple, and a ritual feast. The connection of the mystery rites with Osiris also connects these rites with the Egyptian cult of the dead, and with the Egyptian hope for rebirth.

The initiations of the priests, the method of passing the ferryman, and the method for passing the net are similar in form to typical craft initiations that consisted of cross-examinations with predetermined questions and answers about secret names of the working tools and objects involved with the craft. Such references were attested in the most varied ages and cultures and even found, until very recently, in the guilds of modern Egypt. Thus we know the form of modern craft guilds, and we know that Egypt had craft guilds anciently, however there is no direct evidence of the form that the initiations of these early craft guilds took. However, given the presence of such references to secret information involving craftsman’s working tools in the early funerary literature of ancient Egypt, it seems likely that these elements were also present in the ancient trade guilds of Egypt. This assumption is by no means certain, but it deserves further consideration.

Thus, there is continuity between the various religious expressions found in ancient Egypt that revolves around the ideas of initiation into the afterlife, and into the presence of the deity through ritual mystery reenactments similar to those likely found in the initiations of the ancient craft guilds of Egypt. This illustrates the antiquity of the concepts found in the rites of medieval craft guilds, and of the initiation rites found in universities, fraternities, Freemasonry, and among the Latter-day Saints. This further indicates that such rituals were anciently connected with the temple, admittance into the afterlife, kingship, priesthood, and with becoming like the gods.



## APPENDIX

## Funerary and Temple Traditions Compared

|                     | Funerary      | Temple         |
|---------------------|---------------|----------------|
| <b>Torch</b>        | X             | X              |
| <b>Incense</b>      | X             | X              |
| <b>Primary Myth</b> | Osiris        | Horus          |
| <b>Horizon</b>      | Horizon       | Pylon          |
| <b>Heaven</b>       | Sky/Boatman   | Water/Swamp    |
| <b>Awakening</b>    | Opening Mouth | Awaking Temple |
| <b>Net/Veil</b>     | Net           | Veil           |
| <b>Doors</b>        | X             | X              |
| <b>See God</b>      | X             | X              |

## Egyptian Initiations Compared

|                             | Guild | Funerary | Temple | Priestly | Mystery |
|-----------------------------|-------|----------|--------|----------|---------|
| <b>Levels or Degrees</b>    | X     | ?        | X      | X        | X*      |
| <b>Signs of Recognition</b> | X     | X        | ?      | P**      | X       |
| <b>Examinations</b>         | X     | X        | ?      | X        | P       |
| <b>Secrecy</b>              | X     | X        | X      | X        | X       |
| <b>Washing</b>              | ?     | X        | X      | X        | X       |
| <b>Clothing</b>             | P     | X        | X      | X        | X       |
| <b>Anointing</b>            | ?     | X        | X      | X        | X       |
| <b>Censing</b>              | ?     | X        | X      | X        | ?       |
| <b>Torch Lighting</b>       | ?     | X        | X      | ?        | X       |
| <b>Horizon</b>              | ?     | X        | X      | ?        | ?       |
| <b>Boat/Pass Water</b>      | P*    | X        | X      | ?        | ?       |
| <b>Net</b>                  | P*    | X        | X      | ?        | ?       |
| <b>Doors</b>                | P*    | X        | X      | ?        | ?       |
| <b>Oaths</b>                | X     | X        | P      | X        | X       |
| <b>See God</b>              | ?     | X        | X      | X        | X       |

KEY: X = yes, P = probable, ? = unknown, N = no

\*In some mystery cults, but perhaps not in others. Levels or degrees can at least be seen at Eleusis and in the Mythraic initiations. Nets would have been included in the netmaker's guild just as boats would have been included in the boatmaker's guild. Modern guilds involve various tests required for passing the doors to enter the guild hall or lodge room. Such traditions could also have existed anciently.

\*\*Here the secret names of the deities could have served as a mode of recognition.

# Athirat: As Found at Ras Shamra

Justin Watkins

THE Mother Goddess figure that is found throughout the ancient Near East can be seen very clearly in the texts and artifacts of Ras Shamra, site of the ancient Canaanite city of Ugarit. She is portrayed as a powerful deity, a mother of gods, a consort of El, a wet nurse to men and gods, and a goddess of the sea. In Ugarit she is called Athirat, but is also known to us as Asherah, Elath, and Qudshu. Her prominent role in the myths of the Canaanites gives her great status though it is not reflected in the cultic lists as worship of her declined as time passed. She clearly stood as the greatest goddess of her time.

## History of Athirat

The first mention of Athirat in history is found in Babylonian texts dating to the first dynasty (1830–1531 B.C.).<sup>1</sup> Her appearance in these texts coincides with an arrival of Amorite elements into southern

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1. Judith M. Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 43.

Mesopotamia.<sup>2</sup> Here she is called Ashratum, the consort of Amurru, the chief god of the Amorites from whom their name probably derives. She bears several titles in these texts including “Lady of the Steppe,” “Bride of the King of Heaven,” and “Mistress of Sexual Vigor and Rejoicing.” These titles reveal something of her character including being the patron of the steppe and a goddess of fertility, both of which have been related to Athirat and her roles by scholars. Aside from being paired with an Amorite deity, her title “Lady of the Steppe” also points to her place of origin being in northern Syria, the homeland of the Amorites. In the El-Amarna letters, which date to the 14th century B.C., the leader/king of the Amorites is called Abdi-Ashirta, which is best rendered “servant of Ashirta,” where Ashirta is almost certainly the same name as Ashratum. It is probable that Athirat began life in the Levant as Ashratum.

The connection between Ashratum and Athirat is a strong one. Athirat may be the “Lady of the Sea,” but she also had a connection to the inland where she is patron of fields.<sup>3</sup> Also, she travels on a donkey, an unusual mode of transportation for a sea goddess.<sup>4</sup> Both are consorts to the highest god of the land. The roots of their names are indistinguishable and likely identical. This conclusion is drawn when it is considered that the Canaanite “th” sound is equivalent to most other Semitic languages “sh” sound.<sup>5</sup> Thus the root of both names is *ʾšrt*.<sup>6</sup> With the Canaanites of Ugarit bordering the Amorites throughout the latter half of the second millennium it is very likely that these goddesses had a common ancestor.<sup>7</sup>

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2. Steven A. Wiggins, *A Reassessment of 'Asherah'* (Kevelaer: Verlag Butzon and Bercker; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1993), 149.

3. “CTA 23.13,” (Walter A. Maier, III *ʾAšerah Extrabiblical Evidence* [Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1986], 31).

4. “CTA 4.4.1–7,” Maier, *ʾAšerah*, 12–13.

5. Including Hebrew, hence Asherah where the feminine ending “t” in Ugarit becomes an “h.”

6. Hadley, *Cult*, 49.

7. Wiggins, *Reassessment*, 149–50.

## Etymology and Titles

Within the Ugaritic texts of Ras Shamra, the goddess is most commonly called *rbt atrt ym* which is most commonly translated as “Lady Athirat of the Sea” and it appears in the texts 19 times.<sup>8</sup> However, this is far from clear and much debate surrounds this title. The difficulties stem from the words *atrt* and *ym*, with the former being the most problematic. Scholars have questioned whether this word is a proper name, an epithet of the goddess’, or a participle that makes up part of a title. Dever favors the latter and thus translates it, “She who treads/subdues the Sea,” which follows the NW Semitic tradition of making a name into a sentence.<sup>9</sup> Hadley lists several ideas put forth by scholars including “ruler/queen of the gods” (Ahlstrom),<sup>10</sup> “luck” or “good fortune” (Burney), “holy” or “holy place” (Albright), “sanctuary by the sea” (DeMoor), and “she who determines the day” (Watson).<sup>11</sup> Binger, after listing all the possible roots and their meanings in five relevant languages, asserts that it is impossible to determine the original meaning because of the many possible meanings for the possible roots.<sup>12</sup> Others have argued on similar grounds that its meaning is so ancient that it is lost to us and so we should simply take it as a personal name.<sup>13</sup> These restrictions lead us to regarding Athirat as a personal name.

The second word in question, *ym*, could mean either “sea” or “day.” Hence Watson translates her title as “she who determines the day.” Binger also prefers this, translating the title “Asherah, Lady of the Day” arguing that Ashratum had no connection to the sea.<sup>14</sup> Wiggins adds that much later southern Arabian inscriptions also connect

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8. Tilde Binger, *Asherah: Goddesses in Ugarit, Israel, and the Old Testament* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 42–43.

9. William, G. Dever, *Did God Have a Wife? Archaeology and Folk Religion in Ancient Israel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), 210.

10. Hadley, *Cult*, 41.

11. Hadley, *Cult*, 50–51.

12. Binger, *Asherah*, 143–45.

13. Hadley, *Cult*, 40.

14. Binger, *Asherah*, 48–49.

Asherah to the sun.<sup>15</sup> However, a stronger case can be made for “sea” than for “day.” Pettey recognizes Athirat’s connection to the sea but believes that the association with the inland and desert comes from her position in another culture’s ancient pantheon.<sup>16</sup> Ugarit is a coastal city whose industry was driven by their port. This would make for a logical change from the Amorite “Lady of the Steppe” to the Ugaritic “Lady of the Sea.” Also, Athirat’s servant is called “Fisherman,”<sup>17</sup> a strange name that would be less out of place for the servant of a sea goddess.<sup>18</sup> In the Baal cycle we first see Athirat sitting next to the sea where she later commands Fisherman to cast his net.<sup>19</sup> She also notes that Yam, who was the son of Athirat and god of the sea (his name means “sea”) was El’s darling and hence it makes sense for his consort/wife to be placed over it.<sup>20</sup> Wiggins argues that as each new culture adopted Asherah worship they altered her traits to fit their needs.<sup>21</sup> Thus the most common rendering, “Lady Athirat of the Sea,” is likely the best.

Another title that is commonly ascribed to Athirat in the Ugaritic texts is *qnyt ilm*. This is most often translated as “Creatress of the Gods,” or “Progenitor of the Gods.” There is virtually no contention about this translation among scholars. Athirat is referenced in the texts as being the mother of the gods in many places.<sup>22</sup> The traditional view of scholars has been that Athirat begat many gods by El, but that perhaps they were no longer together, possibly because of El’s apparent impotence. El is viewed as an old man while Athirat is somewhat younger. Later texts pair Athirat with Baal,<sup>23</sup> as do the biblical writers,<sup>24</sup> which is also seen as a possible consequence of El’s impotence. Binger

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15. Wiggins, *Reassessment*, 191.

16. Richard J. Pettey, *Asherah: Goddess of Israel* (New York: Peter Lang, 1990), 16.

17. “CTA 3.6.9–25,” Maier, *’Ašerah*, 3–4.

18. Hadley, *Cult*, 40.

19. “CTA 4.2.3–11; 26–35,” Maier, *’Ašerah*, 10.

20. Hadley, *Cult*, 41.

21. Wiggins, *Reassessment*, 149–50.

22. “CTA 4.2.12–26, 4.4.40–57, 6.1.38–61, 6.5.1–11,” Maier, *’Ašerah*, 7–8, 16–17, 23–25.

23. “CTA 34.6.36.8,” Maier, *’Ašerah*, 39–40.

24. See 1 Kings 18:19.

challenges these traditions arguing that they are very Western in context. She points out that the Greek mythologies have a female deity creating the world, having children without a consort, and making her son her consort. She is the older and he the younger.<sup>25</sup> She adds that the creation myth from the Enuma Elish is essentially the same, where Tiamat creates the gods before everything else and then takes her son as a consort who then creates the universe. She wonders if this could be the case also with El and Athirat. Admittedly, the Ugaritic text would appear to resemble the Enuma Elish in this as El carries the titles “the Builder/maker of what is Built/made” and “Father of Man.”<sup>26</sup> This argument is compelling but unsubstantiated. In any case Athirat stands in the highest regard among the gods of the Ugaritic pantheon.

Another title that is applied to Athirat is “Wet-nurse of the Gods.” Within the Kirta epic El names her this.<sup>27</sup> Kirta secures the promise from El that Hurriya will bear him Yassib and that he will be nursed/suckled by Athirat and Anat. Wiggins points out that this promise that Athirat will suckle him amounts to legitimizing him as Kirta’s heir.<sup>28</sup> Being a wet-nurse only adds to Athirat’s honor here, and those she nurses are brought honor.

## Baal Cycle

The primary source of information about Athirat is the Baal Cycle found at Ugarit. Pettey dates the text from the 17th to 15th century B.C..<sup>29</sup> The Baal Cycle is a lengthy text that focuses primarily on the story of Baal and his attempts to obtain a palace like the other gods in order to secure his status among them. In this narrative Athirat plays a large roll that demonstrates much of what we know about her. The bulk of the story concerning Athirat is found in the *Corpus Tablettes Alphabetiques* or CTA 4.2.3–4.5.81.<sup>30</sup>

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25. Binger, *Asherah*, 51.

26. Binger, *Asherah*, 51.

27. “CTA 15.2.21–28,” Maier, *’Ašerah*, 28–29.

28. Wiggins, *Reassessment*, 190.

29. Pettey, *Goddess of Israel*, 5.

30. Maier, *’Ašerah*, 6–20.

We first hear about the Goddess when Baal and Anat approach Athirat's servant, Fisherman. Previous to this meeting Anat attempted to secure El's favor in allowing the palace to be built, but failed. As a change of plan they send Fisherman to Egypt to entreat the god Kothar to make a present that they could present to Athirat to win her favor.<sup>31</sup> Maier feels that Baal and Anat believe that only Athirat will be successful in obtaining El's permission.<sup>32</sup> If true, this stands as a significant testimony to the influence of Athirat among the pantheon, particularly with El. Later we find out that Fisherman is successful in his errand.<sup>33</sup>

The next section begins the bulk of the text concerning Athirat. We first see her sitting by the sea using a spindle and doing laundry. She is identified in advance as the one who entertains El.<sup>34</sup> During her labors, she sees Baal and Anat coming and begins to fear and tremble. She wonders aloud if they have come to kill her sons.<sup>35</sup> This appears to scholars to be a reference to something that was a part of the myths of Ugarit that is not preserved among our current texts. The story of Baal killing the children of Athirat is alluded to here and elsewhere in the Ugaritic texts but is nowhere found.<sup>36</sup> In order to complete their understanding scholars turn to a Hittite myth that they think is probably Canaanite in origin. In this myth Ashertum (Athirat) tries to convince the Storm God (Baal) to sleep with her. She is refused and the Storm God tells El-kunirsha (El), Ashertum's husband, of what has happened. El-kunirsha advises the Storm God to sleep with Ashertum and then humiliate her. The Storm God then accepts Ashertum's invitation but upon finishing the act informs her "that he slew seventy-seven, even eighty-eight of her sons."<sup>37</sup> Ashertum is humiliated and terrified.

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31. "CTA 3.6.9–25," Maier, *'Ašerah*, 3–4.

32. Maier, *'Ašerah*, 33.

33. "CTA 4.1.20–25," Maier, *'Ašerah*, 5–6.

34. "CTA 4.2.3–11," Maier, *'Ašerah*, 6–7.

35. "CTA 4.2.12–26," Maier, *'Ašerah*, 7–8.

36. "CTA 6.1.38–61; 6.5.1–11," Maier, *'Ašerah*, 23–24, 25–26.

37. Maier, *'Ašerah*, 34.

Baal and Anat present Athirat with their presents of gold and silver and are rewarded by her excited reaction.<sup>38</sup> Athirat, still happy, asks why they have presented her with presents and not El.<sup>39</sup> Anat puts her off by saying they will another time. Athirat agrees to their proposal and commands Fisherman to saddle her donkey so that she can travel to El's palace.<sup>40</sup> Fisherman does so and Athirat sets out for El's place while Baal and Anat go their separate way.<sup>41</sup> In this section we can see the respect that Baal and Anat have for Athirat, not just in coming to her for assistance but also in precious gifts they present to her. One gets the impression that Baal is buying her off, but that it is noteworthy that it can not be done without a respectable gift.

Upon arriving at El's palace she enters his tent and bows down before him and honors him. El seems pleased to see her and offers her food, drink, and sex if she desires it. Athirat praises El and flatters him before telling him about the plight of Baal. She entreats him to give his permission that a palace be built for Baal just as the other gods and calls El Baal's father.<sup>42</sup> El asks her if he or she are slaves and then commands that others build Baal his palace. Athirat praises El again and points out the good things that Baal will do once he receives his palace. She then invokes a blessing of prosperity upon El.<sup>43</sup> Maier believes that the success of Athirat where Anat failed points out her power and prestige being "the senior wife of El and Creatress of the Gods."<sup>44</sup> It seems significant to me that she is able to bless El with great prosperity. Perhaps this is one of the blessings that the Canaanites sought from Athirat.

One other passage in the Baal cycle that mentions Athirat is worth mention. When Baal dies El calls out to Athirat and tells her to choose one of her sons to be Baal's replacement. She chooses one whom El

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38. "CTA 4.2.26-35," Maier, *'Ašerah*, 10.

39. "CTA 4.3.23-36," Maier, *'Ašerah*, 11.

40. "CTA 4.4.1-7," Maier, *'Ašerah*, 12-13.

41. "CTA 4.4.8-22," Maier, *'Ašerah*, 13-14.

42. "CTA 4.4.23-57," Maier, *'Ašerah*, 14-15.

43. "CTA 4.4.58-5.81," Maier, *'Ašerah*, 19-21.

44. Maier, *'Ašerah*, 35.



rejects as weak and then selects another whom El accepts.<sup>45</sup> Here we see a limit to her influence and power but the fact that El looks to her in this important decision points to her high rank in the pantheon.

## Kirta Epic

The Kirta epic is a myth that is about a man, Kirta, who is desperate to be married and have sons so that he can secure his posterity. At first he approaches El who promises him that he will be successful in his quest to obtain Hurriya as a wife and that she will bear him children. Not satisfied, on the way to take Hurriya he comes to Athirat and seeks her blessing also, identifying her as Qudshu, Athirat of Tyre, and Elath of Sidon. He vowed to her that he would give her silver and gold in abundance in exchange, we assume, for the same promises.<sup>46</sup> We know Athirat accepts the terms though we do not have her response directly. Later in the text El promises Kirta that Hurriya will bear him 7 even 8 sons and that his eldest Yassib will be nursed by Athirat and Anat.<sup>47</sup> After seven years have passed, and Hurriya has born him the promised sons, Athirat becomes angry with him, apparently because he has failed to keep his promise to her, and she shouts at El to punish him or else she will.<sup>48</sup>

Maier points out that Athirat's importance is dramatically shown in this epic. He specifically notes the significance of Kirta securing El's promise and then still going to Athirat in order to gain her favor also. To him this reveals her great power and command of respect.<sup>49</sup> The identification of Athirat of Tyre with Qudshu and Elath of Sidon adds to the respect due to her, as we see clearly that she is also being venerated outside of Canaan at this time. The promised offering is reminiscent of Baal and Anat's offering to her, respectable and large; her favor is a thing highly sought after. When El tells Kirta that his son

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45. "CTA 6.1.38–61," Maier, *'Ašerah*, 23–24.

46. "CTA 14.4.197–206," Maier, *'Ašerah*, 27–28.

47. "CTA 15.2.21–28," Maier, *'Ašerah*, 28–29.

48. "CTA 15.3.22–30," Maier, *'Ašerah*, 29–30.

49. Maier, *'Ašerah*, 37.

will be suckled by Athirat and Anat, it is Athirat's name that is put first, showing her place above the other goddess. Perhaps most impressive though is Athirat's anger. In her rage she commands El to act against Kirta and possibly threatens to carry out the punishment herself if he refuses her demand. We expect that very few even of the gods would have the bravery and position to demand anything of El the high god. Clearly Athirat deserves her high standing and regard.

## Shahar and Shalim Epic

This epic is poorly preserved and only two direct references refer to Athirat directly. CTA 23.13/28 (the lines are nearly identical) mention the field of Athirat wa-Rahmay.<sup>50</sup> CTA 23.23–24 mentions gods being nursed by Athirat.<sup>51</sup> The first reference is taken by many scholars to be a reference to Athirat's connection to Ashratum and to show that she is connected to the land, perhaps the steppe and desert.<sup>52</sup> A second part to the myth speaks of El finding two nameless women in the desert and taking them back to be his wives, whereupon they bear him Shahar and Shalim (dawn and dusk). It has been suggested that these two women were Athirat and Rahmay but many scholars today do not believe that we can make that assertion with any confidence.<sup>53</sup>

## Cultic Texts

The cultic texts also found at Ras Shamra consist of god lists and sacrifice lists containing references to Athirat. Surprisingly, she does not appear as near to the top as one would expect. Maier notes however that El also is not as high up and Athirat still appears before Anat and Athtart, the other two major goddesses mentioned in the mythical texts.<sup>54</sup> Binger simply concludes that Athirat was not a god to whom

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50. Maier, *'Ašerah*, 31.

51. Maier, *'Ašerah*, 31.

52. Pettey, *Goddess of Israel*, 15.

53. Maier, *'Ašerah*, 31; Hadley, *Cult*, 43.

54. Maier, *'Ašerah*, 39.

extensive sacrifice was made.<sup>55</sup> However, Maier notes that the myths seem to reflect an older tradition than the cultic texts which may explain why the gods of the myths were not as prominent as in the cultic lists.<sup>56</sup> This would seem to be supported by the fact that many more gods are listed in the cultic texts than in the myths.

Some scholars have tried to determine some changes in worship and myth in the sacrifice lists. This is usually determined by seeing who Athirat and others are paired up with. For example, in CTA 30:1–5 she is paired with El.<sup>57</sup> In CTA 34.6 and 36.8 Athirat is paired with Baal.<sup>58</sup> Some have taken this to mean that perhaps she left El and joined Baal as his cohort. But in 36.6 and RS 24.256.24 she is found near both El and Baal.<sup>59</sup> Binger concludes that Athirat is connected to and paired with so many gods in the lists that it is impossible to deduce anything about her cultic connections.<sup>60</sup> Perhaps the best evidence that Athirat did eventually get paired with Baal is the witness of the OT writers that affiliate Asherah with Baal often. However, it is likely that worship of Athirat in Ugarit declined before the city was destroyed.

## Archaeological Evidence

Several artifacts found at Ras Shamra are of interest in a study of Athirat. Female figurines found at the site have few features and cannot be equated with any of the several Ugartic goddesses because they bear no distinguishing markings. Other artifacts are perhaps more promising. At the site was found a pendant carved with a goddess with two snakes crossing her while standing on a lion. The lion in particular, according to Pettey, could identify this as an Asherah figure since Asherah has been associated with lions in other places.<sup>61</sup> Also

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55. Binger, *Asherah*, 89.

56. Maier, 'Ašerah, 38.

57. Maier, 'Ašerah, 39.

58. Maier, 'Ašerah, 39, 40.

59. Maier, 'Ašerah, 40, 41.

60. Binger, *Asherah*, 89.

61. Pettey, *Goddess of Israel*, 176.

found was an ivory bas-relief from c. 1300 B.C. that depicted a goddess nursing two boys. This too is considered to be a good candidate of portraying Asherah as she has been seen to nurse men and gods, though Pettey admits that the connection is purely speculative.<sup>62</sup> An ivory lid to an unguent box depicting a goddess carved in the Mycenaean style wearing Cretan clothes was also found at Ras Shamra. The goddess is taking the place of a tree between two caprids. This has caught the attention of scholars because of Asherah's being depicted in places as a post or stylized tree. Combined with her affinity with the sea and the seafaring nature of the Mycenaean, Athirat stands as the best candidate for this artifact.<sup>63</sup> However, Cornelius reminds us that no iconographic items have ever been found that can conclusively be connected with Asherah because none of them have her name inscribed on them.<sup>64</sup> He also warns us that texts cannot be directly applied to interpreting iconography, saying that they can only paint a general background.

## Conclusion

Athirat is portrayed in the texts of Ugarit as a dominant goddess. The valuable artifacts found at the site that are probably connected to Athirat further incline our thinking this way. She has the power to persuade El and the bravery to command him. She commands the respect of gods and mortals alike. Called the mother and wet-nurse of the god, it is even plausible that she is the first god, the father of El. Her connections and associations range from the steppes to the sea. Her ability to bless is enormous, extending even to the gods. Humanity's association with her brings honor. Though it is likely that worship of Athirat declined in the latter years of Ugarit she survives to be worshipped later by the Israelites and others. As a Mother Goddess, she is a dominant figure for centuries throughout the pantheons of the ancient Near East.

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62. Pettey, *Goddess of Israel*, 176–77.

63. Pettey, *Goddess of Israel*, 177.

64. Izak Cornelius, *The Many Faces of the Goddess* (Fribourg, Switzerland: Academic Press: Gottingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2004), 99.



# LITERATURE



# Marriage and the Afterlife in *Antigone*

Nathan E. Richardson

MOST writers who comment on *Antigone* remark that the major theme of Sophocles' play is the struggle between human law and divine law, or the laws of the gods.<sup>1</sup> The conflict of the play revolves around Creon and Antigone's difference of opinion over which law is superior. Creon emphasizes the need to obey earthly magistrates to maintain order: "Anarchy, anarchy! Show me a greater evil! \ This is why cities tumble and the great houses rain down, \ This is what scatters armies!"<sup>2</sup> Antigone insists that human law is preempted by divine law because the latter comes from a higher source: "All your [Creon's] strength is weakness itself against \ The immortal unrecorded laws of God. \ They are not merely now: they were, and shall be, \ Operative for ever, beyond man utterly."<sup>3</sup>

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1. David Grene, ed., *Greek Tragedies*, vol. 1. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 178.

2. Sophocles, *Antigone* 3.42–44, in *Literature: An Introduction to Fiction, Poetry, and Drama*, 7th ed., comp. X.J. Kennedy and Dana Gioia (New York: Longman, 1999), 1491–1520.

3. Sophocles, *Antigone* 2.60–3.



However, an observant reader may ask this question: if Creon and Antigone have the same religious beliefs, why do they disagree on such matters as justice and law, which are clearly of a religious nature? The answer lies in the nature of the Greek culture and religion. Several elements of the Greek religion show their influence in the events of the play, such as beliefs about the afterlife, burial rites, and marriage. Examining the historical background of *Antigone* reveals the fact that a commonly shared culture does not necessarily guarantee that its members will have the same values and beliefs, and therefore the members of a culture may have widely differing applications of their beliefs.

### The Afterlife

Many of the customs mentioned in *Antigone* stem from the Greek concept of the afterlife. The Greeks had no real word for “sin.” The closest is *hamartia*, which means “an error of judgment.”<sup>4</sup> There was little belief in divine intervention as a medium of correcting immoral behavior. Rather than humble submission to a long list of commandments to avoid spiritual impurity, Greek salvation was based more on the accumulation of *kleos*, or reputation and honor. If a person became well-known for excellence in this life, his *kleos* would allow him to pass through the gates of Hades to enter the Elysian fields, a paradise.<sup>5</sup>

That is why Antigone’s brothers Eteocles and Polyneices were so concerned with ruling Thebes—they were trying to gain *kleos* to insure good grazing in the Elysian fields. That is also why Creon appears to be so concerned with what the people of Thebes think about him. When Creon debates with his son the question of pardoning Antigone, Haemon appeals to his self-consciousness by mentioning public opinion:

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4. Charles Seltman, *The Twelve Olympians* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1960), 27.

5. Nancy DeBloois, Classical Civilizations 241H: Introduction to Greek and Roman Mythology, Brigham Young University, fall 1999. Class notes in possession of author.

You are not in a position to know everything  
 That people say or do, or what they feel:  
 You temper terrifies them—everyone  
 Will tell you only what you like to hear.  
 But I, at any rate, can listen; and I have heard them  
 Muttering and whispering in the dark about this girl . . .  
 That is the way they talk out there in the city.<sup>6</sup>

While *kleos* was a major factor in determining one's place in the underworld, there were also some cases in which a mortal suffered eternal punishment for having offended the gods. For example, Tantalus was made to stand forever in water that was always just too low to sip, and under grapes that were perpetually just out of reach (hence the word "tantalizing")—all for having gotten Zeus' immortal dander up. So, while it was important for a Greek to gain fame and notoriety, he also had to avoid *hamartia*, or poor decisions which might irritate a god. Antigone apparently valued the latter more than the former, for she freely denounced a king in order to perform a sacred ritual.

## Burial Rites

Although *kleos* determined a person's "degree of glory" in Hades, a deceased Greek could not enter Hades without receiving certain rituals (comparable to the LDS belief that a person is "saved by obedience to [both] the principles and ordinances of the gospel"). Speaking of her warring brothers, Eteocles and Polyneices, Antigone reminds Creon that "there are honors due all the dead."<sup>7</sup> This "honor" refers to the *trispoudai choai* (thrice-poured offering) of libations of wine poured on the body, as well as a burial, which consecrate the body to the gods of the underworld.<sup>8</sup> Antigone's ritual sprinkling of dust is sufficient to meet the requirements by Greek standards.

If a Greek was buried without these rituals, he or she could not receive a place of glory in the Elysian fields. The oft-mentioned silver

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6. Sophocles, *Antigone* 3.57–62, 68.

7. Sophocles, *Antigone* 2.113.

8. Robert Garland, *The Greek Way of Death* (New York: Cornell, 1985), 36, 46.

coin under the tongue was also needed to pay Chairon, the boatman who ferried dead souls across the river Styx to enter Hades. Without the requirements, a disembodied spirit was left to wander back and forth on the bank for eternity. Incidentally, this is why Greeks feared death at sea—such bodies were rarely found and thus were rarely prepared for burial.<sup>9</sup>

Another reason a Greek desired a proper burial was to secure a memorial or tomb. Such a monument would ensure that his name be remembered and honored, bringing exalting *kleos*. Without such a monument, his name would soon be forgotten. Antigone seeks such a memorial for Polyneices and herself when she said, “I should have praise and honor for what I have done. \ All these men here would praise me”<sup>10</sup> Through this one act, she attempts to establish a memorable name for herself and her brother.

## Marriage

The other way to create a personal legacy was by bearing sons. Perpetuating the family line meant perpetuating one’s memory. Without children, a Greek’s legacy stopped short. Antigone agonizes over this fact as Creon entombs her alive: “Now sleepy Death \ summons me . . . \ There is no bridesong there, nor any music. \ . . . My reward is death before my time.”<sup>11</sup>

Some scholars think the Greeks believed unmarried maidens would be wed to Hades on entering the underworld.<sup>12</sup> Weddings and funerals involved the same ingredients of dressing and anointing, and unwed girls who died were buried in wedding robes.<sup>13</sup> The lamenting funeral hymns (*threnos*) were even very similar to the bridal songs (*epithalamia*).<sup>14</sup> Antigone anticipates this grim fate as she calls her

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9. DeBloois, Class Notes, 11.

10. Sophocles, *Antigone* 2.98–99.

11. Sophocles, *Antigone* 4.8–10, 65.

12. Garland, *Way of Death*, 72.

13. Margaret Alexiou, *The Ritual Lament in Greek Tradition* (Great Britain: Cambridge, 1974), 120.

14. DeBloois, Class Notes, 8.

prison “O tomb, vaulted bride-bed in eternal rock.”<sup>15</sup> While all the Greeks were aware of this idea, not all may have taken it literally. “Such a travesty of true marriage can hardly have formed a part of belief, and it is surely a sense of outrage at the unfairness of early death.”<sup>16</sup> Creon may have thought of a virgin death as a punishment, but Antigone may have made her statement about no bridesong only figuratively, for “scholars have alleged that the Greeks believed in the possibility of finding a marriage partner down in Hades.”<sup>17</sup>

## Conclusion

The point of these various possible beliefs is that the Greek culture allowed for a great difference in opinion with respect to religion. The Greek religion was not organized or hierarchal; there was no professional clergy, for all priests were part-time and had to make a regular living.<sup>18</sup> There was no official doctrine or dogma, and therefore no heresy.<sup>19</sup> Such a culture left a lot of room for varying forms and degrees of faith.

Robert Garland points out that pagan religions focus more on this life rather than the one to come. They do not foster reliance on delayed rewards and punishments; the gods usually meted out justice in this life. He concludes that because it teaches people to seek immediate results, paganism produces no martyrs.<sup>20</sup> The nature of *kleos* illustrates this—eternal reward is an extension of what a man’s neighbors think of him on earth, even after he dies.

Saying this does not belittle Greek beliefs, for *kleos* rings with bits of truth—we should seek to establish a good name for ourselves. The point is that some Greeks chose to take a step beyond the commonly-

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15. Sophocles, *Antigone* 4.58.

16. Garland, *Way of Death*, 72.

17. Garland, *Way of Death*, 72.

18. Charles Seltman, *The Twelve Olympians* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1960), 22.

19. Seltman, *The Twelve Olympians*, 23.

20. Garland, *Way of Death*, 48.

shared religion and relied on unseen rewards in the next life. To go against popular opinion, to tell off a king, to break the law, to abandon hopes of bearing children: these acts could seriously jeopardize one's *kleos*. So why does Antigone commit them? Because she is exercising faith that she will be rewarded in the next life. Her belief in the rightness of burying her brother to help him enter paradise transcends her fear of losing *kleos*. She raises her desires from avoiding *hamartia*, or misjudging and getting in someone's way, to doing what is right. Even if she could not explain what she hoped to gain from it, she felt she was doing good. As a sincere seeker for the truth, she learned to invest in the unforeseeable future—and such faith is eventually rewarded.

# Enuma Elish: The Origins of Its Creation

Svetlana Tamtik

THE Enuma Elish is a Babylonian creation epic, originally written on seven clay tablets which were found in the ruins of Ashurbanipal's library in Nineveh.<sup>1</sup> This epic describes the creation of the world by the god Marduk, performed through splitting the body of the sea monster Tiamat at the climax of a battle between the two. Yet, the main purpose of this epic was to explain the elevation of the chief Babylonian god Marduk to the top of the Mesopotamian pantheon and the legitimization of his superiority over the other gods.

The Enuma Elish is the most famous Mesopotamian creation story and is considered to be a masterpiece of their literature. However, it is not quite unique in its composition. It has many parallels with other ancient Near Eastern stories and originates from earlier traditions, myths, and beliefs. In this paper I will analyze those influences and will try to shed some light on the origins of its composition.

Like most cosmogonies of the ancient Near East, the Enuma Elish has some features common to all of them. They include several

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1. Alexander Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), 1.

elements: (1) the creation, or rather organization, of the world from the elements existing in the form of unbridled chaos, as represented by the primordial ocean or sea<sup>2</sup>, (2) the presence of the divine creator, (3) the presence of the antagonist or a primordial monster, (4) a battle between “good” and “evil” forces, (5) the separation of the elements (earth and sky, land and sea, order and chaos, etc.), and (6) the creation of mankind. These features of a creation story existed in many ancient cultures. We find them in ancient Greek cosmogony, where Eurynome, the Goddess of All Things, appears from the primordial chaos and divides sea from sky.<sup>3</sup> The elements of the creation from chaos are also present in Egyptian, Phoenician and Vedic literature.<sup>4</sup> They also existed in Canaanite mythology, where the stage before the creation was represented by unrestrained rule of the sea, personified as the god Yamm, who was later subdued and organized by Baal—the creator.<sup>5</sup> But the most popular comparison is between the Enuma Elish and the creation story described in the Old Testament. Both accounts include the majority of the elements listed above, except there is no reference to a primordial monster in Genesis. However, the name for “the deep” (referring to the waters covering the earth) in the Hebrew Bible is *tehom*, which corresponds with Tiamat—the Mesopotamian personification of the sea in Enuma Elish.<sup>6</sup>

Similar elements were typical for the creation stories of the other ancient Near Eastern cultures. Unfortunately only few of them are mentioned here, because not all of those texts are available. Yet, most surprisingly, most of those elements are not found as prevalent in earlier Mesopotamian cosmogonies. Those accounts lack a well-developed theme of the primordial chaos represented by the sea. They reflect no tradition of a single divine creator; gods usually make the

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2. Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis*, 88–89; also David Neiman, “The Supercaelian Sea,” *JNES* 28.4 (1969): 246–48.

3. Robert Graves and Raphael Patai, *Hebrew Myths: The Book of Genesis* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966), 26.

4. Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis*, 97.

5. Neiman, “The Supercaelian Sea,” 247.

6. George L. Klein, “Reading Genesis 1,” *SWJT* 44.1 (2001): 27; also Thorkild Jacobsen, “The Battle Between Marduk and Tiamat,” *JAOS* 88.1 (1968): 105.

world together.<sup>7</sup> In some cases this role is assumed by different local gods, depending on the city in which the legend was used. There is no primordial battle between “good” and “evil” forces, and even though the theme of fighting dragons is very popular, it usually happens after the world was already created.<sup>8</sup> Finally, there is no clear tradition of dividing the elements and separating the sky from the earth. All those elements seem to come to Mesopotamian cosmogonies at later times. On the other hand, the earlier creation stories of that region have features different from those described above and unique for Sumerian culture. Moreover, there is no typical Sumerian creation story. As S. G. F. Brandon notes, “When we survey the exceeding variety of legends dealing with the origin of things that have been recovered . . . it would seem that there was no common pattern in the Sumerian thought on this subject.”<sup>9</sup>

Nevertheless, there are many elements of earlier Sumerian myths that were also incorporated in *Enuma Elish*. Most of them did not come from cosmogonies, but rather from stories describing a combat between a local god and a dragon or some other monster. L. W. King has noticed that the

Dragon-Myth existed in more than one form in Babylonian mythology, and it is not improbable that many of the great cities of Babylonia possessed local versions of the legend in each of which the city-god figured as the hero.<sup>10</sup>

It is clear that fighting a dragon was one of the most important achievements for any Mesopotamian god, especially for Marduk—the chief god of all Babylonia. In this case the authors of *Enuma Elish* had to

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7. L. W. King, ed., *Enuma Elish: The Seven Tablets of Creation* (2 vols.; vol. 12 of Luzac's Semitic Text and Translation Series (London: Luzac and Co., 1902; repr., New York: AMS Press, 1976), 2:125–27.

8. Robert William Rogers, ed., *Cuneiform Parallels to the Old Testament* 2nd ed. (New York/Cincinnati: The Abingdon Press, 1926), 61; also King, *Enuma Elish*, 2:68.

9. S. G. F. Brandon, *Creation Legends of the Ancient Near East* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1963), 68.

10. King, *Enuma Elish*, 2:69



make him look superior to other gods and his victory to be the most triumphant. Yet, in order to make him a legitimate god, the story of his exaltation had to be built on earlier Sumerian traditions. This explains why there are so many borrowed elements from different Sumerian dragon stories present in Enuma Elish.

One of the most interesting evidences of borrowing might be found in the Myth of Anzu. In this myth, the dragon Anzu steals the Tablet of Destinies from the chief god Enlil, intending “to usurp the Enlil-power,” to “control the orders for all the gods” and to “possess the throne and [to] be master of the rites.”<sup>11</sup> After Anu (Enlil) becomes aware of the loss of the Tablet of Destinies, he looks for a god who could slay Anzu. Similar story unfolds in Enuma Elish, when the sea dragon Tiamat takes a possession of the Tablet of Destinies, and Anshar—the chief god—looks for a hero to fight her. In the myth of Anzu, as in Enuma Elish, Ea plays the role of a counselor, proposing, “Let me give orders and search among the gods, and pick from the assembly Anzu’s conqueror.”<sup>12</sup> Finally, the congregation of gods asks the mother goddess Mami for her favorite son Ninurta, who agrees to fight the dragon. After the victory over Anzu, the gods acclaim Ninurta with many names.<sup>13</sup> The same pattern is observed in Enuma Elish. After Marduk’s victory over Tiamat, the gods “pronounced his fifty names” and “made his position supreme.”<sup>14</sup>

Besides the preceding similarities, more evidence exists in Enuma Elish of the borrowings from the Myth of Anzu. In Enuma Elish, two gods—Ea and Anu (Enlil)—turn down the invitation to fight Tiamat before Marduk accepts it.<sup>15</sup> Similarly, in the Myth of Anzu, three gods reject the request to lead the army, and only then does Ninurta agree

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11. Stephanie Dalley, *Myths from Mesopotamia: Creation, The Flood, Gilgamesh and Others* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 207.

12. Benjamin R. Foster, trans., *Enuma Elish*, in *The Context of Scripture*, ed. William W. Hallo (Leiden: Brill, 1997–2002), 2:394; II.119–24.

13. Dalley, *Myths from Mesopotamia*, 210.

14. Dalley, *Myths from Mesopotamia*, 219–21.

15. *Enuma Elish*, 402; 7.144.

16. *Enuma Elish*, 394; 2.71–118.

to do so.<sup>17</sup> According to Richard J. Clifford, “in Sumerian traditions eleven monsters oppose Ninurta.” The same number fight on Tiamat’s side in the *Enuma Elish*, but only eight are given names, which indicates that the number eleven is a borrowing.<sup>18</sup> In addition, the Tablet of Destinies does not fit in the story of the *Enuma Elish* as it does with the Myth of Anzu, “where its disappearance initiates the dramatic action.”<sup>19</sup> Moreover, it is not mentioned anywhere in the *Enuma Elish* that Tiamat had stolen the Tablet of Destinies. This assumption (implied by many scholars) may also originate from the Myth of Anzu. Another possible borrowing is the net used by Marduk to catch Tiamat.<sup>20</sup> This tool would not be very useful in fighting her but could be better applied against the birdlike Anzu.<sup>21</sup> Finally, after telling Ninurta how to kill the feathered dragon, Ea wishes, “And let the winds bring his feathers as good news.”<sup>22</sup> This phrase sounds very appropriate in this context, but when Marduk “cut(s) open arteries of [Tiamat’s] blood” and “let(s) the North Wind bear (it) away as glad tidings,”<sup>23</sup> it sounds rather awkward and clearly suggests a borrowing.

Another myth that might be used as a source for the *Enuma Elish* is the story of Ninurta and the dragon Kur. While in the previous story Anzu symbolizes mountains,<sup>24</sup> in this one Kur is associated with primeval waters (he held them in check). After his destruction, the waters began to rise up. To fix the problem Ninurta “pil[ed] up heaps of stones on the body of the dead Kur, so that they might hold back the ‘mighty waters.’”<sup>25</sup>

In the *Enuma Elish* Marduk assumes a similar role when he slays Tiamat—a personification of the primordial waters. He also assumes

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17. Richard J. Clifford, *Creation Accounts in the Ancient Near East and in the Bible* (Washington, DC: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1994), 85.

18. Clifford, *Creation Accounts*, 85; also *Enuma Elish*, 392; 1.141–46.

19. Clifford, *Creation Accounts*, 85.

20. *Enuma Elish*, 398; 4.95.

21. Clifford, *Creation Accounts*, 85.

22. Dalley, *Myths from Mesopotamia*, 216; also Clifford, *Creation Accounts*, 85.

23. *Enuma Elish*, 398; 4.131–32.

24. Dalley, *Myths from Mesopotamia*, 212–13, 218.

25. Brandon, *Creation Legends*, 102.

the role of the creator of heaven and earth, which he makes from Tiamat's split body. This role was usually ascribed to Enlil—the personified air that holds the sky and the earth apart.<sup>26</sup> S. G. F. Brandon writes that “It would, accordingly, be reasonable to suppose that the author of the Enuma Elish, intent on exalting Marduk, was led to ascribe to him something of the exploits of Ninurta, as well as of Enlil” and that “he fused together two very different myths, with a resulting confusion of motifs and imagery.”<sup>27</sup>

In different myths the names of monsters and the deities opposing them may vary. In one of those myths Enlil fights a gigantic sea monster named Labbu. Here, as in the Enuma Elish and the Myth of Anzu, Enlil fights the monster only when another god, Tishpak, fails to do so. An interesting detail is the size of the Labbu. His length is fifty *biru* (one *biru* is about six or seven miles). When Enlil slew him, his blood flowed “for three years and three months.”<sup>28</sup> The size of Tiamat in the Enuma Elish (so big that it enabled Marduk to make the earth and the sky from her split body) may also be based on the borrowings from the earlier myths like this one.

Also, in order to fight Labbu, Enlil “raised up the cloud, and stirred up storm.”<sup>29</sup> In the Enuma Elish, winds also were used by Marduk to fight Tiamat: “He thrust in the ill wind so she could not close her lips. The raging wings bloated her belly.”<sup>30</sup> The winds were given to Marduk by his grandfather Anu (Enlil), who “formed and produced four winds, he put them in his hand,” and who also “fashioned dust, he made a storm bear it up.”<sup>31</sup> The usage of dust along with winds seems to be traditional for gods in Mesopotamian mythology in fighting dragons. In the Myth of Anzu, Ninurta uses both of them: “The warrior marshaled the seven evil winds, who dance in the dust, the seven whirlwinds.”<sup>32</sup> And in the myth about Labbu the same

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26. Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis*, 12.

27. Brandon, *Creation Legends*, 102.

28. Rogers, *Cuneiform Parallels*, 63.

29. Rogers, *Cuneiform Parallels*, 61, 63.

30. *Enuma Elish*, 398; 4.98–99.

31. *Enuma Elish*, 392; 1.105–07.

32. Dalley, *Myths from Mesopotamia*, 213, 217.

thing seems to be implied, when Enlil “raised up the cloud, and stirred up storm.”<sup>33</sup> The presence of dust in the winds may fit well with the context of Mesopotamian mythology, but does not fit with the setting of the *Enuma Elish*, where everything was covered with water and the earth was not yet formed.

There is another important borrowing in the *Enuma Elish* that appears in the context of a conflict between Ea (Enki) and Apsu. Apsu and Tiamat are the parents of all the gods and are personifications of the primordial sweet and salt waters.<sup>34</sup> Yet, when we look at earlier Sumerian myths, it appears that Apsu played a more important role than Tiamat. The whole notion of the sea seemed to be less relevant than that of the river, because “it would seem, accordingly, that the Sumerians would have been more closely associated with the spectacle of water in the form of a river than as the sea.”<sup>35</sup> The rivers Tigris and Euphrates were the source of life for Mesopotamians. They even addressed the abstract River “who did(st) create all things” on one of their clay tablets. In that address was an interesting phrase: “within thee Ea, the King of the Deep, created his dwelling.”<sup>36</sup>

It was an old tradition to associate Ea (Enki) with the “sweet” waters, which was expressed in his “sovereignty over the subterranean area from which the springs and rivers have their source.” He was called the “king of abzu,” which distinguished his dominion over the sweet waters. The temple of Enki was built in Eridu (an ancient settlement on a fresh-water lagoon) and “was said to be founded on this abzu,” so “the building of his temple there would give him lordship over this form of the primordial deep.”<sup>37</sup> One aspect of the *Enuma Elish* is built directly on that tradition. It is illustrated in a story when Ea (Enki) took over Apsu (the personification of the sweet waters) with his magic spell and put him to sleep. Then, Ea “stripped of his tiara, he took away his aura, he himself put it on,” after which he killed Apsu. Following

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33. Rogers, *Cuneiform Parallels*, 63.

34. Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis*, 3.

35. Brandon, *Creation Legends*, 68.

36. Rogers, *Cuneiform Parallels*, 63; see also King, *Enuma Elish*, 2:129.

37. Brandon, *Creation Legends*, 71–72.

his victory, he rested in the chamber that he established there and called it “Apsu” what meant “They Recognize Sanctuaries.”<sup>38</sup> As stated by S. G. F. Brandon, “the episode clearly derives from the myth of the foundation of the Ea’s temple at Eridu.”<sup>39</sup>

It is interesting that along with Apsu, Ea was also fighting Apsu’s son and counselor Mummu. Although Ea did not kill him, he made him “drowsy with languor.” Afterward he bound Mummu, “locked him securely,” and then “founded his dwelling upon Apsu,” holding him firm by a lead-rope.<sup>40</sup> At first glance, it may seem evident that the connection between Ea and Apsu in the *Enuma Elish* is based on the earlier traditions that probably came from Eridu, yet the role of Mummu appears to be unclear. Alexander Heidel helped to bring some clarity to this subject by proposing that while Apsu and Tiamat represented sweet and salt waters, Mummu might represent the mist rising from, and hovering over them.<sup>41</sup> This explains why Ea, being the god of the marshlands,<sup>42</sup> had to establish Mummu’s dwelling upon Apsu (associated with marshy Eridu) and hold him with a lead-rope, probably showing his power over the mist as well as over the sweet waters.

The role that Ea plays throughout the whole story of the *Enuma Elish* is very important. He is perhaps the only god, except Marduk, who acts like a hero and whose characteristics are described in detail. L. W. King states that “his birth, moreover, forms the climax to which the previous lines lead up,” and that because of detecting and frustrating the plans of the primeval gods, “Ea and not Marduk is the hero of the earlier episodes of the Creation story.”<sup>43</sup> Later in the epic, Ea continued to help Marduk and “didn’t cease his active opposition to the forces of disorder, but continued to play a chief role on the side of the gods.”<sup>44</sup> Thus, after Marduk’s victory over Tiamat, Ea actively

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38. *Enuma Elish*, 391; 1.62–76.

39. Brandon, *Creation Legends*, 96.

40. *Enuma Elish*, 391; 1.66–73.

41. Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis*, 3.

42. Brandon, *Creation Legends*, 72.

43. King, *Enuma Elish*, 2:37.

44. King, *Enuma Elish*, 2:41.

participated in creating mankind. In fact, even though it may seem awkward, he was the one who actually made them. Marduk only gave him the idea, yet the idea was imperfect and Ea refined it by his council. He proposed to slay a god responsible for waging war and to create mankind from his blood. Then Qingu—the leader of Tiamat’s army—was brought to the gods. He was bound and held before Ea, so that they could shed his blood in order for Ea to create mankind.<sup>45</sup>

All these facts reflect a strong earlier tradition with Ea being the chief god and the creator of mankind. It seems that it was very difficult for the authors of the *Enuma Elish* to avoid borrowing some important elements from the earlier myths; but in making those borrowings, they could not always fit them with the role of Marduk. S. G. F. Brandon explains that “the author [was] so consciously drawing on the well-established tradition that Ea was the creator of mankind, that, despite his clear intention to claim this role to Marduk, he insensibly slip[ed] into the older version.”<sup>46</sup> He also supposes that “the emphasis which is then laid upon the superiority of Enki [Ea] would suggest that this part of *Enuma Elish* must be derived from the tradition of some cult-centre of Enki, probably Eridu, where this deity was exalted above all the other gods.”<sup>47</sup> It is probable that the authors of *Enuma Elish* incorporated some other earlier traditions in order to justify the exaltation of Marduk over the older gods. It seemed that they wanted to ascribe to Marduk all the significant acts and attributes of other gods. L. W. King says that “the priests of Babylon made use of independent legends in the composition of their great poem of Creation” and that “by assigning to Marduk the conquest of the Dragon and the creation of the world they justified his claim to the chief place among the gods.”<sup>48</sup> They knew that by doing so they would also establish Babylon as the capital city of Mesopotamia and would

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45. *Enuma Elish*, 400–401; 6.1–33.

46. Brandon, *Creation Legends*, 106.

47. Brandon, *Creation Legends*, 95.

48. King, *Enuma Elish*, 2:70–71.

legitimize its political hegemony over the whole region. Thus, it becomes evident that the Enuma Elish served more political purposes than religious ones.<sup>49</sup>

Exalting Marduk, a local Babylonian god, over older and more respected Sumerian gods was a daunting task for the priests in a religious climate where most of the important divine roles seemed to be already taken. They could not, therefore, be ascribed to Marduk without a justifying precedent. This precedent was the victory over Tiamat, who threatened the very existence of all the gods.<sup>50</sup> It was a relatively new tradition in Mesopotamian mythology that did not completely mesh with older Sumerian traditions. Thus, several aspects of creation seem to be made twice. For example, before Marduk created the sky and the earth, they were already represented in older mythology in the form of Anshar and Kishar—gods whose names might be translated as “heaven” and “earth,”<sup>51</sup> or the “horizons of sky and earth.”<sup>52</sup> Similarly, before Marduk created day and night, they were already spoken of by Apsu in these words: “by day I have no rest, at night I do not sleep.”<sup>53</sup> Finally, it seems awkward that “the three great cosmic deities (Anshar, Anu and Ea) of the traditional pantheon had to wait for Marduk to be established in those parts of the universe over which they [already] presided.”<sup>54</sup>

But where do those newer traditions come from? The answer to this question may be found by examining the names of the deities in the Enuma Elish. Most of the names are pure Sumerian and come from earlier myths and traditions, except for Tiamat.<sup>55</sup> Her name, as well as

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49. Clifford, *Creation Accounts*, 93; see also Rivkah Harris, “The Conflict of Generations in Ancient Mesopotamian Myths,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 34 (1992): 630; see also Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis*, 11.

50. Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis*, 11.

51. Clifford, *Creation Accounts*, 89.

52. Barbara C. Sproul, *Primal Myths* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1979), 91.

53. *Enuma Elish*, 391; 1.38. See also Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis*, 101.

54. Brandon, *Creation Legends*, 103.

55. Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis*, 12.

the notion of the sea, appears to be a foreign borrowing. It comes from the Semitic root which means “sea.”<sup>56</sup> As was mentioned above, observing the sea was not typical for daily Sumerian life.<sup>57</sup> The sea was “far away to the South behind extensive sweet water marshes and reed-thickets,” and the idea that Mesopotamians could “independently have thought up a myth about a battle between the thunderstorm and the sea and should then have made the myth central in (their) cosmogony is exceedingly difficult to imagine.”<sup>58</sup> Therefore, it had to be brought from some other place by people who spoke a Semitic language. Thus, the only possible option, shared by many scholars, is that the *Enuma Elish* was influenced by Amorites—a Western Semitic group from Amurru that came from the coast of the Mediterranean Sea and established the First Dynasty of Babylon.<sup>59</sup>

The origins of the battle between Marduk and Tiamat become clearer when we compare them with the Western Semitic story of the battle between Baal and Yamm, described in a myth from Ras-Shamra (ancient Ugarit).<sup>60</sup> The fight between the god of thunderstorms, Baal, and the sea god Yamm, is the fight between the elements, or forces in nature,<sup>61</sup> in which Baal fights and subdues Yamm. He then becomes the “King over all the earth, the Lord of Creation.”<sup>62</sup> A similar motif is found in the *Enuma Elish*, where Marduk subdues the sea in the form of Tiamat and, as a result of his victory, becomes the king over all gods.

It is interesting to note that like Baal, Marduk was also, originally, a god of thunderstorms. This role was indicated by his name pronounced as Marutuk or Maruduk, which meant “Son of the storm.”<sup>63</sup> The similarity between the roles of Marduk and Baal could be one of the reasons why the Semite legend of Baal could so easily find its way

56. Jacobsen, “The Battle,” 105.

57. Brandon, *Creation Legends*, 85–86.

58. Jacobsen, “The Battle,” 107.

59. Clifford, *Creation Accounts*, 85–86; see also Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis*, 131; and Jacobsen, “The Battle,” 108.

60. Jacobsen, “The Battle,” 107.

61. Jacobsen, “The Battle,” 106.

62. Neiman, “The Supercælian Sea,” 247.

63. Jacobsen, “The Battle,” 106.



into the creation epic of the Enuma Elish and why “a story told about a victory of the god of thunder would naturally be met with interest and readiness of acceptance.”<sup>64</sup> Thus the legend of Baal and Yamm sheds more light on the nature of the conflict between Marduk and Tiamat.

As has become evident, the authors of Enuma Elish built their epic on many borrowings. Many of those borrowings come from a Mesopotamian background and are deeply rooted in the Sumerian culture. Others, however, come from a different region and reflect traditions and phenomena that might not be observed in Mesopotamia. One of the greatest foreign influences was brought to Mesopotamia by the Amorites, who later became the ruling dynasty of Babylon. They had adopted the cult of a local god, Marduk, and enriched it with West Semitic mythology. Later on, in a response to the political and religious needs of Babylon to become the capital of Mesopotamia, Marduk was also exalted above the other gods with a new creation epic composed for him by his priests, based on both Mesopotamian and Amorite traditions. It was their masterpiece—the Enuma Elish.

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64. Jacobsen, “The Battle,” 107.

# The Effect of the Jewish Christians on the Textual Tradition of the Resurrection Narratives

Jon Rainey

THE ending of Mark presents a problem which has plagued textual critics of the New Testament for centuries. Debate has raged over whether a short ending (16:1–8) or long ending (16:1–20) should be accepted, and if the latter, whether the extant version is valid, or if an underlying original has been lost. The resurrection narrative in the Gospel of Luke presents equal difficulties. Luke's account (24:1–53) is utterly devoid of any mention of a post-resurrection Galilee appearance of Christ, despite the inclusion of this event by Matthew and its intimation by Mark. The Book of Acts is equally devoid of any reference to Galilee and seems to prefer a strictly Jerusalem-centered approach to church history. Several suggestions have been offered to explain these textual phenomena, and a particularly intriguing answer may lie in the historical situation provided by the heretical Jewish-Christian sects, in particular the Ebionites.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Throughout this paper, the term "Jewish-Christians" will be used to denote those groups who accepted Jesus as the Messiah but denied such fundamental teachings as the virgin birth, the divinity of Jesus, the authority of the New Testament apart from Matthew, and the idea that the law had been abolished. They should be distinguished from orthodox Christian Jews, such as Paul and Peter, who are

An understanding of the history and particularly the geographical location of the Jewish Christians provides the first clue to answering these questions. Epiphanius attributes the beginnings of the Jewish-Christian movement to the earliest period of Christianity in Jerusalem, the period soon after the death of Jesus.<sup>2</sup> That Jewish Christianity first appeared at the moment of its separation from the rest of Christianity is made clear by the textual evidence of the New Testament, particularly Acts, which chronicles the early history of the church. It is certain that by the Jerusalem Council of A.D. 48/49, a Jewish-Christian group had come into prominence who regarded circumcision and an adherence to the Law as necessary for salvation.<sup>3</sup> The rejection of their position by Peter, Paul, and James marked the first step towards their separation from proto-orthodox Christianity. Two other subsequent events added additional fuel to their desire to separate themselves, not only religiously, but geographically from Jerusalem. The first was the death of the man whom the Jewish Christians considered their primary apostolic leader, James the brother of Jesus. According to Hegesippus, as recorded by Eusebius, the Ebionites revered him as “the Just One,”<sup>4</sup> giving him precedence over the other apostles and full authority as their leader. His murder in A.D. 62/63 at the hands of the Jews provided yet another reason for schism between the Ebionites and their neighbors in Jerusalem.

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Jewish by ethnicity, rather than doctrine. In the latter sense, there was nothing but Jewish Christianity in the formative years of the church. For further reading on Jewish-Christian sects such as the Ebionites and Nazarenes, see Philipp Vielhauer and Georg Strecker, *New Testament Apocrypha*, vol. 1, ed. Wilhelm Schneemelcher (Westminster: John Knox Press, 1991), 134–52; Stephen Goranson, “Ebionites,” ABD 2:260–61; Georg Strecker, “On the Problem of Jewish Christianity,” in *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity*, ed. Walter Bauer (Mifflintown: Sigler Press, 1996), 241–85; Jean Danielou, *The Theology of Jewish Christianity* (Westminster: Westminster Press, 1977).

2. Epiphanius, *Panarion* 29.7.8. He attributes the dates of the origin of the Ebionites and Nazarenes as institutional sects to the capture of Jerusalem. See *Panarion* 30.2.7.

3. This group is traditionally known as the Judaizers, Jews and Christian Jews who were compelling Gentiles to live according to Jewish customs. They were a major opponent of Paul, as is made clear by Acts and especially Galatians (see James W. Aageson, “Judaizing,” ABD 3:1089).

4. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 2.23.7.

The final event that motivated an Ebionite migration was the impending catastrophe of A.D. 70. According to Eusebius, a secret apocalyptic prophecy warned Christian leaders of the coming destruction of Jerusalem, enabling them to leave the city even before the war broke out.<sup>5</sup> It seems that the Ebionites were similarly affected. Schoeps argues, after reconstructing an Ebionite “Acts of the Apostles” from the Pseudoclementine literature, that the Ebionites saw the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70 as both fulfillment of prophecy and the punishment of the Jews for the death of James, and thus connected their flight from Jerusalem to these events.<sup>6</sup> He sums up the significance of these events to the Ebionites by saying,

Who else in the whole of Christendom would have been interested in appealing to this event and placing it of all things at the center of an account of the history of salvation except the posterity of these exiles, the separated Jewish Christians or Ebionites.<sup>7</sup>

Thus, the hostility of the Jews, the internal disagreements with the Jerusalem church, and the understanding of an approaching catastrophe all combined to drive the Ebionites out of Jerusalem.

The flight to Pella marked only the first step in the founding of a new home for the Jewish Christians. Epiphanius points out that the migration of the Ebionites and Nazarenes did not stop at Pella but extended all the way to Pnias and Batanea (the northern and eastern boundary regions of Galilee).<sup>8</sup> One of the prophecies of Isaiah as found in Matthew, the only canonical gospel which the Ebionites used, would have added special credence to the legitimacy of Galilee as their promised land. Matthew 4:15–16 states that Jesus’ move to Capernaum was a fulfillment of Isaiah, who said, “The land of Zabulon, and the

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5. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 3.5.3.

6. Hans-Joachim Schoeps, *Jewish Christianity: Factional Disputes in the Early Church* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969), 21–23. The supposed prophecy of Eusebius could easily be understood in the light of the saying of Jesus in Matthew 10:23, and it should be remembered that this was the only orthodox gospel used by the Ebionites.

7. Schoeps, *Jewish Christianity*, 21–23.

8. Epiphanius, *Panarion* 29.7.7. and 30.18.1.

land of Nephthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles; The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up.” The Ebionites could easily have understood themselves as migrating into the area which Matthew regarded as the land of promise as prophesied by Isaiah. Jerome gives further testimony by also explaining that the Ebionites and Nazarenes understood Isaiah 9:1 to mean that Jesus proclaimed the gospel first for the benefit of that land (Galilee), the land in which they themselves then resided.<sup>9</sup> It would have been an eschatological fulfillment for the “true” congregation of Christians to settle precisely in the land where Christ first caused the great light to shine.

Finally, there is much evidence from the church fathers that locates Ebionites specifically to the city of Cochaba. For example, Epiphanius claims that the Ebionites lived “in Batanea and Pnias, and especially in Moabitis and Cochaba.”<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, according to Julius Africanus, Jesus’ relatives had spread the gospel throughout Galilee, from Nazareth all the way to Cochaba in the east,<sup>11</sup> connecting the entire region religiously. This would have resulted in even further interaction and connection between the Ebionites of eastern Galilee and the Transjordan and the rest of Galilee proper. Jewish-Christian theology would have easily been integrated into the missionary message of Galilean Christianity, more strongly establishing them as a presence. Patristic and Jewish evidence connects the Nazarenes, another Jewish-Christian sect that was almost identical to the Ebionites, with Galilee as well. Epiphanius makes the obvious observation that the Jewish-Christian sect was named Nazarenes precisely because of their place of origin, Nazareth.<sup>12</sup> Similarly significant is evidence from the Talmudic writings, which make clear references to the heretic Jacob of Kfar Sechania, a Jewish-Christian preacher, whose proselyting activities and successful following were geographically centered in Galilee.<sup>13</sup> Lastly, it should be

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9. Jerome, MLP 24.129–30.

10. Epiphanius, *Panarion* 30.18.1.

11. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 1.7.14.

12. Epiphanius, *Panarion* 29.7.1.

13. Ray Pritz, *Nazarene Jewish Christianity* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1988), 101–02, 107.

noted that archeological evidence favors a strong Jewish-Christian presence in Galilee as well. Bagatti has produced an exhaustive study on the ancient Christian villages of Galilee. From a survey of the remaining art and architecture, as well as the extant Christian and Jewish sources, Bagatti concludes that there were several major centers of Jewish Christians in Galilee, including Cana, Capernaum, Magdala, Sepphoris, and Tiberias.<sup>14</sup>

These historical and geographic observations are particularly relevant when looking at the book of Acts, which is clearly Jerusalem-oriented, despite the fact that Galilee is featured so prominently in the Gospels and is the country native to Jesus' family, childhood, and early ministry. There is no mention of any evangelism in Galilee, and no account of the history of the Galilean church. In fact, the only reference to Galilee in the entire work is found in Acts 9:31, which states, "Then had the churches rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified." The near total silence of Galilee in the canonical history of the church provides the possibility that it is there that the headquarters of the Jewish-Christian church are to be located. Scholars have had difficulty identifying a reason for the absence of a post-resurrection Galilee ministry in Acts. Suggestions range from the idea that Luke simply did not have any information on the matter or that it did not concern him, that he considered the evangelization of Galilee to be the work of Jesus that had already occurred during his ministry, or that the Galilee mission was the prerogative of 'the brothers of the Lord,' as mentioned above.<sup>15</sup> However, a few scholars have suggested that the absence of any mention of Galilee may have been a deliberate suppression of evidence that a Jewish-Christian population dwelled there.<sup>16</sup> Interestingly, Bauckham argues that the

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14. Bellarmino Bagatti, *Ancient Christian Villages of Galilee* (Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 2001), 41-42, 47-49, 68-69, 76-77, 94-95.

15. For an excellent summary of the various scholarly suggestions, see Sean Freyne, *Galilee: From Alexander the Great to Hadrian* (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, Inc., 1980), 344-47.

16. L. E. Elliot-Binns, *Galilean Christianity* (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1956), 44. See also Freyne, *Galilee*, 346. Freyne lists many of the scholarly suggestions as to why there is no post-Easter evangelism in Galilee in Acts.

Gospel of the Ebionites may have been intended as a kind of alternative to the story of the Jerusalem church as portrayed in Acts.<sup>17</sup> Thus, it served as a substitute that provided a completely different theological agenda. Just as Luke puts the emphasis on Jerusalem to steer his reader away from Galilee,<sup>18</sup> so the Ebionite gospel may have done just the opposite. In fact, one of the most interesting doctrines of the Ebionite sect is a specific polemic against the Jerusalem church and institution. Perhaps as a result of their rejection by the church at Jerusalem, the Ebionites embraced a complete abandonment of the temple cult and sacrifice, something which seems never to have been a problem for the pre-A.D. 70 orthodox Christians of Judea. In the Gospel of the Ebionites, Jesus is reported to have said, "I have come to destroy the sacrifices. And if you do not stop making sacrifice, God's wrath will not stop afflicting you."<sup>19</sup> A similar injunction is found later in the gospel, when the disciples say, "Where do you want us to make preparations for you to eat the Passover lamb? And Jesus responded, 'I have no desire to eat the meat of this Passover lamb with you.'"<sup>20</sup>

Luke's focus on Jerusalem in Acts is similarly paralleled by this same focus in his gospel, particularly in his resurrection narrative. While the first third of his gospel necessarily discusses Galilee in the context of Jesus' ministry there, the rest of his gospel points toward Jerusalem, and the culmination of the post-resurrection appearance which is to take place there. By the conclusion of chapter 9, Luke

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17. Richard Bauckham, "The Origin of the Ebionites," in Peter J. Tomson and Doris Lambers-Perry eds., *The Image of the Judaeo-Christians in Ancient Jewish and Christian Literature* (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 173. He makes the same assertion for the Ascents of James, another Jewish-Christian text which is one of the sources for the Pseudo-Clementina, and which is probably based on the Gospel of the Ebionites.

18. Although Luke is describing the Jerusalem church of the forties and fifties in which the Ebionites were still present and James, the Ebionite hero, is leader, the book of Acts was written in the 70s or 80s, after their expulsion, and Luke may be projecting back into his narrative a historical situation with which he was contemporary.

19. As translated in Bart Ehrman, *Lost Scriptures* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 14; and recorded by Epiphanius, *Panarion* 30.16.4-5.

20. Epiphanius, *Panarion* 30.22.4.

begins to steer his audience towards Judea, with a large section from 9:51 to 19:10 purely encompassing Jesus' journey to Jerusalem. Indeed, Luke includes most of his unique material here, and the effect is that this section of his gospel is drawn out much more than it is in the other Synoptics, perhaps theologically so, to focus his readers' attention on the final climax in Jerusalem. His Jerusalem ministry follows, from 19:11 to the end of chapter 23, including, of course, Luke's Passion narrative.

Chapter 24 features Luke's resurrection narrative, and it is here that Luke's geographical bias is most apparent. While Mark mentions in several places that a resurrection appearance will occur in Galilee, and Matthew places a post-resurrection appearance and the injunction to the apostles to carry forth the gospel message in Galilee, Luke completely omits any mention of Galilee in his resurrection narrative. Instead, we read in Luke 24:33–36,

That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. They were saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!" . . . While they were talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you."

Luke specifically places the post-resurrection appearance of Jesus in Jerusalem. In verse 47, he assumes that the mission of the church is to originate from Jerusalem as well, as Jesus says, "and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem." Again, the emphasis is different from what we find in Matthew's gospel. Luke ends his gospel with these words:

Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and, lifting up his hands, he blessed them. While he was blessing them, he withdrew from them and was carried up into heaven. And they worshiped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy; and they were continually in the temple blessing God. (Luke 24:50–53)

Luke's message is clear. The crucifixion, resurrection, post-resurrection appearance, command to preach, and ascension all happen in or very near Jerusalem. The emphasis is singularly located in the city of Christ's passion, and nowhere else. This marks a significant



deviation from the two gospels that preceded him, and the theological reasons behind this decision need to be addressed.

The significance of Luke's ending is best seen in the light of the resurrection narrative of Mark, where any discussion is forced to begin with the question of the long or short ending. It is agreed by virtually all scholars today that the authentic text of Mark ends at 16:8, and that verses 9–20 are scribal additions.<sup>21</sup> The question is whether or not Mark intended to end at 16:8, or whether he had written an original, longer ending that is no longer extant. There are various alternative endings. An intermediate ending simply concludes with, "But they reported briefly to Peter and those with him all that they had been told. And after this Jesus himself sent out by means of them, from east to west, the sacred and imperishable proclamation of eternal salvation."<sup>22</sup> The longer ending, found in the KJV and stemming from the Textus Receptus, is present in several witnesses. Finally, an expanded form of the long ending also existed, mentioned by Jerome and verified by the discovery of the Codex Freerianus in the early twentieth century.<sup>23</sup> Internal evidence is against the authenticity of any of these options. The intermediate ending has a high percentage of non-Markan words, and its tone is markedly different. The long ending of the KJV also has 17 non-Markan words, and lacks a smooth transition from verse 8 to 9. The expanded ending has extremely limited textual support, and has an apocryphal tone which is again out of place.<sup>24</sup> This leaves 16:1–8 as the only remaining original text. The other endings are simply attempts to provide a conclusion to what seemed an unlikely way to end Mark's gospel.

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21. The last twelve verses in Mark are absent in the two earliest parchment codices, B and  $\aleph$ , the old Latin manuscript K, the Sinaitic Syriac, many manuscripts of the old Armenian version, the Adysh and Opiza manuscripts of the Old Georgian version, and a number of manuscripts of the Ethiopic version. Church fathers such as Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and Ammonius are similarly unaware of the existence of these verses (see Bruce Metzger and Bart Ehrman, *The Text of the New Testament* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2005], 322–23).

22. Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament*, 323.

23. Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament*, 323.

24. See Metzger, *Text of the New Testament*, 323–25 for this statistical data.

Similar debate has raged over whether or not Mark's original text ended at verse 8 or not. The majority of modern scholars think that it did.<sup>25</sup> Their argument is that the semi-veiled and paradoxical ending is in line with Mark's overall tone and style, which itself is filled with paradox and brevity. Nevertheless, there are many significant reasons for assuming that Mark did not intend for his gospel to end at verse 8. The first regards the fact that Mark's gospel is an ancient biography. In such a genre, it would make sense that the main character's persona or identity would be fully revealed at important and climactic moments. The first verse sets this theme with, "The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ." If the gospel ended at 16:8, Mark's biography would be missing a perfect opportunity to both confirm the theme and shed additional biographical light on the person of Jesus. What more fully illustrates his identity than his resurrection in glory? Witherington has studied the biographical issue at length, and has compared Mark to other well-known ancient biographies, such as Plutarch's *Life of Caesar* or Tacitus' *Agricola*.<sup>26</sup> He points out that Plutarch ends with the gods vindicating Caesar with visible signs and appearances in the heavens, and that Tacitus ends with similar praise and embellishment.<sup>27</sup> In the tradition of ancient biography, Mark's ending at 16:8 simply would not have been sufficient, as it provides no explanation of the empty tomb, nor any vindication of Jesus by God.<sup>28</sup>

Linguistically, the ending of Mark in the Greek is also odd. The final sentence is simply, "ἐφοβούντο γάρ (*ephobounto gar*)," ending with the postpositive particle γάρ (*gar*), an extremely uncommon way

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25. See R.T. France, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), 670 for a summary of the scholarship.

26. Although Witherington compares Mark to ancient biographies, he prefers to read Mark as a compilation of chreiai, or condensed stories, rather than bios. See Ben Witherington, *The Gospel of Mark: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), 1–12.

27. Plutarch, *Caesar* 69.2–5; Tacitus, *Agricola* 46. See also Witherington, *Gospel of Mark*, 42–45.

28. Witherington, *Gospel of Mark*, 43. Witherington is quick to point out that the appropriateness of abrupt endings to modern novels should not lead us to assume that such an approach was appropriate in the case of ancient biographies.

to end a sentence, let alone a book. Some attempts have been made to show that this is an acceptable way to end a work, but the rarity of the occurrence must still be maintained. Van der Horst has attempted to show examples of sentences or paragraphs that end with γάρ in an effort to support the short ending of Mark. However, he is at a loss to show any example of a book that ends this way, and only presumes that it could be likely, the absence of evidence notwithstanding.<sup>29</sup> A more cautious view is that there is no evidence whatsoever for this being an appropriate ending for a whole document, especially a work of the biographical nature as we have in Mark. Even if he had wanted to make a brief closing statement similar to verse 8, his own text shows in other places that there was a better way of doing it than by ending the sentence with γάρ. Mark 9:6 ends with an almost identical phrase, but words it much differently: ἔκφοβοι γάρ ἐγένοντο (*ekphoboi gar egenonto*). There, the brevity and succinctness are still present, but in a much more grammatically acceptable form. Clearly, if Mark had truly intended for his gospel to end at verse 8, he could have done so in a much smoother way.

Lastly, an ending at verse 8 would not fit Mark's overall apocalyptic and eschatological theme, where the fulfillment of God's purposes plays a central role. One simple example of Mark's style is found in the apocalyptic imagery at the baptism of Jesus. Whereas Luke and Matthew have the heavens merely open (ἀνοίγω) to allow the descent of the dove, Mark uses the verb σχίζω (*schizo*) "to tear open," in good, apocalyptic fashion, to describe the event. The temptation scene which follows then includes references to wild beasts and angels. Witherington also sees apocalyptic overtones at the transfiguration and the crucifixion, leading the reader to expect one more at the end of the work.<sup>30</sup> The inclusion of the heavenly ascent of Jesus after his resurrection would have been a perfect conclusion to the eschatological slant of his gospel, yet it is not there at all.

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29. P.W. Van der Horst, "Can A Book End with γάρ? A Note on Mark 16:8," *Journal of Theological Studies* 23 (1972): 121–24.

30. Witherington, *Gospel of Mark*, 259–65, 397–98.

Finally, we have two specific references to the promise Jesus makes to show himself to the disciples in Galilee. In Mark 14:28, we read, “But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee.” Again in 16:7, only one verse before the gospel ends, Mark says, “But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you.” It is as if he is reminding his readers of his promised conclusion and setting us up for the fulfillment of that promise which is about to follow. It makes little sense that Mark, with his eschatological leanings and normal fulfillment of promised events, would leave us with so little.

The references to Galilee in Mark 14:28 and 16:7 provide a clue as to what might have been the specific content of Mark’s original and now lost ending. As should be clear by now, it almost certainly included a Galilee resurrection appearance. Such an ending finds support in the gospel of Matthew, which uses Mark as a template and largely follows its structure and content. Witherington has suggested that the content of Matthew’s resurrection narrative would have been a redaction of what Matthew found in his Markan source.<sup>31</sup> Such would have included an appearance to the women and a brief account of his promised appearance in Galilee to the Eleven. This seems particularly likely from a comparison of Mark 16:7 with Matthew 28:7 which reads, “Then go quickly and tell his disciples, ‘He has been raised from the dead, and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him.’” The striking similarity between these two accounts strongly suggests that what originally followed Mark 16:8 is that which is found in Matt 28:8–18. What happened to Mark’s original ending is open to speculation. Some possibilities have been offered, such as that it was written but then accidentally lost, or even that the ending was never written in final form due to illness or death. If the former, the original ending would have been lost at a very early date, but after Matthew had already incorporated it into his gospel, subsequent to becoming the more popular gospel and thus the more frequently and carefully copied. Another suggestion, however, is that

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31. Witherington, *Gospel of Mark*, 49.

the ending was deliberately removed, and it is here that the discussion of Jewish Christianity becomes relevant.

If Mark records promises of a Galilee resurrection appearance throughout his gospel, and Matthew without question features this appearance and connects it with his mission commandment to the apostles, why has Luke, who definitely used Mark and maybe Matthew as his sources, deliberately chose to place all resurrection events in Jerusalem? A beginning to this answer may be seen in the later date of Luke. Most scholars today place the writing of Luke's gospel after the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, often as late as 80–85.<sup>32</sup> What had occurred by the time of Luke's composition, particularly in Galilee, that would have affected his decision not to give Galilee the central role that Mark and Matthew did? An interesting possibility, based on the evidence of the Jewish Christians presented at the beginning of this study, is that Galilee had been incorporated as the headquarters of the heretical Jewish-Christian church. In attempt to divert his readers away from the apostate church in Galilee, and to bring their focus to the orthodox church led by Peter in Jerusalem, Luke thus made a conscious decision to end his gospel in that city, and to make Jerusalem the focus of his historical chronicle of the church in Acts. What better propaganda existed for the legitimacy of a church than the claim that Christ had personally visited that area after his resurrection?

In addition, perhaps the reason that Mark's original ending was later excised from the text is precisely because it mentioned a Galilee appearance which would have bolstered the legitimacy of the Jewish Christians there. With a purpose similar to Luke's, the proto-orthodox church removed the ending altogether, either leaving it at 16:8, or as later scribes would do, supplanting it with a new and benign ending.<sup>33</sup> In fact, the longer ending seems simply to be a conflation of elements

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32. Joseph Fitzmeyer, *The Gospel According to Luke I-IX*, vol. 26 AB (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1981), 57. See also I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Exeter: The Paternoster Press, 1978), 34–35.

33. It should be observed that none of the three spurious endings include any account of a Galilee resurrection scene.

from the resurrection narratives of Matthew and Luke.<sup>34</sup> That the proto-orthodox church was involved in the alteration of scripture for theological purposes has been amply illustrated. Bart Ehrman specifically mentions the Ebionites as one of the main heretical groups whose views led proto-orthodox scribes to modify their texts of scripture.<sup>35</sup> Many of these alterations dealt with anti-adoptionistic or anti-docetic corruptions of scripture, but it seems equally plausible that certain historical factors were at play as well. The textual tradition of the Ebionites also reveals a theological bias, as is to be expected. Of all the later canonical gospels, the Ebionites accepted only Matthew, with its Galilee resurrection narrative, into their canon of scripture. Even their distinct scripture, such as the Gospel of the Ebionites, is usually thought to be a redaction of the Gospel of Matthew.

The polemical dialogue between Jewish Christians and proto-orthodox Christians took many forms in the first centuries of early Christianity. The textual tradition of the resurrection narratives provides one example of the effect that such dialogue had on the transmission of the scriptural text which has been passed on for succeeding generations. Only with a thorough look at the historical context surrounding the creation and transmission of the New Testament text can an adequate and plausible suggestion be offered to answer the questions surrounding textual issues such as the original ending of Mark and the discrepancies between the synoptic resurrection narratives.

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34. For example, Mark 16:12–13 seems to be a reference to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus from Luke 24:13–27.

35. Bart Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 50.



# EXEGESIS





# The Strangers in the Land: Who They Are and Israel's Responsibility to Them

David Lurth

ACCORDING to early rabbinic tradition, the Lord revealed 613 written commandments to Moses at Mount Sinai before the children of Israel entered the promised land.<sup>1</sup> With so many commandments, it is almost impossible for the average person to know and live every single one. So, the wise person might ask, “Which commandments of the 613 are the most important to know and would be the most beneficial when followed?” Nowhere in the law of Moses or the entire Old Testament does the Lord plainly say which of his commandments are the most important.<sup>2</sup>

One way to determine the importance of a commandment is to calculate the gravity of its consequence when disobeyed. In this line of reasoning, it is necessary to know what divine punishment would have

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1. Abraham Hirsch Rabinowitz, “Commandments, The 613,” *Encyclopaedia Judaica* 5:760.

2. In the New Testament, Jesus says that the first two great commandments are to love God and your neighbor on which “hang all the law and the prophets” (Matt 22:36–40). Further discussion of the two great commandments taught by Jesus and how they relate to the subject of this paper will be made below.

the most profound impact on the Ancient Israelites and know the commandment upon which that punishment was predicated. In light of the history of the Israelites and the requirements of survival in the ancient world, land and the freedom to live in it was the most valued and sought after blessing of the Lord. Therefore, the most devastating thing that could have happened to the Lord's chosen people was to have the blessing of life in the promised land taken away from them. The question needed to be answered now is: "What was Israel required to do to ensure continued inheritance in the promised land?" The purpose of this paper is to show that Israel's right to continue living in the promised land depended primarily upon their just treatment of the "stranger." I will do this by defining the "stranger," explaining the correct application of some important Old Testament laws pertaining to the stranger, and by examining the teachings of prophets in relation to the stranger.

### Definition of the "Stranger"

The word that is commonly translated in the King James Version as "stranger" (גֵּר *ger*) comes from the Hebrew root גָּר which means "to sojourn"<sup>3</sup> and can equally be translated as "sojourner."<sup>4</sup> One definition of the stranger is given as:

A man who, either alone or with his family, leaves his village and tribe, because of war (2 Sam 4:3), famine (Ruth 1:1), pestilence,

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3. F. Brown, S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs. *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1907), 157. F. A. Spina suggests alternate roots for *gur* to be *gara*, "to attack, strive," and *yagor*, "to be afraid, fear" and the social-historical implications of these roots in "Israelites as gerim: Sojourners in Social and Historical Context," in C. L. Meyers and M. O'Connor, eds., *The Word of the Lord Shall Go Forth: Essays in Honor of David Noel Freedman in Celebration of His Sixtieth Birthday* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1983), 325.

4. Christiana van Houten prefers, along with the NRSV, the more modern translation of גֵּר as "alien," *The Alien in Israelite Law* (England: JSOT Press, 1991), 8. Spina prefers "immigrant" because it contains the "nuances inherent in 'resident alien' and 'sojourner,' but it also calls attention to the original circumstances of social conflict which are inevitably responsible for large-scale withdrawal of people" (323).

blood-guilt, etc., and seeks shelter and sojourn elsewhere, where his right to own land, to marry, and to participate in the administration of justice, in the cult, and in war is curtailed.<sup>5</sup>

Many other similar definitions are given, but the basic sense understood from Biblical passages in which the stranger is mentioned is someone that needs and is entitled to sustenance and protection.<sup>6</sup>

Ultimately, searching for a precise definition of the stranger is meaningless because either Abraham or the Israelites who descended from him are referred to as “strangers” either by the Lord or prophets at least seventeen times in the Old Testament.<sup>7</sup> The Patriarchs were strangers in Canaan and the Israelites were strangers in Egypt. Moses named his first son Gershom (גֵרְשֹׁם) “for he said, I have been a stranger in a strange land” (Exod 2:22).<sup>8</sup> When the Lord commands the Israelites to be kind to the stranger (discussed in more detail below), many times it is followed by the phrase “for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt” to remind them of the Lord’s mercy in delivering them and to teach the Israelites that they should extend that same mercy to those that are in need. On seven different occasions the Lord states that there was to be one law for Israel and the stranger (Exod 12:49; Lev

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5. William L. Holladay, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988), 64.

6. Bernhard A. Asen, “From Acceptance to Inclusion: The Stranger (*ger*) in Old Testament Tradition” in Francis W. Nichols, ed., *Christianity and the Stranger* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1995), 19. Van Houten, in *The Alien*, argues that the identity of the stranger in the Biblical law codes (the pre-monarchic Book of the Covenant and Decalogue, the monarchic Deuteronomy, and the exilic or post-exilic Priestly laws) changed throughout the history of ancient Israel. In the pre-monarchic period, the stranger is an “occasional stranger or family from afar” (59) and are not the conquered Canaanites but are “outsiders, who are vulnerable in a new place . . . [who] must rely on the protection . . . of the Israelite society” (62). During monarchical times, the aliens are the Gibeonites or other non-Israelites who entered into an inferior covenant relationship with the Lord (108). During exilic or post-exilic times, the גֵר “refers to proselytes and not strangers” (131).

7. See Gen 15:13, 17:8, 23:4, 28:4, 36:7, 37:1; Exod 2:22, 6:4, 22:21, 23:9; Lev 19:34, 25:23; Deut 10:19, 23:7; 1 Chr 16:19, 29:15; Ps 39:12.

8. As it is the most common translation used by Latter-day Saints, I will use the King James Translation for all Bible quotes.

18:26, 24:22; Num 9:14, 15:15–16, 29) putting both of them on equal ground. The Lord did not “respect persons in judgment” and neither should the Israelites (Deut 1:17).

## The Stranger in the Pentateuch

Laws concerning the stranger in the Pentateuch can be divided into five basic categories: General Treatment, Welfare Laws, Religious/Ritual Obligations, Social Status, and Moral Laws.<sup>9</sup> The most significant laws from each category will be discussed throughout the remainder of the article. Most of the laws elevate the stranger to the same level as the Israelites, but few deal specifically with how the Israelites were to act towards strangers. Compared to the literature of other ancient Near Eastern cultures, the stranger receives more attention in the Old Testament.<sup>10</sup> Concern for the stranger in specific is given in only one extrabiblical text, a command of a Hittite king to the border guards, “a stranger who resides in the Land provide him fully with seeds, cattle, and sheep.”<sup>11</sup> However, concern for the widow, orphan, and the weak in general is well attested in the literature of the ancient Near East.<sup>12</sup> An example from the epilogue in the Code of Hammurabi is typical: “I sheltered them [the peoples of the land] in my wisdom. In order that the strong might not oppress the weak, that justice might be dealt the orphan (and) the widow.”<sup>13</sup> This is important because in the Old

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9. A comprehensive list with scripture references of the laws concerning the stranger is included in the appendix.

10. Donald E. Gowan, “Wealth and Poverty in the Old Testament: The Case of the Widow, the Orphan, and the Sojourner,” *Interpretation* 41.4 (1987): 343. For a discussion on the context of biblical law concerning the stranger in the ancient Near East, see Houten, *The Alien*, 23–42. For the stranger in ancient Greece, see Christoph Auffarth, “Protecting Strangers: Establishing a Fundamental Value in the Religions of the Ancient Near East and Ancient Greece,” *Numen* 39.2 (December, 1992): 193–216.

11. Bruce V. Malchow, *Social Justice in the Hebrew Bible* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1996), 4–5.

12. For texts concerning the weak, widows, and orphans from the major ancient Near Eastern civilizations, see Malchow, *Social Justice*, 1–5.

13. Malchow, *Social Justice*, 2.

Testament the stranger is often included in a formula with the widow and the fatherless.<sup>14</sup>

Interestingly, the Old Testament and the ancient Near Eastern law codes do not contain case law for the widow, orphan, or the stranger; there is only “concern.”<sup>15</sup> Immediate punishments for not doing justice to the weak are not clearly defined. In the Old Testament, there is no mention of sacrifices, offerings, punishments, or restitutions required for those found guilty of “oppressing” the stranger as there exists for other biblical laws. One needs to examine the teachings of the prophets to discover the ultimate consequence for not doing justice to the stranger (discussed below).

### How Israel Should Treat the Stranger

I will now proceed to discuss the commandments which state specifically how Israel should treat the stranger. Exodus 22:21 states “Thou shalt neither vex a stranger, nor oppress him: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.” The word that is translated “vex” is from נָהַר which means “to oppress” or “be violent” and “is often used in the context of the rich and powerful ill-treating the poor and weak”<sup>16</sup> (see Lev 25:14; Deut 23:16). “Oppress” comes from לָחַץ which means “press” in a physical sense, or “oppress” and is “consistently used to refer to foreigners oppressing Israel”<sup>17</sup> (see Judg 2:18; 1 Sam 10:18; Amos 6:14). The motivation clause “for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt” is given to remind the Israelites of the harsh treatment they received at the hands of the Egyptians and as an example of what not to do to the stranger. The Israelites were not supposed to take advantage of their favorable economic and social status above the stranger.

Immediately following the command not to vex or oppress the stranger in Exodus 22, the Lord commands Israel not to afflict

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14. See Deut 10:18, 14:29, 16:11, 14, 24:17, 19–21, 26:12–13, 27:19; Ps 94:6, 146:9; Jer 7:6, 22:3; Ezek 22:7; Zech 7:10; Mal 3:5.

15. Houten, *The Alien*, 34.

16. Houten, *The Alien*, 52.

17. Houten, *The Alien*, 52.

widows or the fatherless (v. 22) and declares the consequence for the maltreatment of this section of Israelite society:

If thou afflict them in any wise, and they cry at all unto me, I will surely hear their cry; And my wrath shall wax hot, and I will kill you with the sword; and your wives shall be widows, and your children fatherless. (Exod 22:23–24)

The just treatment of strangers, widows, and the fatherless was so important to the Lord that he would personally see to it (“I will kill”) that offenders were severely punished.

The Lord commands “judge righteously between every man and his brother, and the stranger that is with him,” (Deut 1:16) and “thou shalt not pervert the judgment of the stranger” (Deut 24:17). In the context of these two passages it is clear that the Lord required Israel to give fair and equal treatment when judging strangers in court trials. Israel was also required to “do no unrighteousness in judgment” with the stranger when measuring goods for payment (see Lev 19:34–37).

Israel was also supposed to celebrate many of their required festivals with the stranger. This is important for the objective of this paper because these celebrations have direct ties to Israel’s inheritance and subsequent activities in the promised land. The Feast of Weeks marked the beginning of the wheat harvest (Deut 16:10–11).<sup>18</sup> The Feast of Tabernacles was to celebrate the harvest and to remember the time Israel lived in booths in the wilderness after the exodus (Deut 16:13–14). “As the main feast of the year, Tabernacles was the occasion for the consecration of Solomon’s Temple (1 Kings 8).”<sup>19</sup> Upon entering the promised land, Israel was to offer up the firstfruits to the Lord (Deut 26:11). During all these festivals, Israel was commanded to “rejoice with the stranger” to remind them of their former status as strangers in Egypt and to extend the same blessings to the strangers among them just as the Lord had blessed them to become established in the promised land (see Deut 16:10–15, 26:10–11).

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18. Louis Jacobs, “Shavuot,” *Encyclopædia Judaica* 14:1319.

19. Ernst Kutsch, “Sukkot,” *Encyclopædia Judaica* 15:496–97.

In the Law of Moses, the Lord commands “And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might,” (Deut 6:5) and “thou shalt love thy neighbour (עֲרֵב) as thyself” (Lev 19:18). In the same chapter that the Lord commands Israel to love their neighbor, He also commands, “the stranger that dwelleth with you shall be unto you as one born among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself; for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt” (Lev 19:34; see also Deut 10:19). Therefore, “neighbour” and “stranger” can be used interchangeably as Israel was commanded to love both of them “as thyself.” This fact is significant for a deeper understanding of the Savior’s answer to a question posed by a Pharisee concerning the law of Moses:

Master, which is the great commandment of the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. (Matt 22:36–40)

Jesus could have just as easily said “stranger” instead of “neighbour” and according to his answer, the commandment to love the neighbour (or stranger) is the second greatest besides the one to love God.

But what does it mean to love the stranger? The teachings of the Savior in the New Testament give insight to this question. Jesus was asked a related question to the one above and he responded with a similar answer. The encounter is recorded as follows:

And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou? And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live. (Luke 10:25–28)

There seems to have been some confusion or disagreement as to the definition of “neighbour” and the lawyer “said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour?” (Luke 10:29). Jesus’ answer, the parable of the Good Samaritan, gives an all-inclusive definition of “neighbour” as anyone who



is in need of assistance, the same as the definition of a stranger given above. In addition, the parable teaches that help should be given regardless of the social standing of the giver or receiver. The lawyer's identification of the Samaritan as the neighbor of the man who was robbed shows that he had a correct understanding of what it meant to "love thy neighbor (or stranger) as thyself." Loving the neighbor and stranger consists of providing medical attention, food, clothing, or shelter to those in need (see Luke 10:33–35) and was taught by the Savior as an essential requirement to inherit eternal life.

### **The Prophets Establish the Primacy of Just Treatment of the Stranger**

The prophets of the Old Testament emphasize the just treatment of the stranger in connection with Israel's right to remain in the promised land. The first one to do so was Moses. Just before Moses was to lead the children of Israel to the promised land, he taught them:

And the Lord said unto me, Arise, take thy journey before the people, that they may go in and possess the land, which I swear unto their fathers to give unto them. And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul. . . . For the Lord your God is God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty, and a terrible, which regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward: He doth execute the judgment of the fatherless and widow, and loveth the stranger, in giving him food and raiment. Love ye therefore the stranger: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt. (Deut 10:11–12, 17–19)

The importance of the occasion in which Moses is speaking can not be underestimated. After many years of hard bondage in Egypt, the Lord had finally called a prophet to free his people. And what did Moses say right before Israel was about to possess the promised land? "Love God and love the stranger."

Deuteronomy 28 is a list of the blessings and curses that will come upon Israel if they do or do not keep all the Lord's commandments. If they are faithful, they will prosper in the land (vv. 1–14). If they are not, destruction will come upon them (vv. 15–68),

and they will eventually be driven out of the promised land and scattered over the whole earth (vv. 63–64). The section on curses is organized into a chiasmus. This is significant because ancient Hebrew poetry often utilizes chiastic structure where important ideas or themes are listed in succession and then repeated in reverse order. The most important message that the author wants to convey is put at the turning point of chiasm. The chiastic structure of the curses is as follows:<sup>20</sup>

- A 25 – Removed to all kingdoms of the earth
- B 26 – Your carcasses will be eaten by animals
- C 21–24, 27 – Cursed with plagues, botch of Egypt
  - D 28 – Madness, and blindness, and astonishment of heart
  - E 29 – Grope at noonday, as the blind gropeth in darkness
  - F 32, 34 – Eyes look towards sons and daughters, will be mad at what your eyes will see
  - G 35 – Smitten in knees, legs and from foot to head
  - H 33, 36 – Lord will bring you to unknown nation
    - I 38–40, 42 – No food, crops consumed by locusts, all trees consumed
    - J 43–44 – Stranger will rule over Israel
      - K 44 – Sign of Israel’s disobedience: Israel will be the tail (stranger is head)
- X 45 – Curses because Israel did not hearken unto the voice of the Lord and keep his commandments
  - K’ 46 – Curses will be for “a sign and a wonder” upon Israel
  - J’ 47 – Because Israel did not serve the Lord for the abundance of all things
    - I’ 48, 51 – Serve enemies in hunger, thirst, and want of all things, enemies will eat crops/flocks
    - H’ 49 – Lord will bring nation with unknown tongue against you
    - G’ 52 – Besieged in gates, walls, and throughout all the land
- B’ 53, 55, 57 – Will eat the flesh of your own children
  - F’ 54, 56 – Eye evil toward brother, wife, and children
- C’ 59–61 – Cursed with plagues, diseases of Egypt
- A’ 63–64 – Scattered among all people
  - D’ 65 – Trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind:
  - E’ 66–67 – Fear day and night

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20. Duane L. Christensen has identified a rather complex chiastic structure of Deuteronomy 28 in *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 6B (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2002), 664–706. In his commentary, he gives no special attention to the place of the stranger in the chiasmus or the significance of the stranger in the chapter.

It is not a perfect chiasmus but specific vocabulary and themes are reflected on either side of the center where Moses prophetically accuses Israel of not keeping the Lords' commandments (v. 45).<sup>21</sup> The reference to the stranger is located very close to the center and is in chiastic form itself (vv. 43–44):

The stranger that is within thee shall get up above thee very high; and thou shalt come down very low  
 He shall lend to thee, and thou shalt not lend to him:  
 He shall be the head, and thou shalt be the tail.

About the stranger ruling over Israel as stated in the above verses, “It should be noted that this is a reversal of the final blessing in the original expansion of the covenant blessings in vv 12–13”<sup>22</sup> which promised Israel with prosperity in the promised land. The reason that the stranger would rule over Israel is given in its reflection across the center of the chiasmus in verse 47, “Because thou servedst not the Lord thy God with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things.” As explained above, Israel was required to “rejoice with the stranger” in the various feasts, sharing with him the abundance of the Lord’s blessings given in the promised land.

In the Book of Mormon, King Benjamin taught that serving God also means serving “your fellow being” (Mosiah 2:17). So, when Moses says that Israel “servedst not the Lord [their] God” (Deut 38:47), we can understand it to mean that Israel neglected serving the strangers among them by not sharing the blessings of the promised land with them. The consequence of this negligence is in line with the talionic nature of God’s justice in the law of Moses and as taught by the prophets:<sup>23</sup> Israel’s favored status in the promised land would be

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21. For factors to consider when determining the strength of a proposed chiasmus, see John W. Welch, “Criteria for Identifying and Evaluating the Presence of Chiasmus,” in *Chiasmus Bibliography*, ed. John W. Welch and Daniel B. McKinlay (Provo, UT: Research Press, 1999), 157–74.

22. Christensen, *Word*, 683.

23. See Exod 21:23–25; Lev 24:17–21; Deut 19:19, 21; Obad 1:15; Jer 17:10.

taken away and given to the stranger. That this role reversal between Israel and the stranger is found within the context of a chiasmus has even added significance because “No literary device could better convey the ‘measure for measure’ balancing concept of talionic justice than does the literary equilibrium of chiasmus.”<sup>24</sup> In Deuteronomy 28, Moses taught that Israel’s treatment of the stranger would be the determining factor in whether or not Israel would remain in the promised land.

Jeremiah also taught the importance of dealing righteously with the stranger. The Lord commanded him to stand at the gate of the temple and say to the people of Israel:

Amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place. For if ye thoroughly amend your ways and your doings; if ye thoroughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbour; If ye oppress not the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and shed not innocent blood in this place, neither walk after other gods to your hurt: Then will I cause you to dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers, for ever and ever. (Jer 7:3, 5–7)

Shortly before Jerusalem was destroyed, Jeremiah told the Israelites that they needed to amend their ways and stop oppressing the stranger. If they did so, they had the promise to dwell in the land “for ever and ever.” Jeremiah also went to the house of the king of Judah and said the same thing, promising desolation upon the throne of David if they did not repent (Jer 22:1–5). Of all the commandments the Lord could have urged Israel to obey when destruction was imminent, he chooses to tell them not to oppress the stranger. At the same time, Jeremiah deemphasizes other commandments such as temple ritual observances (Jer 6:20, 7:4).

The importance of this commandment in the eyes of the Lord is also seen in the locations in which Jeremiah was ordered to call for its obedience. He is first commanded to proclaim it at the temple, the center of Israelite worship (Jer 7:2). Then he is commanded to speak it

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24. John W. Welch, “Chiasmus in Biblical Law: an Approach to the Structure of Legal Texts in the Hebrew Bible,” *Jewish Law Association Studies* 4 (1990): 10.

at the house of the king of Judah, the center of Israelite government (Jer 22:1). This was done to ensure that every Israelite would hear Jeremiah's call for obedience and to teach that the just treatment of the stranger was required of all classes of society, whether the person is a farmer or the king of Israel.

Malachi prophesied concerning the Second Coming of the Savior and those who oppress the stranger. He says the Lord will be a "swift witness" against those that "turn aside the stranger" (Mal 3:5). Malachi continues in the often quoted passage:

Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept them. Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the Lord of hosts. But ye said, Wherein shall we return? Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation. Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the Lord of hosts. And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the Lord of hosts. (Mal 3:7–12)

According to the law of Moses, every third year Israel was required to give a tithe of that year's increase to the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow (Deut 14:28–29, 26:12–13). So when Malachi says that future Israel would rob God of tithes and offerings, he is predicting their harsh treatment of the stranger and those who cannot provide for themselves. It is interesting to note that he does not mention any other commandments that need be obeyed. The blessing for paying tithes and offerings and therefore caring for the stranger is prosperity in the land.

## Conclusion

It is true that the unjust treatment of the stranger is not the only action against which the Israelites were warned. The prophets

frequently accused Israel of serious crimes such as idolatry, adultery, and murder.<sup>25</sup> But, the association of Israel's treatment of the stranger and their right to remain in the promised land is undeniable. We Latter-day Saints who claim to be of the House of Israel need to be watchful of how we treat the strangers, outcasts, and down-trodden among us. We need to love them as is commanded in the Bible or our inheritance on this earth will be in jeopardy. Let us hope that at the final judgment Christ can say the following to us:

Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a *stranger*, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. (Matt 25:34–36, emphasis added)

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25. For idolatry, see Isa 2:8; Jer 5:19; Ezek 6:13; for adultery, see Isa 57:3; Jer 29:23; for murder, see Jer 7:9; Hos 6:9.

## APPENDIX

### General Treatment of the Stranger

- Do not vex or oppress the stranger (Exod 22:21, 23:9; Lev 19:33).
- Love the stranger (Lev 19:34; Deut 10:19).
- Judge righteously with the stranger (Deut 1:16).
- The Lord loves the stranger (Deut 10:18).
- Do not oppress the hired servant who is a stranger (Deut 24:14).
- Do not pervert the judgment of the stranger (Deut 24:17, 27:19).

### Welfare Laws for the Stranger

- Leave the gleanings for the stranger (Lev 19:9–10, 23:22).
- Leave grapes in the vineyard for the stranger (Lev 19:10; Deut 24:21).
- Israel is to be fair with the stranger in economic transactions (Lev 19:34–37).
- Poor strangers are to be taken care of and live with Israel (Lev 25:35).
- Give carrion to the stranger (Deut 14:21).
- Leave the sheaf in the field when it is forgotten for the stranger (Deut 24:19).
- Leave olives on the tree for the stranger (Deut 24:20).

### Religious/Ritual Obligations toward the Stranger

- Like Israel, the stranger will be cut off if he eats leavened bread during Passover (Exod 12:19).
- Male strangers must be circumcised to keep the Passover (Exod 12:48).<sup>26</sup>
- Let the stranger rest on the seventh/Sabbath day (Exod 20:10, 23:12; Deut 5:14).
- The stranger is to observe Day of Atonement with Israel (Lev 16:29).

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26. Exod 12:43 KJV says no stranger (בן נכר) “son of a foreigner”; *ger* is not used) is to eat the Passover. Ze’ev Falk identifies all foreigners as *ger* not recognizing the different vocabulary that is present in the Hebrew, *Hebrew Law in Biblical Times* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 2001), 112–14. For a good discussion on the “foreigner” (נכר), see Michael Guttman, “The Term ‘Foreigner’ Historically Considered,” *Hebrew Union College Annual* 3 (1926): 1–20.

- Strangers, like Israel, are to bring burnt offerings to the door of the tabernacle (Lev 17:8–9).
- The stranger, like Israel, is not to eat blood (Lev 17:10–14).
- The stranger, like Israel, is unclean upon eating carrion (Lev 17:15).
- Same Passover observance for the stranger and Israel (Num 9:14).
- Same “offering by fire” observance for the stranger and Israel (Num 15:14).
- The stranger is forgiven, like Israel, of sins of ignorance (Num 15:26, 29).
- The stranger is cut off, like Israel, for sinning knowingly (Num 15:30).
- The stranger is unclean, like Israel, after gathering ashes of a heifer (Num 19:10).
- The stranger, like Israel, can flee to the cities of refuge for protection (Num 35:15).
- The three year tithe is to be given to the stranger (Deut 14:28–29, 26:12–13).
- Israel is to rejoice with the stranger at the Feast of Weeks (Deut 16:10–11).
- Israel is to rejoice with the stranger at the Feast of Tabernacles (Deut 16:13–14).
- Israel is to rejoice with the stranger when offering up the firstfruits after entering the promised land (Deut 26:11).

### Social Status of the Stranger

- Circumcised male strangers are “as one that is born in the land” (Exod 12:48).
- One law/ordinance for Israel and the stranger (Exod 12:49; Lev 18:26, 24:22; Num 9:14; 15:15–16, 29).
- The stranger is to be “as one born among Israel” (Lev 19:34).
- Israel and the stranger are to offer the same sacrifices (Lev 22:18–31).<sup>27</sup>
- An Israelite servant of a stranger may be redeemed by a close relative (Lev 25:47–48).

### Inclusion of the Stranger in Israelite Moral Laws

- Strangers shall not “uncover the nakedness” of close relatives or unclean women (Lev 18:6–19, see v. 26).
- Strangers shall not lay with the neighbor’s wife (Lev 18:20, see v. 26).
- Strangers are not to let their seed pass through the fire to Molech (Lev 18:21 [see v. 26], 20:2).
- Strangers shall not profane/blaspheme the name of God (Lev 18:21 [see v. 26], 24:16).
- Strangers shall not have homosexual relations (Lev 18:22, see v. 26).
- Strangers shall not do bestiality (Lev 18:23, see v. 26).

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27. Lev 22:25 KJV says that the sacrifices should not be offered “from a stranger’s hand” but this is the נכר and not the *ger*. See note 26.





# A New Look at an Old, Subtle Serpent: Naked in Genesis 3:1

Mike Gadd

THE creation and fall story concerning Adam and the woman, starting in Genesis 2:4b, has been used as textual evidence to further the arguments of everything from feminist criticism to the Newer Documentary Hypothesis. The story highlights doctrines of agency, accountability, fall, and atonement. Opinions concerning the meaning of the pericope vary widely. Exegesis is difficult on this passage because so many questions remain unanswered. Authorship is disputed. Audience is disputed. It remains difficult to determine when the text was first constructed. The geographic location is equally unknown and cannot be readily ascertained any more specifically than the near eastern region at large. Knowing so little makes exegesis tenuous. Despite the difficulties, commentators have built upon previous assumptions in an attempt to see the intended meaning. This paper discusses the merits and exegetical contributions for an alternate translation of ערום in Genesis 3:1, rendering it as *naked*.

## Status Quo

E. A. Speiser, in his commentary, translates עָרוֹם as the superlative *sliest*.<sup>1</sup> He does not write a comment on his choice of words. Almost without exception, modern English translators translate עָרוֹם as *crafty*, *sly*, *subtle*, or a synonym.<sup>2</sup> Many English translations follow the precedent set from earlier translations.<sup>3</sup> For example, much of the KJV is a reworking of William Tyndale's earlier translation.<sup>4</sup>

## Why People Use Subtle

Julius Wellhausen's Newer Documentary Hypothesis, widely accepted among scholars, posits the J source using word play as a signature of its style. Pauline A. Viviano, referring to the J source writes, "they employ word plays: adam (humanity)/ adamah (ground), issah (woman)/ is (man), arummim (naked)/ arum (cunning). . . . Such clever word plays hold the interest of the hearer or reader."<sup>5</sup> Here עָרוֹם is used as evidence of word plays. Viviano sees J as a storyteller who is interested in keeping and captivating the attention of the hearer.

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1. E.A. Speiser, *Genesis (ABS)* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1964), 21.

2. See Gary A. Anderson, Micheal E. Stone, "The Life of Adam and Eve: The Biblical Story in Judaism and Christianity" University of Virginia, n.p., [cited 01 Nov. 2005] online: <http://www3.iath.virginia.edu/anderson/bible/gen1-3/genv3.1.html>. Also see John R. Kohnlenberger III, ed., *The NIV Interlinear Hebrew-English Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1987), 6. Additionally, the BDB renders the translation as "crafty."

3. Douglas Stuart discusses the hesitancy felt by translators to defy tradition in *Old Testament Exegesis* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 40–41.

4. The choice of subtle or cunning has ancient roots as well. That is the idea expressed in the LXX and this topic is covered by Ephrem the Syrian. See Andrew Louth and Marco Conti, *Genesis 1–11 (ACCS)*, Thomas C. Oden, Downers Grove, eds.; IL: Inter Varsity Press, 2000), 74.

5. Pauline A. Viviano, *Source Criticism*, in Steven L. McKenzie and Stephen R. Haynes, eds., *To Each Its Own Meaning* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999), 43. I have left off original pronunciation marks for the transliterated words.

*Subtle* also finds support theologically. If the translators hold the position that the woman was tricked or hoodwinked by the serpent they have no issue casting the serpent as subtle, wise or sly.<sup>6</sup> Yet good exegesis requires the reader to suppress and guard against preconceived notions of what the text means.

### Alternate Reading: Naked

On the hermeneutical periphery other translations appear for עָרוֹם.<sup>7</sup> *Naked*, meaning “not wearing, covered by, or protected with clothing; NUDE,”<sup>8</sup> represents a viable translation for עָרוֹם when we look in the verses both before and after Genesis 3:1. Despite having a modern chapter break between Genesis 2:25 and 3:1, Speiser sees the latter verse as a continuation of the former so he includes Genesis 2:25 with 3:1 in the same thought unit.<sup>9</sup> The significance of the author’s word עָרוֹם in describing the snake as well as the man and woman follows that the serpent shows up in a more naked form than the naked man and woman.<sup>10</sup>

David Cotter comments that chapters 2 and 3 are linked together by *naked* and *subtle*, homonyms in Hebrew stemming from different roots.<sup>11</sup> Since the two roots look similar to each other, the intention of the words, translation into the versions, and later pointing all become suspect. While both proto-Masoretic and MT transmitters especially did remarkably accurate work, a quick glance at the critical apparatus in the BHS shows the final form is not without flaws.

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6. For example, see Kenneth A. Matthews, *Genesis 1–11:26*, The New American Commentary 1A (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1996), 225, 232.

7. Thanks to Donald W. Parry for first pointing out to me this inconsistency in translating עָרוֹם.

8. Philip B. Gove, ed., *Webster’s Third New International Dictionary of the English Language Unabridged* (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, Inc, 1993), 1500.

9. Speiser, *Genesis*, 20.

10. See below for a discussion of “more naked.”

11. David W. Cotter, *Genesis*, Berit Olam Studies in Hebrew Narrative and Poetry (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2003), 33–34.

עָרוֹם is found in the MT 29 times, in 28 different verses.<sup>12</sup> If the verse in question, Genesis 3:21, is omitted from the findings, the entire Pentateuch and all of the Prophets use עָרוֹם as meaning *naked* nine times out of eleven. The Wisdom Literature is divided between *naked* and *subtle*. Notably, Proverbs alone uses עָרוֹם eight times, all of which are *subtle* or a synonym. However, since the entirety of the Torah and Prophets use עָרוֹם as naked (9 occurrences) the reader should consider using naked in Genesis 3:1.

Even if a reader determines to substitute *naked* for *subtle*, the literal aspect of *naked* does not make sense in comparative or superlative form. As with much of Genesis, the literal does not always hold the complete meaning the author is attempting to convey to the reader. If read symbolically, *naked* often carries with it a connotation of lack of status, especially in ancient Near Eastern texts.<sup>13</sup> If we are to assume, as Speiser and others do, that the text is influenced by its ancient Near Eastern surroundings this connotation becomes very significant.<sup>14</sup> Here, the man and woman carry more status than the snake since the snake exists more naked than all.

## Paul's Use of Naked, Clothing and Mortality

Paul provides a symbolic interpretation of nakedness. In our present culture, as in Moses', and Paul's, nakedness relates to physical bodies. Paul, speaking symbolically, shows how nakedness relates to not having a mortal, physical body, and thus being reduced to a spiritual body only.<sup>15</sup> In 2 Corinthians 5:1–4, additional light is shed on this meaning of *naked*.<sup>16</sup> In verse one Paul recalls that if our mortal,

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12. I reached these calculations using Accordance, a biblical software program.

13. M. Niehr, "arom; erom," *TDOT* 11:349–54.

14. See Speiser, *Genesis*, 26–28, for examples of incorporating knowledge of ancient Near Eastern texts into his interpretation of the fall pericope.

15. Thanks to Dr. Parry for providing the first clues toward this interpretation and for referencing 2 Corinthians 5: 1–10 in class.

16. Unless otherwise indicated, all Bible quotes are from the KJV. I use Paul here without reservation due to his background in the Hebrew Bible and Jewish law prior to conversion.

physical bodies die we still remain as spirits with spiritual bodies. In the spiritual state, i.e. disembodied state, we desire to be “clothed” with a heavenly, i.e. an immortal, physical body. The phrase “eternal in the heavens” points to this heavenly body as an immortal body. The use of the term “clothed” in verse two highlights the *naked* theme. Verse three implies that being a spirit with an immortal, physical body places one under the category of “not naked.” By direct inference, the category of *naked*, or unclothed, means without a mortal, physical body, so long as the context remains earthly, as in the Garden story.

The Hebrew Bible shows the superlative preposition מְּ next to עָרוֹם.<sup>17</sup> This means the snake, man, woman and animals compare with one another on a gradient scale.<sup>18</sup> It remains possible for all the animals, the man and the woman to fall into the naked category and yet still see the serpent in the more or even in the most naked category.<sup>19</sup>

### Mortality in Genesis 3

The subtle difference between the man and woman having physical bodies and being mortal concludes in Genesis 3. They were not yet mortal. This explains how, after receiving physical bodies in chapter 2, the man, woman, and animals still qualified as naked. After eating the fruit, the naked couple receives an insightful (to the reader) reprimand from God. God expels the couple from the garden, but before the expulsion, God makes the couple clothing to wear (Gen 3:21). The clothing symbolizes mortality and un-nakedness. Putting on the clothing symbolically marks the change to mortality. The author

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17. For a treatment of the superlative preposition straight out of Genesis 3:1, see Gary D. Pratico and Miles V. Van Pelt, *Basics of Biblical Hebrew Grammar* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001): 54.

18. Paul uses *naked* and *clothed* in a total binary sense. Either you are one or the other, but never both naked and clothed. Applying Paul’s use of naked to that of Genesis 3:1 presents a catch: Paul uses the term in the binary sense, while Genesis 3:1 has עָרוֹם in a continuous sense. This discrepancy between uses seems marginal in importance for our exegesis, but deserves notice.

19. The term “most” is used by Pratico and Van Pelt, *Hebrew Grammar*, 54.

marks this change to mortality by showing the reader Adam giving the woman a name: Eve, which connotes living and life. The change precedes any childbirth, a sign of mortality, and in the next chapter conception occurs, also showing the change to mortality occurred sometime before that point. Indeed, God himself marks the couple's change to mortality by noting that Adam and Eve will mortally die (Gen 2:17).

## Synthesis

The man and women receive physical bodies as do the animals. The woman encounters a serpent with less status than herself, the man or any of the animals.<sup>20</sup> After temptation from the serpent, the woman and man eat the fruit. They are reprimanded by God, given clothing, and kicked out of the garden. They become mortal.

By translating ערום as *naked* in addition to *subtle*, *crafty* or *sly*, the reader is better able to see the full intention of the author. Despite the J source using frequent word plays and the precedent of translation, items which are not mutually exclusive, naked, the translation of choice for both the Torah and the Prophets, is an equally correct translation. *Naked* highlights the mortality theme in this story, thus enriching the meaning of the text to the reader.

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20. Latter-day Saint theology similarly teaches that having a body is favored over not having a body (see D&C 138:50).

# Inhabiting Eternity: Finding the Tabernacle and Temple in Isaiah 57:15

Jacob Rennaker

THE language that people use conveys a myriad of meaning. In examining the language an author uses, for example, one can attempt to discover his or her understanding of a subject. This holds true for the author of the book of Isaiah. Isaiah 57:15 contains a curious phrase that is used nowhere else in the Hebrew Bible. Here, God is referred to as One who “inhabits eternity.”<sup>1</sup> These words imply a certain understanding of deity. Traditionally, this verse has been interpreted as a metaphor regarding God’s kingship and His transcendence (see below). In a careful examination of the phraseology and context of the verse, however, Isaiah’s description is reflective of symbols in which ancient Israel found superlative meaning: the tabernacle and temple of God.

The entire verse says:

For thus says the high and lofty one who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with those who are contrite and humble in spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite.

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1. All translations are from the NRSV unless otherwise indicated.



The phrase under consideration in Hebrew is שָׁכַן עַד. The first word, שָׁכַן means to reside or inhabit.<sup>2</sup> This verb is in the active participle form, which in the NRSV is translated “inhabits.” The second word, עַד, can mean either “perpetual continuation; enduring future,”<sup>3</sup> or “time without end.”<sup>4</sup> In both the NRSV and the KJV, the word in this verse was translated as “eternity.” Interestingly, in the entire Old Testament the word “eternity” appears twice in the NRSV, and only once in the KJV.<sup>5</sup> The uniqueness of this combination of words allows for many different translations and interpretations.

## Kingship

Interpreting this verse in light of a kingship context provides valuable insights. Some read the phrase רַם וְנִשָּׂא שָׁכַן עַד instead as “in the height as Holy One I sit enthroned,”<sup>6</sup> or “who sits enthroned forever.”<sup>7</sup> This particular verse has also been viewed as depicting some sort of royal audience chamber.<sup>8</sup> One scholar believes that “this reference to [His] eternal rule derives apparently from the Jerusalem tradition of God’s kingship,”<sup>9</sup> which is reflected elsewhere in the Old Testament. This imagery can be seen in another chapter of the book of Isaiah: “In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a

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2. Willem A. VanGemeren, ed., *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, vol. 4 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 111.

3. G. Brotrterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Hein-Josef Fabry, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, vol. 10 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 456.

4. Brotrterweck, et. al., *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, vol. 10, 460.

5. Merrill C. Tenney, *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1975), 381.

6. See George A. Buttrick, ed., *The Interpreter’s Bible*, vol. 5 (New York: Abingdon Press, 1956), 671–72.

7. H.C. Leupold, *Exposition of Isaiah*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1971), 279.

8. Joseph Blenkinsopp, “Isaiah 56–66,” *Anchor Bible*, vol. 19 (New York: Doubleday, 2003), 295.

9. Brotrterweck et al., *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, vol. 10, 460.

throne, high and lofty. . . . Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory . . . my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts” (Isa 6:1, 3, 5). This “kingship” of God can be seen as “a royal metaphor for the great sovereign who from the exalted throne room extends the royal presence and the royal concern”<sup>10</sup> to His subjects. While this interpretation fits quite nicely into the context of an Israelite kingship ideology, there are other possible interpretations that help to augment our understanding of this verse. These additional aspectual interpretations take into account other facets of ancient Israel’s theology.

## Transcendence

Another rendition of the phrase שכן ער is “abides forever.”<sup>11</sup> שכן can be translated “to reside,” which implies a stationary condition. The following word, ער, was cited before as implying perpetual continuation. This second word could be seen as clarifying and intensifying the first verb. Thus, the phrase in its entirety can be used to show the eternal and unchanging nature of God. This particular principle is expressed by a number of biblical authors. The author of Psalms wrote, “from everlasting to everlasting, you are God” (Ps 90:2), and “you [God] are the same, and your years have no end” (Ps 102:27). Elsewhere, God says, “For I the Lord do not change” (Mal 3:6). As an eternal being, God is not subject to the vicissitudes of mortality; he is not subject to death or any other type of change.

This particular interpretation of the phrase שכן ער gives a different meaning to the verse. Instead of bringing to mind a royal setting, it now stresses the unchangeable nature of God. Whereas a king can be seen in relation to his subjects, a transcendent<sup>12</sup> and unchangeable being would

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10. Walter Brueggemann, *Isaiah 40–66* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), 180–86.

11. Ronald E. Clements, ed., *New Century Bible Commentary: Isaiah 40–66* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1975), 210.

12. Homer Hailey, *A Commentary on Isaiah* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1985), 468.

have difficulty relating to those who are constantly changing. Isaiah touched upon this concept in an earlier chapter: “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts” (Isa 55:8–9). The “high and holy place” of God’s residence mentioned in Isaiah 57:15, in this view, is nowhere on earth, but in heaven.<sup>13</sup> One scholar, however, attempted to reconcile this view of God as unchanging with the view of God as a type of king. In his synthesis, he stated, “[God] has always sat enthroned.”<sup>14</sup> This view includes the royal imagery, while maintaining God’s permanence. This interpretation would have allowed the audience to conceptualize God as a tangible ruler. However, the psychological distance between a king and his subjects in antiquity still would have left the impression of a deity who is somewhat removed from his people.

## The Tabernacle

While God possesses eternal characteristics, the words used in this verse do not necessarily describe a completely static or unreachable deity. The verb שָׁכַן can mean “to dwell.” However, this word does not necessarily imply “the notion of a static remaining,” but can also mean a “transition into a spatially and temporally as yet unspecified condition.”<sup>15</sup> It can also be translated as “to rest,”<sup>16</sup> which implies some sort of transition. The word used for the Israelite tabernacle (מִשְׁכַּן) is derived from the root letters שָׁכַן. The tabernacle was a temporary structure that was moved many times during Israel’s journey in the wilderness. Sometime after Israel was settled in their promised land, they built a permanent place for their God: the temple. The temple was not referred to as a מִשְׁכַּן, but as a הַכֵּל, a בַּיִת, or a מִקְדָּשׁ. The

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13. Hailey, *Commentary on Isaiah*, 468.

14. H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Isaiah*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1971), 280.

15. Brottnerweck et al., *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, vol. 14, 694.

16. Aaron Pick, *Dictionary of Old Testament Words for English Readers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publishers, 1977), 211.

visible difference between the words used to describe the transitory tabernacle and the stationary temple helps to further demonstrate the implications of the word שְׁכִינָה.

An interesting parallel is found in the New Testament. The Greek word σκηνή means “tabernacle.”<sup>17</sup> In the prologue to John’s gospel, it states: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God . . . And the Word became flesh and lived among us” (John 1:1, 14). The word translated as “lived” is ἐσκηνώσεν which literally means to “tent” or “tabernacle.” Further associations can be made with the words Isaiah used because some “suggest that the LXX translators may have favored this particular Greek term for ‘tabernacle’ because its consonants [σ-κ-ν] correspond to the Hebrew consonants for the Shekinah [ש-כ-נ], God’s presence.”<sup>18</sup> Here in John 1, a transcendent and eternal being is seen as transitioning from an eternal realm to a temporal realm. The language used in these New Testament verses appears to be referring to Israel’s exodus. God was not static or utterly transcendent during the sojourn in the wilderness; He was seen as a dynamic deity who regularly made contact with his people. By means of the tabernacle, God transitioned from his heavenly realm to an earthly dwelling place, where he associated with Israel. John applied this imagery to Jesus, as a God, transitioning from heaven to earth, just as the God of Israel had done in the past. The presence of this imagery in John’s writings argues for the existence of such a view among some Jews in the second temple period.<sup>19</sup>

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17. Willem A. VanGemeren, ed., *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1997), 1133.

18. Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2003), 408. The Shekinah, or “God’s presence,” was the verbal representation of God’s presence in the tabernacle, where he communed with Israel.

19. George Arthur Buttrick, *The Interpreter’s Bible*, vol. 8 (New York: Abington Press, 1951), 473.

## A Temple Perspective

When these differing translations are all seen in light of the temple, a harmonious description of God emerges. He is a perpetual King, who rules his people with constancy and equity. Even though he is transcendent, he can be approached by humanity in his holy palace, the temple. The temple is a place where sacred space meets sacred time. The verb שָׁכַן, as mentioned earlier, refers to dwelling in a certain place. The place where God dwells is considered sacred, as can be seen in Genesis when altars and memorials were erected at places where God appeared (Gen 26:24–25, 28:12–18, 35:1). Related to the concept of sacred space is the element of time implicit in the word עֵרָב. God sets apart sacred time, as shown in the Ten Commandments: “Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy . . . therefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and consecrated it” (Exod 20:8–11).

The Holy of Holies combined both the elements of sacred space and sacred time. It was the most holy place within the tabernacle and temple (Exod 26:34), and was to be entered by the high priest once a year on the holiest day, the Day of Atonement (Exod 30:10). It was in the Holy of Holies that the Eternal God would appear on his “throne” above the mercy seat to “commune” with Israel (Exod 25:22; see also 1 Sam 4:4).

## Conclusion

The people of Israel were profoundly affected by the events and aftermath of the Exodus. The symbolism of the tabernacle, the evidence of God among his wandering people, permeated their very language. In describing God as One who “inhabits eternity,” Isaiah used words that reflected his understanding of deity. The particular words used by this prophet depict God in terms of the tabernacle: God was the divine king of his people Israel, whose rule was constant. This God was not utterly transcendent; he condescended to visit his people. Even after their sojourn through the desert, God continued to visit this people in the temple that they

built for him.<sup>20</sup> Both the tabernacle and the temple became the symbol for the place where this celestial sovereign manifested Himself as the God of Israel. The seemingly small phrase שֶׁכֶן עַד embodied each of these fundamental attributes of God and conveyed to Israel the majesty of their God who truly “inhabits eternity.”

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20. This is vividly depicted in the dedication of Solomon's temple in 1 Kings 8:10–12.