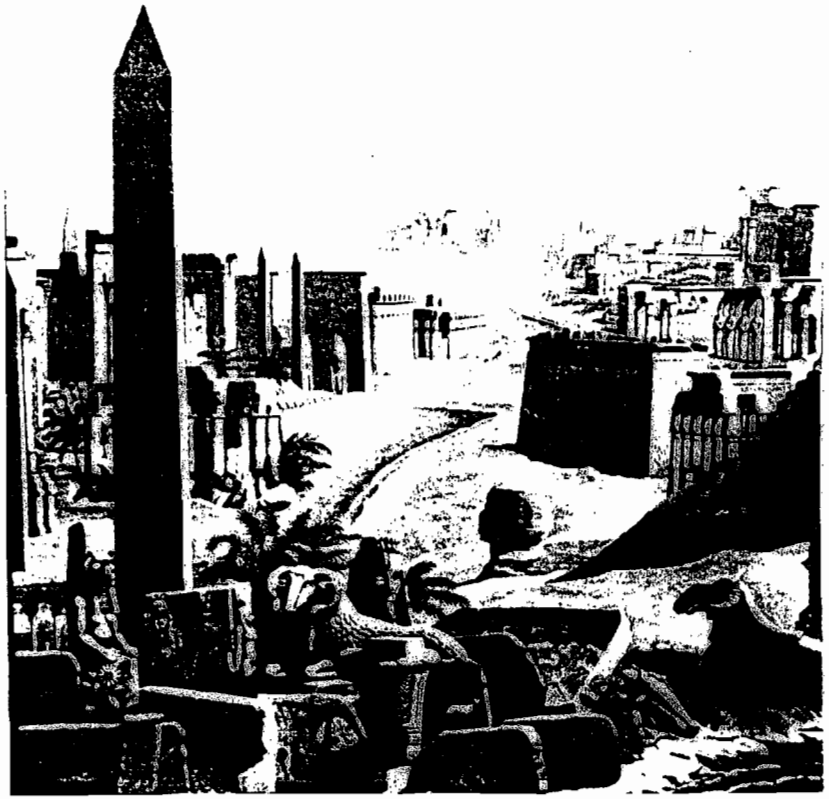
Egypt and Israel
(by Ronald J. William)



Panorama of Egypt, from the frontispiece to the first edition of the *Description de l'Égypte*

THE LEGACY OF
EGYPT

SECOND EDITION

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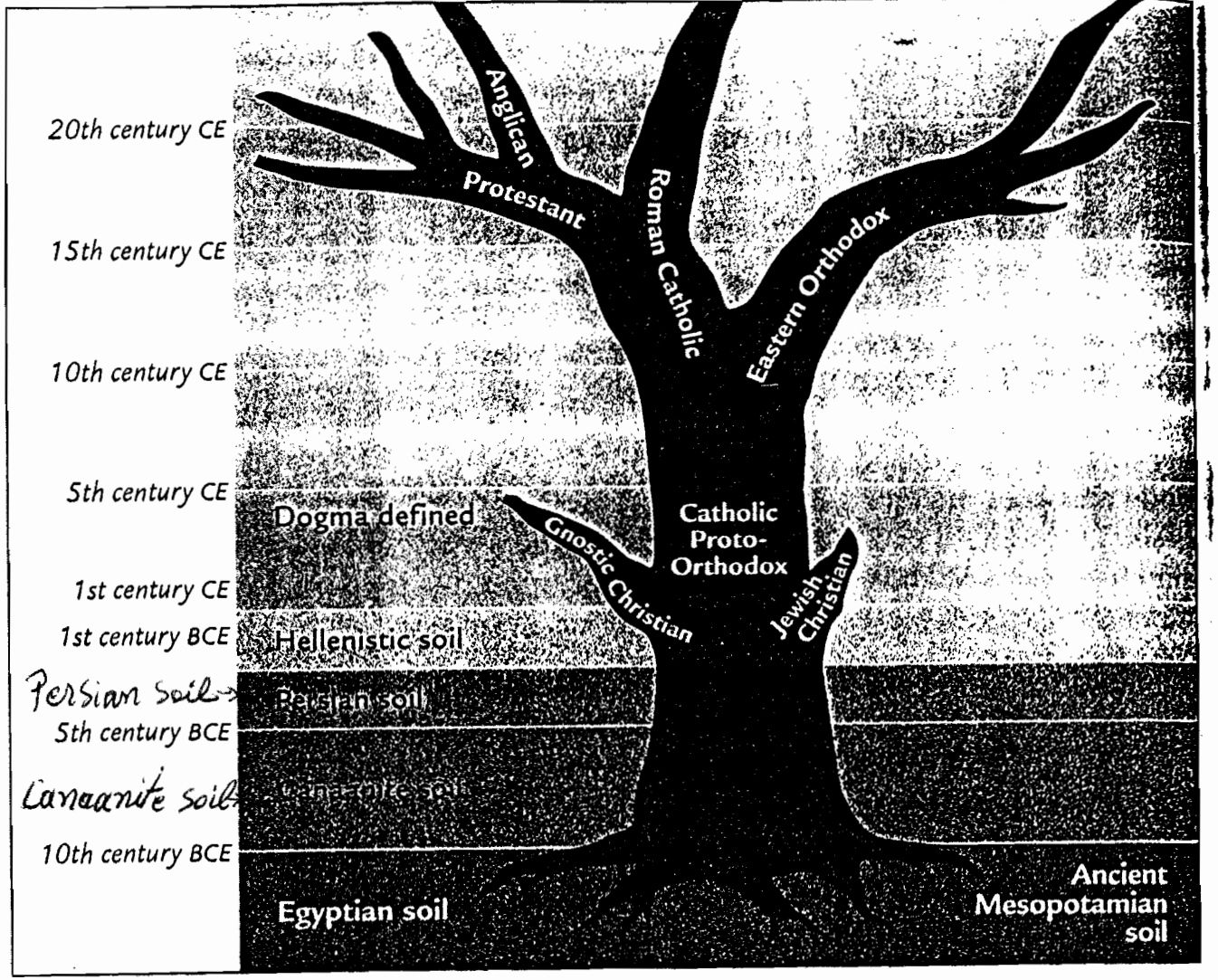
The major branches of Christianity emerged from Judaic roots in Hellenistic soil.



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(2)

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EGYPT AND ISRAEL[1]

BECAUSE of the unique position of Syria-Palestine as a bridge between Egypt and Western Asia, across which the military roads and trade routes passed, it was continually subject to the cross-currents which flowed from these centres of culture. As early as about 3000 B.C., for instance, there are evidences of Egyptian influence in Byblos. Indeed, from the time of the Old Kingdom right down to the Empire period, an Egyptian temple was to be found in this Phoenician city.

During the Middle Kingdom (*c.* 2052–1786 B.C.) Egypt exercised an economic if not political domination over Syria-Palestine. To this period belong the movements of the Hebrew patriarchs to and from Egypt recorded in the Old Testament (Gen. 12: 10 ff.). A wall painting in a tomb at Beni Hasan, from the reign of Amenemhet II (*c.* 1900 B.C.), depicts a group of thirty-seven Semitic tribesmen (Pl. 17). Their leader bears the Hebrew name Abishai (cf. 1 Sam. 26: 6, etc.), and they are described as *ḥḳ3w-ḫ3swt*, 'rulers of foreign lands', an appellation which was the source of the later name Hyksos. That such visitors to Egypt often remained is clear from a Thirteenth Dynasty papyrus to be

[1] The transcription of Hebrew in the present chapter does not coincide with that employed for Egyptian (see table). The following letters have different values or are used solely for Hebrew.

ʾ as in saloon	ḏ = th as in *this*
ʿ a short 'Murmurvokal'	ṭ = an 'emphatic' t
ḥ as in met	ḵ = ch as in loch
ō as in not, awe	p̄ = f
b = v	ś = a sound between s and sh
ḡ = a palatalized gh	ṯ = th as in *th*ink

dated about 1740 B.C., now in the Brooklyn Museum, which contains a list of ninety-five workmen, many of them Semites. Their gradual assimilation to Egyptian ways is shown by the fact that they gave their children Egyptian names.

From the end of the Twelfth or the beginning of the Thirteenth Dynasty, comes a group of documents known as 'Execration Texts'. These are pottery bowls and clay figurines bearing curses directed against the enemies of the state, whether actual or potential. They contain many names of places in Syria-Palestine, such as Achshaph, Askelon, Jerusalem, and Shechem, as well as those of persons, and serve as a valuable source for determining the unsettled political conditions of the time. Not long afterwards Egypt was to be invaded and occupied by the Asiatic hordes known as the Hyksos. The period of their domination witnessed the movement of Semitic tribes into Egypt, and the Biblical account of Joseph is probably to be placed at the end of the Hyksos era.

The contacts between Egypt and Syria-Palestine became still closer when, during the New Kingdom, the latter territory became part of the newly created Egyptian Empire. The topographical lists of Thutmose III carved on the temple at Karnak and later copied by Ramesses II and III, bear witness to his conquests. Through the machinations of the wily Hittite ruler Suppiluliumas, who took advantage of the invasion of the area by the Habiru, Egypt's Asiatic possessions were lost for a time during the reigns of Amenhotpe III and his dreamer son Akhenaten (*c.* 1403–1348 B.C.). This is graphically portrayed in the state archives discovered at (Tell) El-Amarna in Middle Egypt. The nearly 400 clay tablets written in Akkadian, the lingua franca of the day, include letters from the rulers of the city-states of Syria-Palestine which were under Egyptian suzerainty, and copies of the replies. From them we learn that one of the royal scribes of Abimilki, the ruler of Tyre, was himself an Egyptian.

The soil of Palestine has also yielded evidence of Egyptian

domination in the form of hieroglyphic inscriptions found at various sites. For example, at Beth-shan three stelae from the reigns of Sety I and Ramesses II have been excavated. One of them refers to the '*ʿprw* of Mount Yarumtu', a term cognate with Ugaritic *ʿprm* and Akkadian *Ḫab/pirū*. We have already encountered these Habiru as the invaders who accomplished the collapse of Egyptian authority in Syria-Palestine. This designation, which probably meant 'transient', 'nomad', was later adopted in the form *ʿibrîm* as a name of the Hebrew people. As *ʿprw* it appears on monuments in Egypt to designate foreigners employed in the labour corvée. The earliest mention of these people in hieroglyphic inscriptions comes from the reign of Thutmose III.

Not all Semites in Egypt were of the labouring classes, however. One of the sons of Ramesses II, for instance, was married to the daughter of a Syrian ship captain named Ben-Anath. Some attained to positions of trust and responsibility in the court. During the Nineteenth Dynasty a Semite by the name of Ben-Ozen served Merenptah as chief herald, and in the following dynasty a royal butler called Mahar-Baal served as a judge at the harem conspiracy trials.

It was probably during the Nineteenth Dynasty that the Exodus took place, when the Hebrew tribes that had been living in the Delta returned to Palestine. Merenptah (*c.* 1212–1202 B.C.), early in his reign, had a series of hymns of victory inscribed on a stela which was placed in his mortuary temple at Thebes, a duplicate being carved on the temple at Karnak. In the closing lines we find the only mention of the name Israel in Egyptian texts:

> The princes lie prostrate, saying, 'Hail!'
> Not one lifts his head among the Nine Bows.
> Destruction for Libya! Hatti is pacified;
> Canaan is plundered with every evil;
> Askelon is taken; Gezer is captured;
> Yanoam is made non-existent;
> Israel lies desolate; its posterity is no more;
> Hurru has become a widow for Egypt.

Indicative of the close ties between Egypt and Palestine is the salutation in the first line quoted above, which is a Canaanite loan-word cognate with Hebrew *šālōm*.

Contacts between Egypt and the Hebrew people become increasingly important during the period of decline which followed the New Kingdom. In the time of David, a member of the Edomite royal house named Hadad fled to Egypt and was given political asylum by an unnamed Pharaoh (1 Kgs. 11: 14–22), who may have been Siamūn (*c.* 990–974 B.C.) or Psusennes (Psibkhenne) II (*c.* 974–940 B.C.) of the Twenty-first Dynasty. When Solomon succeeded to the throne, Hadad returned to Palestine to plague him. In similar fashion Solomon's enemy Jeroboam later took refuge under Sheshonq (O.T. Shishak) I (*c.* 940–919 B.C.) of the Twenty-second Dynasty (1 Kgs. 11: 40).

The account of Solomon's own marriage to an Egyptian princess again fails to name the Pharaoh who was her father (1 Kgs. 3: 1); perhaps this too was Psusennes II, or less probably Sheshonq I. At any rate, Solomon received the city of Gezer (or should Gezer be read ?) as a wedding gift (1 Kgs. 9: 16). This alliance is a clear indication of the growing importance of the Israelite state on the one hand, and the waning power of Egypt as contrasted with her position in the Eighteenth Dynasty on the other. We need only recall the proud words of Amenhotpe III quoted by Kadashmanenlil I, King of Babylon, in a letter to the Pharaoh: 'From of old no daughter of a king of Egypt has ever been given to anyone' (*EA* 4/6 f.). In the fifth year of his successor Rehoboam, about 930 B.C., a campaign was conducted against Palestine by Sheshonq I (1 Kgs. 14: 25 f.), who listed on a wall of the temple at Karnak 156 cities of Syria-Palestine which he claimed to have captured.

In the eighth century, during the time of the prophet Hosea, a pro-Egyptian party had arisen in the Northern Kingdom, and many adherents eventually made their way to Egypt where they settled (Hos. 7: 11; 9: 6). By the end of the same century, Isaiah

clearly indicates the presence of a similar group partial to Egypt in Judah during Hezekiah's reign (Isa. 30: 1–5; 31: 1–3). A century later Egyptian troops were again on Palestinian soil in a vain endeavour to save the tottering Assyrian Empire from collapse before the forces of Babylonia and Media. As fate would have it, the Judean king Josiah met his death at the hands of Necho during this campaign, in 608 B.C. (2 Kgs. 23: 29). The Pharaoh then proceeded to depose Josiah's rightful heir Jehoahaz and replace him with his brother, who was given the throne name Jehoiakim and reduced to the role of a vassal, paying tribute to Egypt. A few years later, after the fall of Jerusalem to Nebuchadrezzar in 587 B.C. and the subsequent murder of Gedaliah, whom the Babylonians had installed as governor, there was a large-scale emigration to Egypt (Jer. 41: 16 ff.). At the time the prophet Jeremiah referred to earlier Hebrew colonies in the Delta and Upper Egypt (Jer. 24: 8; 44: 1).

Late in the seventh century a colony of Jewish mercenary soldiers was established on the Island of Elephantine at Aswan, which was to continue in existence through the sixth and fifth centuries. From this site as well as others, such as Saqqara, Edfu, and Hermopolis Magna, have come a great mass of letters and business and legal documents written in Imperial Aramaic on papyrus, ostraca, and leather. They contain much evidence of Egyptian influence, especially in the matter of names and religious practices. A particularly instructive example of the latter occurs in a papyrus which reads, 'I bless you by Yahweh and by Khnum'![1] Yet, as the correspondence at Elephantine shows, the Jews of that place were in close communication with the religious and civil authorities in Jerusalem.

In 301 B.C. Palestine came under the control of Ptolemy I, and was to remain so for a century. Many prisoners were brought

[1] ברכתך ליהה ולחנב: A. Dupont-Sommer, 'Le Syncrétisme religieux des Juifs d'Éléphantine d'après un ostracon araméen inédit', *Revue de l'histoire des religions*, cxxx (1945), 17–28.

back from his Palestinian campaigns, and during the third century he also imported Jewish soldiers to Egypt as mercenaries, granting them lands to be held under military tenure. Jewish settlers tended more and more to drift into Alexandria until, by the first century B.C., they formed the largest body of Jews outside Judaea. After the deposition and subsequent murder of the High Priest Onias IV, about 160 B.C., a further group of Jews emigrated to the southern Delta, where they built a temple at Leontopolis, which was eventually destroyed during the first century A.D.

In view of these numerous contacts between the two cultures, occurring in both Egypt and Palestine, it was inevitable that Israel should fall heir to many features of Egyptian civilization. It will be our task in the following pages to draw attention to some of these.

Of paramount significance for all subsequent ages was the creation of the first true alphabet. This was not an accomplishment of the Egyptians, but of a Semite working in the Egyptian turquoise mines in the Sinai Peninsula (above, p. 215). Nevertheless, this linear script was clearly derived from Egyptian hieroglyphic, employing the acrophonic principle. That is to say, the hieroglyph depicting a house plan was read as the Semitic word *bayiṯ/bēṯ*, 'house', and given the phonetic value *b*; the wavy line representing water, and possessing in Egyptian the phonetic value *n*, was read in Semitic as *mayim/mēm*, 'water', and employed to indicate the sound *m*. This revolutionary step was taken about 1500 B.C., and it is possible to trace the development of the signs from these proto-Sinaitic inscriptions to the later Hebrew forms, and ultimately through Greek to our present alphabet.

As we have already observed, Semites living in Egypt tended to give their children Egyptian names, and sometimes even to adopt them for themselves. Some of these names went with them to Palestine, and a few have survived even to the present day, such as Moses, derived from *msw*, 'child', Phinehas, from *pꜣ nḥsy*, 'the negro', and Susanna, from *sšn* (earlier *sššn*), 'lotus'. Other Egyptian names which were current in Biblical times are Hophni, from *ḥfnr*, 'tadpole', Merari, from *mrry* or *mrrw*, 'beloved', Pashhur, representing *pš* (<*psš*)-*Ḥr*, 'portion of Horus', and Putiel, which is Egyptian in form, beginning with the familiar element *pꜣ dỉ*, but substituting the Hebrew word *'ēl*, 'God', for the name of an Egyptian deity, and thus meaning 'he whom God has given'.

The Egyptian language, as might well be expected, also left an indelible mark on Hebrew vocabulary, and a number of loan-words are preserved in the Old Testament.[1] Some of these are titles, such as *par'ō* from *pr-ꜥꜣ*, hence Greek φαραώ and English 'Pharaoh', and *ḥarṭummīm*, 'magicians', probably from *ḥry-tp*. Names of water-plants, which were such a common feature of the Egyptian landscape, also found their way into Hebrew. Such are *'ăḥū*, 'reeds', derived either from *ꜣḫ*, 'papyrus-thicket', or from *ỉwḥ/ỉḥy*, 'reeds'; *gōmē*, 'papyrus', from *ḳmꜣ*, 'reeds'; *sūp̄*, 'reeds', from *ṯwfy*, 'papyrus-marshes' (Copt. ⲥⲟⲟⲩϥ); *šūšan* or *šōšannā*, 'blossom', 'lily', from *sšn* (<*sššn*), 'lotus' (Copt. ϣⲱϣⲉⲛ). Terms for materials also occur: *šēš* or *šayiš*, 'white marble', from *šs*, 'alabaster'; *šēš*, 'byssus', from *sšr-nsw*, 'royal linen' (Copt. ϣⲉⲛⲥ, ϣⲛⲥ); *'ēṭūn*, '(Egyptian) linen', from *ỉdmỉ*, 'red linen', whence Greek ὀθόνη; *šiṭṭā*, 'acacia', from *šnḏt* (Copt. ϣⲟⲛⲧⲉ); *hobnīm* from *hbny*, whence Greek ἔβενος and English 'ebony';[2] *neṭer* from *nṯrỉ*, producing Greek νίτρον, Latin *nitrum*, and English 'natron'.

Two Egyptian measures were adopted by the Hebrews: *'ēp̄ā*, 'ephah', from *ỉpt* (Copt. ⲉⲓⲟⲡⲉ), and *hīn*, 'hin', from *hnw*, 'jar', used as a liquid measure. Other words borrowed were *y°'ōr*, 'river, Nile', from *ỉ(t)rw*, 'river' (Copt. ⲓⲟⲣ); *qeseṭ*, 'scribal kit', from *gsṯỉ*; *qōp̄*, 'ape', 'monkey', from *gṯf/gwf*, whence Greek κῆπος, κῆβος; *maṭṭē*, 'staff', from *mdw*, 'staff'; *'ebyōn*, 'poor', from *bỉn*,

[1] T. O. Lamdin, 'Egyptian Loan Words in the Old Testament', *Journ. American Oriental Soc.* lxxiii (1953), 145–55.

[2] It may be, however, that *hbny* was itself a loan-word from the Sudan.

'bad', 'miserable', pronounced **ĕbyūnē*[1] (Copt. ⲉⲃⲓⲏⲛ); *ṭabba'aṯ*, 'seal', 'signet-ring', from *ḏb't*, 'signet-ring' (Copt. ⲧⲃⲃⲉ).

The debt, of course, was not all one way, and during the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Dynasties especially the Egyptian language was enriched by a very large number of loan-words from Canaanite sources. Among them are such words as *ym*, 'sea' (Heb. *yōm*), which survived into Coptic as ⲉⲓⲟⲙ; *mrkbt*, 'chariot' (Heb. *merkāḇāḇ*), Copt. ⲙⲉⲣⲉⲥⲱⲟⲩⲧⲥ; *mktr*, 'fortress' (Heb. *miḡdōl*), Copt. ⲙⲉⲥⲧⲟⲗ; *ṯpr*, 'scribe' (Heb. *sōp̄ēr*); *ktm*, 'gold' (Heb. *keṯem*); *šbd*, 'rod' (Heb. *šeḇeṭ*), Copt. ⲯⲃⲱⲧ; *mkmrt*, 'net' (Heb. *miḵmereṯ*); *krr*, 'holocaust' (Heb. *kālīl*), Copt. ⲥⲗⲓⲗ; *ʿgrt*, 'wagon' (Heb. *ʿᵃḡālā*), Copt. ⲁⲥⲟⲗⲉ; *brt*, 'covenant' (Heb. *bᵉrīṯ*); *ʿšg*, 'to misuse' (Heb. *ʿāšaq*); *iṯi*, 'which?' (Heb. *ʾē-zē*).

The influence of Egyptian may also be seen in some idiomatic expressions. In Eccles. 12: 5 occurs the term *bēṯ ʿōlōm*, 'eternal home', used of the tomb, familiar also from Phoenician and Palmyrene inscriptions[2]. This recalls the Egyptian *pr n nḥḥ* (*Beni Hasan* i. 26/180), or *pr n ḏt* (*Urk.* iv. 1200/5). A similar expression appears in Tobit 3: 6, *τὸν αἰώνιον τόπον*, with which may be compared Egyptian *st nt nḥḥ* (*Urk.* iv. 1200/4).

In Eccles. 4: 8 we also find the word *šēnī*, 'second', employed in the sense of 'companion'. This is unparalleled in Hebrew, but common with Egyptian *sn-nw*, 'second' (e.g. *Urk.* iv. 151/4). Again, *mahēr šālāl*, the first half of the compound name Maher-shalal-hash-baz, given by Isaiah to his son as a reminder of his prediction that the Syro-Ephraimite coalition would be overthrown (8: 1, 3), brings to mind the Eighteenth Dynasty Egyptian term *ỉs-ḥỉḳ*, 'plunder', 'easy prey' (*Urk.* iv. 6/4, 613/16). This latter likewise consists of an imperative (*ỉs*, 'go') followed by a substantive (*ḥỉḳ*, 'plunder').[3]

[1] The vocalization indicates that the borrowing could not have been later than the twelfth century B.C.

[2] Ph. בת עלם, Palm. בת עלמא.

[3] S. Morenz, 'Eilebeute', *Theologische Literaturzeitung*, lxxiv (1949), 697–9.

Another instance of a borrowed idiom may be found in 1 Kgs. 18: 42, where Elijah, in a time of severe drought, ascended to the summit of Mount Carmel, where he 'put his face between his knees'. This takes on a particular significance when we remember the common Egyptian phrase *ḏḏỉ ḥr mỉst*, 'head on lap', a sign of mourning (e.g. *Sinuhe*, R 10; *P. Westc.* 12/20 f.), and the derivative compound *ḏḏỉ-mỉst* (*Med. Habu*, 86/22; *P. Bremner-Rhind*, 4/17; *P. Sall.* iv. *rt.* 16/5). The same idiom was also transmitted to Syria, where it turns up in the Ugaritic texts: 'The gods lowered their heads upon their knees' (Text 137, 33–9).[1]

A frequent expression in Egyptian is *sỉw-ʿ*, 'broken of arm', in the meaning 'weak', 'disabled', 'incapacitated', as contrasted with its opposite *nḫt-ʿ*, 'strong'. It may be traced back to the First Intermediate Period and the Middle Kingdom (*Merikarē*, 136; *Neferty*, 54), but it becomes more frequent in Late Egyptian (*P. Anast.* i. 8/8, 9/3; *Urk.* iv. 1078/1; *Amenemope*, 4/5). This idiom clarifies the Biblical use of *zᵉrōaʿ*, 'arm', with the verb *šibber*, 'break' (Pss. 10: 15; 37: 17; Job 38: 15; Jer. 48: 25; Ezek. 30: 21 f., 24) or with *dikkō*, 'crush' (Job 22: 9).

An example of the reverse tendency is the borrowing into Egyptian of the term *hdm rdwy*, 'footstool' (*Truth and Falsehood*, 3 f.), from Hebrew *hᵃḏōm raḡlayim* (Pss. 99: 5; 132: 7; 1 Chr. 28: 2; Isa. 66: 1).[2] A second instance comes, not from the New Kingdom as in the preceding case, but from the late fourth century B.C. In one of the inscriptions from the tomb of Petosiris, to which we shall refer later, we encounter the unique expression *wḏ(t) nt nṯr*, 'fear of god' (*Pet.* 62/2), which is certainly a rendering of the Hebrew *yir'aṯ ʾᵉlōhīm* (Gen. 20: 11; 2 Sam. 23: 3).

Several metaphors have also found their way from Egyptian

[1] A. Jirku, '"Das Haupt auf die Knie legen". Eine ägyptisch-ugaritisch-israelitische Parallele', *Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, ciii (1953), 372.

[2] F. Hintze, '*Hdm rdwj* "Fussschemel"', *ZÄS* lxxix (1954), 77.

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-Biblical Hebrew. For instance, Yahweh's promise to Jeremiah to make him a 'fortified wall of bronze' to the people (Jer. 15: 20; cf. 1: 18) reminds us of the Egyptian use of *ỉnb n ḥmt*, 'wall of copper', to describe Senwosret III (*P. Kahun* ii. 14), or *sbty ꜥ3 n ḥmt*, 'great wall of copper', with reference to Sety I (Champ., *Not. descr.* ii. 76).[1] In demotic texts the metaphor appears as *sbt ḥmt*, 'copper wall', descriptive of Pesnufe in the Petubastis Cycle (*P. Spieg.* 12/13), and in the saying 'He is a copper wall to his master in the darkness' (*P. Ins.* 11/15). In similar vein, Ramesses II is portrayed as *sbty n bỉ3 n pt*, 'a wall of iron' (Kuentz, *Bat. de Qadech*, p. 299, § 262; cf. Lepsius, *Denkm.* iii. 187e, 7), and Thutmose III as *sbty m bỉ3 [n pt]*, 'a wall of iron' (*Urk.* iv. 1233/6). The briefer expression *sbty n bỉ3* for 'wall of iron' is also employed as an epithet of Sety I (Mar., *Abydos* i. 52/17) and Ptolemy II (*Urk.* ii. 36/1). Rekhmirē, the vizier of Thutmose III, is even called *ḏrỉ nbw*, 'a wall of gold' (*Urk.* iv. 1087/10).

Of special interest is the fact that during the fourteenth century B.C., in a letter written to the Egyptian ruler in the Akkadian language, Abimilki of Tyre calls the Pharaoh *dūri siparri*, 'a wall of bronze' (*EA* 147/53). We have already observed that Abimilki's scribe was an Egyptian. Since the demotic instances quoted show that the figure was still current in Egypt during the first century A.D., it is perhaps permissible to see Egyptian influence in the words of Horace, '*hic murus aeneus esto*', 'let this be a copper wall' (*Epist.* i. 1/60). The expression is unique in Latin literature. The description of the 'Field of Reeds', the Egyptian prototype of the Greek Elysian Fields, as being surrounded by *ỉnb m bỉ3*, 'a wall of iron' (*CT* ii. 369a), is strikingly paralleled in the much later Homeric account of the island of Aeolia, which was encircled by τεῖχος χάλκεον (*Odyssey*, x. 3 f.). It is also reminiscent of Ezekiel's 'wall of iron' (Ezek. 4: 3).

Another frequent metaphor in Egyptian texts is the 'way of

[1] A. Alt, 'Hic murus aheneus esto', *Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, lxxxvi (1933), 33–48.

life'.[1] It occurs in the form *wỉt n ꜥnḫ* (*P. Ch. Beatty* iv. *vs.* 6/4; *Instr. of Amennakhte*, 1; *Urk.* iii. 19/14; *Stela of Ta-Hebt*, 13), or *wỉt nt ꜥnḫw*, 'way of the living' (*Khety*, 11/4), as well as *mtn n ꜥnḫ* (*Harmhab Edict*, 5, left) and *mỉt n ꜥnḫ* (*Amenemope*, 1/7, 16/8). The Hebrew equivalents, which are all to be found in books which elsewhere reveal Egyptian influence, are *dereḵ (ha)ḥayyīm* (Jer. 21: 8; Prov. 6: 23) or *'oraḥ ḥayyīm* (Ps. 16: 11; Prov. 2: 19; 5: 6; 15: 24; cf. Prov. 10: 17).

In this connection it is interesting to note the words which Jeremiah ascribes to Yahweh (21: 8): 'I am setting before you the way of life and the way of death.' Nearly a century and a half earlier Piankhi (*c.* 751–730 B.C.) of the Twenty-fifth Dynasty had recorded on his stela (*Urk.* iii. 26/1–4) the words which he addressed to the besieged inhabitants of Medum: 'See, two ways are before you; you must choose as you wish: open up, and you shall live; close, and you shall die.' We are reminded also of the words in Deut. 30: 15, 19.

An Egyptian source has also been claimed for the maxim contained in Prov. 25: 22 (cited by St. Paul in Rom. 12: 20) which advises one to feed an enemy, 'for you will heap fiery coals on his head'.[2] This is a custom mentioned nowhere else in Hebrew literature, but the Old Testament does speak of sprinkling ashes on the head as a sign of mourning (Pss. 11: 6; 140: 10 [Heb. 11]). In the demotic tale concerning Setna, written in 233–232 B.C., we read that he must pay for his misdemeanour in appropriating the magical book from the tomb of Naneferkaptah: 'I will make him bring this book here, with a forked staff in his hand and a fiery brazier on his head' (*I Kh.* 4/35–7, 5/37–9). Here it is clearly a rite of penance, and suggests for the Biblical passages a higher motivation for kindness than the usual exegesis allows. The

[1] B. Couroyer, 'Le Chemin de vie en Égypte et en Israël', *Revue biblique*, lvi (1949), 412–32.

[2] S. Morenz, 'Feurige Kohlen auf dem Haupt', *Theologische Literaturzeitung*, lxxviii (1953), 187–92.

interpretation offered here is supported in a remarkable way by a maxim in the 'Wisdom of Amenemope' (5/3–6) which counsels the reader to treat the wicked man thus:

> Lift him up, give him your hand,
> Leave him (in) the arms of the god;
> Fill his stomach with the bread which you have,
> That he may be sated and weep.

In the Old Testament Yahweh is often referred to as a potter (e.g. Isa. 29: 16; 45: 9; 64: 8 [Heb. 7]; Jer. 18: 2 ff.; Job 10: 9; 33: 6). In three passages from later Jewish literature, however, the deity is portrayed as fashioning men at his pleasure for different purposes. In Sir. 33: 13 we read:

> As clay in the potter's hand—
> Since all his ways are according to his pleasure—
> So are men in the hand of him who made them,
> To repay them as he decides.

The second passage is found in Wisd. 15: 7:

> For a potter, kneading the soft earth,
> Painstakingly moulds each vessel for our use;
> Yet he shapes from the same clay
> Both the vessels that serve clean purposes
> And those for opposite purposes, all alike;
> But which shall be the function of each of these
> The worker in clay decides.

St. Paul adopts this figure in Rom. 9: 21: 'Has the potter no authority over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for noble and another for ignoble use?' For this striking metaphor also an Egyptian prototype may be adduced.[1] In a work to which we have already had occasion to refer, and to which we shall return again, the author says (*Amenemope*, 24/13–8):

> As for man—(mere) clay and straw!—
> The god is his builder.

[1] S. Morenz, 'Eine weitere Spur der Weisheit Amenopes in der Bibel', *ZÄS* lxxxiv (1959), 79–80.

> He tears down and builds up daily,
> He makes a thousand poor men at will,
> And makes a thousand men into inspectors,
> While he is in his hour of life [i.e. actively engaged].

Another metaphor found in this important work runs (*Amenemope*, 20/3–6):

> Be resolute in your mind; keep your intellect steadfast;
> Do not steer with your tongue.
> A person's tongue is the steering-oar of a boat—
> The Universal Lord is its pilot.

A late instance of the same thought occurs in a demotic text: 'Do not let your mind be a steering-oar. A man's tongue is evil which leads him like the steering-oar of a boat' (*Krugtexten*, A, 14 f.). This has survived into Biblical literature in Jas. 3: 4 f.: 'Look at ships, too: though they are so great and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot chooses. So also the tongue is a little member and yet makes great boasts.'[1]

Perhaps the most influential contribution of Egypt lay in the area of literary types and motifs. Peet, in his Schweich Lectures of 1929, made the statement that Egypt was 'the home of the short story, and one of her claims to literary recognition is that she produced the first short stories to be told for their own sake'.[2] If by the term short story we mean a well-told tale characterized by its brevity, with only the bare essentials, shorn of superfluous details, outlined in a few deft strokes, and often revealing a feeling for the dramatic, then the Egyptians were indeed its creators. This literary form they transmitted to the Hebrews, who developed it to a remarkably high degree.

Folk-tales often provided the material for such compositions.

[1] S. Herrmann. 'Steuerruder, Waage, Herz und Zunge in ägyptischen Redensarten', *ZÄS* lxxix (1954), 106–15.

[2] T. E. Peet, *A Comparative Study of the Literatures of Egypt, Palestine and Mesopotamia*, London, 1931, p. 27.

An outstanding example of the Egyptian genius for story-telling is known as the 'Tale of the Two Brothers', contained in a Nineteenth Dynasty manuscript written about 1225 B.C. (*ANET* 23–5). The theme of the first part of the work has survived into Greek and Latin literature, being found in the *Iliad* (vi. 156–65), Euripides' *Hippolytus*, Aristophanes' *Clouds* (1063–8), and Horace's *Odes* (iii. 7). Most striking, however, is the close resemblance it bears to the account of the attempted seduction of Joseph by Potiphar's wife recounted in Hebrew sources (Gen. 39: 6–20).

The Joseph narratives are characterized by their Egyptian colouring,[1] a feature especially noticeable in the case of the proper names which they contain. According to Gen. 41: 45, Joseph adopted the name Zaphenath-paneah (Eg. *ḏd-pꜣ-nṯr-ỉw·f-(n)ḥ*), his wife was called Asenath (Eg. *ns-Nỉt* or *ỉw·s-n-Nỉt*), and his father-in-law was Potiphera (Eg. *pꜣ-dỉ-pꜣ-Rʿ*). The last-mentioned Egyptian name is also the source of the form Potiphar, borne by Joseph's master (Gen. 37: 6; 39: 1). We note too the Egyptian practice of embalming in the case of Jacob (Gen. 50: 2 f.) and Joseph himself, who lived to the ripe age of 110 (Gen. 50: 26), a figure well attested as the ideal length of life in Egyptian sources.

Another folk-tale motif which found its way into Biblical literature has survived in the 'Second Tale of Khaemwēse', which is contained in a demotic papyrus of the first century A.D. Despite the late date of this manuscript, the tale is of purely Egyptian character, and preserves elements of great antiquity. The story tells of a priest who was led through the halls of the underworld by his son Si-Osiris. Seven later Hebrew or Aramaic versions of the theme are known. One such may have formed the basis for Jesus' parable of Dives and Lazarus (Luke 16: 19–31).[2] It is

[1] J. Vergote, *Joseph en Égypte* (Orientalia et Biblica Lovaniensia, 3), Louvain, 1959.

[2] H. Gressmann, 'Vom reichen Mann und armen Lazarus', *Abhandlungen der preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin, Phil.-hist. Klasse*, 1918, no. 7.

possible that the account of Moses' dramatic division of the waters of the Sea of Reeds (Exod. 14: 21 f.) owes its inspiration to the similar feat of the ancient Egyptian magician Djadjaemonekh, as related in the Westcar papyrus (6/7–13).

There may be evidence in this area also that the cultural flow was not only in one direction. The 'Astarte papyrus' of the thirteenth century B.C., now pitifully fragmentary, contains a mythological tale of Yam, the sea, and Ashtoreth/Astarte (*ANET* 17 f.). Although too badly damaged for a complete understanding of its contents, enough has survived to suggest to some scholars that we are dealing with a Canaanite myth now familiar from the Ugaritic texts. Posener, however, has argued that the theme can be traced much earlier in purely Egyptian sources.

Some scholars have also claimed that the so-called 'Famine stela' was influenced by the Hebrew account of Joseph. This inscription, of the Ptolemaic period, dates perhaps from the end of the second century B.C., although the scene is set in the reign of Djoser of the Third Dynasty, more than two and a half millennia earlier (*ANET* 31–2). The theme of a seven-year period of famine, followed by years of prosperity, could have been inspired by the Biblical story, since it originated at Elephantine, where, as we have seen, a Jewish colony had been in existence for some centuries.

Before passing on to the next literary genre bequeathed by the Egyptians to the Hebrews, we must digress briefly to consider the important developments in the administration of the nascent Hebrew state under David and Solomon. During the reign of the former, Israel became the leading power in Syria-Palestine, and consequently required the creation of a military, economic, and governmental organization. It was only natural that David should look to Egypt for his models, either directly or through Phoenician intermediaries.

Foremost among the titles held by the royal officials were two which have Egyptian antecedents: the first, *sōp̄ēr*, 'scribe',

combined the functions of private secretary to the ruler and secretary of state, and corresponds to the Egyptian *sš (nsw)*, '(royal) scribe'; the second, *mazkīr*, 'recorder', or chief of protocol, is equivalent to the Egyptian *whmw*, usually rendered 'herald'.[1] These officials first appear under David (2 Sam. 8: 16 f. = 1 Chr. 18: 15 f.; 2 Sam. 20: 24 f.), continue during the reign of Solomon (1 Kgs. 4: 3), and last until the time of Hezekiah and Josiah.

The title *rēʿē/rēaʿ (hammelek)*, '(royal) companion', current in the time of David (2 Sam. 15: 32 [LXX], 37; 16: 16; 1 Chr. 27: 33) and Solomon (1 Kgs. 4: 5) calls to mind, as has long been recognized, the common Egyptian titles *smr (wʿty)*, '(unique) companion', or *rḫ nsw*, 'royal confidant'. To these officials David added a council of thirty (2 Sam. 23: 18–39), which likewise harks back to an Egyptian institution, the *mḥbʒyt*, a group of thirty which has been called the 'traditional Grand Jury of Egypt' (cf. *P. Anast.* v. 9/5; *Med. Habu*, 96/1; *Amenemope*, 20/18; *Harmhab Edict*, 6, right).

Solomon's reign witnessed a great economic expansion, accompanied by new social and political developments. His determination to establish himself as an oriental potentate with a large harem, a well-organized court, and extensive international relations, combined with his lavish building schemes, required both wealth and manpower. In order to levy taxes, as well as to conscript men into military service and labour corvées, the land was divided into twelve districts under prefects. The device of employing the labour force in three-monthly shifts (1 Kgs. 5: 13 f. [Heb. 5: 27 f.]) was inspired by Egyptian practice, if we can trust Herodotus (ii. 124). For administrative purposes a greatly enlarged bureaucracy was essential. Solomon's close ties through marriage would inevitably lead him also to turn to Egypt for

[1] R. de Vaux, 'Titres et fonctionnaires égyptiens à la cour de David et de Salomon', *Revue biblique*, xlviii (1939), 394–405; J. Begrich, 'Sōfēr und Mazkīr', *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*, lviii (1940/1), 1–29.

assistance. The description in 1 Kgs. 7, for example, shows that both Solomon's palace and that constructed for his Egyptian wife were of Egyptian design.

It may be that scribal schools on the pattern of those in Egypt were set up in Jerusalem, and youths were trained for the civil service. In addition to the functionaries already mentioned, Solomon instituted a new office, the bearer of which was described as one *'al habbayiṯ*, 'over the household' (1 Kgs. 4: 6). His duties appear to have been those of a royal steward or comptroller, but later, in the case of Shebna, who held the office during the reign of Hezekiah (Isa. 22: 15), or of Jotham, who acted as regent (2 Kgs. 15: 5), the incumbent exercised almost the same powers as those of the Egyptian vizier. It is noteworthy that Joseph is also described by the Pharaoh as being *'al bētī* (Gen. 41: 40).

During the reigns of David and Solomon this Egyptian influence manifested itself in yet another literary form, to which A. Hermann has given the name *Königsnovelle*, or royal romance. In Egypt this is a reflection in literature of the concept of the divine, invincible king depicted in heroic style on the wall reliefs of many a temple. The pattern became a stereotyped one: first, the motivation is given for some royal activity, often of a ritual or military nature, and is frequently received through the medium of a dream; next, the king's plans are outlined to a gathering of courtiers and officials, who are usually sceptical or hesitant; and, finally, the exploit is successfully accomplished. In this way the myth of the divine might and majesty of the Pharaoh is portrayed.

The earliest known example belongs to the Twelfth Dynasty. It concerns the building of a temple to the god Atum at Heliopolis by Senwosret I (*BAR* i, §§ 501–6). Other examples which may be cited are the celebrated 'Sphinx stela' of Thutmose IV (*ANET* 449), the recital of Kamose's expulsion of the Hyksos preserved on the Carnarvon Tablet (*ANET* 232 f.), and the account of Thutmose III at the battle of Megiddo (*BAR* ii, 419–37).

It should occasion little wonder, then, when this literary convention turns up in Hebrew narratives of the reigns of David and Solomon.[1] The account of David's proposal to build a temple (*bayiṯ*) for Yahweh in 2 Sam. 7, resulting in the divine promise to build a *bayiṯ*, here in the sense of 'dynasty', for David, shows how the Hebrew religious genius skilfully adapted the form. The expression *ʾśś šēm gōḏōl* (vs. 9; in the parallel passage 1 Chr. 17: 8 the adjective is omitted) is particularly instructive, for it is an exact reproduction of the Egyptian phrase *irỉ rn* (*wr*), 'make a (great) name', the formula for proclaiming the royal titulary (*Urk.* iv. 261/13–262/1, 199/8).

In passing, we may note that this phrase, followed by the motif of the Egyptian fivefold titulary, is employed by the eloquent peasant in his first speech before the chief steward Rensi (*Peas.* B1, 64–8), as Ranke first pointed out. A similar rhetorical use of the motif in Hebrew literature has been demonstrated by Alt for Isa. 9: 2–7 [Heb. 1–6].[2]

A second instance of the royal romance in Hebrew sources concerns Solomon's dream (1 Kgs. 3: 4–15), and the subsequent demonstration of the divine gift of wisdom which he received. Perhaps the same form also underlies the account in 1 Kgs. 8: 1–5, 66.

It has been suggested that the custom of anointing kings on their accession in Syria-Palestine owes something to Egyptian practice.[3] The Biblical narratives recount the anointing of Saul, David, and Solomon, as well as Joash and Jehoahaz of Judah and Jehu of Israel.

[1] S. Herrmann, 'Die Königsnovelle in Ägypten und in Israel', *Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der Karl-Marx-Universität Leipzig, Gesellsch. und Sprachwiss. Reihe*, 3 (1953/4), 51–62.

[2] A. Alt, 'Jesaja 8,23–9,6. Befreiungsnacht und Krönungstag', *Festschrift Alfred Bertholet*, Tübingen, 1950, pp. 29–49; reprinted in *Kleine Schriften zur Geschichte des Volkes Israel*, ii, Munich, 1953, pp. 206–25.

[3] R. de Vaux, 'Le Roi d'Israël, vassal de Yahvé', *Mélanges Eugène Tisserant*, i, Rome, 1964, pp. 119–33.

The Pharaohs were not themselves anointed, but their officials and vassals were, as a sign of subjection to their overlord. Although explicit evidence for the anointing of officials in Egypt is scanty, it is none the less clear. A stela now in Florence, probably of the First Intermediate Period, describes the functionary Simentuwosre as 'one who anoints the officials in the house of the ruler' (No. 1765, 2). The only other written reference is in a lengthy demotic document of the reign of Psammetichus (Psamtik) I (664–609 B.C.) of the Twenty-sixth Dynasty, in which the 'Prophet' of Amūn Peteēse is 'taken before Pharaoh and anointed with lotus-oil' (*P. Ryl.* ix. 8/15). The ceremony is also recorded in scenes on tomb walls.

The anointing of Canaanite vassals is alluded to in a cuneiform letter from Addu-nirari to a Pharaoh, probably Akhenaten: 'When your grandfather Manakhpi(r)ya (Thutmose IV), King of Egypt, made my grandfather Ta[ku] king over Nukhasshe, and put oil on his head, he said the following: "As for him whom the King of [Egy]pt has made king, [and on whose head] he has put [oil], no one [may depose him]" ' (*EA* 51/4–9). Archaeological evidence is also forthcoming, since the tomb of a King of Byblos contained a handsome obsidian jar with gold inlay bearing the throne name of Amenemhet III. The traces clearly show that the oil this royal gift once contained had been slowly poured from it.

If the custom of anointing rulers in Syria-Palestine, which symbolized their position with respect to their Egyptian suzerain, was adopted by the Hebrews, they applied to it a new and most significant interpretation. For them it meant the recognition that their king was a vassal of Yahweh.

Egypt had long been renowned for her wisdom, as both Old and New Testaments affirm (1 Kgs. 4: 30 [Heb. 5: 10]; Acts 7: 22). She had a long tradition of didactic treatises designed for the edification of the sons of officials who were trained to enter government service. The earliest work of this nature to be mentioned in Egyptian sources is attributed to Imhotep, the

lebrated vizier of Djoser, first king of the Third Dynasty. This has not survived, but books of instruction by an unnamed vizier who wrote for his son Kagemni, also of the Third Dynasty, by Hardjedef of the Fourth Dynasty, and above all by Ptahhotpe of the Fifth Dynasty, are still extant. During the First Intermediate Period, Khety III of the Tenth Dynasty compiled such a work for his son and successor Merikarē. The New Kingdom produced two treatises, those of Any and Amenemope, and the demotic 'Instruction of ʿOnkhsheshonqy' and the Insinger papyrus show that this type of literature was still in vogue as late as the first century A.D.

Such works, entitled *sbʾyt*, 'teaching', in Egyptian, provided the material of instruction in the scribal schools, and were used to teach reading and writing, to inculcate rules of etiquette and ethical conduct, and to develop habits of correct speech. We have noted above that the tenth century, which witnessed the rapid development of the Israelite state under David and Solomon, was especially receptive to Egyptian influences, and perhaps saw the introduction of similar scribal schools.

By the end of the eighth century, after the fall of Samaria to Assyria, Hezekiah of Judah was once more the sole ruler of the Hebrew state. His reign was marked by a nationalist revival which looked back admiringly to the days of Solomon. It is not surprising that Egyptian influence once again became strong. We have alluded earlier to the presence of a pro-Egyptian party at this time which roused the ire of Isaiah (Isa. 19: 11 f.). The *ḥᵃḵōmīm*, 'wise men', do not emerge as a professional group until this time, when they are denounced by Isaiah (Isa. 29: 14). Scribal activity was certainly a mark of the period, according to Prov. 25: 1. Perhaps it would not be an exaggeration to describe Hezekiah as a patron of literature. It is worthy of note that Egypt also was experiencing an archaistic revival at the same time, beginning at least as early as Piankhi, and continuing throughout the Twenty-sixth Dynasty.

Hebrew literature is permeated with concepts and figures

derived from the didactic treatises of Egypt, as we shall demonstrate in a moment. Yet works of a similar nature, composed by a father for his son, were also produced in Mesopotamia. It is surely significant that, apart from the 'Wisdom of Ahiqar', they appear to have had little appreciable influence on the Old Testament, whereas Akkadian sources contributed much in the areas of law, theodicy, psalmody, and mythology.

The most striking example of borrowing from Egyptian texts is found in Prov. 22: 17 to 23: 14. This small collection within the Book of Proverbs bears a remarkable similarity to the 'Wisdom of Amenemope', to which reference has already been made. The existence of an ostracon containing a schoolboy's copy of a portion of the text is clear evidence of the fact that the original work is much earlier than the actual British Museum papyrus, which has been dated by some scholars as late as the sixth century B.C. The work may, indeed, be as early as the thirteenth century.[1] It is characterized by a high ethical tone and an emphasis on personal piety which is a mark of the late Nineteenth Dynasty.

We turn first to a bold simile in *Amenemope* (9/14–19, 10/4 f.):

> Do not exert yourself to seek gain,
> That your needs may be secure for you;
> If riches are brought to you by robbery,
> They will not spend the night with you;
> At daybreak they are not in your house;
> Their places can be seen, but they are not there! . . .
> They have made themselves wings like geese,
> And have flown towards the sky.

This is adapted in Prov. 23: 4 f. as follows:[2]

[1] The attempt of Drioton to make both 'Amenemope' and Prov. 22: 17–23: 14 dependent on a common Semitic source (*Mélanges bibliques . . . André Robert*, Paris, 1957, pp. 254–80; *Sacra Pagina*, Paris, 1959, i. 229–41) has been answered by the present writer (*JEA* xlvii (1961), 100–6) and B. Couroyer (*Revue biblique*, lxx (1963), 208–24).

[2] In vs. 4 read מִבִּינָתְךָ for מִבִּינָתֶךָ, and in vs. 5 probably עָשֹׁר should be substituted for עָשָׂה.

Do not toil to become rich;
Cease from your plundering!
Do your eyes light upon it?
It is gone!
For riches make themselves wings,
Like an eagle which flies to the sky.

The Hebrew adapter has substituted the eagle, or more accurately the griffon-vulture, a familiar bird in Palestine, for the Egyptian goose, which is unknown to the Old Testament.

Another instance of the substitution of a Palestinian figure for an Egyptian occurs in Prov. 22: 24 f.:

Do not be friendly with a hot-tempered man,
Nor go with a passionate man,
Lest you learn his ways,
And get a snare for yourself!

The snare is a well-known metaphor in Biblical literature (e.g. Isa. 8: 14; Prov. 18: 7; 29: 6; Ps. 106: 36), and here replaces the lasso, peculiar to Egypt, which appears in the parallel in *Amenemope* (11/13 f., 17 f.):

Do not fraternize with the passionate man,
Nor go too near him for conversation . . .
Do not make him cast his speech to lasso you,
Nor be too free with your answer.

Here we encounter the Egyptian concept of the *šmm*, 'passionate man', as contrasted with the *gr*, 'silent man'. This antithesis is found as early as the Old Kingdom, and refers to the unbridled, unrestrained man as opposed to the man of self-control. To render the Egyptian term *p3 šmm*, the Hebrew writer has coined the expression *'īš ḥēmōṭ* (appearing once more in Prov. 15: 18 as *'īš ḥēmō*). The natural Hebrew equivalent is *q'ṣar 'appayim* (cf. Prov. 14: 17).

Another passage from *Amenemope* reproduced in this section of Proverbs runs thus (3/9–16):

Give ear, hear what is said,
Set your mind to interpret them;
It is profitable to fix them in your mind,
But detrimental to him who ignores them.

Let them rest in the casket of your body,
That they may be a door-post in your mind;
Indeed, when there is a gale of speech,
They shall be a mooring-post for your tongue.

The Hebrew equivalent is found in Prov. 22: 17 f.:

Give ear, and hear my words,
Set your mind to know them;
For it is fine that you keep them within you,
That they be fixed as a tent-peg on your lips.

In vs. 17, as the Septuagint shows, *dibrē ḥ'kōmīm*, 'the words of the wise', is a misplaced title, having taken the place of the original *d'bārāy*, 'my words'.[1]

This is not the only place where the Egyptian document has suggested a superior reading for the Hebrew text. In Prov. 22: 20 a strange form[2] appears, which has perplexed generations of scholars. The puzzle was finally solved when the concluding lines of *Amenemope* were examined (27/7–10):

Observe these thirty chapters:
They divert; they instruct;
They constitute the foremost of all books;
They inform the ignorant.

The work is indeed divided into thirty numbered chapters. Erman was the first to realize that the enigmatic Hebrew word should be read simply as *š'lōšīm*, 'thirty', and the Biblical verse rendered:

Have I not written thirty (sayings) for you,
Consisting of sensible counsels?

[1] On the basis of the Egyptian passage, the unlikely word יַחְדָּו, 'together', in vs. 18, has been emended to כָּ(יָ)תוּד.
[2] שְׁלִשֹׁום.

Scholars have pointed out that, if the introduction, consisting of 22: 17–21, be excluded, the remainder of the collection consists of thirty distich lines. This was undoubtedly an attempt to conform to the pattern of the earlier work.

The influence of the 'Wisdom of Amenemope' is not confined to this section of the Book of Proverbs. In the former we read (19/14–17):

> The god is (always) given to success,
> While mankind is given to failure;
> The words which men say are one thing,
> The things which the god does are another.

As early as the Old Kingdom the sage Ptahhotpe had said (*Ptah.* 115 f.):

> The plans [lit. preparations] of men have never come about;
> It is what the god ordains that comes about.

His maxim became proverbial, for centuries later it was quoted on a stela of the Twenty-fifth Dynasty (*Urk.* iii. 72/33). The same sentiment was also expressed a little before Amenemope in the 'Instruction of Any' (8/10):

> Their [i.e. men's] plans are one thing;
> (Those of) the Lord of life are different.

Finally, the demotic 'Instruction of ʿOnkhsheshonqy', of the Ptolemaic period, shows how persistent this belief was (26/14):

> The designs [lit. calculations] of the god are one thing;
> The thoughts of men are another.

In these passages we find the earliest expression in literature of the dictum of Thomas à Kempis, *Homo proposuit, sed Deus disponit*, or 'man proposes, but God disposes'. The sentiment is to be found in Prov. 16: 9 (cf. also 19: 21; 20: 24):

> Man's mind plans his way,
> But Yahweh directs his steps.

Another passage in *Amenemope* which is echoed in Biblical literature is the following (19/11–13):

> Do not pass the night fearful of the morrow;
> When day dawns, what is the morrow like?
> Man is ignorant of what the morrow is like.

Again Ptahhotpe has anticipated the thought. One version runs, 'No one knows what may happen when he (tries to) perceive the morrow' (*Ptah.* 343); another, 'There is no one who knows his [or its] plans when he thinks about the morrow' (*Ptah.* 345). This too became a proverb which was later quoted in the Ramessid age (*P. Ram.* i. B i. 6 f.). In the well-known tale from the First Intermediate Period, the eloquent peasant says: 'Do not prepare for the morrow before it comes, for no one knows what trouble may be in it' (*Peas.*, B i. 183).

A similar sentiment is expressed in a series of maxims preserved on a New Kingdom ostracon: 'Do not prepare yourself on this day for tomorrow before it comes. Is yesterday not like tomorrow in the hands of god?' (*O. Petrie* 11, *rt.* 1). Compare with this Prov. 27: 1:

> Do not boast about tomorrow,
> Because you do not know what the day will bring forth.

Still later versions of this saying in the New Testament will quickly spring to mind (Matt. 6: 34; Jas. 4: 14).

A very fine simile concerning the silent and the passionate man forms the fourth chapter of *Amenemope* (6/1–12):

> As for the passionate man in a temple,
> He is like a tree growing in a courtyard:
> In but a moment (comes) its loss of foliage,
> And its end is reached in the timber-yard [?];
> It is floated far from its place,
> And the flame is its burial shroud.
>
> The truly silent man keeps to one side;
> He is like a tree growing in a plot [?].

It is verdant, and doubles its yield,
And (remains) before its owner;
Its fruit is sweet, its shade pleasant,
And its end is reached in the grove.

This would appear to have been the source of Jer. 17: 5–8, a passage composed at a period when Egyptian influence was strongly in evidence. The theme turns up again in the Psalter (Pss. 1; 92: 12–15 [Heb. 13–16]).

An Egyptian milieu is also apparent in Prov. 25: 23: 'The north wind brings forth rain; a secretive tongue, a vexed countenance.' As is well known, the winds which produce rain in Palestine come from the west (cf. 1 Kgs. 18: 41 ff.; Luke 12: 54). It is in Egypt that such rains blow from the north.

The Book of Job has affinities with Mesopotamian literature, for it was there that the problem of theodicy first found expression. However, there are traces of Egyptian influence even here. Apart from references to papyrus and marsh reeds (8: 11) and reed skiffs (9: 26) in the dialogue, the clearest evidence comes from the later portions of the work. In Job's monologue (29–31) we encounter the phoenix (29: 18) and ostriches (30: 29). The description of Job's philanthropy in 29: 12–17 recalls the tomb inscriptions and stelae from the Old Kingdom. In the Sixth Dynasty, Harkhuf of Elephantine writes: 'I gave bread to the hungry, clothing to the naked; I brought to land him who had no ferry-boat' (*Urk.* i. 122/6–8; cf. 133/2 f.). The eloquent peasant, during the Tenth Dynasty, addressed the chief steward Rensi thus: 'You are a father to the orphan, a husband to the widow, a brother to the divorcee, an apron to the motherless' (*Peas.*, B1, 62–4). The same statements continue into the Ptolemaic period, as the stela of Ta-Hebt shows (line 15). Job 31 calls to mind the 'Affirmation of Innocence' contained in Chapter 125 of the 'Book of the Dead' (*ANET* 34–6).

The Yahweh Speeches (38–42) also refer to Egyptian fauna, the ostrich, crocodile, and hippopotamus. The survey of natural

phenomena in Chs. 38–9 has been compared by von Rad to the 'Onomastica', lists of birds, animals, plants, minerals, meteorological and geographical terms, compiled for the use of Egyptian scribes.[1] Babylonian scribes also composed similar lexicographical lists, but the great ḪAR-ra-*ḫubullu* has quite a different arrangement. The impressive series of questions by which the Deity interrogates Job is reminiscent of the teacher's sarcastic cross-examination of a pupil contained in Pap. Anastasi i (*ANET* 475–9) of the Nineteenth Dynasty.

The *carpe diem* motif appearing in Ecclesiastes (2: 24 f.; 3: 12 f., 22; 5: 18 f.; 9: 7–9) finds parallels in Egyptian literature. The earliest are to be found in the Harpers' Songs, one of which (*Khai-Inheret*, 10–2, 15 f.) counsels:

Make holiday, in very truth!
Put both incense and fine oil by you,
Wreaths of lotus and *rrmt*-flowers on your breast.
The woman whom you love,
She it is who sits beside you. . . .
Set your mind on drunkenness every day,
Till that day comes when there is mooring.

This text is carved on a tomb of the time of Ramesses III, but other versions go back to the Eighteenth Dynasty. The theme survived in Egypt for many centuries, so that in the tomb of Petosiris, from the end of the fourth century B.C., we read: 'Drink and be drunken; do not cease from festivity. Follow your desires while you are on earth. . . . When a man goes, his possessions go' (127/3 f.). The funerary stela of Taimhotep, dated 42 B.C., runs: 'May your heart not weary of eating or drinking, of drunkenness or the joys of love! Make holiday and follow your desire always. Do not set care in your mind' (*B.M. Stela* 146).

Early in the Twelfth Dynasty the renowned scribe Khety, son of Dwauf, composed a teaching addressed to his son Pepy (*ANET*

[1] G. von Rad, 'Hiob xxxviii und die altägyptische Weisheit', in *Suppl. Vet. Test.* iii, Leyden, 1955, pp. 293–301.

432–4). In this he developed a new genre, the satire on the trades, in which various occupations are described and contrasted unfavourably with the noble office of the scribe. As might be expected, the theme became a very popular one in the scribal schools, and during the New Kingdom many imitators rang the changes on it (e.g. *P. Lansing*, *P. Anastasi* v, *P. Sallier* i). It was natural that a Hebrew teacher of Wisdom, acquainted with this literary tradition, should adapt it for his own use. Thus it was that Jesus ben Sira, about 190 B.C., incorporated it into his book (38:24 – 39:11).

The Egyptians showed a particular aptitude for lyric poetry. This found its finest expression in several collections of love songs from the later New Kingdom (*P. Harris* 500, *P. Ch. Beatty* i, and a papyrus in Turin; cf. *ANET* 467–9). An excellent example is the following (*P. Ch. Beatty* i. *vs.* C4/6–C5/2):

> Seven days till yesterday I have not seen (my) sister,
> And illness has assailed me;
> I have become heavy of body,
> Forgetful of my own person.
> If the leading physicians come to me,
> My mind is displeased with their medicines;
> The lector-priests are without resource,
> And my illness cannot be determined.
> To tell me, 'Here she is!' is what will revive me,
> Her name is what will elate me.
> The coming and going of her messengers
> Is what will revive my spirit.
> My sister is of more use to me than any medicines;
> She is more to me than the medical corpus.
> My health is her coming in from outside;
> The sight of her leads to fitness.
> She opens her eye, and my body is rejuvenated,
> She speaks, and then I am invigorated.
> When I embrace her, she drives evil far from me—
> But she has been gone from me for seven days!

This gift for lyricism, which was not characteristic of Akkadian literature, was transmitted to the Hebrews. Although the latter did not preserve much literature that might be regarded as secular, some of their love poetry has survived in the Biblical collection known as the Song of Songs. The marked resemblance of these poems to their Egyptian counterparts is unmistakable. With the above song, for instance, we might compare S. of S. 2:5 and 5:8. The Egyptian custom of employing the terms 'brother' and 'sister' for one's beloved is reflected also in the Hebrew work (4:9–12; 5:1 f.).

It is probable that Israel owed as much to Mesopotamia as to Egypt in the area of hymnology, but her debt to the latter civilization was by no means inconsiderable. Indeed, literary dependence on the great Hymn to Aten (*ANET* 369–71) has been claimed for Ps. 104. It cannot be denied that the similarity is impressive between this psalm and the hymn which was composed in the reign of the heretic king Akhenaten (*c.* 1365–1348 B.C.). Three examples must suffice. In the first, the terrors of darkness when Aten, the sun-god, has withdrawn himself are described (*Bibl. aeg.* viii. 93/17–94/3):

> When thou dost set in the western horizon,
> The earth is in darkness, like to death.
> Men sleep in a bed-chamber, their heads covered,
> One eye unable to behold the other.
> Were all their goods beneath their heads stolen,
> They would be unaware of it.
> Every lion has come forth from his lair;
> All the reptiles bite.
> Darkness prevails, and the earth is in silence,
> Since he who made them rests in his horizon.

This is paralleled by Ps. 104:20 f.:

> Thou appointest darkness, that it may be night,
> In which all the beasts of the forest prowl:
> The young lions roaring for their prey,
> To seek their food from God.

A little further on in the hymn we read (*Bibl. aeg.* viii. 94/8–10):

Ships sail up and down stream alike,
Since every route is open at thine appearing.
The fish in the river leap before thee,
For thy rays are in the midst of the sea.

With this we must compare Ps. 104: 25 f.:

Here is the great and vast sea,
Wherein are teeming masses without number,
Living things both great and small.
There the ships go,
Leviathan which thou didst create to play in it.

Finally, the Egyptian poet declares (*Bibl. aeg.* viii. 94/16 f.):

How manifold is that which thou hast made, hidden from view!
Thou sole god, there is no other like thee!
Thou didst create the earth according to thy will, being alone.

Ps. 104: 24 similarly affirms:

How manifold are thy works, O Yahweh!
All of them thou hast made by wisdom,
The earth is full of thy creations.

It must be admitted, however, that it is difficult to see how the psalmist could have been familiar with the Hymn to Aten. The latter composition, written more than 500 years earlier, was the product of a religious movement which later ages anathematized and sought to obliterate from their memory. For the text we are dependent on a single copy carved on the wall of the tomb of Ay at (Tell) El-Amarna. Is the resemblance, then, purely fortuitous?

The answer is to be found in the fact that, despite the rapid eclipse of Atenism, its influence lived on in art and literature. Just as the Aten hymn itself owed much to the earlier hymns to Amon-Rē, so later Egyptian sun-hymns incorporated ideas and phrases from that of Akhenaten. Dramatic proof of this is found in the tomb of Petosiris, constructed in the late fourth century B.C. Text No. 60, as Lefebvre has pointed out, echoes passages of the Aten hymns contained in this very Amarna tomb of Ay

A further example of the same influence may be cited in Ps. 34: 12 [Heb. 13]:

Who is the man who desires life,
Craving (many) days in order to enjoy good?

This can hardly be other than a reproduction of the line which occurs in a text inscribed in the same tomb at (Tell) El-Amarna: *i ꜥ nb mr ʿnḫ ṯbt ḥrw nfr*, 'O every one who loves life, desiring a long life of good' (*Bibl. aeg.* viii. 99/16).[1]

Before leaving the subject of psalmody, we should draw attention to the fact that here too Biblical literature has exercised an influence on that of Egypt. The tomb of Petosiris, High Priest of Amon-Rē at Hermopolis, to which we have already alluded on several occasions, is inscribed with a great body of texts. Earlier we noted that one contains the Hebraic expression 'fear of god'. Lefebvre, who edited the texts, has shown that No. 61 also betrays Jewish influence, especially from Ps. 128.

We have now passed in review the evidences for Egyptian influence on the Hebrews in the political, economic, linguistic, and literary spheres. We should expect to find at least as great a debt on the part of Israel in the area of religion. This would appear to be all the more likely in view of the adoption of Canaanite deities such as Astarte, Anath, Qadesh, Resheph, Horon, and even the title Baal, into the Egyptian pantheon. The remarkable fact is that the Egyptian contribution here is but negligible.

It has long been held by some scholars that Hebrew monotheism owed its origin to the Atenist heresy of Akhenaten. We have observed above that this religious movement soon disappeared after the death of Akhenaten, when the Egyptians assiduously attempted to expunge all traces of it. But far more disastrous to this theory is the fact that Atenism was probably not monotheistic at all. The introductory lines of the Hymn to Aten itself equate

[1] B. Couroyer, 'Idéal sapientiel en Égypte et en Israël (à propos du Psaume xxxiv, verset 13)', *Revue biblique*, lvii (1950), 174–9.

Aten with the deities Rē, Rē-Harakhti, and Shu. The line from the same hymn quoted above, 'Thou sole god, there is no other like thee' (*Bibl. aeg.* viii. 94/17), has been cited as testimony for such a monotheism. Yet the earlier Hymn to Amūn (*ANET* 365–7), which all scholars would accept as the product of a polytheistic faith, addresses the god Amon-Rē with crass tautology as 'The only sole one, who has no peer' (8/5), or again (6/2 f.):

> Thou art the sole one, who madest [every]thing,
> The only sole one, who madest what exists.

It is quite evident that this has become a mere literary cliché and is not to be taken literally. Similar sentiments are expressed in the polytheistic sun-hymns from the post-Amarna period (such as *P. Ch. Beatty* iv. *rt.* and *P. Leiden* 350). They arise from the syncretistic and universalistic tendencies which mark the Empire period, and at the most could be described only as incipient monotheism. We can hardly do more than employ the term monolatry even for Atenism.

A Hebrew doctrine which may owe something to Egyptian sources is that of the creation of man in the image of God (Gen. 1: 26 f.; 5: 1; 9: 6; cf. 1 Cor. 11: 7; Jas. 3: 9). Attempts to show a dependence on Babylonian mythology are most unconvincing. However, in a work of the Tenth Dynasty in which the sun-god Rē is described as a beneficent creator, we read: 'They [i.e. mankind] are his likenesses [*snnw*] who have come forth from his body' (*Merikarē*, 132). The concept appears again in the New Kingdom. At the end of the 'Instruction of Any', in a lively exchange of letters between Any and his son, the latter writes: 'Men are in the image [*sn-nw*, lit. second] of the god (because of) their custom of hearing a man in regard to his reply. It is not the wise alone who is in his image [*sn-nw*], while the multitude are dumb beasts' (*Any*, 10/8 f.). Later still, during the Twenty-fifth Dynasty, Taharqa's sister Shepenwepet is described in a text at Karnak as the 'image' (*tỉt*) of the god Rē (*Rec. Tr.* xxii [1900], 128).

In the text just mentioned Rē is called *mnỉw nfr n rḫyt*, 'good shepherd of the people'. This is a common figure in Egyptian texts, going back to the First Intermediate Period. The sage Ipuwēr says of Rē: 'He is the shepherd of everyone, in whose mind there is no evil. His herds are diminished, (yet) he has certainly spent the day caring for them' (*Ipuwēr*, 12/1). Mankind is referred to as 'this noble flock' (*P. Westc.* 8/17), and Merikarē says: 'Men, the flock of the god [i.e. Rē], are (well) provided for' (*Merikarē*, 130 f.). In the New Kingdom sun-hymns Rē is spoken of as a good shepherd who is tireless, capable, and loving (*P. Ch. Beatty* iv. *rt* 3/4, 4/3, 10, 7/9, 8/6; cf. *B.M. Stela* 826, lines 7 and 11). The Biblical parallels are obvious (Isa. 40: 11; Mic. 2: 12; Jer. 31: 10; Ezek. 34: 11 ff.; Pss. 23: 1; 78: 52; 80: 1 [Heb. 2]; 95: 7, etc.). However, it should be noted that Mesopotamian texts also occasionally employ the word *rē'ū*, 'shepherd', in speaking of the gods, although it is much more commonly used with reference to human rulers.

During the First Intermediate Period in Egypt, the idea emerged of a final judgement of the deceased. Somewhat later Osiris became the final judge of all men. In the later copies of the 'Book of the Dead', vignettes frequently portray the scene of psychostasia, in which the heart of the deceased is weighed in the scales against *ma'at*, 'truth', 'justice', 'righteousness', while Anubis and Thoth preside over the proceedings (Pl. 18). The Hebrew belief in a doctrine of immortality is late, however, and consequently the idea of a final judgement does not appear before the second century B.C. (Dan. 7: 10; 12: 1–3; Enoch 47: 3; 90: 20 ff.; Heb. 9: 27; 1 John 4: 17; Jude 6; Rev. 20: 4, 12–15). However, a few earlier passages in the Old Testament may reflect Egyptian ideas concerning psychostasia (Job 31: 6; Prov. 16: 2; 21: 2; 24: 12). Certainly the motif of scales in which the good and evil deeds of men are weighed in the final judgement appears in later Jewish writings (Enoch 41: 1; 61: 8; 2 Esd. 3: 34; Apoc. of Elias 13: 13 f.).

It does not fall within the scope of this chapter to trace the further contributions of Egypt to the development of early Christianity. Nevertheless, enough has been said to show that Hebrew culture did not emerge in a vacuum, but was subjected to influences from many quarters, not the least of which came from the valley of the Nile.

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11

THE CONCEPT OF LAW IN ANCIENT EGYPT[1]

In daring to speak of 'law' in ancient Egypt one tends to lay oneself open to a number of criticisms. In the opinion of some authorities it is nonsense to talk of law before it was elaborated by the Romans, and this view, which holds for the whole of the ancient Orient, applies particularly to Egypt owing to the lack of documentary evidence. We have, after all, collections of Sumerian, Akkadian, Hittite, and Neo-Babylonian laws—but nothing of the kind from Egypt. Even documents relating to legal practice are rare, and the few traces that are preserved are in religious contexts, thus encouraging the theory, so dear to sociologists, of the progressive *désacralisation* of institutions, a process completed only in the classical era. Moreover, in their legal deeds the Egyptians use everyday language with the addition of only a few technical terms, and even these had several applications and were frequently imprecise, giving rise to suspicion of a lack of clarity in their concepts. The problem is thus, in short, to determine whether they had really progressed beyond a vague legal empiricism.

[1] In the present chapter I have tried to give an over-all picture of the legal and judicial institutions of ancient Egypt and their evolution, having regard to the historical background and endeavouring wherever possible to include and analyse extracts from actual documents. A more detailed study of the law of the Old Kingdom is to be found in J. Pirenne, *Histoire des institutions et du droit privé de l'ancienne Égypte*, and a systematic account of the material, with a precise chronological summary of the sources, in the various works of Erwin Seidl dealing with pharaonic Egypt (see the Bibliography). In the following notes, *RIDA* = *Revue internationale des droits de l'antiquité*.

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The Decalogue of the Egyptian Bible << The Book of the Dead >>

Chapter 125

The Judgment of the Dead

The declaration of innocence

(1) To be said on reaching the Hall of the Two Truths[1] so as to urge N of any sins committed and to see the face of every god:

Hail to you, great God, Lord of the Two Truths!
I have come to you, my Lord,
I was brought to see your beauty.
I know you, I know the names of the forty-two gods,[2]
Who are with you in the Hall of the Two Truths,
Who live by warding off evildoers,
Who drink of their blood,
On that day (5) of judging characters before Wennofer.[3]
Lo, your name is "He-of-Two-Daughters,"
(And) "He-of-Maat's-Two-Eyes."
Lo, I come before you,
Bringing Maat to you,
Having repelled evil for you.

I have not done crimes against people,
I have not mistreated cattle,
I have not sinned in the Place of Truth.[4]
I have not known what should not be known,[5]
I have not done any harm.
I did not begin a day by exacting more than my due,
My name did not reach the bark of the mighty ruler.
I have not blasphemed (10) a god,
I have not robbed the poor.
I have not done what the god abhors,
I have not maligned a servant to his master.
I have not caused pain,
I have not caused tears.
I have not killed,
I have not ordered to kill,
I have not made anyone suffer.
I have not damaged the offerings in the temples,
I have not depleted the loaves of the gods,
I have not stolen (15) the cakes of the dead.
I have not copulated nor defiled myself.
I have not increased nor reduced the measure,
I have not diminished the arura,
I have not cheated in the fields.
I have not added to the weight of the balance,
I have not falsified the plummet of the scales.
I have not taken milk from the mouth of children,
I have not deprived cattle of their pasture.
I have not snared birds in the reeds of the gods,
I have not caught fish in their ponds.
I have not held back water in its season,
I have not dammed a flowing stream,
I have not quenched a needed (20) fire.
I have not neglected the days of meat offerings,
I have not detained cattle belonging to the god,
I have not stopped a god in his procession.
I am pure, I am pure, I am pure, I am pure!
I am pure as is pure that great heron in Hnes.
I am truly the nose of the Lord of Breath,
Who sustains all the people,
On the day of completing the Eye[6] in On,
In the second month of winter, last day,
In the presence of the lord of this land.
I have seen the completion of the Eye in On!
No evil shall befall me in this land,
In this Hall of the Two Truths;
For I know the names of the gods in it,
The followers of the great God!

The Address to the Gods

Hail to you, gods!
I know you, I know your names.
I shall not fall in fear of you,
You shall not accuse me of crime to this god whom you follow!
(5) No misfortune shall befall me on your account!
You shall speak rightly about me before the All-Lord,
For I have acted rightly in Egypt.
I have not cursed a god,
I have not been faulted.
Hail to you, gods in the Hall of the Two Truths,
Who have no lies in their bodies,
Who live on *maat* in On,
Who feed on their rightness before Horus in his disk.
Rescue me from Babi, who feeds on the entrails of nobles,
On that day of the great reckoning.
Behold me, I have come to you,
Without sin, without guilt, without evil,
Without a witness against me,
Without one whom I have wronged.
I live (10) on *maat*, I feed on *maat*,
I have done what people speak of,
What the gods are pleased with,
I have contented a god with what he wishes.
I have given bread to the hungry,
Water to the thirsty,
Clothes to the naked,
A ferryboat to the boatless.
I have given divine offerings to the gods,
Invocation-offerings to the dead.
Rescue me, protect me,
Do not accuse me before the great god!

I am one pure of mouth, pure of hands,
One to whom "welcome" is said by those who see him;
For I have heard the words spoken by the Donkey and the Cat,
In the house of the Open-mouthed;
I was a witness before him when he cried out,
I saw the splitting of the *ished*-tree in (15) Rostau.
I am one who is acquainted with the gods,
One who knows what concerns them.
I have come here to bear witness to *maat*,

Kemetic Imago Dei doctrine

Bible, Genesis 1, 26-27:
"Then God said: 'Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness'..."

1. **The Four Primordial Deeds of Creation**
   (from The Coffin Texts, 1130 and 1031)
   The Coffin texts were widely written during the Middle kingdom (20th century B.C.), but their ideas were developed earlier and were widespread during the 3rd millennium B.C (in the Pyramid Texts, for example)

Words spoken by Him-whose-names-are –hidden, the All-Lord, as he speaks before those who silence the storm, in the sailing of the court: Hail in peace! I repeat to you the good deeds which my own heart did for me within the serpent-coil, in order to silence strife. I did four good deeds within the portal of lightland:
I made the four winds, that every man might breathe in his time
I made the great inundation, that the humble might benefit by it like the great;
I made every man like his fellow; and I did not command that they do wrong.
It is their hearts that disobey what I have said.
I have created the gods from my sweat, and the people from the tears of my eye.

2. Instruction to King Merikare (21st century B.C.)

Well tended is mankind - God's cattle
He made sky and earth for their sake,
He subdued the water monster,
He made breath for their nose to live.
They are his images, who came from his body,
He shines in the sky for their sake;
He made for them plants and cattle,
Fowl and fish to feed them...
He makes daylight for their sake,
He sails by to see them.
He has built his shrine around them,
When they weep he hears.
He made for them rulers in the egg,
Leaders to raise the back of the weak.
He made for them magic as weapons
To ward off the blow of events,
Guarding them by day and by night.
He has slain the traitors among them,
As a man beats his son for his brother's sake,
For God knows every name...

(23)

The Spirit of African Religion:

Egyptian religious Ethic



Divine Nature and equality of All Human Beings
(Instructions to King Merikare)

Well tended is mankind - God's cattle
He made sky and earth for their sake,
He subdued the water monster,
He made breath for their nose to live.
They are his images, who came from his body.
He made for them plants and cattle,
Fowl and fish to feed them.
He makes daylight for their sake,
He sails by to see them.
He has built his shrine around them,
When they weep he hears.
He made for them rulers in the egg,
Leaders to raise the back of the weak
He made for them magic as weapons
To ward off the blow of events,
Guarding them by day and by night.
He has slain the traitors among them,
As a man beats his son for his brother's sake,
For God knows every name.

Don't be evil, kindness is good
Respect the nobles, sustain your people
Do justice, then you endure on earth;
Calm the weeper, don't oppress the widow
Don't expel a man from his father's property
Beware of punishing wrongfully,
Do not kill
Do not prefer the wellborn to the commoner,
Choose a man on account of his skills
Do not build your tomb out of ruins.



24 ~ ~~STF~~

Norbert Lohfink on Biblical tradition of "Social Justice"

For almost a century, biblical scholars and Egyptologists who compared Biblical texts and the literature of ancient "Near East," specifically Sapiential literature, government ethic, business ethic, and the rights of the poor, the widow and the orphan proclaimed in the book of Exodus, Isaiah and Amos, have constantly pointed out that Biblical concepts of human dignity and human rights did not emerge in a vacuum.

In his study of the rights of the poor in ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia, the Jesuit biblical scholar Norbert Lohfink was so struck by the high moral standards of these ancient civilizations that he concluded,

> *The gods listened to the cry of the poor, especially the sun god. According to the affection people had toward the poor, the gods blessed them or cursed them. The force of this theme is so strong that, after spending some time with this kind of text and then returning to the study of the Bible, it seemed difficult to me to find there anything not already known from other sources. Nearly every motif, even the words, seemed to be part of a common heritage.*

Lohfink, Norbert, "Poverty in the Laws of the Ancient Near East and of the Bible" in *Theological Studies*, march 1991, vol.52, N0.1; p.35.