



THE  
EGYPTIAN ORIGINS  
OF  
KING DAVID  
AND THE  
TEMPLE *of* SOLOMON



AHMED OSMAN





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Bear & Company  
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*To the followers of Hermes Trismegistus—those people,  
in different parts of the world, who never forgot the  
wisdom of ancient Egypt.*



My gratitude to Kayla Toher and Richard Smoley for  
their help in preparing the manuscript for publication.

# THE EGYPTIAN ORIGINS OF KING DAVID AND THE TEMPLE *of* SOLOMON

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“No one since Sigmund Freud has done more to show the connection between ancient Egypt’s Amarna period and the biblical stories of Joseph, Moses, and the Exodus. Ahmed Osman now provides compelling new evidence showing the true roots behind the establishment of the kingdom of Israel and the building of the Temple of Solomon.”

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“Ahmed Osman has discovered an intriguing back door into biblical history. Walking the tightrope between skeptical archaeologists and true believers of the Bible, the author asks a compelling question: Did Hebrew scribes attribute the military victories of an Egyptian pharaoh to David, the famous slayer of Goliath?”

RAND AND ROSE FLEM-ATH, AUTHORS OF *THE MURDER OF  
MOSES: HOW AN EGYPTIAN MAGICIAN ASSASSINATED MOSES,  
STOLE HIS IDENTITY, AND HIJACKED THE EXODUS*

*Israel is the illegitimate son of Egypt,  
Who challenges his father to accept him.*

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## David's Empire

AS WE HAVE SEEN, there is no evidence to support the view that an empire stretching from the Nile to the Euphrates was founded in the early years of the tenth century BCE. Indeed, no such empire can be said to have been created between the time of Pharaoh Tuthmosis III in the fifteenth century BCE and the second half of the sixth century BCE, when Cyrus of Persia conquered both Mesopotamia and Egypt. Scholars have therefore had to explain—or rather explain away—the story of David's empire by saying that the biblical narrator simply invented it to aggrandize an important biblical figure.

### DAVID'S TRUE IDENTITY

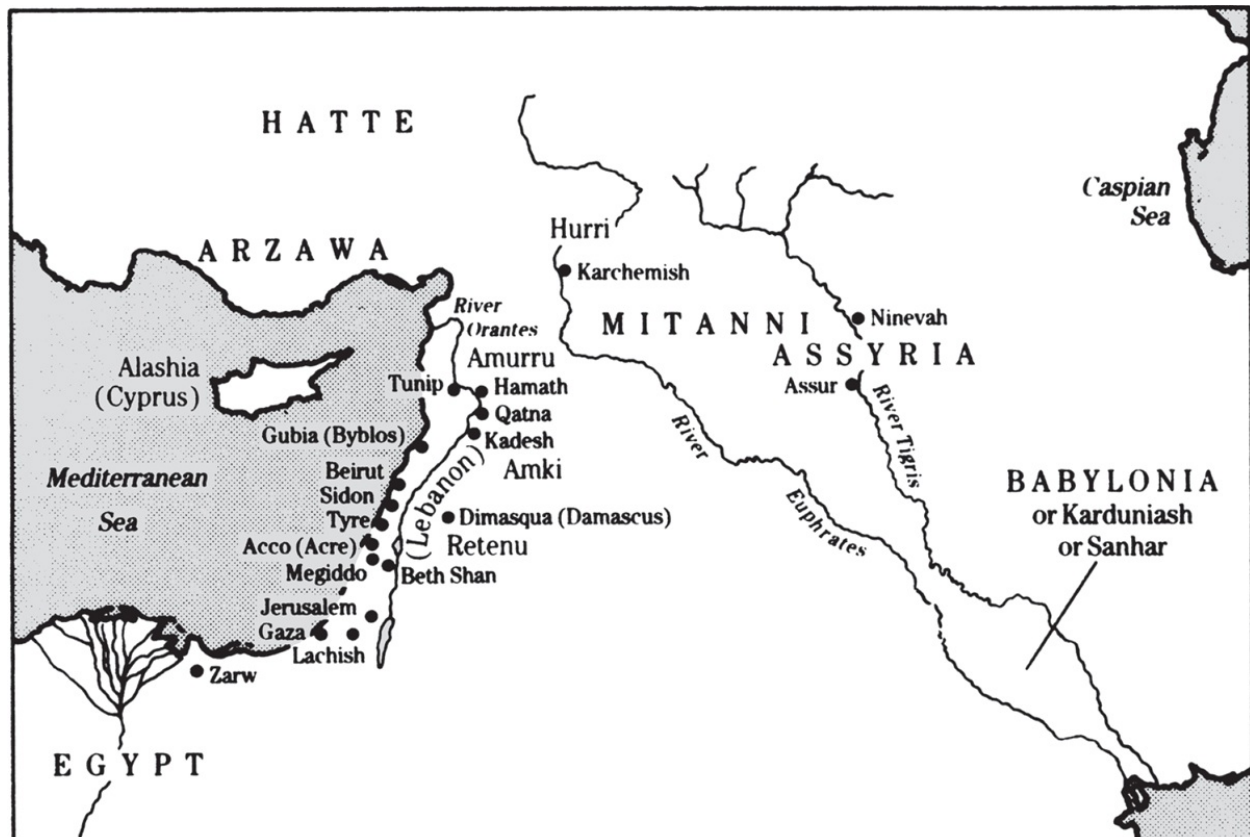
Although archaeologists have found no evidence to confirm the existence of David's empire in the tenth century BCE, they did find evidence of this same empire, only in a different time. It was established five centuries earlier than David's time by Pharaoh Tuthmosis III.

The Bible is notoriously suspect in its chronological sequences of events, doubtless as a result of the many centuries when its stories were passed down by word of mouth. Nevertheless, although the order in which they occurred is muddled in places, the account of David's wars as found in 2 Samuel is clearly dealing with the same events that are inscribed in the annals of Tuthmosis III recorded at Karnak. Attempting to conceal the early relationship between the tribes of Israel and pharaonic Egypt, the biblical scribes amalgamated the stories of two characters—one a warrior king who lived in the fifteenth century BCE, the other a tribal chief who lived five centuries later—to create the story of King David.

When we compare the Egyptian account of Tuthmosis III's wars in the Levant with the biblical account of David's wars, we can clearly see the similarities. First of all, 2 Samuel 8:3 tells us that David went to "recover his border at the river Euphrates," but the Bible gives us no account of David, or any



Israelite leader, whose border extended to the Mesopotamian river. When Tuthmosis III went out to fight in the Levant, however, he did so precisely in order to recover his border at the Euphrates. Following the long, peaceful reign of Queen Hatshepsut of the Eighteenth Dynasty, Egypt realized that it had lost the empire that had been established earlier by Tuthmosis I. As soon as Tuthmosis III succeeded Hatshepsut, he went out to recover Egypt's lost borders in the Levant—up to the Euphrates.



*The empire of Tuthmosis III between the Nile and the Euphrates rivers, which would be used by Hebrew authors to describe the empire of King David*

The account of Tuthmosis III's wars at the Karnak temple, copied from the daily records of the scribe who accompanied the army on its campaigns, provides considerable light on the nature of David's alleged wars from Egyptian historical sources. They show how the events of Tuthmosis's reign were adapted by Hebrew scribes for the reign of David five centuries later. They reveal the significance of the battleground of Megiddo. They show how Jerusalem came to be known as the "royal" city of David and how David brought up the Ark (boat)

of the Lord to Jerusalem (2 Samuel 6:1). They also uncover the origins of the name *Zion*, which has not been found in any historical source and makes its first appearance in the Bible with David's entry into Jerusalem: "David captured the fortress of Zion, the city of David" (2 Samuel 5:7).

## **TUTHMOSIS'S CAMPAIGN IN CANAAN**

The Egyptian account begins with Tuthmosis III's departure at the head of his troops from the fortified border city of Zarw in northern Sinai during the last days of year 22 of his reign. Ten days later he arrived in Gaza, where he celebrated the start of his year 23 (1468 BCE) with festivals in honour of his "father," the god Amun-Ra, whose image he carried inside an ark at the head of the marching army. He stayed there for the night before pushing north toward central Canaan, where he paused in a town called Yehem to the south of a mountainous ridge he had to cross in order to reach Megiddo, where the Qadeshite (Syrian) enemy had gathered. At Yehem he was faced with a choice of three routes, but the shortest, called the Aruna road, was narrow and dangerous, so he summoned a council of war.

The king's officers were opposed to choosing the Aruna route. They said: "How can one go on this road which is so narrow? It is reported that the enemy stand outside, and have become numerous. Will not horse have to go behind horse, and soldiers and people likewise? Shall our own vanguard be fighting while the rear stands here in Aruna [the starting point of the narrow road] and does not fight?" However, in the light of fresh reports brought in by messengers, Tuthmosis III decided that he would make his way to Megiddo by the unappealing—but to his enemies unexpected—narrow road, a choice to which his officers replied: "Thy father Amun prosper thy counsel. . . . The servant will follow his master."<sup>1</sup> Thus the scene was set for the first battle of Megiddo.

In his assault upon Megiddo, Tuthmosis III marched at the head of the narrow mountainous road from Aruna, with the image of Amun leading the way. When he eventually emerged into the valley southeast of the city, he could see that the enemy forces had been divided (just as in the biblical account of the attack on Rabbah). Having apparently expected him to take one of the two broader roads available to him, one group had been stationed at Taanach to the south and the other nearer to the walls of Megiddo. As a result of his unexpected choice of route, Tuthmosis and his troops appeared on the scene between them. On the advice of his officers, the king encamped for two days while he waited

for the rear echelon of his army to arrive. Then, having divided his army into separate units, he attacked: “His Majesty set forth in a chariot of fine gold, adorned with his accoutrements of combat, like Horus, the Mighty of Arm, a lord of action like Montu (Egyptian god of war), the Theban, while his father Amun made strong his arm. The southern wing of His Majesty’s army was at a hill south of [the] Kina [brook], and the northern was to the north-west of Megiddo, while His Majesty was in their centre, Amun being the protection of his person.”<sup>2</sup>

The Egyptian forces prevailed in the ensuing battle, and the kings opposed to Tuthmosis fled to the sanctuary of fortified Megiddo, where, as the gates of the city had been shut, they were hauled to safety by citizens who let down “garments to hoist them up.” The account of the battle complains that the enemy had “abandoned their horses and their chariots of gold and silver” and “if only His Majesty’s army had not given up their hearts to capturing the possessions of the enemy, they would [have captured] Megiddo at this time.”<sup>3</sup> Instead they had to lay siege to the city for seven months, the occupants having surrounded it with a protective ditch and fence: “They measured [this] city, which was corralled with a moat and enclosed with fresh timbers of all their pleasant trees.” However, the king was not with them: “His Majesty himself was in a fortress east of this town.”<sup>4</sup>

Although “Rabbahin,” in eastern Jordan, is mentioned among the cities subdued by Tuthmosis, there is no indication that he personally conducted any military campaigns against Rabbah; it appears that this city, like many other Canaanite towns, sent tribute to the pharaoh without the need for war. But the details of Tuthmosis III’s campaign against Megiddo strongly resemble those of David’s battle against the fortified city of Rabbah (2 Samuel 11:1). According to the biblical account, the Ammonites of eastern Jordan and the Arameans (or Syrians), though allied, operated as separate units (2 Samuel 10:6). This echoes the description of the divided forces facing Tuthmosis III when he arrived unexpectedly by the Aruna road before his assault upon Megiddo. The escape of the Syrian king of Qadesh and his troops is reflected in the biblical account of the battle, where it says: “And when the children of Ammon saw that the Arameans were fled, they fled . . . and went into the city” (2 Samuel 10:14). There is also a parallel in the details of the subsequent siege: Tuthmosis III left the field of battle for “a fortress to the east,” while we are told that “David tarried still at Jerusalem” (2 Samuel 11:1). Similarly, in the biblical narrative, the Ammonites wait near the gate of their city, while their Aramean allies wait further away in the open country. Then, as was the case at Megiddo, David’s

enemies fled and sought refuge in their city, which was then besieged. Unlike the Megiddo account found at Karnak, 2 Samuel 11:1 suggests that the subsequent siege of the city did not start until “after the year was expired,” but, like the battle for Megiddo, it ended in triumph. Except for the time lapse between the battle and the siege, the biblical account of these events exactly matches the historical details of Tuthmosis’s successful campaign against Megiddo.

This conclusion is reinforced by the fact that in the Bible, Solomon simply inherited David’s empire without becoming involved in any military campaigns, and Megiddo is found among his possessions. In 1 Kings 9:15 we are told that one purpose of his raising a levy was “to build . . . the wall . . . of Megiddo,” and it is also mentioned as one of his possessions in 1 Kings 4:12.

## **JERUSALEM IN TUTHMOSIS’S TIME**

We know from the Bible that David “and his men marched to Jerusalem . . . [and] captured the fortress of Zion. . . . David then took up residence in the fortress and called it the City of David.” No actual fighting between David and the Jebusites is reported, as his men entered the fortress through a water shaft (2 Samuel 5:6–7, 9).

On the other hand, we know that, after his allied enemies were defeated at Megiddo, Tuthmosis III went with his men to stay in a fortress *east* of Megiddo while his forces were laying siege on the city. As is the case with David when he went to Jerusalem, no fighting was needed for the king to enter this fortress. Although the name of the fortress where Tuthmosis stayed is not mentioned, this could only have been Jerusalem, the same place where David is said to have established his residence. Jerusalem, about seventy-nine miles southeast of Megiddo, was the only possible location for the pharaoh to have stayed for the seven months of the siege. Nevertheless, the name of Jerusalem was not included in the king’s list for two reasons:

1. When Tuthmosis III went out to fight against the confederation of Canaanite and Syrian princes at Megiddo, Jerusalem was not part of the rebellion. Tuthmosis faced no need to take control of the fortress by force. Instead he was able to make his way straight from Gaza to Megiddo and, without need for military action, to seek safe sanctuary in Jerusalem during the seven months in which Megiddo was under siege.

2. Although Jerusalem came under Egyptian control at that time, the name



*Jerusalem* does not appear at all, neither in the western Asiatic city-list of Tuthmosis III nor in any lists of his immediate successors. This has not previously been explained. My own view is that Egyptians at the time recognized Jerusalem by another name—Qadesh (not to be confused with Syrian Qadesh on the river Orontes), which is a Semitic word meaning “holy.” Among the historical records of Tuthmosis III found at Karnak, a list was found that includes more than a thousand names of Canaanite locations that fell under Egyptian control after his first Asiatic campaign. At the top of this list we find the name Qadesh in Canaan, which could not have been the same city as Qadesh in Syria. The modern Arabic name for Jerusalem is *al-Quds*. In Hebrew it is *ha-Qudesh*, which means “the holy place.” This meaning is confirmed by the Bible, where Nehemiah 11:1 calls Jerusalem “the holy city” (*yerushalayim ‘ir ha-qodesh* in Hebrew), which suggests that Jerusalem was known as “the holy city” in ancient times.

## THE HOLY ARK

The account of bringing the ark to Jerusalem is found both in the biblical story of David and in the Egyptian records of Tuthmosis III. According to the Bible, shortly after David’s arrival to Jerusalem, he “brought the ark of the LORD and set it in its place inside the tent that David had pitched for it” (2 Samuel 6:17). In the meantime, we know from his records that Tuthmosis brought the Ark of Amun-Ra with him from Egypt.

Although we have no recorded account, it is logical to assume that the king would have been accompanied to Jerusalem by the Ark of Amun-Ra, which had been carried at the head of his army as it advanced on Megiddo. We know that there were some rituals in Egyptian religion that only the king and high priest could perform before their deity. It is also logical to assume that the resting place for the ark would be Mount Moriah, the high ground to the north of the fortress, which had been revered as a holy place even before the time of Abraham. To this day, it is the setting for two of the holiest shrines of Islam, the Dome of the Rock and Al-Aqsa Mosque, as well as for the Jewish Wailing Wall.

We learn from 2 Samuel that David, who had remained in the fortress of Jerusalem, rejoined his forces to lead the final successful assault on the besieged city of Rabbah and then took “the crown from their king’s head. . . . David took a great quantity of plunder from the city” (2 Samuel 12:30). David also took a large number of prisoners of war to work for him, and, before returning to

Jerusalem, he subdued the rest of the Ammonite cities. Similarly, according to Egyptian texts, Tuthmosis III left his residence at the fortress and joined his forces to lead the final assault on Megiddo. He then moved north, to southern Lebanon, where he captured three cities by the river Litani before returning to Egypt.

## THE FIRST ARMAGEDDON

We find a reflection of the memory of Tuthmosis's victory at Megiddo in Revelation 16:16. Here Armageddon (in Hebrew, *har Megiddon*: the mount of Megiddo) is designated as the site where, at the end of days, the kings of the world will fight the ultimate battle against the forces of God. This points to the belief that the Messiah, born of the House of David, will one day have to reenact the battle of his great ancestor who conquered Megiddo and that the final confrontation between good and evil will take place here.

Three cities—Megiddo, Hazor, and Gezer—are specifically mentioned in the Bible in connection with King Solomon's ambitious building activities (1 Kings 9:15).

David and his men marched north to Syria, on his way to "restore his monument [i.e., his boundary marker] at the Euphrates River." But before getting to the Euphrates, "David also defeated Hadadezer, king of Zobah." Although his army had footmen only, "David captured a thousand chariots, hundred charioteers and twenty thousand foot soldiers" (2 Samuel 8:3–4).

No trace of Zobah has been found in Syria or Canaan at the time of either David or Tuthmosis III. Yet this account fits in precisely with the sequence of events described in the wars of Tuthmosis. So although there has been some scholarly debate about the matter, the biblical city of Zobah is conventionally identified as Qadesh (not to be confused with the Qadesh that has been identified with Jerusalem).

Qadesh, the northern Syrian stronghold on the river Orontes during the Canaanite period, has been identified with the modern Tell Nebi Mend, south of Lake Homs. Together with Megiddo, Qadesh headed the coalition of Canaanite kings against Egypt, and, although confined with the other defeated kings within the walls of Megiddo, the king of Qadesh managed to escape and continued to lead rebellions against Egypt.

The book of 2 Samuel does not provide a date for David's alleged defeat of Hadadezer, but we know from the Karnak inscriptions that Tuthmosis captured

Qadesh as part of his continuing campaign to restore his empire. The pharaoh then crossed the Euphrates in his year 33 (1458 BCE) and defeated the king of Mitanni: “My Majesty crossed to the farthest limits of Asia. I caused to be built boats of cedar on the hills of the God’s Land [Phoenicia] in the neighborhood of the-mistress-of-Byblos [Ashtaroth]. They were placed on chariots [wheeled wagons], oxen dragging them, and they journeyed in front of My Majesty in order to cross that great river which flows between this country and Nahrin [Mitanni]. . . . Then My Majesty set up a stele on the mountain of Nahrin taken from the mountain on the west side of the Euphrates.”<sup>5</sup>

Evidence of Tuthmosis’s wars has been found by archaeologists excavating at the site of Qadesh. The evidence makes it clear that the final destruction of this Syrian stronghold took place five centuries before the biblical date for David’s victories. It also showed that the fortified city of Qadesh no longer existed at the time of David in the early part of the tenth century BCE.

Archaeological evidence leaves no doubt that the only empire between the Euphrates in northern Syria and the Egyptian Sinai in the south was established by Tuthmosis III in the fifteenth century BCE. Until Cyrus of Persia in the sixth century BCE, this entire area did not fall under the control of any other empire. So why did the biblical narrators use the accounts of Tuthmosis III’s wars in their David story?

## Jerusalem, City of David

JERUSALEM OFFERS THE CLEAREST EVIDENCE about King David's identity. It is situated in the Judean hills, thirty-five miles east of the Mediterranean, at an elevation of 2,440 feet. Its first settlement dates back to the Stone Age, when families dwelt in caves in the vicinity, and there is evidence of continuity of settlement since the Early Bronze Age in the third millennium BCE.

Jerusalem began as an obscure fortress on the southeast hill, which could be seen from the neighboring heights. Today it consists of an ancient walled Old City and a New City. The present walls of the Old City, to which seven gates provide access, were last restored and rebuilt by the Ottoman sultan Suleiman the Magnificent in the first half of the sixteenth century CE. The New City, which extends outside the walls, was largely built after 1860.

The Bible describes the taking of Jerusalem as a military operation carried out by David: "The king and his men marched to Jerusalem to attack the Jebusites who lived there. . . . David then took up residence in the fortress and called it the City of David. He built up the area around it, from the supporting terraces inward" (2 Samuel 5:6, 9).

However, the evidence makes it clear that this operation was actually a peaceful one, carried out by Tuthmosis III, five centuries earlier.

The link between Tuthmosis III and Jerusalem derives from the time when he based himself there while his army was besieging Megiddo. His annals, as we saw earlier, said that he stayed at a fortress east of Megiddo. Although the name of the fortress is not mentioned in the Egyptian text, indications are that Jerusalem, which lies to the southeast of Megiddo, is the location meant here. Leaving the besieged city and traveling east, the only route was the Way of the Sea, which is joined near the river Jordan by the road leading south to Jerusalem. It seems that Egyptian sources provide an incomplete account of the fortress where the king stayed because the scribe concerned remained with the army, recording details of the military campaign at Megiddo rather than accompanying the king.



## THE ARK OF AMUN

Shortly after David's arrival, we have a description of how "they brought the ark of the LORD and set it in its place inside the tent that David had pitched for it, and David sacrificed burnt offerings . . . before the Lord" (2 Samuel 6:17). It is said that bringing the ark to Jerusalem made the city the holy center for the Israelite tribes. However, given what we have already seen, we are dealing not only with two Davids but with two arks—the Ark of the Covenant, in which Moses placed the Ten Commandments, and the ark in which Tuthmosis III carried his god, Amun-Ra, into battle before him at Megiddo, as described in the annals at Karnak: "Year 23, first month of the third season, day 19—awakening in [life] in the tent of life, prosperity and health, at the town of Aruna. Proceeding northward by my majesty, carrying my father Amun-Ra, Lord of the Thrones of the Two Lands [that he might open the ways] before me."<sup>1</sup>

It is clear that the idea of a holy ark was introduced to the Israelites by Moses from Egyptian worship practices. In festivals and on other occasions, the Egyptian deity used to be carried by the priests in an ark. When the king went to live in the fortress of Jerusalem at the start of the protracted siege of Megiddo, the only possible location for the god Amun-Ra in his ark was where the king was in residence. In fact, we know that there were some daily rituals in Egyptian worship that only the king and high priest could perform before the deity.

Here again we have no account either in the Bible or in Egyptian records of the king using any force to obtain the holy ground of Jerusalem for the ark. The Bible gives details of a peaceful transaction whereby Araunah, the Jebusite king of Jerusalem, sold David his threshing floor for fifty shekels of silver so that he could build an altar. In the course of these negotiations Araunah said to David: "Behold, here are oxen for the burnt offering, and here are threshing sledges and ox yokes for wood. O king, Araunah gives all this to the king" (2 Samuel 24:22–23). The choice of a threshing floor may seem a curious one for the site of an altar, but such elevated and exposed pieces of ground at the approaches to cities were often the site of cultic observances.

The sanctity of Jerusalem is implied in Genesis, which describes how Abraham received a blessing on this same piece of ground: "And Melchizedek king of Salem [Jerusalem] brought out bread and wine. He was priest of God Most High, and he blessed Abram, and said, Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth. And blessed be God Most High, who delivered your enemies into your hand" (Genesis 14:18–20). Therefore, at least from the time of Abraham, this high ground to the north of Jerusalem had been

regarded as holy, not just for the inhabitants of the city but for other peoples in Canaan as well.

But the threshing floor was not bought by the tribal David to build an altar for the Lord, but by Tuthmosis III as the site for a shrine to his state god, Amun-Ra. This is made clear in Psalms where David, like Egyptian kings, is called the Son of God: “I have installed my King on Zion, my holy hill. I will proclaim the decree of the Lord: He said to me, ‘You are my son; today I have become your father.’ Ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession” (Psalms 2:6–8).

The new name of Zion makes its first appearance in the Bible when we learn of King David’s entry into Jerusalem: “David captured the fortress of Zion, the City of David” (2 Samuel 5:7). It assumes more importance from this time onward.

The name *Zion* is not always used to indicate the same location. In some cases, as in 2 Samuel 5:7, it seems to signify the fortress of Jerusalem. Yet at the same time it is suggested that the fortress was named after the king: “David then took up residence in the fortress and called it the City of David” (2 Samuel 5:9). In other cases, *Zion* refers only to the sacred area that was used to build the Temple: “Then you will know that I, the LORD your God, dwell in Zion, my holy hill. Jerusalem will be holy; never again will foreigners invade her” (Joel 3:17). Here, while *Zion* refers clearly to the holy area of the Temple Mount, Jerusalem is clearly separate. There are also these verses: “May the LORD answer you when you are in distress; may the name of the God of Jacob protect you. May he send you help from the sanctuary and grant you support from Zion” (Psalm 20:1–2). It is clear in this case that by *Zion* only the sanctuary is meant.

Further complications arise from the fact that Mount Zion was later believed not to have been in the area of the Temple, high to the north of ancient Jerusalem, but on the western mount. Here, in the first century CE, a small church was built on the southern end of the hill, which became identified as the Coenaculum (the room of the Last Supper). This was followed many centuries later—in 1936—by a Christian monastery known today as the Church of Mary. Nevertheless, modern archaeology has confirmed that this western mount did not form part of ancient Jerusalem and was not occupied at the time of the tribal chief David.

All the indications are, in fact, that Zion, the ancient holy ground of Jerusalem, was the artificially flattened ground on Mount Moriah where Solomon built his Temple and which today includes two of the holiest shrines of

Islam—the Dome of the Rock and Al-Aqsa Mosque. The Temple area is surrounded by the colossal Herodian enclosure wall, preserved in the east, south, and west; a larger section of the western wall (the Wailing Wall), which survives today, is the most venerated site in the Jewish tradition. In ancient times, even before David entered the fortress, this area was regarded as holy ground not only by the Jebusites but by Abraham. In fact, Mount Moriah is identified as the area where the Temple was first built: “Then Solomon began to build the temple of the Lord at Jerusalem on Mount Moriah, where the LORD appeared to his father David” (2 Chronicles 3:1). It is the same location where, in the account of Abraham’s intention to slay Isaac, we have this obscure reference: “And Abraham called the name of that place The LORD Will Provide. And to this day it is said ‘On the mountain of the LORD it will be provided’” (Genesis 22:14). As we have seen, Abraham also received the blessing from the king Melchizedek on the same holy ground.

However, it was when King David brought his ark and placed it here that this ancient holy ground was transformed into a holy center believed to be the abode of the Lord: “For the LORD has chosen Zion, he has desired it for his dwelling: ‘This is my resting place for ever and ever: here I will sit enthroned, for I have desired it’” (Psalm 132:13–14). Once Tuthmosis III had taken the image of Amun-Ra in his ark to Jerusalem, the logical resting place for it, it was on the holy high ground of Mount Moriah where, one would expect, Tuthmosis III would have worshipped during his seven-month stay.

## **DAVID’S HOLY ARK**

Whose ark was brought to Jerusalem?

Shortly after David’s arrival in Jerusalem, the Bible speaks about bringing a holy ark to the city: “They brought the ark of the Lord and set it in its place inside the tent that David had pitched for it, and David sacrificed burnt offerings . . . before the LORD” (2 Samuel 6:17). However, if these events actually took place in the fifteenth century BCE, this object could not have been the Ark of the Covenant but would have been the Ark of Amun, brought by Tuthmosis III.

I believe this “Ark of the Lord” is not the same one as the Ark of the Covenant, although it could be similar. The Bible describes the Ark of the Covenant as a gold-covered wooden chest containing the two stone tablets of the Ten Commandments. When the Israelites came out of Egypt into Sinai, the Lord said to Moses to ask the Israelites to “make a chest of acacia wood. . . . Overlay

it with pure gold, both inside and out. . . . Then . . . put in the ark the Testimony [the tablets of the Ten Commandments], which I will give you” (Exodus 25:10–11, 16).

While Moses was on Mount Sinai receiving the Ten Commandments, the Israelites persuaded his elder brother, Aaron, to make them an idol in the shape of a calf. The following morning they celebrated with a big feast, worshipping the idol. When Moses came down and saw this, “his anger burned and he threw the tablets out of his hands, breaking them to pieces at the foot of the mountain” (Exodus 32:19).

Later, when the Tabernacle, the tent of meeting, was completed, “the LORD said to Moses: ‘Chisel out two stone tablets like the first ones, and I will write on them the words that were on the first tablets, which you broke. Be ready in the morning, and then come up on Mount Sinai. Present yourself to me there on the top of the mountain’” (Exodus 34:1–3).

After the death of Moses, the Ark of the Covenant is said to have been taken to the Promised Land by Joshua, who succeeded Moses as the leader of the Israelites. There, for the next three hundred years, the ark is said to have been moved from one location to the other in Canaan, including Gilgal near Jericho (Joshua 4:19), where it is believed to have remained for about seven years before it was moved to Shiloh, midway between Dan in the north and Beer-Sheba in the south (Joshua 18:1). After about three hundred and fifty years, during which time nothing was reported about the fate of the ark, the Philistines took the ark (1 Samuel 4:11). Later, after King Saul’s death, when David became the king over all Israel, he decided to bring the ark of God from Judah to Jerusalem (2 Samuel 6:2).

I believe the Ark of the Covenant never went to the Promised Land, as the book of Joshua seems to be a fiction written by the priests and disagrees completely with the account of the book of Judges. Exposed wood does not last. Unless it is regularly treated it rots and decays. Many such wooden arks made in ancient Egypt disappeared with time, except those that were kept inside secure tombs. It is significant that here the Bible does not speak of the “Ark of Covenant” but of the “Ark of God.” As I have mentioned before, it was Tuthmosis III, historical David, who brought the ark of his god, Amun, into Jerusalem.

It seems that, while attributing the military victories of Tuthmosis to David, the biblical scribe wanted also to include the account of the pharaoh’s ark in David’s story. However, in the fifteenth century BCE, more than a hundred

years before the time of Moses and the Exodus, the Ark of the Covenant had not yet been made. The only ark that we know from historical sources to have reached Jerusalem at that time was the Ark of Amun, which was brought to the city by Tuthmosis III. When Tuthmosis left Jerusalem, he obviously must have taken the Ark of Amun with him back to Egypt.

Although Solomon is said to have placed the Ark of the Covenant inside the Temple he built in Jerusalem, after Solomon's death and the collapse of his empire, there is no more mention of the ark for more than three hundred years. An account of King Josiah (641–609 BCE) indicates that the ark was not in the Temple at that time, because he asks the Levites to “put the sacred ark inside the house that Solomon . . . built” (2 Chronicles 35:3).

Moreover, it is clear that the very idea of a holy ark was introduced to the Israelites by Moses from Egyptian practices of worship. In his festivals and on other occasions, Amun used to be carried by the priests in an ark. This custom is shown in the Anubis shrine found in Tutankhamun's tomb, with the jackal-like statue of Anubis, guardian of the dead, sitting on the top of a large box. Although the dimensions do not match, the Anubis shrine corresponds to the description of the Ark of the Covenant. It is covered with pure gold and has poles of acacia wood inserted into four rings on its sides. The similarities among these objects may be evidence that the biblical scribes used Egyptian sources to describe the Ark of the Covenant, or that the Israelites did not originate the idea of the ark but rather were introduced to the practice by Egyptians, through Moses. The ark brought by David into Jerusalem was not the Ark of the Covenant made by Moses, but the ark of the god Amun brought by Tuthmosis III.

## HOLY ZION

After Tuthmosis III left Jerusalem at the end of his seven-month stay, the holy ground where he had worshipped became Egyptianized. This can be seen from the name it acquired: *Zion*. The name *Zion*, as we have seen, makes its first appearance in the Bible as soon as we learn of David's entry into Jerusalem and has not been found in any other historical source.

Although the word *Zion* occurs over 150 times in the Bible, the reason for using this name as a synonym for *Jerusalem* has not been explained. Its origins actually point to a link with Egypt. *Zion* (*tsiyyon*) is not originally a Hebrew word. It consists of two elements, one Semitic, the other Egyptian. The Semitic

first element, *tsi*, means a “land of drought,” a “barren place.” But the meaning of the second Egyptian element has hitherto escaped recognition.

*On* is the biblical name of the Egyptian holy city of Heliopolis, a short distance to the north of modern Cairo. It is mentioned in the life of Joseph the patriarch: the pharaoh, having appointed Joseph to a high position, gave him an Egyptian wife, “the daughter of Potiphera, priest of On” (Genesis 41:45). After the decline of Heliopolis, when Thebes in Upper Egypt became the new capital city of the empire as well as the holy city of the state god, Amun-Ra, it became the custom to refer to Thebes as “the southern On” and Heliopolis as “the northern On,” with *on* being used in the sense of “holy city.” Thus the word *Si-on* or *Zi-on* means “holy city of the desert,” its second syllable revealing its Egyptian origin.

Mount Moriah, until then holy only to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, became holy for all the Asiatic kingdoms of the Egyptian empire after Tuthmosis III made it his religious base during the siege of Megiddo and worshipped his god, Amun-Ra, there. After his seven-month stay, Tuthmosis III returned to Megiddo for his successful assault on the city, then made his way back home to Thebes. We have no means of knowing whether he visited Jerusalem again during one of his many campaigns in western Asia. Nevertheless, his descendants, the children of Sarah, never entirely forgot their great ancestor. After leaving Egypt and eventually settling in the Promised Land of Canaan, they made his holy ground the most venerated part of their new home.



## Joseph's Dreams

WHILE TUTHMOSIS III WAS CREATING the richest and most powerful empire the world had yet seen, Sarah and her descendants were leading a nomadic life in Canaan. Tents provided simple homes and protection against the often harsh elements. Marriages were arranged, children born, the dead buried. The rhythm of their days was set by trying to coax a living from the unpromising soil and caring for their modest herds of sheep, goats, and cattle. Nonetheless, the story of their lives at this time, as we find in Genesis, indicates that memories of those early links with the royal house of Egypt, although growing fainter with each passing year, still survived among Sarah's descendants.

When Isaac, the son of Sarah's bigamous marriage to Tuthmosis III, grew to manhood, he is said to have taken a wife, Rebekah. Like Sarah before her, Rebekah is described as infertile, but this may be simply a way of saying that, at a time when early marriage was the norm, a girl had been taken as a bride long before she reached childbearing age.

Eventually, Rebekah gave birth to twin sons. The first to be born was named Esau, the second Jacob (*Ya'qwb*, which means in Hebrew "the one who follows"). The most intriguing aspect of their early life is Esau's sale of his birthright:

Once when Jacob was cooking some stew, Esau came in from the open country, famished. He said to Jacob, "Quick, let me have some of that red stew! I'm famished!" . . . Jacob replied, "First sell me your birthright." "Look, I am about to die," Esau said. "What good is the birthright to me?" But Jacob said, "Swear to me first." So he swore an oath to him, selling his birthright to Jacob. Then Jacob gave Esau some bread and some lentil stew. . . . So Esau despised his birthright. (Genesis 25:29–34)

What was this birthright that Esau sold to Jacob? To what exactly did this birthright entitle its owner? The only logical explanation would be the inheritance of property or a title. We know from an account in the Talmud that Jacob did not receive any of Isaac's property after his father's death, but Esau gave him Isaac's promise, the empire:

Then Isaac died, and Jacob and Esau wept together for their father's demise. They carried his body to the cave of Machpelah, which is in Hebron, and all the kings of Canaan followed with the mourners in the funeral train of Isaac. . . . Isaac bequeathed his cattle and his possessions to his two sons. Esau said then to Jacob, "Behold, this which our father has left us must be divided into two portions, then I will select my share." Jacob divided all his father's possessions into two portions in the presence of Esau and his sons, and then addressing his brother, said:

"Take unto thyself both these portions which thou seest before thee. Behold, the God of Heaven and Earth spoke unto our ancestors, Abraham and Isaac, saying, 'Unto thy seed will I give this land as an everlasting possession.' Now, all that our father left is before thee; if thou desirest the promised possession, the land of Canaan, take it, and this other wealth shall be mine; or if thou desirest these two portions, be it as it is pleasing in thy eyes, and the land of Canaan shall be the share for me and mine." . . .

*Esau . . . gave Jacob for his portion the land . . . from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates.*<sup>1</sup>

From this account, we can see that the birthright that passed from Esau, the elder twin, to Jacob was the princely title that flowed from the identity of their grandfather, Tuthmosis III.

While Esau did not take the promise seriously, Jacob still hoped that one day he would be able to inherit his father's legacy. As he was living in tents and leading a simple nomadic life with his flock in Canaan, he still dreamed that one day he or his descendants would inherit the vast kingdom stretching from the Nile to the Euphrates. Of the two brothers, the Old Testament suggests that Jacob would have more faith in the fulfillment of such a promise at some time in the future. We are told in Genesis 25:27 that the twin brothers had vastly different characters. Esau was "a skilful hunter, a man of the open country," but Jacob, like Joseph, the son who would be born to him, seems to have been more

of a dreamer.

Later Jacob is said to have had an encounter with the Lord, which resulted in his name being changed: “Your name is Jacob, but you will no longer be called Jacob; your name will be Israel” (Genesis 35:10). As the Hebrew verb *srh* means “to be a leader” (or a commander), and *el* is the short form of *Elohim* (God), the new name means “Elohim rules.”

More significant is the fact that this change of name comes just before the story of Joseph and his dreams. Like Jacob his father, although he was a younger son, Joseph shared his father’s dreams about the promised inheritance and the royal connection. That is why

Israel loved Joseph more than any of his other sons . . . and he made a richly ornamented robe for him. When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of them, they hated him. . . .

Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him all the more. He said to them, “Listen to this dream I had. We were binding sheaves of grain out in the field when suddenly my sheaf rose and stood upright, while your sheaves gathered around mine and bowed down to it.” His brothers said to him, “Do you intend to reign over us? Will you actually rule us?” And they hated him all the more because of his dream and what he had said. (Genesis 37:3–8)

Then Joseph had a second dream, which he related to his father as well as to his brothers: “I had another dream, and this time the sun and the moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me” (Genesis 37:9). This served to fuel the jealousy of his brothers, and Jacob rebuked him, saying: “Will your mother and I and your brothers come and bow down to the ground before you?” (Genesis 37:10).

By giving his son the ornamented robe, Jacob was passing to Joseph his own birthright, which he had bought from his brother, Esau. This made the young lad feel more important than his elder brothers, for which they hated him. His brothers’ revenge was to humiliate Joseph and show him that his dream was false by selling him as a slave to Egypt, the land of his royal dreams. They sold him to Ishmaelite traders whose caravan was on its way to the land of the Nile.

When the merchants reached their destination, they sold Joseph to Potiphar, the captain of the pharaoh’s guard, who found him a faithful servant and

entrusted to him everything he owned. Joseph was not only efficient but handsome, and after a while Potiphar's wife tried to seduce him. When he refused to lie with her, Potiphar's wife accused him of trying to rape her, and the lad was sent to jail.

In prison, Joseph met the pharaoh's chief cupbearer and chief baker, who had been locked up after giving offense to the king. When both of them had strange dreams, they asked Joseph to interpret them. Joseph predicted—accurately—that the cupbearer would be released and restored to his position, while the baker would be hanged.

Some two years later, according to Genesis 41:1, the pharaoh himself had two mysterious dreams that none of the wise men of Egypt could interpret for him. The cupbearer explained to the pharaoh how Joseph had interpreted his and the baker's dreams and events had turned out exactly as predicted. The pharaoh sent for Joseph and said: "I had a dream, and no one can interpret it. But I have heard it said of you that when you hear a dream you can interpret it. . . . In my dream, I was standing on the bank of the Nile, when out of the river there came up seven cows, fat and sleek, and they grazed among the reeds. After them, seven other cows came up—scrawny and very ugly and lean. . . . Then the lean, ugly cows ate up the seven fat cows" (Genesis 41:15, 17–20).

The pharaoh had another dream: "In my dream I saw seven heads of grain, full and good, growing on a single stalk. After them, seven other heads sprouted—withered and thin. . . . The thin heads of grain swallowed the seven good heads. I told this to my magicians, but none of them could explain it to me" (Genesis 41:22–24).

Joseph said to the pharaoh: "The dreams of Pharaoh are one and the same. God has revealed to Pharaoh what he is about to do. The seven good cows are seven good years, and the seven good heads of grain are seven years; it is one and the same dream. The seven lean, ugly cows that came up afterwards are seven years, and so are the seven worthless heads of grain. . . . Seven years of great abundance are coming throughout the land of Egypt, but seven years of famine will follow them. . . . Now let Pharaoh look for a discerning and wise man and put him in charge of the land of Egypt" (Genesis, 41:25–27, 29–30, 33).

Seeing that Joseph was the right man for the job, the pharaoh told him: "I hereby put you in charge of the whole land of Egypt." Then Pharaoh took his signet ring from his finger and put it on Joseph's finger. He dressed him in fine linen and put a gold chain around his neck. He had him ride in a chariot as his second in command, and people shouted before him, 'Make way!' . . . Pharaoh

gave Joseph the name Zaphenath-Paneah [Sef-net-pa-ankh] and gave him [the] daughter of Potiphera, priest of On [Heliopolis], to be his wife” (Genesis 41:41–45).

Thus, according to the Bible, Joseph’s dreams of becoming a ruler in Egypt were fulfilled when he was thirty years old. It will be surprising to learn the identity of the pharaoh who appointed this Hebrew to rule over Egypt.

## Uniting the Families of Egypt and Canaan

AMENHOTEP III, THE SON OF TUTHMOSIS IV, sat on the throne at a time when Egypt and the countries in her empire were enjoying a time of peace and prosperity. His reign was a period of unprecedented prosperity and splendor, when Egypt reached the peak of its artistic and international power. A combination of diplomacy, judicious marriages, and a liberal use of gold secured a balance of power between Egypt and its neighboring states: the Mitanni in northern Syria; the Hittites of Asia Minor; and the Assyrians and Babylonians in Mesopotamia. Canaan and Syria posed no threat, and the southern frontier was secured up to and beyond the Nile's fourth cataract.

Trade and gifts exchanged with rulers in the empire dominated Amenhotep's foreign relations. Luxuries from the Levant and the Aegean world poured into the country on a greater scale than ever before, while in Egypt itself more land was brought under cultivation, art flourished, and prosperous officials and priests enjoyed the pleasures of new townhouses and country villas with large estates. The common people also benefited from the general prosperity and from the state projects that offered alternative employment during the long summer droughts.

Amenhotep III not only kept Joseph in the official positions he had obtained during the previous reign, but he also took a significant step toward uniting the two branches of Tuthmosis III's descendants through Tuthmosis III's two wives: Sarah the Hebrew and Merytra, daughter of Huy and the Divine Adoratrice of Amun. Amenhotep was about twelve when he ascended the throne, and he had to marry Sitamun, his baby sister, in order to confirm his right to it. Although Sitamun was only two years old at the time, she was the heiress whose husband, according to Egyptian customs, would obtain the right to succeed her father.

A short time after ascending the throne, before the end of his year 2, Amenhotep also married Tiye, daughter of Yuya, whom I have identified as



Joseph the patriarch. Moreover, Amenhotep decided to make Tiye his Great Royal Wife—the queen. This was against Egyptian tradition, according to which the king could marry as many women as he desired, but the queen, whose children would follow him on the throne, had to come from the heiress, daughter of the previous pharaoh.

As Sitamun was only two when Amenhotep married her, the king fell in love with Tiye, the older girl, who lived with him in the royal palace at Memphis. Tiye's mother, Tuya, was the king's "ornament" (*khrt bsw*), a post that might be said to involve the duties of a modern lady-in-waiting. This meant that she had to live in the vicinity of the royal residence. It was thus that the prince Amenhotep grew up with and fell in love with Tiye. The marriage between Amenhotep III and Tiye is attested by an issue of scarabs dated to year 2 of his reign, copies of which were also found in Palestine: "Live King Amenhotep (III), who is given life, (and) the Great King's Wife Tiye, who liveth. The name of her father is Yuya, the name of her mother is Tuya. She is the wife of a mighty king whose southern boundary is as far as Karoy [in northern Sudan] and northern as far as Naharin [in northern Syria]." <sup>1</sup>

## WIVES AND HAREMS

Along with his queens Sitamun and Tiye, Amenhotep III had a large harem, including two princesses from Babylon and two princesses from Mitanni. In his year 10, when Gilukhepa, daughter of the prince of Naharina, arrived in Egypt, she was accompanied by 317 women in her retinue, who became part of his harem.

Why did Amenhotep III insist on making Tiye his Great Royal Wife, allowing her to be portrayed sitting next to him, depicted in sculpture in equal size, for the first time in Egypt? Why did Amenhotep III allow the tribe of Israel to come down and join Joseph and his family, who were living in Egypt? Could it be that Amenhotep III became aware of the family relationship between Tiye's father (Joseph) and Tuthmosis III, his own great-grandfather?



*Amenhotep III seated beside his wife Tiye, daughter of Yuya (Joseph).  
The statue is housed at the Museum of Egyptian Antiquities in Cairo.*

Following his brothers' second visit to Egypt to buy food, Joseph obtained the pharaoh's permission for his father and all the members of his family to come and live in Egypt. In all, we are told that the number of Israelites who settled in Egypt as a result of this arrangement totaled seventy, although only sixty-nine are named. Since Joseph and his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, are mentioned by name in the biblical list, it is reasonable to conclude that the seventieth member of the tribe of Israel was already in Egypt. I believe that she

was a daughter of Joseph—Tiye, Yuya's daughter, who became queen.

Nevertheless, the Israelites were shepherds. They were not allowed to settle in the Nile Valley, because shepherds had been regarded as an abomination by the Egyptians ever since the century-long occupation and rule of the eastern Delta by the pastoral Hyksos before the foundation of the Eighteenth Dynasty. Instead the Israelites were given land in Goshen, to the east of the Nile Delta, which was remote from the seat of the pharaoh's residence. Goshen was near the military border city of Zarw, at modern Qantara East, overlooking the Suez Canal.

Although Amenhotep III is known to have had his royal residence at Memphis, near present-day Saqqara, until his year 20, when he moved to his newly built residence at Malqata in western Thebes, the biblical story of Moses implies that the ruling pharaoh of the time had a residence in the vicinity of Goshen: he was in a position to give orders in person to the midwives to kill male children born to Israelite women, while the sister of Moses was able to watch his basket and see the pharaoh's daughter picking him up from the water.

It seems that the king, who wanted to allow his wife a chance to see her father's family, established a summer royal residence for her in Zarw, in the same area as the biblical Goshen. We know this from Amenhotep's pleasure-lake scarab, dated to his year 11, which indicates that the queen had a residence in this area. Six versions have been found of the scarab, which was issued to commemorate the creation of a pleasure lake for the Great Royal Wife, Tiye. Although there are some minor differences, they all agree on the main points of the text, which runs as follows:

Year 11, third month of Inundation (first season), day 1, under the majesty of Horus . . . mighty of valour, who smites the Asiatics, King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Neb-Maat-Re, Son of Re Amenhotep Ruler of Thebes, who is given life, and the Great Royal Wife Tiye, who liveth, His Majesty commanded the making of a lake for the Great King's Wife Tiye, who liveth, in the city of Zarw-kha. Its length 3700 cubits, its breadth 700 cubits. [One of the scarabs, a copy of which is kept at the Vatican, gives the breadth as 600 cubits, and also mentions the names of the queen's parents, Yuya and Tuya, indicating that they were still alive at the time.] His Majesty celebrated the feast of the opening of the lake in the third month of the first season, day 16, when His Majesty sailed thereon in the Royal barge Aten Gleams.<sup>2</sup>

# YUYA AND JOSEPH

John Henry Breasted, the American Egyptologist, believed that while the origin of the powerful Tiye is obscure, the persistent publication of the names of her untitled parents on different scarabs is remarkable, indicating that they could be of foreign origin.

Yuya's (Joseph's) tomb was discovered in 1905, after the American Theodore M. Davis had obtained a concession to excavate in the Valley of the Kings in Luxor, the ancient Thebes. Davis, who took to spending the winters of his old age there, provided the money while excavation work was carried out by officials of the Egyptian Service of Antiquities. The tomb was officially opened on February 13, 1905, and was attended by a brother of the king of England, the Duke of Connaught, and his duchess, who happened to be visiting Egypt at the time.

The rich tomb given to Yuya and his wife among the royalty in the Valley of the Kings suggests their importance in this reign. Until the discovery of Tutankhamun's tomb seventeen years later, Yuya's tomb was the only one to be found almost intact. Along with the two sarcophaguses of Yuya and his wife, including their mummies, the tomb contained different relics, such as:

- A chest offered by Queen Tiye, his daughter.
- A papyrus containing chapters of the Book of the Dead, including the images of seven cows in heaven.
- Three objects given to Yuya by the king, similar to those given to Joseph by the pharaoh on his appointment: a golden necklace, a chariot, and the title of "Bearer of the King's Ring."
- Three small chairs of Sitamun, made for her when she was a child, indicating that after her father's early death she was reared by Tuya. She must have been about fifteen years of age when she gave the chairs to be included in the funerary furniture, around year 13 of Amenhotep III's reign.

The different ways in which Yuya's name was written on his objects relates him to Yahweh, or Jehovah, the god of the Israelites. His name was found in his tomb spelled in different ways: *Yaa*, *Ya*, *Yu-Ya*, *Ya-Yi*, *Yu*, *Yu-Yu*, *Ya-Ya*, *Yi-Ay*, *Yi-a*, and *Yuy-y*. As we can see, in most of these cases his name is written in two syllables, *Yu* and *Ya*. Every syllable begins with the letter Y. *Yu* (or *Jo* in English) is the short name for Yahweh, the Hebrew god, and is also the first part



of *Yoseph*, Joseph's name, while the second part, *seph* (*sef* ), represents the first part of the Egyptian name that the pharaoh gave to Joseph on his appointment—Zaphenath-Paneah, or Sef-net-pa-ankh, which means “God says he will live.”



*The mummy of Yuya, identified as Joseph. Joseph was appointed minister by Tuthmosis IV and remained in the royal court under Amenhotep III.*

From the objects found in his tomb, we can see that Yuya (Joseph) held an important position in the pharaonic court of Amenhotep III. As well as holding the title “Holy Father of the Lord of the Two Lands,” which he received after the king married his daughter, he was also “Master of the Horses,” “Deputy of His

Majesty in the Chariotry,” “Bearer of the Ring of the King of Lower Egypt,” “Seal-Bearer of the King of Lower Egypt,” “Hereditary Noble and Count,” “Favorite of the Good God (Pharaoh),” “Ears of the King of Lower Egypt,” “Sole Friend,” “Great Prince,” “Beloved of the King of Upper Egypt,” “Beloved of the King of Lower Egypt,” “Praised of the Lord Amun,” “First among the King’s Companions,” and “The Wise One.”

His mummy, one of the best examples of Egyptian mummification, looks very impressive, which persuaded the British Egyptologist Arthur Weigall to comment in his book *The Life and Times of Akhnaton* [sic: *Akhenaten*], published in 1910:

He was a person of commanding presence, whose powerful character showed itself in his face. One must picture him now as a tall man, with a fine shock of white hair, a great hooked nose like that of a Syrian; full, strong lips; and a prominent, determined jaw. He has the face of an ecclesiastic, and there is something about his mouth which reminds one of the late Pope, Leo XIII. One feels on looking at his well-preserved features, that there may be found the originator of the great religious movement which his daughter and grandson [Queen Tiye and Akhenaten, her son] carried into execution.<sup>3</sup>

A short time after her marriage, Tiye gave birth to her first son, Tuthmosis, who lived with his parents at the royal residence in Memphis, where he was educated and trained by the priests. But after the king his father appointed him as the high priest of Ptah, a position held by the heir apparent during the Eighteenth Dynasty, he suddenly and mysteriously disappeared from the scene, certainly at the hands of Amun’s priests. That is why, when the queen became pregnant again in Amenhotep III’s year 11, the king feared that if she gave birth to a boy, he might have another confrontation with the priests. It also explains why Tiye kept her new son, later named Akhenaten, away from the royal residence, out of fear for his life.

## **AMENHOTEP’S ADMINISTRATION**

In order to be able to manage the affairs of a large empire, Amenhotep needed a large and efficient administration. Growing wealth presented new problems in administration for the Egyptians. With the extensive wealth and land of the



Egyptian empire at the accession of Amenhotep III, the new pharaoh had to have an army of officials to see to the growing kingdom. These administrators followed him when he moved his residence from Memphis to Thebes, so that the king would be surrounded by chosen, loyal, dedicated, and competent officials. At the same time, the majority of officials in his reign were given their titles through family inheritance, as was the tradition of the time, while many of the lesser positions were given to people of humble background. These chosen officials were of extreme importance throughout the reign of Amenhotep, as they contributed to the immense building programs, the day-to-day issues that arose in Egypt, trade, and the duty of keeping the peace with the neighboring nations.

Amenhotep III's reign, which lasted nearly forty years, was both stable and prosperous, more as a result of international trade and a strong supply of gold than of conquest and expansion. Due to his country's prosperity in a time of peace, Amenhotep was able to become a great builder. Throughout the country, new temples were founded and old ones restored. One of the biggest projects was Amenhotep's splendid palace, the Malqata, in western Thebes, opposite modern Luxor, where he moved in his year 20. This huge estate included small chapels, large audience halls, parade grounds, villas for public officials, kitchens, offices, workshops, and quarters for servants. Next to the Malqata, the king built his imposing mortuary temple. Thebes was also the seat of the state god, Amun, and here his cult received such favorable royal treatment—generous endowment for the great temple of Karnak at Thebes, gifts of land and gold—that it virtually became an arm of the state.

One of Amenhotep's greatest achievements was the temple of Amun, a large complex on the east bank of the Nile at Thebes (modern-day Luxor), including the famous reliefs on the east side, among them a scene that depicts his birth directly from the god Amun.

Amenhotep III ruled for about thirty-nine years. Shortly before his death the king became seriously ill, and the Egyptian priests, with their magic, failed to cure him. In Amenhotep's year 35 (1371 BCE), his father-in-law, Tushratta, the Hurrian king of Mitanni in northern Syria, decided to send an image of the goddess Ishtar to the pharaoh, hoping she might save his life. While the image was on its way to Egypt, Tushratta sent a letter to the king: "To Nimmu Aria (Amenhotep III), king of Egypt whom I love and who loves me. . . . Thus, speaks Shaushka (Ishtar) of Nineveh, Lady, of all the lands: I wish to go to Egypt. . . . Now I am sending you this letter and she is on the way. . . . May Shaushka, Lady of the Heavens, protect us, my brother and myself."<sup>4</sup>

Amenhotep III's mummy was found in the western Valley of the Kings in Luxor. He was originally buried in tomb KV 22, but his mummy was moved to chamber KV 35, where it was found in 1898 by Victor Loret. A modern CT scan has shown that the king had a degenerated spinal condition called diffuse idiopathic skeletal hyperostosis (DISH). There are also depictions of him in his final days as being visibly weak and having a sick figure. Scientists believe he was obese. Toward the end of his life he suffered severe dental problems, as can be seen in his mummy, where his teeth were found to be badly worn and his gums riddled with abscesses.

Examination of his mummy suggests that the king was about fifty when he died. As he ruled for a full thirty-eight years and died at the start of the thirty-ninth, he could have been around twelve when he came to the throne and about fourteen when he married Tiye in or just before his second regnal year.

Being the great-grandson of Tuthmosis III (the king who married Abraham's wife Sarah and fathered Isaac, her only son), Amenhotep III, knowingly or not, was able to reunite the descendants of Tuthmosis III from Egypt and Canaan. This resulted in a new age, in which the Amarna kings ruled Egypt and created the first great religious renaissance.

## The Empire of the King of Peace

AS WE HAVE SEEN, the pharaoh who married Sarah and fathered Isaac was Tuthmosis III, who established the great empire between the Nile and the Euphrates. Although the Bible says that this empire was ruled by King Solomon, historical evidence shows that it was Amenhotep III, the king who married Joseph's daughter, who eventually inherited the empire. In this case, I believe, both sources are right, because Solomon and Amenhotep III were one and the same person.

The task of identifying the historical Solomon is complicated not only by biblical red herrings, but by the fact that we have no historical records of a king of that name who ruled an empire. It is only when we match the details of the Old Testament account of Solomon's exploits with those of Amenhotep III that it becomes clear we are dealing with the same person.

Other than a minor military operation in northern Sudan during his year 5 (ca. 1401 BCE), Amenhotep III's reign was almost entirely peaceful. He was the first ruler of the Egyptian empire who did not launch any military campaigns in western Asia. Instead he relied on alliances and exchanges of gifts and diplomatic letters between himself and other leaders of the then-known world in order to create a climate of international friendship. He also furthered the cause of peace by a series of diplomatic marriages.

Similarly, the possession of a large and secure empire and freedom from warfare are said to have enabled Solomon to embark on a large number of projects and administrative reforms. According to Otto Eissfeldt, the German biblical scholar, there were five characteristic features of Solomon's reign:

1. Change in his kingdom's military organization and the introduction of chariotry as an essential arm of war
2. The creation of new administrative districts

3. Changes in the taxation system
4. The refinement of court procedure and maintenance of diplomatic relations with foreign courts
5. Building activity on a large scale, including the royal palace and its adjoining temple, and fortified barracks for his garrisons in the north

All of these features, as well as changes to the size of the empire, can be related to the life and times of Amenhotep III, as I shall show.

## **MILITARY ORGANIZATION**

Tuthmosis III, who founded the great empire in the fifteenth century BCE, did have a strong, well-trained, well-organized army equipped with the best chariots of his age; otherwise he would not have been able to establish his extended empire. However, the American Egyptologist Alan Richard Schulman has shown that the chariots formed only a part of the army at the time. It was not until the early part of the reign of Amenhotep III that the chariotry became established as a separate entity from the infantry, with Yuya (Joseph) being the first minister to bear the title “Deputy of His Majesty in the Chariotry.” Thus, it was Amenhotep III who organized the chariotry as a separate unit of warfare.

## **ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEM AND TAXATION**

Up to the time of Solomon, the structure of the administrative system in Israel was tribal, according to the Bible. It was Solomon who did away with tribal divisions and united Israel, together with other parts of the empire, into one political entity: “Solomon had twelve district governors over all Israel, who supplied provisions for the king and the royal household. Each had to provide supplies for one month of the year” (1 Kings 4:7). If we examine the matter closely, we find that this administrative system belongs not to Israel but to the Egyptian empire.

From as early as 3000 BCE, the Egyptian administration controlled the activities of the Two Lands of Egypt. It organized the royal court as well as the economy in the name of the king, the official owner of all the land. Palace officials were responsible for each administrative region, and each region had another high official with a local bureaucracy under his control. During the

empire—particularly after the time of Tuthmosis III—the administrative system was reorganized to suit the needs of the age, and this system was further developed by Amenhotep III. It was then that, for the purpose of taxation, the empire was arranged in twelve administrative sections, an arrangement that the biblical narrator drew on for his account of the king whom the world now knows as Solomon.

According to Eissfeldt, almost all scholars agree that the taxation system that the Bible says was introduced by Solomon precisely matches the system that was used in Egypt after Tuthmosis III had established the new Egyptian empire. Each of the twelve areas was the responsibility of a high official and was expected to contribute sufficient tax to the country's needs for one month of the year.<sup>1</sup>

Coping with the administrative burdens of a vast empire required a highly developed administration. The sudden appearance of such an administration in Israelite tribal society during the “United Monarchy” of David and Solomon in the tenth century BCE, without any roots in the nation's previous history and followed by its sudden disappearance after Solomon's death, has been a source of puzzlement to scholars. The apparent contradiction is resolved, however, once identification of the historical David as Tuthmosis III and Solomon as Amenhotep III makes it clear that the sophisticated administration described in the Old Testament is the one established by these two monarchs in the fifteenth and fourteenth centuries BCE to deal with the task of ruling Egypt and its empire.

## **COURT OFFICIALS**

We find among the list of Solomon's officials the priests, the scribes, the commander-in-chief of the army, the official in charge of the palace, and another in charge of the tribute. All of these new offices, not known before in Israel, are similar to appointments made by Amenhotep III. Even the forced labor pressed into service in Egypt for the king's building projects is said to have been imposed for the first time by Solomon on native Israelites as well as foreigners: “King Solomon conscripted laborers from all Israel—thirty thousand men” (1 Kings 5:13). A figure of 550 officials simply to supervise labor is given in 1 Kings 9:23.

## **EMPIRE IN FLUX**

According to the Bible, the empire inherited by Solomon was weakened during the course of his reign. The king faced troubles in Edom, while his influence in Syria was also weakened when Rezon is said to have seized Damascus and made himself king there. These rebellions find their echo in the Amarna letters, the foreign archives of the Eighteenth Dynasty relating to the reign of Amenhotep III. Frederick J. Giles, the Canadian Egyptologist who made a study of them, came to the conclusion that “most of the letters that deal with the alleged collapse of the Egyptian empire during the Amarna period” come from the period of his rule.<sup>2</sup> Thus the biblical account of changes in David’s empire during the time of Solomon can be seen to accord with events during the reign of Amenhotep III.

Letters sent by Canaanite kings, especially Abdi-khiba of Jerusalem, speak of continuous trouble in the area of Edom and southern Canaan: “All the king’s land is rebellious.” These problems in southern Canaan were not so serious that they weakened the king’s control in the area, but the situation in northern Syria was far more critical. Even before Amenhotep III came to the throne, the northern Mesopotamian kingdom of Mitanni, defeated by Tuthmosis III, had begun to reassert its influence over city-states in northern Syria. Amenhotep III responded to this threat with a peace treaty with the king of Mitanni and marriage to two Mitannian princesses. He also sent the king of Mitanni thirty units of gold each year in return for his protecting the northern Syrian section of the empire.

However, Amenhotep III’s problems in the region were not yet over. Toward the end of his reign, the king’s authority over the northern part of the empire, including Damascus, was endangered by the powerful Hittite king Suppiluliuma I. The Hittites were an Asiatic people who settled in Anatolia in the third millennium BCE. They also posed a threat to Mitanni, Egypt’s ally in the area. Akizzi, ruler of the northern Syrian city of Qatna, a few miles north of Qadesh, spoke of these dangers in letters to Amenhotep III: “To King Annumuria (Amenhotep III), Son of the Sun, my Lord thus [says] this thy servant Akizzi . . . the King of the Hittites . . . sends forth . . . as for me, I am with the King, and with the land of Egypt.”<sup>3</sup>

Despite trouble in some regions, both Amenhotep III and Solomon were not concerned with military might and conquest but rather with rebuilding and enhancing the regions they ruled. According to the Bible, Solomon, whose period is called the Golden Age of Israelite history, is known for his building exploits: “Here is the account of the forced labor King Solomon conscripted to build the LORD’s temple. His own palace, the supporting terraces, the wall of



Jerusalem, and Hazor, Megiddo and Gezer. . . . He built up Lower Beth Horon, Baalath, and Tadmor in the desert within his land, as well as all his store cities and the towns for his chariots and for his horses—whatever he desired to build in Jerusalem, in *Lebanon* and throughout all the territory he ruled” (1 Kings 9:15, 17–19; emphasis added). Further reference to this mass of building work, including “store cities,” which Solomon built in Hamath, is to be found in 2 Chronicles 8:3–6. Lebanon, which is included in Solomon’s empire, was among the nations conquered by David according to the biblical account, and it was part of Tuthmosis III’s empire.

The Bible mentions Hazor, Megiddo, and Gezer in connection with Solomon. Again, we find that all of these were among the western Asiatic cities conquered by Tuthmosis III in the middle of the fifteenth century BCE. This has been confirmed by archaeological digs, which have produced evidence of each city’s destruction in the strata corresponding to his period. In addition, in all three cases, evidence has been found of large-scale reconstruction work half a century later, during the reign of Amenhotep III. New royal palaces, temples, ordinary houses, and fortifying walls were established. Like Amenhotep III, Solomon was known for his massive building projects. In the time of Amenhotep III, in each of the reconstructed cities a local ruler was appointed, paying tribute to the pharaoh and enjoying the support of an Egyptian garrison. Egyptian objects, including a cartouche of Amenhotep III, were found in the strata belonging to this period, as is the case in other excavated cities of Canaan such as Beth She’an and Lachish. Evidence of the cities’ wealth and trade was found. It was clearly in this period—during the fourteenth century BCE—that these cities prospered.

## KING OF PEACE

According to the Bible, Solomon was not the original name of the son of David and Bathsheba: “Because the LORD loved him, he sent word through Nathan the prophet to name him Jedidiah” (2 Samuel 12:25; *Jedidiah* means “loved by the Lord”). The name *Solomon* is derived from the Semitic *salam*, or Hebrew *shalom*, which means “peace.” *Solomon* in this case seems to be a title rather than a name. It is not known if this name was used for him at the time of his reign. This could be why, although he ruled over a great empire, no historical evidence has ever been found of a king named Solomon. Rather than looking for a name, we have to find a king who ruled an empire between Egypt and the Euphrates in peace. Here we find only one king, Amenhotep III, the ninth king

of the Egyptian Eighteenth Dynasty, who inherited the empire of his great-grandfather, Tuthmosis III.

Amenhotep III's reign was almost entirely peaceful. Because of his peaceful activity in Canaan, the holy city of the Jebusites, where Tuthmosis III had spent seven months with the Ark of Amun, this city was named Yerushalayim, or Jerusalem, the city of peace. We will talk more about Jerusalem and the Temple later and will show the relation Amenhotep III had to the City of David.

Among the historical records of Tuthmosis III found at Karnak is a list of more than a thousand names of Canaanite locations that fell under Egyptian control after his first Asiatic campaign. At the top of this list we find the name Qadesh. Because it is included in a list of cities in Canaan, it could not have been the Syrian city of that name. As we saw in chapter 4, it is likely that it refers to Jerusalem, which was evidently known as Qadesh, the "holy city," from ancient times. This can explain why, although Tuthmosis III had conquered the whole land of Canaan, the name *Jerusalem* does not appear in his western Asiatic city list, or in the lists of any of his immediate successors.

However, about a hundred years later, during the time of Amenhotep III, we find a new name for the city, provided by the Tell el-Amarna letters, the foreign archives of the Eighteenth Dynasty. Six communications sent to the king of Egypt in the fourteenth century BCE and written in Akkadian, the diplomatic language of the period, come from *mat Urusalim*, "the land of Jerusalem." The letters confirm that this city had been under Egyptian control since the time of Tuthmosis III, with an Egyptian military garrison stationed locally.

Furthermore, the Akkadian name for Jerusalem, found in the Amarna letters, can be divided into two elements, *uru* and *salim*. The first element, *uru*, is derived from the verb *yara*, meaning "to found" or "to establish." The second element has caused some misunderstanding. A number of scholars have argued that it refers to a Western Semitic or Amorite god, Shulmannu or Shalim. By this view, *Urusalim* would mean "Shalim has founded." But no textual or archaeological evidence has ever been found to indicate that the Amorite god Shalim was worshipped at Jerusalem.

When we abandon this unsupported explanation, we find that *salim* was correctly understood by the Jewish rabbis in the Aggadah, the legendary part of the Talmud. *Salim* means "peace" (Hebrew *shalom* and Arabic *salam*). Thus the meaning of *Urusalim* would be "foundation of peace" or "establishing peace," an interpretation that is supported by the historical evidence: the lack of any mention of Urusalim in Egyptian sources before the Tell el-Amarna letters; the

fact that Qadesh, whose name is used both in the Bible and in later Arabic texts as a synonym for *Jerusalem*, is mentioned in the lists of subdued Asiatic cities of this period; and the fact that the Qadesh in question cannot have been the city of that name on the river Orontes.

This indicates that the Canaanite holy city of Qadesh became known as Jerusalem only during the time of Amenhotep III, the king of peace. To further the cause of peace, both Amenhotep III and Solomon saw judicious marriages as an act of diplomacy.

## THE PHARAOH'S DAUGHTER

One of Solomon's reported marriages, however, has been subject to much dispute. The Bible states that he married the pharaoh's daughter, receiving the city of Gezer as dowry, but it does not mention the name of this pharaoh. Many Egyptologists and biblical scholars have doubted this account. Egyptian pharaohs were known to refuse to marry their daughters to any foreigners. Scholar Paul S. Ash writes: "From what is currently known, reigning Pharaohs did not marry their daughters to foreigners. According to Kadash-Enlil I of Babylon, Amenhotep III had said, 'From of old, a daughter of the king of the land of Egypt was not given to anyone.' In addition, some evidence in Herodotus suggests that it was unusual for a Pharaoh's daughter to marry a foreigner. According to Herodotus 3.1, Cambyses of Persia attacked Egypt because Pharaoh Amasis refused to give his daughter to Cambyses."<sup>4</sup>

Furthermore, the Bible states that the unnamed pharaoh took possession of the Canaanite city of Gezer and gave it to Solomon: "Pharaoh king of Egypt had attacked and captured Gezer. He had set it on fire. He killed its Canaanite inhabitants and then gave it as a wedding gift to his daughter, Solomon's wife. And Solomon rebuilt Gezer" (1 Kings 9:16–17).

However, this account does not agree with historical records. Gezer, in the foothills of the Judean mountains, midway between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, is first mentioned in the Egyptian texts of Tuthmosis III after he had captured it in approximately 1468 BCE.

Although the city faced some invasion attempts during the time of Amenhotep III's successor, Akhenaten, Gezer remained under Egyptian domination at least until the end of the thirteenth century BCE. In one of the Amarna letters, the ruler of Gezer writes to the pharaoh complaining of an attack on the city by a people, the Habiru, who are believed to be Hebrews: "So to the

king my lord, my Sun; Message of Milkilu, your servant, . . . my lord, save his land from the power of the ‘Apiru’” (letter no. EA271).<sup>5</sup> Later, during the time of Merneptah, Ramses II’s successor, toward the end of the thirteenth century BCE, Gezer has apparently been recaptured. The Israelite Stele, dating from this time, says: “Canaan is captive with all woe. Ashkelon is conquered, Gezer seized, Yanoam made non-existent.”<sup>6</sup>

## THE BURNING OF GEZER

Canaan remained firmly under Egyptian control when Ramses III (ca. 1182–51 BCE), the second ruler of Egypt’s Twentieth Dynasty, came to the throne. A papyrus found in Thebes—known as the Papyrus Harris, now in the British Museum—relates that at this comparatively late date, Ramses III built a temple of Amun in the land of Canaan, and the “foreigners of Retenu come to it, bearing their tributes before it.” Furthermore, an ivory model pen case, found at the Canaanite city of Megiddo and belonging to an Egyptian envoy to foreign countries, bears the name of Ramses III.<sup>7</sup>

However, after the reign of Ramses III, Egypt lost control over Canaan as a result of a mass invasion by the Sea Peoples, who attacked the whole eastern Mediterranean coast from Anatolia in the north to Egypt in the south. This invasion began around 1174 BCE—year 8 of Ramses III (about the same time that, according to Greek historians, the Trojan War was taking place). The story of the invasion is recorded in the best-preserved inscriptions and reliefs on the walls of Ramses III’s funerary temple in western Thebes.

Although Ramses III was able to repulse the attack on Egypt, the Hittite empire of Asia Minor was swept away, and the Hittite capital, Hattushash, burned to the ground. Nevertheless, there is textual and archaeological evidence to show that Egypt’s control over Canaan continued until the middle of the twelfth century BCE, when Egypt completely lost control of all the countries of the Levant.

From then onward, archaeological features show that Gezer was inhabited by a part of the Sea Peoples, the Peleset. These were the original Philistines, who later gave their name to the land of Canaan: Palestine. As we saw in chapter 3, the archaeological evidence for this claim consists of numerous specimens of a class of painted Philistine pottery that have been recovered in southwest Canaan dating from the first half of the twelfth century BCE. Although this pottery resembles Mycenaean pottery in style, chemical and physical analyses indicate

that it was made locally.

Another indication of Philistine settlement in southwest Canaan is the discovery of weapons and tools of iron—unknown to the Canaanites at the time—that can be dated to the twelfth century BCE: “It was in the second half of the twelfth century BCE that the Philistines really established themselves by building older towns and founding new ones, often no doubt in close association with the Canaanite population they now ruled.”<sup>8</sup>

According to the Bible, although Gezer was under Philistine rule when Solomon sat on the throne (conventionally dated to ca. 965–925 BCE), it was conquered and burned by an Egyptian pharaoh, who then gave it to Solomon. We have no external sources to confirm this account. Nevertheless, the British Egyptologist Kenneth Kitchen agrees with the biblical story and believes that Siamun, the sixth king of the Twenty-First Dynasty, who ruled 986–967 BCE, was the unnamed pharaoh of the Bible who conquered Gezer. I do not take Kitchen’s view seriously because, during my visit to his office at Liverpool University, he told me that if a biblical text disagrees with an Egyptian text, he would regard the biblical text as more accurate. He also told me, “The absence of evidence is not evidence,” meaning that he would accept the accuracy of the biblical account without other historical evidence, or even against other evidence.

The biblical account tells us that the pharaoh who married his daughter to Solomon captured Gezer and gave it to her as a wedding present (1 Kings 9:16). But the Bible gives us no indication of exactly when this event took place, nor does it give the name of the pharaoh who led the campaign against Gezer at the time conventionally assigned to the rule of Solomon. None of the kings of the weak Twenty-First Dynasty (which, according to the accepted evidence, came to an end in 945 BCE) are known to have been involved in military campaigns in western Asia. Furthermore, Gezer, in the Judean highland some thirty kilometers west of Jerusalem, is known to have been part of the Philistine territory during this period.

Kitchen’s views about Siamun’s capture of Gezer have been challenged by some scholars, such as Paul S. Ash and Mark W. Chavalas. The Belgian biblical scholar Edward Lipinski contends, “The attempt at relating the destruction of Gezer to the hypothetical relationship between Siamun and Solomon cannot be justified factually, since Siamun’s death preceded Solomon’s accession.”<sup>9</sup>

## ROYAL MARRIAGES

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The biblical account of Solomon's wives completely disagrees with what we would expect of an Israelite ruler. But it does correspond to what we know about Amenhotep III. It was he who married Sitamun (the daughter of Pharaoh Tuthmosis IV), then Tiye (daughter of Yuya—Joseph), and seven other foreign princesses. To further the cause of peace with different nations of the empire, he had a series of judicious marriages to foreign princesses: two from Syria, two from Mitanni, and two from Babylonia, as well as a princess from Arzawa in southwestern Asia Minor. As for his harem, Gilukhepa, one of his Mitannian wives, is said to have arrived in Egypt with a caravan that included 317 ladies-in-waiting. This agrees completely with the biblical account of Solomon.

Had Solomon been king of Israel, we would expect him to have had an Israelite wife to bear his successor, especially because, according to Israelite tradition, the line of descent goes through the mother. As we have seen, Sarah gave birth to Isaac from the pharaoh, not from Abraham, her husband; for this reason, it was Isaac who inherited the promise of an empire. Even today, if a Jewish man marries a Gentile woman, his children from this woman would not be regarded as Jews.

Yet all we find in the Bible story are Solomon's foreign wives, beginning with the pharaoh's daughter. According to the Bible, "King Solomon . . . loved many foreign women besides Pharaoh's daughter—Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians and Hittites. . . . He had seven hundred wives . . . and three hundred concubines" (1 Kings 11:1, 3). Even Rehoboam, his son who succeeded him on the throne, is said to have been the son of Naamah the Ammonite (1 Kings 14:21). Yet Solomon's marriages to foreign women were regarded as defiance against God as well as against Israelite beliefs. The Lord had instructed the Israelites, "You must not intermarry with them [foreign nations], because they will surely turn your heart after their gods" (1 Kings 11:2; cf. Exodus 34:16).

The Lord's warning proved to be right, for shortly afterward we are told that "as Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods: and his heart was not fully devoted to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father had been. He followed Ashtoreth [Ishtar], the goddess of the Sidonians" (1 Kings 11:4–5). This sequence of events can hardly ask for greater confirmation than we find in the historical account of Amenhotep III.

## **SOLOMON'S GODS**

Traditionally a pharaoh was the head of all Egyptian deities and was regarded as the embodiment of the gods on Earth. He was expected to uphold *maat* (truth, harmony, justice) within his kingdom and respect all gods of the country. Although the cult of Amun was regarded as the state religion during the Eighteenth Dynasty, the pharaoh still had obligations toward all the other gods. However, near the end of his reign, Amenhotep III seems to have adopted the monotheistic god Aten, introduced by his son, Akhenaten. This can be seen from the name he gave to his youngest daughter, Beketaten, as well as some of the art of his reign:

The deified Amenhotep III's new role as the living manifestation of all deity, including the creator/sun god Amun-Ra, was expressed in a new art style that emphasized his idealized, divine nature. Akhenaten's role as the firstborn of the creator god Shu was expressed in a new art style that emphasized his physical characteristics as Shu and his inherent female twin, Tefnut, a role also shared by Nefertiti. After Amenhotep III's first jubilee and by Akhenaten's year 3 [of the coregency], the living [god] Ra-Horakhty's names were enclosed in the cartouches of a king, and the new god appeared with full royal titulary as the rayed disk with multiple hands, in every respect the senior coregent of Akhenaten.

By Akhenaten's year 5 [of the coregency], he and the Aten celebrated a jubilee of their own, after (or during) which he changed his name from Amenhotep IV to Akhenaten and dedicated the site of the "Horizon of the Aten" (Akhenaten, modern Amarna) as the chief cult center of the Aten.<sup>[10](#)</sup>

## ANOINTING AND CORONATION

Even the account of Solomon's coronation agrees with Egyptian pharaonic tradition. According to the Bible, David ordered Solomon to be anointed "king over Israel" (1 Kings 1:34). Anointing the king at the time of his coronation was an Egyptian, not a Canaanite, custom. Although 1 Samuel says that it was adopted in the case of both Saul and David, the very Hebrew word used, *mesheh*, "to anoint," is borrowed from the Egyptian *meseh*.

While the title *Messeh* or *Messiah* now refers to Jesus Christ the redeemer, every Egyptian king had received this title at the time of his coronation. The title *Messeh* was written in hieroglyphics with the image of two crocodiles. The word

for “crocodile” is pronounced *meseḥ*. Along with other oils and perfumes, the priests also used the fat of the crocodile to anoint the king, believing that this would give him sexual strength as well as strong descendants.

According to the Bible, King David gave his orders: “Take your lord’s servants with you and set Solomon my son on my own mule. . Have Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet anoint him king over Israel. Blow the trumpet and shout, ‘Long live King Solomon.’ Then you are to go up with him, and he is to come and sit on my throne” (1 Kings 1:33–35).

Then, we are told, “the king made a great throne covered with ivory and overlaid with fine gold. The throne has six steps, and its back had a rounded top. On both sides of the seat were armrests, with a lion standing beside each of them. Twelve lions stood on the six steps, one at either end of each step” (1 Kings 10:18–20).

Otto Eissfeldt noticed the similarity to pharaonic practice here: “It is comparatively easy to visualize the throne of gold and ivory with its six steps which stood in the audience chamber as it is described in 1 Kings. . . . The lavish use of gold can be compared without hesitation with the wonderfully-preserved chair of Tutankhamun.”<sup>11</sup> Other aspects of the account of Solomon’s coronation in 1 Kings—trumpet blowing, the acclamation “Long live King Solomon,” and following the king in procession—also accord with Egyptian custom.

The similarity of Solomon’s coronation with the pharaonic system goes beyond rituals. The very idea of kingship, originally foreign to the Hebrews, was accorded a place in Israelite theology similar to that in Egypt in the biblical books relating to the time of David onward: “Some scholars argue that, in adopting the institution of kingship, Israel also adopted a pagan theory of kingship and a ritual pattern for expressing it, allegedly common to all her neighbors. In this view the king was regarded as a divine or semi-divine being.”<sup>12</sup> This situation had nothing to do with Saul, because he was merely a head of the tribal coalition, but applied mainly to David and Solomon. In both cases, as in the Egyptian tradition, the king was regarded as the son of the deity. “You are my son; today I have become your father,” Yahweh tells King David in Psalm 2:7. He also says of Solomon: “I will be his father, and he will be my son” (2 Samuel 7:14). The Israelite Lord now also refers to his kingly son as his “anointed” (Psalms 2:2; 18:50; 20:6).

The ancient idea of monarchy was built on the divine right of the king and his descendants to rule and be obeyed. Ancient kings were regarded as demigods, descended from the gods. This concept is completely out of



accordance with ancient Israelite belief. The Israelite idea of a chosen people did not imply this view. Jacob and his descendants had a covenant with God to follow him, with the promise that he would make them victorious. No single man or dynasty in this tribal society was regarded as having the right to rule. For the Israelites to accept David and Solomon as sons of God, possessing this right, was a new departure for them.

The biblical account does not fit in with the life of an Israelite king of the tenth century BCE. How could the king of Israel choose all his wives from among foreign nations, without even one Israelite to bear his successor? How could Solomon, who established the Temple of Jerusalem as the house of Yahweh, disobey his God and worship other deities? These details make more sense if they are applied to Amenhotep III.

## The “Lost” Mines of Solomon

FIFTEEN YEARS BEFORE THE END of the nineteenth century, more details about King Solomon came forward, neither from the Bible nor from any historical source, but from a work of fiction. *King Solomon’s Mines*, a novel by H. Rider Haggard, the English Victorian adventure writer, was published in 1885. Relying on the discovery in the 1870s of an immense set of mining ruins in southern Africa—known as Great Zimbabwe—Haggard claimed that Solomon had had great mines that were subsequently lost to history.

As soon as the book came out, it became an immediate bestseller and has been republished to this day. Although this was fiction, Solomon’s mines entered popular belief and were described in many books, movies, and TV series. One point that made Haggard’s claim more acceptable is the biblical account of Ophir, a port region famous for its wealth. Both the books of Kings and Chronicles tell of a joint expedition to Ophir by King Solomon and the Tyrian king Hiram I from Ezion-Geber, a port on the northern extremity of the Gulf of Aqaba in the Red Sea, which brought back large amounts of gold, precious stone, and wood.

Although the Bible mentions the wealth that came from Ophir, it does not say where it was located, only saying that those who journeyed to Ophir were away for three years. Ptolemy, the Alexandrian geographer of the second century CE, placed Ophir in the Malay peninsula. Christopher Columbus believed he had found it in Haiti; others suggested India, Madagascar, Sri Lanka, Arabia, or Peru.

Were Solomon’s mines just a fiction, a symbol of his wealth and wisdom, or did the story point to real, historical mines?

### THE TIMNA VALLEY

After the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948, the search for Solomon’s

mines took another direction. Rather than looking for the king's mines far away in Africa and Asia, the search came home to Israel.

In 1959 excavations in the Arabah valley, about forty kilometers north of the Gulf of Aqaba, were carried out under Beno Rothenberg by the Arabah Expedition, with the Ha'aretz Museum in Tel Aviv and, for several years, the University of Tel Aviv. A large section of the valley, containing ancient remains of worship and copper mining, is now encompassed in a recreation park.

During the survey, it became apparent to the excavators that the Timna Valley was a major center of copper mining and processing over a period of almost six thousand years. Situated between Egypt, the Negev, and Arabia, the copper mines in the Timna Valley were probably, during this early period, part of the kingdom of Edom and worked by the Edomites. Consequently:

By 1964, the conclusion of the initial archaeological-metallurgical investigations, it had become clear that systematic excavations at Timna would . . . assist accurate dating of the ancient industrial enterprises discovered during the surface survey. It had also become obvious that the ancient remains previously called "King Solomon's Mines" belonged in fact to several widely separated periods of activity, from the fourth millennium BCE to medieval and later times, but not including the period of Solomon. The accurate dating of these sites had therefore become of great importance and urgency for the history of metal and they also contribute to a reliable dating of contemporary civilizations in Arabia and Edom, the Negev, the Arabah and Sinai.<sup>1</sup>

Although the mines in the Timna Valley, north of the Israeli port of Eilat, proved to be historical fact, not fiction, they did not belong to the time of the biblical King Solomon, but to that of the pharaohs of Egypt. Although the exact date when the Egyptians first appeared in Timna remains unrecorded, after the time of Tuthmosis III, the Timna area became part of his Egyptian empire. After that, Egypt controlled the "King's Highway" through Moab, Edom, and the Sinai. This would have given Egypt de facto control over the Timna copper mines, even if the empire's soldiers and priests did not arrive in significant numbers until after the Amarna era, in the second half of the fourteenth century BCE.

During the New Kingdom of Egypt, and until the middle of the twelfth

century BCE when Egypt withdrew from its colonies in the east, the whole region was under the control of the Pharaohs of the 19th-20th Dynasties who sent mining expeditions to the Timna Valley and the Nahal (wadi) Amram south of it. After these activities came to a standstill in the twelfth century the Egyptians returned for a short while to Timna during the 22nd Dynasty, in the tenth century BCE. Mining activities were again revived at the time of the Imperial Roman occupation of the Southern Arabah and continued, with varying intensity, during the Early Islamic occupation of the area. At a very reduced scale these activities seem to have gone on until medieval times.<sup>2</sup>

This archaeological report agrees with what we know about this area from historical sources. After the fifteenth century BCE, Edom and the lands south of the Dead Sea came under Egyptian control as part of the empire inherited by Amenhotep III. Later, in the second half of the fourteenth century BCE, Egyptian-Midianite copper production began at Timna. A very advanced smelting furnace, consisting of a bowl-shaped smelting hearth dug into the ground and lined with clay smelting mortar, was in use.

## **THE HATHOR TEMPLE**

Along with the mines, Rothenberg made an important new discovery in 1969. At the foot of the huge sandstone formation in the center of the Timna Valley known as King Solomon's Pillars, a small Egyptian temple was excavated. The temple, dedicated to Hathor, the Egyptian goddess of mining, was established during the reign of Seti I, second king of the Nineteenth Dynasty, and served the members of the Egyptian mining expeditions and the local workers.

In the temple, archaeologists found hieroglyphic inscriptions, including cartouches of the Egyptian pharaohs who reigned in the second half of the fourteenth through the twelfth centuries BCE. However, with the decline of Egyptian control of the region in the middle of the twelfth century BCE—the time of the invasion of the Sea Peoples and the arrival of the Philistines in Canaan—the mines at Timna and the Hathor temple were abandoned.

They also found a low mound, 15 × 15 meters and about 1.5 meters high, leaning against one of the large, picturesque, Nubian sandstone formations that comprise King Solomon's Pillars, located right in the center of the ancient

smelting area of Timna and a popular tourist attraction. The excavation of the small mound was originally planned as a trial and scheduled to take about two weeks. But right from the first day numerous unusual and unexpected finds came to light, causing a complete change of the expedition's plans. The result was a season of more than two months—and the discovery of a temple containing almost ten thousand small finds.

The life story of the temple falls into four main phases: at the beginning, there were several shallow pits and a few fireplaces cut into the bed-rock under the rock shelter formed by the huge overhanging walls of “King Solomon's Pillars.” Flint tools and pottery date this phase to the Chalcolithic period. . . .

More than 2000 years later, . . . an Egyptian temple was erected on top of the Chalcolithic remains. . . . Many architectural fragments of this initial phase of the temple survived, some bearing hieroglyphic inscriptions of a Hathor face, the Egyptian goddess to whom the Timna temple was dedicated.

After a thorough wanton destruction, . . . a new temple was built on top of the ruins. . . . There is some evidence that this happened during the reign of Ramses III (1198–1166 BCE). . . .

The second temple, still in use under Ramses V (1160–1156 BCE), was destroyed by an earthquake. After a short period of abandonment, the temple worship was renewed [after the temple was covered by a large tent]. . . . There are convincing reasons to relate this tent-sanctuary to the Midianites who returned to Timna for a short while after the Egyptian copper mining expedition no longer reached the area. . . .

This find is of considerable significance for the archaeology and history of the Holy Land and the Bible; it solves a number of long outstanding problems but, in turn, it raises many new questions. We know today that the copper mines of Timna were operated by pharaonic expeditions of the 19th to 20th Dynasties, in collaboration with local Kenite-Midianite tribes, and there is no evidence for the existence of any “King Solomon's Mines.”<sup>3</sup>

Located in the Timna Valley, twenty miles north of the Gulf of Aqaba on the Red Sea, in an area called Arabah, Solomon's Pillars are natural geographical formations named after the biblical king. As Timna was believed to be the site of

copper mining under King Solomon, the local pillars took this name from him. However, instead of the presumed biblical ties, Solomon's Pillars proved to be related to the pharaohs of Egypt. An inscription near the temple depicts pharaoh Ramses III offering gifts to the goddess Hathor.

As a result of Rothenberg's pioneering work, a new paradigm emerged, one in which the New Kingdom Egyptians, and not King Solomon of Israel, were the true masters of the local copper mines. Nonetheless, this did not stop those who regard the biblical account as more historically accurate from trying to reverse the conclusion again. A report under the title "King Solomon's Mines Rediscovered?" was published by *National Geographic* in October 2008, and it claims that the Timna mines belong to Solomon after all:

Copper mines in southern Jordan were active centuries earlier than previously believed, according to a new study that suggests the area was producing the metal at the same time as the biblical figure of King Solomon is said to have built Jerusalem's first Jewish temple.

Industrial-scale metal production was occurring at a site in Jordan in the tenth century B.C., according to the study's carbon dating of ancient industrial mining debris and analysis of the settlement layout.

Previous studies had concluded no copper production occurred in the area before the seventh century B.C.

"We're conclusively showing that the Iron Age chronology [of this region] has to be pushed back another 300 years," said lead author Thomas Levy, an anthropologist at the University of California, San Diego.

The shift in estimated Iron Age dates means the Jordan copper mine would have been in operation during the reigns of Kings David and Solomon—who are referred to in the Old Testament (the Hebrew Bible) but have not been verified as actual historical figures.

"Now we have to readdress many of the questions about the relationship between the biblical text about this region in those centuries and the archaeological record," Levy said.<sup>4</sup>

It is significant that a nonbiblical, nonhistorical story is proved to be right by archaeological finds. It is even more significant that Solomon's mines point not to the kings of Israel, but to the pharaohs of Egypt. This shows that Solomon's

biblical account, although placed at a different geographical location and a different time, comes from the story of Amenhotep III.

# The Temples of Solomon and Amenhotep III

ACCORDING TO THE BIBLE, Solomon carried out some major buildings operations in Jerusalem, including his Temple; his own royal residence; a palace for his queen, the pharaoh's daughter; a throne room (1 Kings 7:7); a portico, or porch of pillars (1 Kings 7:6); and the "Palace of the Forest of Lebanon" (1 Kings 7:2). These were all built at the same time, in one location.

Solomon's Temple, the Bible says, was established as the center of worship for Yahweh in all Israel: its Holy of Holies was the place where he situated the Ark of the Covenant, including the original tablets of the Ten Commandments. Different books of the Old Testament describe the Temple, how it was built, and how it gradually became the central location of worship for the twelve tribes of Israel during the United Monarchy.

Solomon is said to have begun to build the Temple in the fourth year of his reign, while its construction took seven years. Although different sources give different accounts regarding the size of each part of the Temple, its main features are agreed upon.

## THE LAYOUT OF SOLOMON'S TEMPLE

According to *Easton's Bible Dictionary* and the *Jewish Encyclopaedia*, the Temple was composed of:

1. The *debir*. Called the "inner house" or the "Holy of Holies," it was considered the dwelling place of the name of God. It was floored and wainscoted with cedar wood from Lebanon, and its floor and windows were overlaid with gold. It contained two cherubim, each having outspread wings so that they stood side by side and their wings touched the wall on either



side and met in the center of the room. The Ark of the Covenant, containing the original tablets of the Ten Commandments, was placed in the Holy of Holies.

2. The *hekal*. The holy place, called the “greater house” or the “temple.” Its walls were lined with cedar, on which were carved figures of cherubim, palm trees, and open flowers, which were also overlaid with gold.
3. The *ulam*. The porch, or entrance, before the Temple on the east, where the two pillars stood.
4. The chambers. Built around the Temple on the southern, western, and northern sides, these rooms were used for storage.

Biblical tradition says that the building was surrounded by the “court of the priests,” called the “inner court,” and the “great court,” which in turn surrounded the whole temple. It is stated that the Temple was provided with a structure around it. In addition, in front of the Temple, a little to the southeast, stood the “sea,” a large laver of cast metal ornamented with gourds (1 Kings 7:24). This laver, which rested on the back of twelve bulls, had a capacity of three thousand *baths* (a Hebrew measure of volume) for the ablutions of the priests.

## ***Two Pillars***

Moreover, Solomon’s Temple had some special features, the nature of which became subject to much argument and speculation. It is stated that in the porch, before the Temple, Solomon erected two pillars named Jachin and Boaz (1 Kings 7:21). These two pillars became the most widely discussed feature of Solomon’s Temple, as they must have had a hidden symbolic function. Why were the pillars given names at all, and what do these names mean?

Different scholars have had different views about the possible meaning of the names given to these two pillars. Some explained these names by saying that it was the custom among ancient Middle Eastern peoples to give names to sacred objects. Josephus, in *Antiquities of the Jews*, says the name of Boaz, which stood on the left when one was facing the Temple, means “in strength,” and that of Jachin, which stood on the right, means “will establish.”

## ***Cherubim***

At the same time, although it was forbidden for the Israelites to make images, the Temple of Solomon is said to have included cherubim everywhere, even in the Holy of Holies. Pertaining to the arrangement of the cherubim in the debir, 2 Chronicles 3:13 says that “they faced the main hall.” The cherubim, who are not given angelic status in the Old Testament, were regarded as unearthly beings who directly attend to God. Although the word *cherubim* appears ninety-one times in the Hebrew Bible, the Scriptures do not describe them, and their role is never explicitly elucidated. While still in Egypt, Yahweh tells Moses to make multiple images of cherubim at specific points around the Ark of the Covenant (Exodus 25:18–22). The cherubim were two figures placed on top of the Ark, which had been set in the holiest place in the tabernacle, established by Moses at the foot of Mount Sinai. Exodus 25:20 states that the two figures had “their faces turned to each other.”

### ***Masonic Details***

Other details of the Temple are not found in the Bible. As Solomon’s Temple represents one of the focus points in modern Freemasonry, the Masons had their own understanding of its construction:

King David began the temple. . . . Upon the accession of Solomon to the Israelitish throne, he pushed forward with vigour the projects of his father, and hastened the completion of the temple. This king collected from various countries of the world a larger class of skilled workmen, who numbered fourscore thousand hewers of stone. Among other charges made by Solomon, he selected three thousand of the most expert operatives, and placed them as governors or superintendents of the work. All these were classed under the general term of Masons. At this time, Solomon received many flattering indications of the friendly spirit of neighboring rulers, and among others, Hiram, King of Tyre, who offered him the resources of the Tyrian kingdom. By this means the king of Israel was enabled to procure such timber as was essential in the construction of the temple. A son of Hiram, Anynon, by name, was appointed master mason of this great work, and was especially distinguished for his geometric knowledge. He was chief master of all the masons engaged in the erection of the Jewish temple, and was a proficient master of engraving and carving, and all manner of masonry required for the sacred edifice. . . . In this manner, the worthy science of

masonry was introduced into the country of Jerusalem, and then propagated throughout many kingdoms.<sup>1</sup>

## DESTRUCTION

A few years following the death of King Solomon, the Bible says that what became known as the United Kingdom came to an end on the succession of Solomon's son Rehoboam, around 930 BCE. Simultaneously, Solomon's great empire vanished in a moment as if it had never existed. The Israelites then were divided in two separate kingdoms; the kingdom of Israel (ruled by Jeroboam) in the north, including Shechem and Samaria, and the kingdom of Judah in the south (ruled by Rehoboam), including Jerusalem. As a result, Solomon's Temple was no longer the center of Israelite worship, as King Jeroboam of Israel built different shrines on different high places (1 Kings 12:26–28, 31).

Although it is known that the Egyptians built temples since the beginning of their history, Solomon's Temple was a new thing in Israelite history, because previously the Israelites had always worshipped on high places. The earliest biblical mention of a site of worship is found in Genesis 12:6–8, where Abraham builds altars in the places where the Lord appears to him. As we have seen, Abraham was also ordered by the Lord to sacrifice Sarah's son on a high mountain (Genesis 22:2). According to Genesis 28:18–19, Jacob set up a pillar to the Lord at Bethel and poured oil on its top, and the prophet Samuel "went on a circuit from Bethel to Gilgal to Mizpah, judging Israel in all these places" (1 Samuel 7:16).

Solomon himself worshipped on different high places: "As Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods, and his heart was not fully devoted to the LORD his God. . . . So Solomon did evil in the eyes of the LORD. . . . On a hill east of Jerusalem, Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the detestable god of Moab, and for Molek the detestable god of the Ammonites. He did the same for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and offered sacrifices to their gods" (1 Kings 11:4–8).

Moreover, following Solomon's death, the Israelites went back to worship on the same high places where they used to worship before. Jeroboam, king of Israel in the north, "made two golden calves. He said to the people, 'It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem. Here are your gods, Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt.' One he set up in Bethel, and the other in Dan. . . . The people came to worship the one in Bethel and went as far as Dan to worship the other. .

. . . Jeroboam built shrines on high places and appointed priests from all sorts of people, even though they were not Levites” (1 Kings 12:28–31).

Nothing much is known about the fate of Solomon’s Temple after the king’s death aside from the biblical accounts that indicate that the Israelites moved their worship to different high places. In the meantime, it is generally believed that the Temple survived until the time of the Babylonian invasion in 586 BCE. Following the Babylonian Exile, when Cyrus the Great of Persia defeated the Babylonians, he gave the Jews permission to return to Palestine and build their temple on the site of the earlier Temple, which was completed before the end of the sixth century BCE. The Jerusalem Temple became the center of Jewish worship in Palestine until it was destroyed in 70 CE by the Romans.

In modern times, discrepancies in the biblical account of Solomon’s Temple have been questioned by some scholars, who have noticed that “the architectural and ornamental features of the Temple itself, as they make their appearance in Masonic tradition and the biblical account, [were] established . . . with rabbinic legend and exposition, and with present-day biblical commentary and criticism. Here, again, we will note some corroboration, and some discrepancy between several Books of the Bible themselves, and between the various versions and translations; also, some anachronisms and improbabilities.”<sup>2</sup> Moreover, modern archaeologists have not been able to find remains of either Solomon’s Temple or his palace in Jerusalem.

In his *Archaeology of Palestine*, W. F. Albright—who has been described by another worker in that field as “one of the most competent and versatile archaeologists of the modern world”—tells us that “the age of Solomon was certainly one of the most flourishing periods of material civilization in the history of Palestine.”<sup>3</sup> It is not surprising, therefore, that John Garstang has found sufficient material at his command to devote an entire work to the subject.<sup>4</sup> But this appraisal of Albright’s is mainly based on the biblical record itself, since contemporaneous extrabiblical chronicles are strangely silent with respect to this period, as J. McKee Adams has shown.<sup>5</sup> With respect to any extraneous references to David and Solomon in the annals of the neighboring states—and despite the close ties that David, and especially Solomon, are said to have had with Phoenicia and Egypt—it is as if these two Jewish kings had never lived.

One short reference to Sheshonq I, king of Egypt—the “Shishak” of the Bible (1 Kings 14:25–26)—does, however, have some, if limited, significance in this respect. It is Sheshonq, or Shishak, who gave his daughter to Solomon in

marriage, making her at the same time a gift of the town of Gezer, which he had conquered and destroyed. Sheshonq is said to have subsequently invaded Palestine after the death of Solomon and sacked the king's palace and the royal buildings, as well as the Temple. Nevertheless, the Great Karnak Relief, on the walls of Luxor, lists the towns Sheshonq conquered in this campaign. It shows the pharaoh before his god Amun, smiting the Asiatics, but the inscription indicates nothing specifically of Solomonic identification, and we are confined entirely to the story in the Bible itself for the other details enumerated. Solomon himself is nowhere mentioned in the record at Karnak.

Similarly, archaeological excavations have so far turned up no unquestionable evidence that the Temple ever existed. The same can be said about Solomon's other building projects in Jerusalem, all of which are said to have "occupied him for a period of twenty years."<sup>6</sup> As Paul Leslie Garber states, "The evidence, such as it is, is of literary character." Albright states pointedly, "No certain traces of the Temple of Solomon . . . have so far been recovered by archaeologists."<sup>7</sup>

## EGYPTIAN TEMPLES

The situation in Egypt was different than in Canaan. Egyptians are known to have built temples from the dawn of their history more than five thousand years ago. The ancient Egyptians believed their temples were houses for the gods or kings to whom they were dedicated. The temple was considered the "horizon" of a divine being, the place where the god came into existence at creation.

According to the Bible, much precious material was used in the construction of Solomon's Temple. This is equally true of the mortuary temple that Amenhotep III built in western Thebes. Egyptian temples were built with stone so that they would last forever. The most important part was the sanctuary, which contained a cult image, a statue of the god. The typical design consisted of a series of enclosed halls, open courts, and entrance pylons aligned along the path used for festival processions. Every Egyptian temple followed the same basic design: a forecourt and reception area for public gatherings, with colonnades leading to smaller rooms, which led to the Holy of Holies, where the god was believed to reside when visiting Earth. Within their temples, the Egyptians performed different rituals, gave offerings to the gods, reenacted mythological events through festivals, and performed rites to ward off the forces of chaos. Beyond the temple proper, they used to have an outer wall enclosing a

wide variety of secondary buildings. Over time, the Egyptian temple developed, and the rooms outside the sanctuary grew larger. Egyptian temples reached the high point of their design during the time of the New Kingdom and the Eighteenth Dynasty.

Medinet Habu, where Amenhotep III built his house and his mortuary temple, has many features that are identical to those of the descriptions of the Temple of Solomon, including the Migdol Gateway, an exact copy of the Temple of Solomon, and a Holy of Holies, as well as a treasury, and the two pillars (statues) at the eastern gate. The following description shows the Egyptian features of Solomon's Temple.

In the principal front was an ulam [a porch], probably a grand portico, such as they had formerly been in several Egyptian Temples. The temples of the ancients were generally without windows . . . that of Jerusalem appears to have had them . . . of the same form as those observed in the . . . great temple of Thebes. The timbers of the ceiling were of cedar, and it appears that the roof was flat like Egyptian temples. . . .

Before the ulam were two pillars of brass, whose capitals resembled, according to the expression of the Bible, "lily work," which indicates some resemblance to the Egyptian capitals, composed from lotus flowers. There is no mention of bases, and it is probable that they had none. They were no doubt intended as a decoration to the whole, like the obelisks which were placed before the Egyptian temples.

The exterior walls of the temple were of stone, squared at right angles, and ornamented with the figures of cherubim, palm-leaves . . . sculptured probably in the stone like the Egyptian hieroglyphics.<sup>8</sup>

Although Solomon's Temple had nothing to correspond to an Egyptian hypostyle hall, his palace is said to have had one. The Palace of the Forest of Lebanon and the Hall of Pillars remind one strongly of the outer and inner hypostyle hall of an Egyptian temple. (A hypostyle hall is a space covered by a roof supported by pillars.) Also, the chambers that surrounded the Holy Place in Solomon's Temple, believed to have been storehouses for sacred treasure, are paralleled by similar chambers in Egyptian temples, which surrounded the *naos*, or hypostyle hall, and were used for similar purposes.

## AMENHOTEP III'S TEMPLES

On the subject of the riches used by Amenhotep III in his construction of the temples, Donald B. Redford, the Canadian Egyptologist, says in his book *Akhenaten: The Heretic King*: “The recorded figures of metals and precious stones that went into the Montu temple (one of the Karnak temples) is quite staggering: 3.25 tons of electrum, 2.5 tons of gold, 924 tons of copper, 1,250 pounds of lapis lazuli, 215 pounds of turquoise, 1.5 tons of bronze and over 10 tons of beaten copper. Such was the return on Egypt’s investment in an empire!”<sup>9</sup>

Amenhotep III, whom I am identifying with the biblical Solomon, is known to have built many temples both in Egypt and in Canaan. He began his building program in his year 2. The sites of his temples for different deities, including himself, were at Hermopolis, opposite Amarna (the new capital that was later founded by his son, Akhenaten), two temples at Karnak to the north of Thebes, the great Luxor temple in Thebes itself, three temples in Nubia, and his mortuary temple north of his palace complex in western Thebes. He also built other, small temples in almost all the Canaanite cities that had Egyptian garrisons, as well as on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, where his great-grandfather, Tuthmosis III, had kept the Ark of Amun.

Amenhotep III’s buildings were of mammoth size and scale and used a copious amount of rich goods as well as the highest quality in design and workmanship. His major achievements in building were the temple at Luxor, his mortuary temple, and the palace at Malqata.

## THE LUXOR TEMPLE

The temple complex in ancient Thebes (present-day Luxor), on the western bank of the Nile, is regarded as the greatest of Amenhotep III’s building achievements. Started by Amenhotep III, it was completed by Tutankhamun and Ramses II. It was known in the ancient Egyptian language as *ipet resyt*, “the southern sanctuary.” The temple also had a Sun Court, which opened to the sky for solar worship. The Luxor complex was not dedicated to a cult god or a deified version of the king in death, but to the rejuvenation of kingship. Here many of the later kings of Egypt were crowned, in reality or conceptually. (Alexander the Great, who claimed he was crowned at Luxor, may never have visited the temple.)



The Luxor complex was built to mark the celebration of the Opet festival, which brought together the Theban trinity of Amun, Mut, and Khonsu. A cult statue of Amun was paraded down the Nile from the nearby Karnak temple to stay for a while with his consort Mut in a celebration of fertility.

Amenhotep III also used the Luxor temple to show his connection with the gods, as he identified himself with the national deities and indeed presented himself as the substitute for major gods. In a series of scenes, the pharaoh depicts his divine birth, with his mother being offered the ankh, the sign of life. Amenhotep used this as a way not of justifying his rule, but of proclaiming his own status and power as a god.

## THE MORTUARY TEMPLE

It is Amenhotep's mortuary temple on the western bank of the Nile, certainly the most impressive of all Egyptian temples, that is to be identified with the biblical Temple. According to the Bible, much precious material was used in the construction of Solomon's temple in Jerusalem. This is equally true of the mortuary temple that Amenhotep III built at western Thebes. Like the latter, the mortuary temple is oriented toward the east and was built on the same location as the royal palace.

Amenhotep III wanted to be revered as a god, not merely in the afterlife, but also on Earth. He built this enormous mortuary temple to leave a legacy that he was a living god who ruled on Earth. Although most of it has disappeared by now, its description gives some clue to its extravagance: "Fine white sandstone, wrought with gold throughout, its floor is adorned with silver, all its portal with electrum . . . it is numerous in royal statues of Elephantine granite of costly gritstone, of every splendid costly stone, established as everlasting works. Their statue shines more than the heavens; their rays are in the faces [of men]."

The temple was probably the largest ever created in the world and included many different sections. Its storehouse was filled with male and female slaves, and with children of the princesses of all the countries of the captivity of pharaoh. Its storehouses contained cattle as numerous as the sand of the shore.<sup>10</sup> It was surrounded by settlements of Syrians and colonized with children of princes.

The mortuary temple of Amenhotep III is located on the western bank of the Nile, across from the city of Luxor on the eastern bank. In its time, it was the largest funerary complex in Thebes. Currently, only parts of the temple's layout

remain, as well as the two Colossi of Memnon, which are two large stone statues placed at the entrance measuring eighteen meters (fifty-nine feet) high. The mortuary temple was built close to the river, and the annual flooding has caused the site to decay at a relatively rapid rate over time.

Throughout the temple, there are hundreds of freestanding statues, sphinxes, and massive stelae. Some of these include numerous statues of Sekhmet, the lion-headed goddess; a lion-crocodile sphinx; jackals; scarab beetles; a white hippopotamus; and other Egyptian gods, along with Amenhotep III himself, represented as a god.

It seems that Amenhotep III organized the animal and Sekhmet statues into maps of the heavens, bringing the heavens to Earth. Jean Yoyotte, the French Egyptologist, suggested that the goddess Sekhmet is given importance not only because she is the “mistress of darkness,” but also because she possesses healing qualities, which are meant to cure any illness of the pharaoh’s.

It seems that this temple was built to resemble a mound, symbolizing the emergence of the world from the primeval waters of creation. Every time the Nile flooded, the temple emerged from it, as the Egyptians believed that the Earth was formed by a mound emerging from the water.

## **TWO PILLARS REVISITED**

At the front of the temple, the Colossi of Memnon can be found, followed by the long hypostyle hall that leads to the Sun Court. The whole area is surrounded by three pylons, or gates. The Sun Court is divided into northern and southern halves and contained statues of both Amenhotep III and Egyptian gods. The north side had statues made of brown quartzite from Lower Egypt, while the south side had red granite from Aswan in Upper Egypt. Since Amenhotep III revered the sun god, the temple faced the east, and the two colossi in front of it receive the first rays of the rising sun.

The colossi present a difference between Solomon’s Temple and the mortuary temple of Amenhotep III. Because the Second Commandment forbade the making of idols, the Bible referred to them as pillars. However, having different names, Jachin and Boaz, they must have been regarded as two different entities, or, as in the case of Amenhotep III’s colossi, the two aspects of man. Although Islam, like Judaism, forbids image making, the Holy Qur’an states that King Solomon had jinn (supernatural creatures) working for him who “do for him whatever he desires of niches and statues” (34:13).

The ancient Egyptians believed that each person has two spiritual elements, the *ka* and the *ba*. They also believed that the living must help the dead in their afterlife journey by remembering them and keeping their names remembered. That is why, desiring to be eternally remembered by the living, Amenhotep III built these two great colossi in front of his temple.

The Colossi of Memnon are two massive stone statues of the pharaoh Amenhotep III, standing since 1350 BCE, representing his eternal soul. They are made from blocks of quartzite sandstone, which was quarried at El-Gabal el-Ahmar, near modern Cairo, and transported upstream to Thebes. Their original function was to stand guard at the entrance to the memorial temple. The colossi depict Amenhotep III in a seated position, his hands resting on his knees and his gaze facing east toward the river. Two shorter figures are carved into the front throne alongside his legs; these are his wife Tiye and mother, Mutemwiya. The modern names of the colossi are derived from Memnon, a hero of the Trojan War, a king of Ethiopia who led his armies from Africa into Asia Minor to help defend the beleaguered city but was slain by Achilles. *Memnon*, whose name means “the steadfast” or “the resolute,” was said to be the son of Eos, the goddess of dawn. He was associated with the colossi because the northern statue was reported to ring at dawn. In 27 BCE, a large earthquake reportedly shattered it, making it collapse from the waist up and cracking the lower half. Following its rupture, the remaining lower half was reputed to ring on various occasions—always within an hour or two of sunrise, usually right at dawn. The legend of the “Vocal Memnon”—the luck that hearing it was reputed to bring, and the reputation of the statue’s oracular powers—became known outside of Egypt, and a constant stream of visitors, including several Roman emperors, came to marvel at the statues.



*The two Memnon statues at the entrance of Amenhotep III's mortuary temple in western Thebes*

Given the similarities among luxurious materials used to build both Amenhotep III's and Solomon's temples, the sheer amount of effort required to physically construct such monumental buildings, and the apparent likeness in layout and design elements, we must pause to consider the source of these affinities.

## **SOLOMON AND TYRE**

Can Solomon's Temple be regarded as a fairy tale invented by the biblical scribes? I don't think so. I believe that King Solomon *did* rule a great empire that extended between northern Syria and the borders of Egypt. I also believe that King Solomon *did* build a great Temple, as the Bible says. However, I do not

agree either with dating Solomon to the tenth century BCE or with locating Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem. Since archaeologists have been looking in the wrong time and location, they have not been able to find the evidence.

Nevertheless, it is known that Amenhotep III established a small Egyptian shrine for his military force in the city of Jerusalem, which must have been in the same area where the Jews later built their temple.

Studying the relationship between Phoenicia and Solomon and comparing it to the relationship between Phoenicia and Egypt proves useful. Let us first examine the biblical account of how King Solomon built his Temple in Jerusalem, with the help of the Phoenician Hiram, king of Tyre, who sent him both cedar wood and technical workers:

When Hiram king of Tyre heard that Solomon had been anointed king to succeed his father David, he sent his envoys to Solomon, because he had always been on friendly terms with David. Solomon sent back his message to Hiram: "You know that because of the wars waged against my father David from all sides, he could not build a temple for the Name of the LORD his God. . . . But now the LORD my God has given me rest on every side. . . . I intend, therefore, to build a temple for the name of the LORD my God. . . . So give orders that cedars of Lebanon be cut for me. My men will work with yours, and I will pay you for your men whatever wages you set "

When Hiram heard Solomon's message, he was greatly pleased. . . . So Hiram sent word to Solomon: "I have received the message you sent me and will do all you want in providing the cedar." (1 Kings 5:1-8)

Following that, Solomon sent for a skilled Phoenician craftsman, named Hiram, or Hiram, asking him to come to Jerusalem and supervise the building operation (1 Kings 7:13-14).

During this period in the tenth century BCE, the Phoenician city of Tyre was still an important source of the cedar wood that was needed to establish a major building like Solomon's Temple.

The land of the Phoenicians was an ancient civilization composed of independent city-states. The Phoenicians were a great maritime people who had developed a high level of skill in shipbuilding and were able to navigate the waters of the Mediterranean Sea. In ancient times, the land's abundant forests

afforded the choicest lumber, particularly to its neighbors, especially Egypt.

As we have seen, the biblical text makes it clear that Solomon received much aid from Hiram in constructing his buildings. It is also believed that Solomon's Temple was built according to Phoenician design, in the same manner as Tyre's temple of Melqart. Both were surrounded by courts and had two pillars. Herodotus, the Greek historian, visited Tyre in the fifth century BCE. His description of the temple to Heracles is identified with the temple of Melqart. Herodotus writes, "The sanctuary was richly furnished, there were many votive offerings, and I noticed two pillars: one of pure gold and one of an emerald stone of such size as to shine by night" (Herodotus 2.44).

However, we have no historical sources, either in Tyre itself or in any of the neighboring countries, that mention Hiram as a king of Tyre. Our only nonbiblical source for Hiram comes from Josephus. Flavius Josephus, the Jewish historian who died at the end of the first century CE, claimed to have his sources of Phoenician records about King Hiram from two authors called Dios and Menander of Ephesus (Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 8.5.3). Josephus related that the construction of Solomon's Temple began in the twelfth year of Hiram's reign. But again, while Hiram is said to have reigned between 969 and 936 BCE, or between 980 and 947 BCE, no source outside the Bible mentions him except Josephus. Even the so-called Tomb of Hiram, located about six kilometers southeast of Tyre, was established much later, during the Persian period, about four hundred years after Hiram's presumed death.

Furthermore, in recent years, historians have begun to doubt the validity of Josephus's account, which was intended to prove the historicity of the Hebrew Bible. H. Jacob Katzenstein, author of *The History of Tyre*, writes: "Although Josephus speaks about copies of letters exchanged between Hiram, king of Tyre, and King Solomon, he does not give any quotation of these letters. At the same time, Eupolemus (the Jewish-Hellenistic author) quotes (!) some letters exchanged between Solomon and Hiram; they are, of course, not real letters, but the creation of Eupolemus's pen, based upon biblical material."<sup>11</sup>

Katzenstein also suggests that Josephus may have found his source in the fact that in the eleventh and twelfth years of his reign, Hiram built temples to Melqart and Astarte in Tyre and that Josephus applied these numbers to the date of building the Temple in Jerusalem. On the basis of a correlation with Babylonian and Assyrian chronology, another scholar contends that Josephus's data for the Tyrian and Hebrew kings are unreliable.<sup>12</sup>

The Amarna letters throw some light on the biblical account, which states:

“King Solomon gave twenty towns in Galilee to Hiram king of Tyre, because Hiram had supplied him with all the cedar and juniper and gold he wanted” (1 Kings 9:11). However, in the Amarna letters, the name of Tyre’s king is not Hiram but Abimilichi. In letter no. 99, in the Berlin Museum, Abimilichi asked the king to “give the city of Huzu to his servant [himself].” In another letter, no. 29, which is to be found in the British Museum, the king of Tyre indicated that another city had been placed under his control: “And now the city Zarbitu is to be guarded by the city of Tyre for the king, my Lord.”

Some scholars have noticed that although Solomon’s Temple has some features that could be similar to the Phoenician temples, it does also have similar features to other, non-Phoenician temples, like the Egyptian temple of Hatshepsut at Deir el-Bahri at Luxor, while its general form reminds one of Egyptian sanctuaries. Others have observed that, like Egyptian temples, Solomon’s Temple is said to have had cherubim figures all over the building, even in the Holy of Holies, in violation of the divine prohibition against making graven images.

## EGYPT AND TYRE

While no historical evidence has been found to confirm the biblical account regarding Tyre’s relations with David and Solomon during the tenth century BCE, we find conclusive historical evidence to confirm these relations for Tuthmosis III and Amenhotep III.

Trade and friendship between Egypt and Phoenicia started very early, from the time of the Old Kingdom and the builders of the pyramids, and lasted three thousand years. Specifically, Egypt imported much wood from Tyre, proven by the modern uncovering of two cedar boats for the king’s use in the afterlife buried beside the Great Pyramid of Khufu. It is known that Egypt and Tyre traded oils as well.

When Tuthmosis III invaded Syria, he incorporated Phoenicia into the Egyptian empire, holding it until about 1400 BCE. After that, Egypt used Canaan as a buffer against rival empires further north, such as Mitanni. Canaan also became a source of revenue through taxes, tribute, and trade. During this period, Egypt stationed small garrisons in major towns, like Jerusalem, and created administrative centers, like that in Beth She’an. These centers had buildings with distinctive Egyptian architecture and were inscribed with hieroglyphs.



From the time of Tuthmosis III on, Egypt had very close associations with all Phoenician cities, especially Tyre. Tuthmosis III's fifth, sixth, and seventh campaigns were directed against the Phoenician cities in the Levant and against Qadesh in northern Syria. According to his annals, in his Asiatic campaign of years 22–24, Tuthmosis III marched north through Tyre on his way to Qadesh.

Although Egypt's hold on the Levant was weakened after the death of Tuthmosis III, relations with Tyre remained very strong during the reign of Amenhotep III. According to Katzenstein, during the reigns of Amenhotep III and Akhenaten, "Tyre was Egypt's faithful ally. The city, which served occasionally as an anchorage-ground for the Egyptian army (EA 155:70), was one of the most important cities of the Phoenician Hanseatic League. As Tyre was the southern Phoenician coastal town nearest to Egypt and as its interests were pro-Egyptian, it became both a factor and an objective in the struggle for power between Egypt and her enemies, open and covert, in Western Asia."<sup>13</sup>

For example, King Abimilichi of Tyre sent a letter to the Egyptian king asking for his support in his conflict with Sidon. Abimilichi, whose name means "my father is king," held the rank of prince of Tyre around 1347 BCE. He is known to be the author of ten letters to the Egyptian pharaoh. In letter EA 147, King Akhenaten confirmed him as ruler of Tyre upon the death of his father, and in EA 149, he referred to him with the rank *rabisu* (general).

In one of his letters to the Egyptian king, Abimilichi says:

To the king, my lord, my god, my Sun: Message of Abi-Milku, your servant. I fall at the feet of the king, my lord, 7 times and 7 times. I am the dirt under the sandals of the king, my lord. My lord is the Sun who comes forth over all lands day by day, according to the way (of being) the sun, his gracious father, who gives life by his sweet breath and returns with his north wind; who establishes the entire land in peace, by the power of his arm: ha-pa-si; who gives forth his cry in the sky like Baal, and all land is frightened at his cry.

The servant herewith writes to his lord that he heard the gracious messenger of the king who came to his servant, and the sweet breath that came forth from the mouth of the king. . . . When the king, my lord, said ku-na "(Prepare) before a large army" then the servant said to his lord: ia-a-ia-ia ("Yes, yes, yes"). . . . Zimredda, the king of Sidon, writes daily to the rebel Arizu . . . about every word he has heard from Egypt. I herewith write to my lord, and it is good that he knows.<sup>14</sup>

From the same period of Amenhotep III and Akhenaten, the Amarna letters include some letters from Jerusalem sent by a Canaanite ruler named Abdi-Heba. He states that he is a “soldier for the king, my lord,” and requests that the Egyptian monarch send him a messenger and some military men to help resist his enemies. Like Abimilichi in the letter above, he says that he “falls at the feet of my lord the king, seven times and seven times,” a stock phrase that conveys his faithfulness to his Egyptian suzerain. Abdi-Heba also reveals that he was not the heir to the throne but was given the throne of Jerusalem by the Egyptian king himself. He goes on to say that for this reason he will always be a faithful vassal of his Egyptian lord.

Despite the lack of mention of the king of Tyre in sources besides the Bible, it is obvious that Amenhotep III and his successor Akhenaten maintained a solid relationship with the Phoenicians. If we accept Solomon as Amenhotep III, we can see where the biblical scribes may have drawn their material.

I have identified Solomon as the pharaoh Amenhotep III and have shown that archaeologists have been looking in the wrong location for Solomon’s temple, which shares similarities with Amenhotep III’s mortuary temple in western Thebes. Now that we have found Solomon’s Temple in Egypt, we can look for the architect, known as Hiram Abiff, who designed and supervised its construction.

# The Birth and Repression of Gnosticism

THE CULT OF AMENHOTEP, son of Habu, developed over time, to reach its zenith at the start of the first century CE. With the death of Cleopatra VII, the last of the Ptolemaic Dynasty, in 30 BCE, the rule of the pharaohs came to an end. From then onward Egypt was ruled by a prefect who was appointed by the Roman emperor and resided in Alexandria. Although pharaonic customs and traditions still continued under Roman rule, major developments took place, especially in religion. As the Romans stopped financing the temples except for the Serapeum in Alexandria, Egyptians felt lost, with no place to worship. However, as the religious establishment gradually died out, new popular organizations emerged.

## THE THERAPEUTAE

Looking for spiritual salvation, a new group, the Therapeutae, emerged. The Therapeutae, “healers” or “attendants” (from the Greek *therapeuō*, “to heal” or “care for”) are believed to have settled on the shores of Lake Mareotis near Alexandria. The only original account of this community is given in Philo’s treatise *De vita contemplativa* (On the contemplative life).

Philo, a member of the flourishing Jewish community in Alexandria, was born around 15 BCE and died around 50 CE. He was influenced by the philosophy of Plato and attempted to reconcile pagan philosophy with the revelations of the Bible. His writings were recognized as having a close affinity with Christian ideas, and for this reason they were preserved and studied by the church.

The Therapeutae, according to Philo, were members of a contemplative community that embraced the simple life. On becoming members, they renounced the world completely, fleeing “without ever turning to look back,

abandoning brothers, children, wives, parents. . . . They make settlements for themselves outside the walls, in gardens or in solitary places, seeking solitude.”<sup>1</sup>

They left their possessions to their relatives or friends and went to live in encampments of individual huts: “They eat no costly food, but simple bread and, as a seasoning, salt. . . . Spring water was their only drink.”<sup>2</sup> They began each day with prayers around daybreak. More prayers followed toward evening. The hours in between they devoted to reading the Hebrew Scriptures. “They philosophise and interpret allegorically their native code of laws, since they regard the words of the literal interpretation as symbols of a hidden nature revealed only in such figures of speech.”<sup>3</sup> They also studied the writings of their Jewish forebears, founders of the sect, about the truths enshrined in these allegories.

Philo says that the Therapeutae spread out of Egypt to other nations so that “this sect is to be found in many parts of the civilized world.” In Egypt itself it was “numerous throughout each of the districts called Nomes, and particularly around Alexandria.”<sup>4</sup>

In his *Ecclesiastical History*, written in the early fourth century CE, Eusebius of Caesarea identified the Alexandrian Therapeutae as the first Christian community in Egypt: “So large was the body of believers, men and women alike . . . that Philo [of Alexandria] decided that he must record in writing their activities . . . in the work that he entitled *The Contemplative Life*.” Eusebius insists upon the Christian nature of the Therapeutae: “These statements of Philo seem to me to refer plainly and unquestionably to members of our Church” (*Ecclesiastical History*, 2:17).

Eusebius stresses that Philo

describes the life of our ascetics with the greatest precision. . . . He says that they are called *Therapeutae* and their womenfolk *Therapeutrides* . . . either because like doctors they rid the souls of those who come to them from mortal sickness and so cure and heal them, or in view of their pure and sincere service and worship of God . . . because the title Christians was not yet in general use. . . . If anyone does not agree that what has been described is peculiar to the gospel way of life but thinks it applicable to other people too, he will surely be convinced by Philo’s next paragraph, in which, if he is reasonable, he will find the evidence on this point beyond dispute:

“Having first laid down self-control as a foundation for the soul, they build the other virtues on it. None of them would take food or drink before sundown, as they hold that philosophy deserves daylight but darkness is good enough for bodily needs. So, to the one they assign the day, to the others a small part of the night. . . .”

These statements of Philo seem to me to refer plainly and unquestionably to members of our Church. But, if after this someone insists on denying it, he will surely abandon his scepticism and be convinced by still clearer evidences which cannot be found anywhere but in the religious practices of Christians who follow the gospel. For Philo states that among the people in question there are women also, most of them elderly spinsters who have remained single, not of necessity, like some priestesses of pagan cults, but of their own free will, through their passionate craving for wisdom. . . . Need I add to this an account of their meetings, or of the segregation of men and women living in the same place, or of the regular spiritual discipline still practised among us, especially during the commemoration of our Saviour’s Passion, when it is our habit to abstain from food, spend the whole nights in prayer, and devote ourselves to the word of God? (*Ecclesiastical History*, 2.17)

There are indications that the Christian monastic movement, which appeared in its full form only in the third century CE, had its origins with the Therapeutae: “The ascetics . . . were recognized as a defined group within the Christian congregations as early as the end of the second century. . . . It has been held that the new Christian monasticism was a revival or development of the . . . Therapeutae described by Philo.”<sup>5</sup>

Nevertheless, at this early stage of the Christian movement, we find no mention of the name of Jesus, and no account of his birth or crucifixion, but only his teachings regarding salvation. The first appearance of Jesus’s name comes with Mark the evangelist, who has been viewed as the founder of the Egyptian Coptic Church and the first in the line of Alexandrian patriarchs. From the early days of the Christian church, confirmation of Mark’s journey to Egypt was believed to be found in the New Testament: “She [the church] who is at Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you her greetings, and so does my son Mark” (1 Peter 5:13). “*Babylon* here can only be the Egyptian town of that name (in old Cairo). Peter went with Marcus to Egypt. . . . With Coptic and Roman Catholic authors, it is a received fact that the tidings of salvation were first

brought to Egypt by Mark, the author of the second gospel.”<sup>6</sup>

## GNOSTIC CHRISTIANITY

Eventually the Therapeutae movement developed its doctrine, built on Hermetic teachings, and produced many books, including some gospels of Christ that were not included in the Catholic canon of the New Testament. In the first century and a half of the Christian era, the term *Gnostic* came to denote a section of the early Christian community who professed a belief not simply in Christ and his message but in a revelatory experience of the divine. The Greek word *gnosis* connotes “knowledge” or the “act of knowing.” Gnosis is not a rational, propositional, logical understanding but a knowing acquired by experience.

Gnosticism asserts that “direct, personal and absolute knowledge of the authentic truths of existence is accessible to human beings,” and that the attainment of such knowledge is the supreme achievement of life. The Gnostics were less interested in dogma or rational theology than in the ongoing force of divine revelation. It is this knowledge, gained from interior comprehension and personal experience, that constitutes gnosis. The first leaders of Gnostic Christianity were teachers in the catechetical school of Alexandria in the early part of the second century.<sup>7</sup>

The Gnostic Basilides was one of the earliest known Christian teachers at Alexandria. Born in the first century CE, he flourished under the emperors Hadrian and Antoninus Pius, about 120–140. Basilides was conversant with the Hebrew Scriptures and Christian Gospels, as well as with ancient Egyptian wisdom. He adapted the idea of Christ to the Gnostic panorama of the universe. According to the church father Irenaeus of Lyons (in *Against the Heretics*, 1.24, written about 170 CE), Basilides taught that *nous* (mind) was the first to be born from the Unborn Father; from *nous* was born *logos* (reason); from *logos*, *phronēsis* (prudence); from *phronēsis*, *sophia* (wisdom) and *dunamis* (strength); and from *dunamis* and *sophia*, the Virtues, Principalities, and Archangels. The highest heaven was made by these angelic hosts, their descendants made the second heaven, and their descendants in turn made the third, and so on till they reached the number 365. Hence the year has as many days as there are heavens.

According to Basilides, the angels who hold the last or visible heaven brought about all things that are in the world and shared among themselves the Earth and the nations upon it. The highest of these angels is the one who is

thought to be the God of the Old Testament. He wished to make the other nations subject to his people, but the other angelic principalities withstood him to the utmost. The Unborn and Nameless Father, seeing their miserable plight, sent his firstborn, *nous* (identified with Christ), to deliver those who would believe in him from the power of the angelic agencies. Christ seemed to be a man and to have performed miracles. But it was not Christ who suffered on the cross but Simon of Cyrene. Simon took on Jesus's form and was crucified in his stead. Jesus stood by and laughed at them, then returned to his Father. Through the gnosis of Christ the souls of men are saved, even though their bodies perish.

Clement of Alexandria gives us a few glimpses into the ethical side of Basilides's system in his *Stromata* or *Miscellanies*, written around 210 (1.21; 2.6, 8, 20; 4.11, 12, 25; 5.1, etc.). He tells us that, nominally, faith was the beginning of the spiritual life; it was not, however, a free submission of the intellect but a natural gift of understanding (gnosis) bestowed upon the soul before its union with the body, and which some possessed while others did not. Faith is a latent force that only manifests its energy through the coming of the Savior, as a ray of light will set naphtha on fire. Sin was not the result of the abuse of free will but the outcome of an inborn evil principle.

## ***THE GOSPEL OF TRUTH***

Until the discovery of the Nag Hammadi library in 1945, the Gnostic view of early Christianity had largely been forgotten. The teachings of the Gnostics—vilified as heretics by the Catholic church—had been virtually erased from history by the early church fathers; their gospels were banned and even burned to make room for the Christian theology outlined in the canonical Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

The Nag Hammadi library includes a number of “Gnostic Gospels”—texts once thought to have been entirely destroyed during the early Christian struggle to control orthodoxy, such as *The Gospel of Thomas*, *The Gospel of Philip*, and *The Gospel of Truth*. Here is an excerpt from *The Gospel of Truth*:

The gospel of truth is joy to those who have received from the Father of truth the gift of knowing him, through the power of the Word that came forth from the pleroma, the one who is in the thought and mind of the Father, that is, the one who is addressed as the Savior, (that) being the name of the work he is to perform for the redemption of those who were

ignorant of the Father, while the name [of] the gospel is the proclamation of hope, being discovery for those who search for him.

When the totality went about searching for the one from whom they had come forth—and the totality was inside of him, the incomprehensible, inconceivable one who is superior to every thought. . .

Through this, the gospel of the one who is searched for, which <was> revealed to those who are perfect through the mercies of the Father, the hidden mystery, Jesus the Christ, enlightened those who were in darkness through oblivion. He enlightened them; he showed (them) a way; and the way is the truth which he taught them. . . .

As for the incomprehensible, inconceivable one, the Father, the perfect one, the one who made the totality, within him is the totality and of him the totality has need. . . .

There was manifested in their heart the living book of the living—the one written in the thought and the mind [of the] Father . . . that (book) which no one was able to take, since it remains for the one who will take it to be slain. . . . For this reason, the faithful one, Jesus, was patient in accepting sufferings until he took that book, since he knows that his death meant life for many. . . . He draws himself down to death though life eternal clothes him. . . .

This <is> the word of the gospel of the discovery of the pleroma, for those who await the salvation which is coming from on high.<sup>8</sup>

By the late fourth century CE, when Christianity became the officially approved religion of the Roman empire, possession of books denounced as heretical was made a criminal offense. Copies of these books were burned and destroyed. But in Upper Egypt, someone took some banned books and hid them in jars, where they remained for about sixteen hundred years.

The documents showed that Gnostic Christianity was not the depraved cult described by the orthodox Christian writers, but rather a legitimate religious movement that offered an alternative testament to Jesus's life and teachings.<sup>9</sup>

## **GNOSTICISM IN ROME**

We have a Roman witness of the Gnostic nature of early Christianity in



Alexandria during the first half of the second century. It shows that the Alexandrian Christians, although worshipping Christ, kept their ancient beliefs. In 134 CE, following his visit to Alexandria, the Roman emperor Hadrian wrote a letter to his elderly brother-in-law, the consul Servianus, quoted by Flavius Vopiscus, *Vita Saturini* 8: “So, you praise Egypt, my very dear Servianus! I know the land from top to bottom. . . . In it the worshippers of Serapis are Christians, and those who call themselves Bishops of Christ pay their vows to Serapis.”

That Gnosticism was in the mainstream of Christianity in the first two centuries of the Common Era is attested by the fact that one of its most influential teachers, Valentinus, was in consideration during the mid-second century for election as the bishop of Rome. Born in Alexandria around 100 CE, Valentinus distinguished himself at an early age and became an extraordinary teacher and leader in the Alexandrian Christian community. While he regarded Jesus as the Savior, Valentinus believed that man lives in an absurd world that can be rendered meaningful only by gnosis. In his myth of the creation, Valentinus shifts the blame for the defective cosmos from humanity to creative divinity. Irenaeus quotes Valentinus concerning this:

Perfect redemption is the cognition itself of the ineffable greatness: for since through ignorance came about the defect . . . the whole system springing from ignorance is dissolved in Gnosis. Therefore, Gnosis is the redemption of the inner man; and it is not of the body, for the body is corruptible; nor is it psychical, for even the soul is a product of the defect and it is a lodging to the spirit: pneumatic (spiritual) therefore also must be redemption itself. Through Gnosis, then, is redeemed the inner, spiritual man: so that to us suffices the Gnosis of universal being: and this is the true redemption. (*Against the Heresies*, 1.21.4)

While still in his prime, ca. 136–140 CE, Valentinus migrated from Alexandria to Rome and played an important role in the affairs of the church there up to the year 160. He professed to have received a special apostolic sanction through Theudas, a disciple and initiate of Paul. The church father Tertullian wrote that Valentinus was a candidate for the office of bishop of Rome around 140 and that he lost the election by a rather narrow margin. Valentinus, who became a priest in the church and could even have become a bishop, was never condemned as a heretic in his lifetime and remained a respected member of the Christian community until his death.

The situation changed toward the end of the second century, when the church fathers started to define what they regarded as orthodox belief and to establish the ecclesiastical order of the church. By 180 Irenaeus had published his first attacks on Gnosticism as heresy, a work that was continued with increasing vehemence throughout the next century. What became identified as Orthodox Christianity developed as a result of the fathers' attempt to define what is *not* to be regarded as heresy in their confrontation with the Gnostic teachers. By the end of the fourth century the struggle was over: Gnosticism as a Christian tradition was largely eradicated by the force of the Roman state, its remaining teachers ostracized, and its sacred books destroyed.

Freemasons regard Hiram Abiff, rather than Jesus, to be their Savior. Here again, surprisingly enough, they have a point. Where did they get this belief from? It could only be a memory of an ancient tradition that was lost during the Middle Ages. Although Jesus is certainly the Christ, or Messiah, it was the cult of the architect, son of Habu, that created early Christianity.

## **THE MARGINALIZATION OF EGYPT**

When the Romans began to govern, they closed all Egyptian temples, with the exception of the Serapeum of Alexandria, which contained the great library of Alexandria and its precious scrolls of Egyptian knowledge, including Gnostic wisdom. Looking for salvation, the Therapeutae meditated throughout deserted areas, where they would be safe to seek the knowledge of the Spirit. It was the convictions of these people, who held ancient Egyptian beliefs in relation to the five books of Moses, that were translated into Greek in Alexandria and produced the writing of Nag Hammadi, even before Jesus had been introduced as the redeemer, son of God. Although the Gnostic communities, as confirmed by Eusebius, represented the earliest emergence of Christianity in Egypt, the church of Rome refused to accept his account, claiming that Christianity did not spread among the Egyptians before the third or even the fourth century.

How could Rome justify its claim, when it is a well-known fact that the earliest center for Christian studies was not in Rome, Asia Minor, or Syria, but in Alexandria? The catechetical school of Alexandria, the oldest in the world, was teaching Christian theology as early as the second half of the second century, when both Christians and pagans were admitted. The school prepared young clerics for the priesthood, and their studies included philosophy as well as theology. The catechetical school of Alexandria is known to have been the most

important institution of religious learning in Christendom, where many prominent bishops from different parts of the world were instructed under scholars such as Athenagoras, Clement, Didymus, and especially Origen, who is considered the father of Christian theology. Many scholars, such as Jerome, visited the school of Alexandria to communicate directly with its scholars.

The German theologian Walter Bauer argued that the silence in the early sources about Egyptian church leadership in the first two centuries was due to the fact that the dominant form of early Christianity in Egypt was of a Gnostic type that was later considered heretical by the Catholic church. Scholar Helmut Koester writes:

In his book *Orthodoxy and Heresy*, first published in 1934, Walter Bauer provided an answer to the astounding absence of reliable sources [in Christian literature] for the Christian beginnings in Egypt. Seen from the perspective of the later Catholic Church, Bauer argues, the beginnings of Christianity in Egypt were “heretical.” And therefore, Christian writings composed in Egypt in the early period were not preserved, while other pieces of information were suppressed or not admitted to the treasure of ecclesiastical tradition.<sup>[10](#)</sup>

In modern times, even after the emergence of solid evidence confirming the spread of Christianity in Egypt during this period, some church historians have still insisted on denying the existence of early Egyptian Christianity on the same grounds. Archaeological remains uncovered in Egypt clearly show that Christian communities did exist in the country as early as the start of the second century. Christian scriptures were found in Egypt that later became part of the orthodox canon. “Of the fourteen Christian texts that I would date before CE 200 there is only one, the first fragment of the Gospel of Thomas from Oxyrhynchus, which may be reasonably be regarded as Gnostic.”<sup>[11](#)</sup>

It is true that the early Christian communities in Egypt were diverse in their teachings, with many who were regarded as Gnostics. But this was not the case in Egypt alone; after all, the Gnostic Valentinus taught in Rome as he had taught in Alexandria. At the time, in the mid-second century, orthodoxy had not yet been defined. “The essence of the argument is that early Egyptian Christianity was Gnostic through and through: that, while there may have been individual Christians who were not Gnostics. . . . This is part of Bauer’s general thesis that everywhere and not only in Egypt ‘heresy’ was primary and ‘orthodoxy’

secondary.”<sup>12</sup>

Irenaeus was the first person to attack the Gnostic teachers as heretics. He wrote a number of books, but the most important is the five-volume *On the Detection and Overthrow of the So-Called Gnosis*, normally referred to as *Adversus Haereses* (*Against Heresies*). Irenaeus wrote this book in Greek ca. 180. Its purpose was to refute the teachings of the various Gnostic groups that existed in the second century, not only in Egypt, but also in Rome and other Christian centers. Until the discovery of the Nag Hammadi library in 1945, *Against Heresies* was one of very few surviving sources that we had for Gnosticism.

From the end of the second century, Gnosticism as a theological doctrine or system was rejected by ecclesiastical authority as false. As the nascent Catholic church considered itself to be the custodian of a divinely imparted revelation, it claimed to be the only source that was authorized to expound doctrine under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Any interpretation that differed from its official one was regarded as heretical.

## ORTHODOXY

The word *orthodox* means “holding the right or correct opinion.” In theology, it indicates a right faith, true belief, or sound opinion, in accordance with what is accepted theological and ecclesiastical doctrine. *Orthodox* later also became the specific epithet applied to the Eastern Church. The classic view of orthodoxy is that it represents the teaching advocated by Jesus and his apostles; those Christians who deny this teaching are heretics. Heresy, then, represents a diversion from the original teachings of Christianity into ideas drawn from outside, mainly from pagan philosophies, such as that of Hermes Trismegistus.

However, *orthodoxy*, in the sense of a unified group advocating an apostolic doctrine accepted by the majority of Christians everywhere, did not exist in the first three centuries. Early Christianity embodied a number of divergent forms, no one of which represented the clear and powerful majority of believers against the others. Orthodox Christianity became identified as such only as a result of the bishops’ attacks on what they regarded as heretical Christianity—that is, Gnosticism. But writers of the second and third centuries, such as Origen, Hippolytus, Tertullian, Irenaeus, and Justin, identified orthodoxy only by rejecting what they regarded as heresy, stressing the notion of the apostolic succession.

In their conflict with the Gnostic teachers, the bishops had to define what they regarded as the true faith. It was no longer enough to be baptized on the confession of the risen Christ to be accepted as a member of the Christian community. In order to keep out those they regarded as heretical, the church fathers introduced the Christian creed from the end of the second century on. It is a fixed formula, summarizing the essential articles they regarded as representing the true faith and embodying the basic beliefs of the church. Whoever confessed the creed, accepted baptism, and obeyed the clergy was accepted as a Christian. Anyone who had different views was regarded as a heretic and expelled from the church.

In the New Testament and the primitive Church documents, however, no creed statement as such exists. During the apostolic period of the first century, there was no set formula for confessing Christian faith. What is called the Apostles' Creed does not go back to apostolic times. The Apostles simply preached salvation through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ as the Son of God. In Acts, before Philip baptizes the Ethiopian eunuch, the latter declares: "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God" (Acts 8:37). Paul writes, "If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved" (Romans 10:9). The main points of belief at this period were mainly the confession that Jesus is the Christ, Son of God, who died and was risen in the third day.

This position began to change, however, when Ignatius of Antioch (ca. 116) made quasi-creedal statements based on the primitive kerygma: "Jesus Christ, who was descended from David, and was also of Mary . . . he was truly persecuted under Pontius Pilate; He was truly crucified, and [truly] died, in the sight of beings in heaven, and on earth."<sup>13</sup>

This was the first time Pontius Pilate was mentioned in regard to Jesus's death, together with his crucifixion. Gnostics were claiming that Christ appeared only in visions to different disciples in different parts of the world at different times. By fixing a date and place and the method of his death and resurrection, the nascent Catholic church tried to deny these claims. Nevertheless, by the beginning of the third century, the Roman creed took its final shape, including mention of the ecclesiastical organization of the church as part of the confession: "I believe in God the Father Almighty; and in Christ Jesus His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived of the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; . . . on the third day he rose again from the dead, he ascended to heaven, and is seated on the right hand of the Father, whence he will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in

the Holy Spirit, the holy Catholic church, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting.”

## ECUMENICAL COUNCILS

Later, the ecumenical church councils became the instrument for defining orthodoxy and condemning heresy. The first attempt to gather a body of bishops representing the whole Christian world was the council called by the emperor Constantine I at Nicaea, in northwestern Asia Minor, in the summer of 325. With the style and procedure of the Roman Senate, the 318 bishops who assembled laid the groundwork for the common creed. The bishops of the whole Christian world were now publicly recognized as the senate of the church. In 381, fifty-six years later, the emperor Theodosius I convoked the second ecumenical council at Constantinople. A letter was issued by the synod in 382, including the text of the creed that was agreed upon, which became the core of all future confessions: “We believe in one God, the Father almighty . . . and in one Lord Jesus Christ the only begotten Son of God . . . who because of our salvation came down from heaven, and was incarnate from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and became man, and suffered and was buried. and rose again on the third day according to the Scriptures, and ascended to heaven . . . and will come again with glory to judge living and dead . . . who spoke through the prophets; in one holy Catholic and apostolic Church.”

The name *catholic church* or *church universal* was first applied to the whole body of believers as distinguished from an individual congregation or a particular body of Christians. In the early second century, Ignatius, bishop of Antioch, was arrested, brought to Rome by armed guards, and eventually martyred there in the arena. In his farewell letter to his fellow Christians in Smyrna (present-day Izmir in modern Turkey), he made the first written mention in history of the Catholic church, writing, “Where the bishop is present, there is the Catholic church” (*To the Smyrnaeans*, 8:2).

From the third century on, the idea of doctrine was superadded, so the term *catholic* came to connote the church as orthodox, in opposition to heretics. By 325, the bishops of the first ecumenical council in Nicaea were legislating in the name of the universal body that they called in the official documents “the Catholic church.” At that time five chief Christian communities existed, each headed by a patriarch: in Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem. It was that same council that formulated the basic creed in which the

term *catholic* was retained as one of the marks of the true church of Christ. From the fifth century on, the idea of the unity of the universal church was added to the term *catholic*. Thus, at least in the Western half of what had been the Roman empire, the church of Rome was able to establish itself as the head of the Catholic church—the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church founded by Jesus Christ.

## THE TRIUMPH OF CATHOLICISM

When the emperor Constantine I adopted the new faith, Christianity became the officially approved religion of the Roman empire. Constantine also granted political power to the Roman church. The bishops of Rome were recognized as councillors of state and obtained juridical rights. The bishops wasted no time in using their newly acquired power to spread the word of God and stamp out his enemies, who were not only the pagans but also the Gnostics of Egypt. At that point the bishops, using the power of the state, declared the possession of what they regarded as heretical books as a criminal offense and ordered them to be destroyed. That was the time, in the mid-fourth century, when someone in the town of Nag Hammadi in Upper Egypt decided to save the Coptic library by putting it in some jars that he buried on a cliff.

The conflict between Roman Christianity and paganism came to a head with the ascent of the emperor Theodosius I, a zealous defender of Catholic Christianity and a fiery enemy of paganism. He set about on a systematic obliteration of all opposition to the Catholic church, especially in Egypt.

One day in 391, the Catholic bishop Theophilus marched from his headquarters in the Brucheion (royal quarter) of Alexandria at the head of a large, howling mob, heading west for the Serapeum in the heart of the Egyptian quarter of Rhakotis. The Serapeum, which had been the center of Egyptian worship for seven centuries, was adorned with extensive columned halls, statues, and many other works of art, as well as being the house of the great Alexandrian library. The frenzied mob, led by Theophilus, rushed through the street along the Canopic way, turning into the short street that led to the temple area of Serapis and meeting other crowds there, before climbing up the great flight of marble steps.

They jumped across the stone platform and into the temple area, where the events of the final tragedy took place. In their agitation, the angry mob took little heed of the gold and silver ornaments, the precious jewels, the priceless bronze

and marble statues, the rare murals and tapestries, the carved and painted pillars of granite and marble, the ebony and scented woods, the ivory and exotic furniture—all were smashed to pieces with cries of pleasure. But that was not all. The shouting men, full of demonic delight, turned to the library under the temple, where hundreds of thousands of papyrus rolls and parchments, inscribed with ancient wisdom and knowledge, were taken off their shelves, torn to pieces, and thrown onto bonfires.

This is how the Hermetic Gnostic teaching, originating with Hiram Abiff, the historical Amenhotep, son of Habu, which had given birth to Christianity, was suppressed and persecuted. But the soul of ancient Egyptian sage Hermes lived on secretly in the hearts and minds of some people, until the mid-sixteenth century, when Marsilio Ficino translated the *Corpus Hermeticum*, reviving the memory of the glorious past.



## CONCLUSION

# From Mythology to History

ALTHOUGH THE BIBLE HAS MANY mythological accounts, it also portrays some major characters as real historical persons. It is said that Joseph, the son of Jacob, after being sold as a slave in Egypt, became a minister and a close friend of the pharaoh. These events are said to have taken place during the seventeenth century BCE, when the Hyksos, shepherd kings, ruled Egypt.

The Bible asserts that King David established a great empire, with its borders extending between the Euphrates in northern Syria and the borders of Egypt, during the tenth century BCE. David is also said to have been succeeded on the throne by his son, Solomon, who ruled the empire in peace and built a great Temple in Jerusalem. The Temple was built under the supervision of Hiram, known to the Freemasons as Hiram Abiff.

During the 1400s, a Greek copy of the ancient Egyptian *Corpus Hermeticum* reached the Italian city of Florence and was quickly translated into Latin. This translation caused a great revelation within the Western world, which gave birth to the modern Renaissance.

From these texts the Grand Lodge of Freemasonry was established in England in 1717, and the Masonic central ritual formed around the Temple of Solomon and Hiram Abiff, the legendary Phoenician architect whose name is based upon the biblical account as being responsible for building the Temple. Freemasons associated Hiram Abiff with Hermes Trismegistus, whom they regarded as the first teacher of wisdom and magic and whose teaching eventually produced the Gnostic philosophy.

In modern times, however, historians and archaeologists have completely failed to find any evidence to confirm the biblical accounts of these characters or of the existence of Hiram Abiff in Phoenicia or his Temple in Jerusalem. As a result, many serious historians have concluded that the kingdom of David and Solomon never existed.

However, when we set aside biblical chronology and start looking for

historical evidence, we do find confirmation of the Bible stories, only in different times and different locations. When we look in history for an empire that extended between the Euphrates and Egypt, we do find it—exactly as the Bible describes it—not during the time of David in the tenth century BCE, but during the reign of Tuthmosis III in the fifteenth century BCE. We come to the same conclusion with the king of peace who inherited the empire: again, we find him living in Egypt during the fourteenth century BCE, and known as Amenhotep III. In these new dates we can find evidence of the biblical account in all its details.

When we realize that it was Pharaoh Tuthmosis III, not Abraham the Hebrew, who fathered Isaac, the ancestor of Israel, the biblical story moves from the realm of mythology to become part of history. Here we can see how, when the descendants of the two branches of Pharaoh Tuthmosis III were united, a new age of magic, wisdom, and knowledge was born. For while Sarah the Hebrew brought him the line of Isaac, Jacob, and David, Satiah, his queen, brought him the line of Amenhotep II, Tuthmosis IV, and Amenhotep III. When Amenhotep III married Tiye the daughter of Joseph (Yuya) and made her his queen, the two branches of the pharaoh's descendants were united. Then, over a span of 150 years, they produced the first monotheistic belief system as well as philosophical teachings that we have to this day. It was during this short time that the historical background of the Bible stories, as well as the Hermetic philosophy later associated with Hermes Trismegistus and his magic, came to be.

# Footnote

[\\*1](#) According to biblical chronology, Abraham lived during the nineteenth century BCE. The Hebrews did not appear in history before the fifteenth century BCE.

# Endnotes

## CHAPTER 2. THE TWO DAVIDS

- [1.](#) Garsiel, “The Book of Samuel,” 7.
- [2.](#) Garsiel, “The Book of Samuel,” 23.
- [3.](#) Keys, “Leading Archaeologist Says Old Testament Stories Are Fiction.”
- [4.](#) Davies, “‘House of David’ Built on Sand,” 55.

## CHAPTER 3. THE EVIDENCE OF ARCHAEOLOGY

- [1.](#) Pritchard, ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, 262.
- [2.](#) Gardiner, *Egypt of the Pharaohs*, 285.
- [3.](#) Kenyon, *The Bible and Recent Archaeology*, 63.
- [4.](#) Finkelstein and Silberman, *David and Solomon*, 269.
- [5.](#) Davies, *The History of Ancient Israel*, 117.
- [6.](#) Draper, “Kings of Controversy.”
- [7.](#) Draper, “Kings of Controversy.”
- [8.](#) Davies, *The History of Ancient Israel*, 116.
- [9.](#) Osman, *The House of the Messiah*, 120.
- [10.](#) Davies, *The History of Ancient Israel*, 113.

## CHAPTER 4. DAVID’S EMPIRE

- [1.](#) Quoted in Gardiner, *Egypt of the Pharaohs*, 190.

- [2.](#) Quoted in Gardiner, *Egypt of the Pharaohs*, 190.
- [3.](#) Quoted in Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, 236–37.
- [4.](#) Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, 237.
- [5.](#) Quoted in Gardiner, *Egypt of the Pharaohs*, 194.

## CHAPTER 5. THE CHOSEN ONE

- [1.](#) Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt*, 60–61.
- [2.](#) Maspero, *The Struggle of the Nations*, 289.
- [3.](#) Maspero, *The Struggle of the Nations*, 289.
- [4.](#) Hayes, *The Scepter of Egypt*, 116–17.
- [5.](#) Roth, ed., *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 7:757.

## CHAPTER 6. SARAH AND THE PHARAOH

- [1.](#) Baskin, *Midrashic Women*, 138.
- [2.](#) Eerdmans, “The Hebrews in Egypt,” 193–207.

## CHAPTER 7. JERUSALEM, CITY OF DAVID

- [1.](#) Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, 236.

## CHAPTER 8. DAVID AND BATHSHEBA

- [1.](#) Gray, *A History of Jerusalem*, 67.

## CHAPTER 9. GOLIATH THE GIANT

- [1.](#) The translation of the autobiography of Sinuhe here is based on the work of Gardiner, *Note on the Story of Sinuhe*, as well as Simpson, ed., *The Literature of Ancient Egypt*.
- [2.](#) Pritchard, *The Times Atlas of the Bible*, 32.

- [3.](#) Simpson, ed., *The Literature of Ancient Egypt*, 64.

## CHAPTER 10. JOSEPH'S DREAMS

- [1.](#) Polano, *Selections from the Talmud*, 83–84. Emphasis in original.

## CHAPTER 11. THE DREAMER PHARAOH

- [1.](#) Bronner, *From Eve to Esther*, 138.
- [2.](#) Sayce, ed., *Records of the Past*, 56.

## CHAPTER 12. UNITING THE FAMILIES OF EGYPT AND CANAAN

- [1.](#) Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt*, 2:344–45.
- [2.](#) Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt*, 3:349.
- [3.](#) Weigall, *The Life and Times of Akhnaton*.
- [4.](#) Moran, *The Amarna Letters*, and Mercer, ed., *The Tell El-Amarna Tablets*.

## CHAPTER 13. THE EMPIRE OF THE KING OF PEACE

- [1.](#) Stephen and Boardman, eds., *The Cambridge Ancient History*.
- [2.](#) Giles, *Ikhнатon*, 159.
- [3.](#) Conder, *The Tell Amarna Tablets*, 2.
- [4.](#) Ash, *David, Solomon, and Egypt*, 114.
- [5.](#) Moran, *The Amarna Letters*, 317.
- [6.](#) Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, vol. 2.
- [7.](#) Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, 262.
- [8.](#) Kenyon, *The Bible and Recent Archaeology*, 63.
- [9.](#) Lipinski, *On the Skirts of Canaan in the Iron Age*, 96–97.

- [10.](#) O'Connor and Chine, eds., *Amenhotep III*, 92.
- [11.](#) Otto Eissfeldt, in Stephen and Boardman, eds., *The Cambridge Ancient History*, 2:597.
- [12.](#) Bright, *A History of Israel*, 205.

## CHAPTER 14. THE "LOST" MINES OF SOLOMON

- [1.](#) Rothenberg, *Timna*, 9–10.
- [2.](#) Rothenberg, ed., *The Ancient Metallurgy of Copper*, xv.
- [3.](#) Rothenberg, *Timna*, 17, 19, 22.
- [4.](#) Carroll, "King Solomon's Mines Rediscovered?"

## CHAPTER 15. WISDOM AND MAGIC

- [1.](#) Verheyden, *The Figures of Solomon*, 110–11.
- [2.](#) Ebeling, *Secret History*, 28.
- [3.](#) Ebeling, *Secret History*, 47.
- [4.](#) *The Testament of Truth*, 69–70, in Robinson, ed., *The Nag Hammadi Library*, 458. Emphasis added.
- [5.](#) Ebeling, *Secret History*, 47, 48.
- [6.](#) Ebeling, *Secret History*, 49.
- [7.](#) Horstmanshoff and Stol, *Magic and Rationality*, 123–24.

## CHAPTER 16. THE LOST PALACE

- [1.](#) Hayes, "Inscriptions from the Palace of Amenhotep III."
- [2.](#) Badawy, *A History of Egyptian Architecture*.
- [3.](#) Milstein, "King Solomon's Wall Found."
- [4.](#) Seidel, "Archaeologists Link Remains of Destroyed Palace to Reign of King

Solomon.”

5. Patch, “The Joint Expedition to Malqata, the Palace-City of Amenhotep III.”

## CHAPTER 17. THE TEMPLES OF SOLOMON AND AMENHOTEP III

1. Horne, *King Solomon’s Temple*, 197.
2. Horne, *King Solomon’s Temple*, 203.
3. Albright, *The Archaeology of Palestine*, 123–24.
4. Garstang, *The Heritage of Solomon*.
5. Adams, *Ancient Records and the Bible*, 297.
6. Horne, *King Solomon’s Temple*, 64–65.
7. Garber, quoted in Albright, *The Archaeology of Palestine*, 154.
8. Curtis, ed., *The London Encyclopaedia or Universal Dictionary*, vol.2, 589.
9. Redford, *Akhenaten*.
10. Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt*, 355–59.
11. Katzenstein, *The History of Tyre*, 78.
12. Feldman, *Josephus in Modern Scholarship (1937–1980)*, 174.
13. Katzenstein, *The History of Tyre*, 29.
14. Moran, *The Amarna Letters*, 233.

## CHAPTER 18. SECRETS OF THE ARCHITECT

1. Mackey, *Encyclopedia of Freemasonry*, 4.
2. Pirtle, *A Kentucky Monitor*, 14, 15.
3. Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt*, 219.
4. Wildung, *Egyptian Saints*, 105.
5. Wildung, *Egyptian Saints*, 105.



- [6.](#) Josephus, *Against Apion*, 259.
- [7.](#) Josephus, *Against Apion*, 277.
- [8.](#) Josephus, *Against Apion*, 269.
- [9.](#) Quoted in Bradley, *Ancient Egypt*.
- [10.](#) Quoted in Morenz, *Egyptian Religion*, 102.
- [11.](#) Wildung, *Egyptian Saints*, 195.
- [12.](#) Steindorff and Seele, *When Egypt Ruled the East*, 77.
- [13.](#) Teeter, *Religion and Ritual in Ancient Egypt*, 100.
- [14.](#) Ockinga, “Amenhotep, Son of Hapu.”
- [15.](#) Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, vol. 3, 104.
- [16.](#) Wildung, *Egyptian Saints*, 105.
- [17.](#) Yates, *The Occult Philosophy in the Elizabethan Age*.
- [18.](#) Assmann, foreword to Ebeling, *Secret History*.
- [19.](#) In Robinson, *The Nag Hammadi Library*, 321–27. The text refers to itself as *The Eighth Reveals the Ninth*, 326.
- [20.](#) Price, *Angels within Us*, 40–41.
- [21.](#) Horstmanshoff and Stol, *Magic and Rationality*, 139.

## CHAPTER 19. THE BIRTH AND REPRESSION OF GNOSTICISM

- [1.](#) Philo Judaeus, translated by Tilden, *On the Contemplative Life*, 7, 8.
- [2.](#) Philo Judaeus, translated by Tilden, *On the Contemplative Life*, 12.
- [3.](#) Philo Judaeus, translated by Tilden, *On the Contemplative Life*, 10.
- [4.](#) Philo Judaeus, translated by Tilden, *On the Contemplative Life*, 8.
- [5.](#) Chadwick, *A Study in Primitive Monasticism*, 14.
- [6.](#) de Vlieger, *The Coptic Church*, 18.

- [7.](#) Roberts, *Manuscript, Society, and Belief*, 54.
- [8.](#) *The Gospel of Truth*, 16 –20, 34; in Robinson, *The Nag Hammadi Library*, 40–42, 47. All parentheses and square and angled bracketed insertions are in the original.
- [9.](#) Grant, *Gnosticism*, in Barnstone, *The Other Bible*.
- [10.](#) Koester, *History and Literature of Early Christianity*, 227.
- [11.](#) Roberts, *Manuscript, Society, and Belief*, 51.
- [12.](#) Roberts, *Manuscript, Society, and Belief*, 49–50.
- [13.](#) Saint Ignatius, translated by Schaff, *The Sacred Writings of Ignatius*, Epistle to the Trallians.

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# About the Author

Born in Cairo in 1934, [AHMED OSMAN](#) has been trying to discover the historical origin of the stories of the Bible for the last 30 years. He is the author of several books, including *Christianity: An Ancient Egyptian Religion*, *Moses and Akhenaten*, and *The Lost City of the Exodus*. He lives in England.



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