

03-Understanding Ancient Egypt to Understand Exodus

Exodus (Names) – Changing the World

Dr. Leon L. Sanders

One Man – Two Roles

King (Political)

- Ruler of the lands
- Defender of the lands
- Battling chaos of others (conquering the enemy)
- Extending Ma'at to others (Sword evangelism)

Pharaoh (Religious)

- High priest of Egypt
- Living "god", in training
- Maintaining Ma'at, balance (societal peace)
- Extends Ma'at (salvation) to others (harmony)

One Ma'at – Two Spheres

Material

- Prosperity & Peace
- Harmony with life
- Preparation for Death – Mummification
- Weighed in the balance

Spiritual

- Needed Ba and Ka
- Surviving the journey
- Similar to the Elysian Fields (Homer, Vergil)
- Prosperity & Peace forever

Pharaoh – Great House

- Pharaoh's word origins
 - Egyptian - Pero or Per-a-a
 - Greek - Much later word in common use today
- The titles of Pharaoh and King **not** interchangeable until (probably) the Ptolemy's rule
- Exodus did not use these terms interchangeably

Pharaoh's Chief Duties

- Performing rituals at the many temples in the land
- Each city had its own triad of gods/goddesses
- Harmony was maintained by rituals AEB peace & prosperity
- Chaos meant the physical misaligned with the spiritual

Personal Morality

- Disharmony was evidenced by a "heavy heart"; harmony made the heart "light as a feather"
- Rituals designed to restore harmony, from a distance
- Chaos (guilt) was evoked by the most basic understanding of morality (Do not kill, lie, etc.) (Br 1:35-23)
- Harmony/Chaos affected the person and thus society

Scales of Ma'at

- When one died the scales of Ma'at would reveal the overall condition of one's material existence (heart)
- If one's heart was in harmony, light, the feather of Ma'at would balance the heart
- If one's heart was heavy, disharmony (guilt), then the scales would not balance and Ammit would eat the heart, ergo, no afterlife

Ma'at: Then and Now



Images of the Deities

- The images were not considered to be or contain the deities but were simply representations of the significant traits of the deities to remind the worshiper of the importance and function of each deity
- The names of the deities were not simply Egyptian in origin showing connection to deities of other cultures

Interrelationship of Deities

- We would expect a common source (Babel) if the various cultural belief systems exhibited similarities even through cultural differences
 - Deities had similar functions
 - Common myths about creation, flood, origin of man
 - Similar practices and temples, especially in early history
 - Fighting/Immortality may have mirrored Nimrod & wife

Similar Deities

Egyptian Deity	Greek Deity
Ptah	Vulcan
Horus	Apollo
Osiris	Dionysus
Isis	Demeter
Neith	Athena
Amun	Zeus
Hathor	Aphrodite

Interrelationships of Empires

- Tracing the similarity of deities allows us to understand the interrelationship between the various cultures
- The Egyptian culture was older than but also concurrent with the Minoan, Mycenaean and Hellenistic cultures
- Egypt provided stability in the ancient world, until...

Why Egypt?

- God could have hid the Hebrews in any culture but He chose Egypt, the only surviving ancient culture
- God's intervention through Joseph made Egypt into a very powerful empire (8:9-17)
- Egypt's "harmony" extended up into the Levant



God's Message to the World

- God's intervention in Egypt could not be hidden
- The news of God's intervention in Egypt would reverberate to the other empires
- This shockwave would soon be translated into the religions of the Axial Age and be felt even in our time (8:9-17)

King and Harmony

- The King of Egypt was not afraid of the Hebrews politically because of their different God
 - The Egyptians would not follow Him
 - He could defeat them militarily and deport them en masse as slaves to the various empires, negating their threat
 - They had no personal representative of God to treat with him as god, yet...

Pharaoh and Chaos

- The Pharaoh of Egypt was afraid of the growing Hebrew influence because it would disrupt Ma'at threatening both the now and the hereafter
- The Pharaoh had to intervene to maintain Ma'at, to prevent the destabilization of their society
- Pharaoh *forgot* that God stabilized Egypt's Ma'at

Contrast of Two Houses

Pharaoh's House (Egypt)

- Built on rejection of the truth of God (Ex 1:15-19)
- The chaos of this "house" would show the "world" the truth of God, again (Ex 1:20-21)

God's House (Jo 14:2)

- Hebrews had only the knowledge of Genesis
- Their understanding of God was "tainted" by their *Egyptian* worldview

Summary

Preparing to begin our study of Exodus

Ancient Empires

- We traced the ancient empires from Babel to Egypt and beyond to today's world that would be transformed by the events in Egypt
- Without this perspective the events in Exodus become a minor event affecting a tiny people that barely survive the Iron Age to birth the Messiah

Ancient Faiths

- Without an understanding of the faith of the ancient world we do not realize how the events of Exodus changed the world
- The major faiths of the Axial Age came into being, not independent of, but *contingent* upon the events of Exodus and the development of Israel as a nation and continued exposure to God's truth – *even when the messengers rejected the truth of their own message!*

Pharaoh as High Priest

- The events of Exodus cannot be understood unless we comprehend that this was not a political or social, battle but a spiritual manifestation of
 - The power of God
 - The grace of God
 - The worthlessness of man's works

Theme of Exodus

- Exodus is NOT a move from slavery to freedom as is commonly depicted but a movement from slavery to sin, to being slaves of God (Ex-6:15-16)
- The purpose of Exodus: to teach man holiness of God
 - The “fear of the Lord” is the beginning of wisdom (Ps 28:28)
- God begins to “build” His *Great House*

Akhenaten – Attempt at Truth



- Nearly 100 years after Moses Egypt tried to reinvent itself
- Pharaoh tried to give Egypt its own Axial Age faith
- The message was rejected by both the priesthood and the people upon his death
- Egypt remained locked to the ancient ways until cast into slavery by Islam's iron chains