

The Two Lands of the Nile and the Origins of One God

I. Ancient Egypt and the Divine Ruler

A. Favorable Geographic Conditions

1. The Nile
2. “Natural” Boundaries—Mediterranean Sea, Red Sea, Libyan Desert

B. Aspects of Egyptian Life

1. Economic Activities

- a. Mainly agricultural—wheat, barley, and flax; sheep and cattle
- b. Cities—construction, glass-blowing, metal working, cloth weaving
- c. Foreign trade—export of glassware, linen cloth, and clay vases; import of ivory, spices, and copper

2. Society

- a. Wide Social Distinctions
- b. Attitudes toward Women
- c. Brother-Sister Marriages
- d. Striving for Immortality (Mummification)

3. Divine Monarchy

- a. Menes (Narmer [Catfish]) ca. 3100 B.C. — Narmer Palette
- b. Nekhen (Hierakonpolis)—pottery center
- c. Tawy = “Two Lands”
- d. *ma'at* = truth, justice, righteousness, order, etc.

4. Intellectual Achievements and Religious Beliefs

- a. The Sphinx and technology
- b. The Pyramids and mathematics
- c. Polytheism—Osiris, Isis, Horus, Ra, Amen
 - Osiris—brother of Seth; husband and brother of Isis; father of Horus
 - Seth—brother of Osiris and Isis; kills and dismembers Osiris
 - Isis—wife and sister of Osiris; sister of Seth; mother of Horus; puts Osiris back together

- d. Akhnaton (or Ikhnaton or Akhenaton) formerly: Amenophis IV (or Amenhotep IV) ca. 1367–1350 B.C. (or 1370–1353 B.C. or 1377–1360 B.C.)
 - (1) James Breasted
 - (2) F. J. Giles
 - (3) Donald Redford
- e. Worship of Aton—monotheistic or henotheistic?

Video: Abba Ebban, “Heritage: Civilization and the Jews,” no. 1: *A People Is Born*

Recommended Reading:

- Cyril Aldred, *Akhenaten, Pharaoh of Egypt*, London, 1968, esp. pp. 133–139.
- F. J. Giles, *Ikhnaton: Legend and History*, Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson UP, 1972.
- Christine Hobson, *The World of the Pharaohs: A Complete Guide to Ancient Egypt*, Thames and Hudson, 1987.
- Michael Allen Hoffman, “Where Nations Began,” *Science* 83, October 1983, pp. 42–51.
- Michael Allen Hoffman, *Egypt before the Pharaohs: The Prehistoric Foundations of Egyptian Civilization*, New York: Knopf, 1979.
- Donald B. Redford, *Akhenaten: The Heretic King*, Princeton University Press, 1984.
- Ian Shaw, *Exploring Ancient Egypt (Places in Time)*, Oxford University Press, 2003.

The Aton Hymn

When thou settest in the western
horizon,
The land is in darkness like
death ...
Every lion comes forth from his
den;
All creeping things, they sting.
At daybreak, when thou arisest in
the horizon ...
Thou drivest away the darkness ...
Men awake and stand upon their
feet ...
All the world, they do their labor.
How manifold are they works!
They are hidden from man's sight.
O sole god, like who there is no
other,
Thou hast made the earth according
to thy desire.

Psalm 104

Thou makest darkness and it is
night,
Wherein all the beasts of the forest
creep forth.
The young lions roar after their
prey.
The sun ariseth, they get them
away ...
Man goeth forth unto his work,
And to his labor until the evening.
O Jahweh, how manifold are they
works!
In wisdom has thou made them all;
The earth is full of thy riches.

Hymn to Amen-Re

The sweetness of thee is in the northern sky.
The beauty of thee carries away hearts;
The love of thee makes arms languid;
Thy beautiful form relaxes the hands;
And hearts are forgetful at the sight of thee.
Thou art the sole one, who made what is,
The solitary sole [one], who made what exists,
From whose eyes mankind came forth,
And upon whose mouth the gods came into being
He who made herbage [for] the cattle,
And the fruit tree for mankind,
Who made that (on which) the fish in the river may live,
And the birds soaring in the sky.
He who gives breath to that which is in the egg,
Gives life to the son of the slug,
And makes that on which gnats may live,
And worms and flies in like manner;
Who supplies the needs of the mice in their holes,
And gives life to flying things in every tree.
Hail to thee, who did all this!
Solitary sole one, with many hands.