

Horus, Seth, and Israel: Egyptian Literary Reflections in a Biblical Mirror

A lecture by Gary Greenberg presented at ARCE-NY on May 12, 2016



Let me start off with this image of an eighth century BCE seal. It depicts a young man in Egyptian clothing and Egyptian style wig standing above a winged solar disk. If you look at the writing on it, however, it is not Egyptian. It is Hebrew. It belongs to a government minister named Abdi, working for the Israelite king Hoshea, the last ruler of the Kingdom of Israel. In a side panel in BAR magazine describing this seal it says that this Egyptian style borrowing probably dates to the tenth century.

According to biblical tradition (which is not necessarily historically reliable) ancient Israel places its development as a nation in Egypt. The first Israelite, Jacob, also known as Israel and from whom the nation takes its name, moved his family consisting of about 70 males and their wives and children to Egypt, where several generations later the Israelites rose to become an important political entity in the northern delta. Israel's son, Joseph, allegedly became the equivalent of Prime Minister of Egypt and married the daughter of the High Priest of the city of Annu, which the Greeks called Heliopolis (Sun City) and which is referred to in the Bible as On. Annu was the center of one of the oldest and most influential religious cults in Egypt. Joseph's two children, the eponymous founders of the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, two of the most important of the twelve tribes, were half-Egyptian, and would have received Egyptian educations, probably at Heliopolis.

Moses was allegedly raised as an adopted son of the Pharaoh. If true, it made him a potential contender for the throne of Egypt and he would have been given the education due a member of the royal family. He, too, would probably have studied at Heliopolis. He is credited with being the author of the first five books of the bible, although modern scholarship widely rejects that claim. Despite religiously inspired etymologies for the origin of Moses' name, it is generally recognized that it comes from the Egyptian word "Mose", meaning, "is born", an element of the name of several pharaohs, such as Ahmose and Thutmose. Not surprisingly, the deity element of Moses' name is missing. Scholars have also noticed that several members of Moses' tribe, the Levites, the tribe that controlled the

Israelite priesthood, have Egyptian names, such as Phineas, Hophni and Hur. Phineas is a Semitic form of the name Pan-hesi, meaning, "the Nubian." Solomon is reputed to have been the only non-Egyptian married to an Egyptian princess and allegedly built an Egyptian cult temple in Jerusalem for her. During Solomon's reign, rebellion broke against his rule, and the leader of the revolt, Jeroboam, took refuge in Egypt under the pharaoh's protection. When Solomon died, Jeroboam returned and led those opposed to accepting Solomon's son as the next king, creating a split between what became the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah.

Whatever one may think about the historicity of these biblical claims, and many scholars reject them, Egypt and Israel were borderline neighbors and Egypt had a wide cultural influence throughout the middle east. Egypt was also a breadbasket for many of the Mediterranean and Middle Eastern nations and there was substantial commercial interaction between the Egyptian delta and its northern neighbors. We should expect, therefore, to see some sort of cultural influence running from Egypt to Israel and Judah.

The Abdi seal and others like it, suggest just such an instance. But scholars routinely argue that Israel probably imported it from the Phoenicians. How the generating culture of Israel's very influential southern neighbor leap-frogged over Israel to land in Israel's northern neighbor, and only then found its way to Israel strikes me as puzzling.

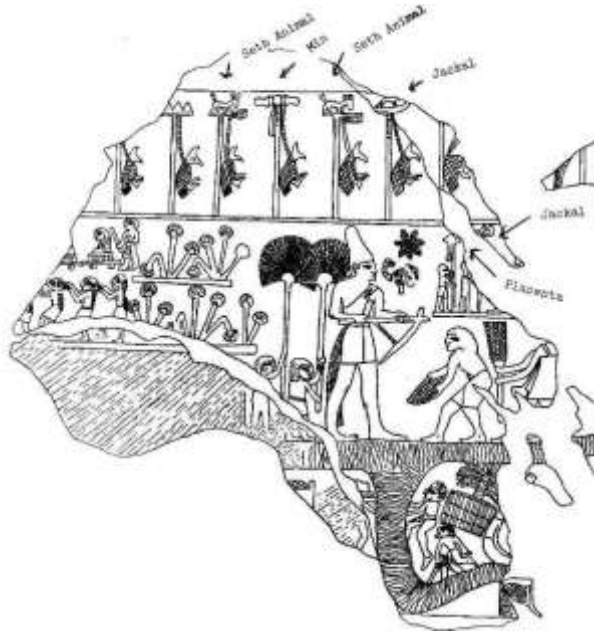
Egyptologists and biblical scholars, however, have erected something like a papyrus curtain between the two disciplines, neither side deigning to expend much effort in examining the other. This is especially true at conferences, where even the hint of such a panel is usually relegated to one of the least favorable slots on the program. Very few Egyptian cultural influences on biblical history are recognized and when they are, they are done so grudgingly.

In this presentation I am not going to argue for the historicity of the biblical accounts of Egypt, but rather, I am going to look at some Egyptian cultural and literary practices that may have influenced the biblical authors of some portions of early biblical history. In particular, I want to look at Egyptian traditions about the gods Horus and Seth and how they may have had some bearing on biblical stories about Jacob and Moses.



Mages of the Egyptian God Seth

Horus and Seth are two of Egypt's oldest deities, with roots going back to pre-dynastic times (before 3000 B.C.E.) Horus is associated with the falcon but Seth, as you can see in the pictures above, is represented by some sort of strange creature dubbed the "Seth animal" because no one is quite sure what kind of animal it is or whether it might be a composite of more than one animal. The relationship between these gods is complicated and, as we shall see, there is some confusion over the nature and identity of the god Horus.



King Scorpion Mace Head

In the above pre-dynastic mace head belonging to a king named Scorpion, we see two military standards with the Seth animal mounted on top. It is likely, therefore, that when the Horus worshippers unified Egypt for the first time, the Seth worshippers were among those forced to yield. Some sort of rivalry between the Horus group and the Seth group appears to have continued through at least the first two dynasties.

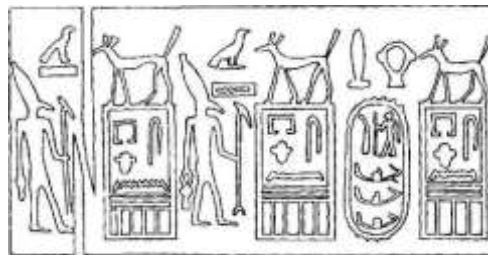


Image depicting King Seth-Peribsen (c. 2800 B.C.E.)

The next to last king of the Second Dynasty (c. 2800 BCE) was Seth-Peribsen. In this image here, we see him on the far left depicted as the god Seth, and on the right we have images of his serekh, with Seth appearing on top as the king's name identifier. The serekh symbol was a predecessor to the cartouche and was used to signify the Pharaoh's

patron deity. The lower part of the serekh shows a building, usually referred to as a palace. This king has the distinction of being the only Egyptian ruler to have a serekh showing only the god Seth. Identifying the king with Seth instead of Horus is obviously an important political move and highly controversial, suggesting strong lingering conflict between the Horus and Seth cults.



Image of King Khasekhemwy

The successor to Seth-Peribsen was Khasekhemwy, whose name means “The Two Powerful Ones Appear.” This is him above. He was the last king of the second dynasty and he too has a distinction. He is the only Egyptian ruler with a serekh that includes both Horus and Seth. A depiction of which we can see here



Only serekh depicting both Horus and Seth

This suggests that some sort of accommodation was reached during his reign and the two cults made peace with each other. We don't know how or why this happened. Some speculate that a marriage was arranged bringing both sides together, suggesting that the dispute was more political than religious. Others believe there was some sort of military victory. Despite the unity image of both Horus and Seth in Khasekhemwy's serekh, beginning with the third dynasty immediately after and, until the Seth-worshipping Hyksos invasion almost a thousand years later, the subsequent kings displayed only Horus in the serekhs, identifying him as the patron deity.

These early cult conflicts may stand behind some aspects of Egyptian mythology. In the Heliopolitan cosmology, perhaps the most important and influential of the several early Egyptian creation myths, Atum, the creator god, brought forth Shu and Tefnut, who in turn brought forth Geb and Nut, identified as Earth and Heaven. Geb and Nut had five children, Osiris, Horus, Set, Isis, and Nephthys, each born on successive days. Tradition identifies these as the last five days on the Egyptian solar calendar. The full group of nine gods beginning with Atum was known as the Ennead (group of nine), a sort of high council of the Egyptian deities.

But here things get a bit confusing. The Egyptians knew more than one god named Horus and they weren't all in agreement as to which Horus was the one born to Geb and Nut. There was Horus the Elder who was a brother of Seth, and there were two child deities, Horus the Child (known as Harpocrates), and Horus the son of Isis, both of whom were born to Osiris and Isis and were Seth's nephews.

Unfortunately, the Egyptians never left us any clear epic mythological histories. We only have bits and pieces from inscriptions and images. The fullest account we have of the Osiris-Horus-Seth cycle is from the first century Greek historian Plutarch, who provides a lengthy report that appears to have harmonized or integrated various conflicting stories. Whether he harmonized the stories or relied on Egyptian sources we don't know.

In his telling, Osiris was born first and Horus the elder was the second born child, but while Osiris was still in the womb he and Isis conceived Horus the son of Isis and he was born while still in the womb. Seth was born third but only because he forced his way out of the womb before his time, being born ahead of Horus the son of Isis. Later, he tells us, Osiris and Isis had another child, Harpocrates, who was born lame. Harpocrates is "the child Horus."

Seth's most famous (or infamous) incident was the killing of Osiris. The outlines of this story, as presented more fully in Plutarch, can be seen as early as the Fifth and Sixth Dynasty Pyramid Texts (c. 2400-2100 B.C.E.) These early texts also depict various struggles between Horus and Seth. They include, for example, frequent references to Seth having snatched the eye of Horus and Horus having ripped off Seth's testicles.

Note that these texts first appear after the Second Dynasty conflicts between the Horus and Seth cults. Seth's seizure of Horus' eye signifies a shift in power. Horus' subsequent seizure of Seth's testicles reflects the restoration of Horus to the throne. I suspect that these Pyramid Text reference to conflict between Horus and Seth trace back to the earlier conflicts between the two respective cults in both the pre-dynastic period and in the second dynasty.

Despite the murder of Osiris and the attacks on Horus, Seth retained a pretty stalwart image among the Egyptians, at least until about the end of the New Kingdom (c. 1576-1300 B.C.E.) He was depicted as a mighty warrior who protected Re from his enemies as the solar barge made its daily journey through the netherworld. And he is given a role in the process by which the deceased king ascends to heaven on a ladder. In Pyramid Text Utterance 478 from the sixth dynasty pharaoh Pepi, we read,

"Hail to you, Ladder of the God. Hail to you, Ladder of Seth. Stand up Ladder of God. Stand up Ladder of Seth. Stand up Ladder of Horus, which was made for Osiris that he might ascend on it to the sky and escort Re . . . [and in the same utterance a little later] . . . Now let the ladder of God be given to me. Let the ladder of Seth be given to me, that I may ascend on it to the sky and escort Re as a divine guardian of those who have gone to their doubles."



Depiction of the ladder to heaven

This text, one of many in the Pyramid Texts about this ladder, describes Osiris escorting Re up to heaven and the king asking for the ladder of Horus and Seth so he can become like Osiris and escort Re up the ladder. Eventually the ladder became associated with the body of Osiris and then the backbone of Osiris in the form of the Djed pillar. This image here, showing the raising of the Djed pillar/ladder, is a touch ironic. It shows Pharaoh Seti I, (named after the god Seth) functioning as Horus to raise the Djed pillar for the resurrection of Osiris, who was murdered by Seth.

The ladder to heaven appears to be an Egyptian icon but we find a parallel to it in Genesis 28:12, where Jacob has a dream about a ladder to heaven, with angels ascending up and down. As a result of the dream, Jacob named the place Bethel, or House of God. The ladder to heaven tradition seems to be primarily Egyptian in origin and I suggest that Jacob's ladder dream may have had its origin in this Egyptian concept of the dying king going up to heaven. Given the monotheistic nature of the biblical writings, I see the angels as replacements for Horus, Set, Osiris, Re and the deceased king.

When the Hyksos kings captured portions of Egypt (c. 1780-1550 B.C.E.,) they established Seth as their chief deity even while trying to assimilate to Egyptian culture. They established their capitol at Avaris, and dedicated the city to Seth. The Hyksos were expelled by King Ahmose, the founder of the Eighteenth Dynasty, and, yet, in the Nineteenth Dynasty, we still find two pharaohs comfortably named after Seth, Seti I and Seti II, although they both ruled as a Horus king. Ramesses II, who ruled in between the two Seths actually erected a monument commemorating the 400th year of the founding of Avaris as the Hyksos capitol dedicated to Seth.

In the Twentieth Dynasty text known as the *Contendings of Horus and Set*, which we look at shortly, Seth is involved in numerous conflicts with Horus in a contest to become king of Egypt, and Osiris even makes an appearance in the story. But there is no indication that Seth is a bad guy for having killed Osiris. It is only his desire to be Osiris' successor in place of Horus that causes the gods any difficulty. Additionally, this story depicts Re, chief of the gods, as favoring Seth for the crown.

At some point after the end of the New Kingdom, the image of Seth took a major change for the worse. We'll look at this new view later. First let's explore the earlier version of Seth. As noted above, Seth appeared in the form of an animal that cannot be identified. Plutarch adds that Seth also had red hair. It has been suggested by some scholars that the Pharaoh Seti I may have taken that name because he had red hair.

In Plutarch's account of the Osiris cycle, he tells us about three different Horus figures, Horus the Elder, who was Seth's brother and born ahead of Seth; Horus the son of Isis who was conceived while Isis and Osiris were still in the womb and who was Seth's nephew, and Horus the child, who was conceived after Seth had murdered Osiris, and who was born lame in the limbs. Both of these two young Horuses are Seth's nephews, but Horus the son of Isis, having been born in the womb with Seth, can also be confusingly identified as Seth's brother.

The inclusion of three different Horus figures in one story attempts to harmonize what were once separate conflicting traditions about which Horus was born to Geb and Nut. Having “Horus the son of Isis” conceived by Osiris and Isis but still emerging from Nut’s womb may have been seen as a way to harmonize the conflicting accounts about which Horus was born from Nut.

To briefly sum up so far, Seth is a red-haired god who forced his way out of his mother’s womb ahead of his brother Horus. Seth is also a powerful warrior. Another version of Horus appears at a later time and this Horus is lame. I also mentioned above, and will touch upon again, that in a story known as the *Contendings of Horus and Seth*, Re, the chief deity, favored Seth over Horus to be king of Egypt.

We’re now going to look at some similarities between these two competing gods and the biblical accounts of conflict between the twins Jacob and Esau. Esau was covered in birth by a thick layer of red hair, described as like a cloak, and he forced his way out of the womb ahead of his brother Jacob (Gen 25:25). When it came time for Isaac, the father, to designate one of the brothers as the head of the family, the father wanted to give the inheritance to the hunter, Esau. Jacob, at a later time, after wrestling with an angel, became lame (Gen 32:25). These parallels suggest that the biblical author may have adapted attributes of Horus and Seth and applied them to Jacob and Esau.

In addition to these parallels we find some other similarities between the two Egyptian gods and the Hebrew brothers. The Egyptian *Contendings* story is a humorous, perhaps satirical, account of the various struggles of Seth against Horus to become successor to Osiris as ruler of Egypt. A council of the gods had convened to judge which of the two claimants should rule. Horus is described as a youth, although we are told that the council has been arguing over the issue for 80 years, and he is the son of Osiris. Seth claims the right because of his skill as a warrior.

Horus claims the right as the son of Osiris. As the story opens Shu and Thoth declare that it is only right that Horus be awarded the Eye and Isis starts whooping it up. Re, however is not too happy and accuses them of making decisions on their own. As the story unfolds it generally portrays Re, the chief deity, as favoring Seth while most of the other gods’ favor Horus. By way of comparison with the story of Jacob and Esau, the clan chieftain Isaac, favors his red-haired son Esau while the mother favors the younger twin, Jacob, and conspires with her son to get the birthright from Isaac.

The inability of the Egyptian council to resolve the conflict in Seth’s favor leaves him frustrated and he says that he and Horus should step outside and duke it out because, he claims, it appears to be the only way to dispossess the child. Thoth objects, saying, “Do we not know that this is wrong. Shall one give the office of Osiris to Seth while his son Horus is there.”

Jumping ahead in the story, Seth objects to Isis participating in any judgement and Re directs the council to reassemble on an island with instructions to the ferryman not to allow anyone looking like Isis to come across. Isis takes on a disguise as an elderly woman, carrying a bowl of food that she says is for a young cattle tender on the island. The ferryman hesitates, but Isis offers him the bowl of food. The ferryman still hesitates, but she bribes him with a gold ring, which he accepts. On the other side of the water she transformed herself into a young woman and attracted Seth’s attention.

When Seth approaches she said to him that she is a widow and that her son began to tend her deceased husband’s cattle, but a stranger came and threatened to beat up the son, take the cattle, and throw the child out. “Will you defend him,” she asked of Seth.

The god replies, “Shall one give the cattle to a stranger while the man’s son is here.” With these words, Isis turned into a bird and said to Seth that his own words have done him in.

There is some similarity between Isis’ trickery and that used in a biblical story about King David. Nathan, David’s court advisor, seeking to reproach David for having arranged the murder of Bath-Sheba’s husband to cover up his affair with her, approached David with a false legal dispute. He told David about a rich man who stole a poor man’s one lamb ewe so that he could feed a guest without taking any of his own cattle. David was outraged and said the man deserved to die and that the man should be ordered to repay the theft fourfold. Nathan said to David, “you are that man (2 Samuel 12).”

An even better parallel is found again in the story of Jacob and Esau. The latter, by virtue of having forced his way out of the womb ahead of Jacob was entitled to the birthright, the leadership of the tribe after the father's death. Jacob and his mother conspire to take the birthright away from Esau through trickery and disguise.

The father, Isaac, is elderly and can barely see. He tells Esau to bring him a stew and he will give him the blessing conveying the birthright. While Esau is out hunting to get the meat, Rebekah, the mother, tells Jacob to bring a bowl of stew to Isaac and pretend to be Esau. Jacob protests that he is smooth-skinned and Esau has very thick hair and that Isaac would know who is who. Rebekah places a goat skin over Jacob's arms and neck. Jacob questions the ethics but Rebekah says that the sin would be hers. The trick worked. Jacob got the birthright and Esau became a bitter enemy.

Back to the story of Horus and Seth. Spoiler alert. Isis' trick didn't solve the dispute, and Seth, like Esau, remained bitter and angry towards Horus. More arguments were made and Seth continued to challenge Horus to various contests, including battles in the form of hippopotami and the use of a stone sailing vessel. On one occasion Seth seized Horus's eye.

Although the biblical and Egyptian story lines aren't identical the story details are similar, a disguised person with a bowl of food deceptively wins the birthright, despite the boss's opposition favoring the red-haired twin brother who forced himself out of the womb ahead of his time.

Eventually, the gods were fed up and Seth promised peace, offering to host a dinner for Horus. After dinner, during the night, Seth raped Horus and intended to use this act as proof that he should be king and not Horus. When Isis learned what happened she used assorted magic tricks to make it appear that it was Horus who raped Seth rather than the other way around.

In the Jacob-Esau saga, Jacob makes a return trip to his homeland and fears having to go past Esau's territory. When he comes nearby, Esau appears with an army but offers peace and invites Jacob to a banquet. Jacob accepts the invitation and tells Esau to ride ahead and he'll join him. But as soon as Esau departs, Jacob, fearing his brother's true intentions, scoots home and never shows up to smoke the peace pipe. The biblical story seems to be a truncated continuation of the Egyptian storyline that eliminates what would have been the rape of Jacob had a full parallel been presented. However, just before the meeting between Jacob and Esau, Jacob has a nighttime wrestling match with a mysterious figure (Genesis 32:22-32) that leaves him lame. When he wakes up in the morning, he sees Esau and the approaching army. I suspect a strong literary connection between Jacob's struggle with the mysterious stranger and Horus's struggle with Set, both events taking place before a peace offering of a banquet.

The Contendings of Horus and Seth are not necessarily the only story version of the contest between the two gods; it is just the only one that has come down to us. Other traditions with other story details may have circulated. And while the precise outline of the Jacob-Esau saga doesn't exactly match those in the *Contendings*, they are close enough to at least suggest that the conflict between Jacob and Esau drew heavily on Egyptian traditions about Horus and Seth.

Change in Seth's Image

Let us now look to post-New Kingdom times when Seth's reputation took a major turn to the negative. Plutarch says that among the Egyptians, Osiris had become associated with all moisture and Seth was identified with all that was dry, fiery, and antagonistic to moisture, especially the desert wastelands. A literary tradition developed that

identified Egypt's enemies with Seth and the desert. Plutarch also says that the day of Seth's birth was considered unlucky and that red-haired men were assaulted and red-haired donkeys were ceremoniously thrown over cliffs. Plutarch says that some authorities believe that Seth had fathered two sons, Heirosolymus and Judaeus (i.e., Jerusalem and Judea) but Plutarch dismisses that as an attempt, presumably by Jew-haters, to drag Jewish traditions into the story of Horus and Seth. Tacitus says that the Jews wandering in the desert were led to water by a donkey, and, as a result, they worshipped a god in the form of a donkey and erected a statue to him in the Temple.

Apparently, the association of Jews with negative images of Seth in the first century was somewhat common. Plutarch also provides some other interesting details relevant to our discussion. According to his report, after Seth killed Osiris, he hacked the body in pieces and hid them away, Isis recovered all the portions except for the penis and brought Osiris back to life and he became the ruler of the afterlife. Fearing for the child's safety, Isis hid him away, but as the child became older, Osiris came to him and trained him to take on Seth. When Horus was ready he and Seth fought several battles and Horus prevailed. So, we begin with a child hidden away from a usurper who comes back in adulthood and defeats the enemy. You may see here the beginnings of the Exodus story and Moses.

Manetho Story

With that, let's now turn our attention to the biblical Exodus and an Egyptian version of that story attributed to Manetho, a third century BCE Heliopolitan priest who wrote a history of Egypt from the time of the gods down through each of the dynasties. His original work has been lost to history but it appears to have been popular and well known. Portions of it have survived primarily in the form of chronologies, the various versions substantially conflicting with each other.

The chief sources for Manetho's history are the Jewish historian Josephus and the early Christian scholars Africanus and Eusebius, all of whom published some form of chronological listings of Egyptian kings and included some anecdotal historical details. It is from these surviving forms of Manetho's work that we derive our present dynastic structure of thirty Egyptian dynasties.

Josephus records a story that he attributes to Manetho and it purports to be an Egyptian version of the Exodus story. It is problematic and controversial and has several features that clearly identify the story with the troubled reign of the monotheistic pharaoh, Akhenaten. Scholars have routinely dismissed Manetho's Exodus account and see it is a literary trope identifying Egypt's enemies with the Seth-worshipping Hyksos kings and placing Egypt's enemies in the wilderness.

The main players in Manetho's story are the pharaoh Amenophis, his son "Sethos, also known as Ramesses", and Osarseph, a priest from the city of Heliopolis. Amenophis is the Greek transliteration for Amenhotep, the original throne name of both Akhenaten and his father. As we shall see, the story has several details that indicate it was originally about the heretic pharaoh.

In this version, it is Osarseph who initiates the religious revolution and Amenophis (that is, either Akhenaten or his father) who is the victim. Osarseph, says Manetho, was Moses, and he was forcibly expelled from Egypt with his followers, a group of diseased Egyptians. Josephus, upset by Manetho's description of the Jews as a diseased and leprous people, attempts to refute the claim by arguing that the real Exodus should be identified with the expulsion of the Hyksos. Josephus is the first to make this argument and it still resonates with some scholars.

According to Josephus's account of Manetho, Amenophis had a desire to see the gods and he communicated this desire to a famous seer. The wise man told Amenophis that he could accomplish his goals if he purged Egypt of all the lepers and polluted people. Delighted with this news, the king rounded up all such people, to the number of about 80,000, among whom were several priests afflicted with leprosy, but, strangely, instead of having them leave Egypt, he enslaved them in the stone quarries, segregating them from the rest of the Egyptians.

When the seer learned what Amenophis had done, he feared that the pharaoh's actions would bring a violent retaliation from the gods and predicted that the polluted people would join with allies and they would take control of Egypt for 13 years. After a long period of misery, the slaves petitioned the king, asking permission to move to the abandoned city of Avaris, the former capital of the Hyksos kings. There they laid plans for a revolt and elected Osarseph, a Heliopolitan priest, to be their leader. His first orders were not to worship the Egyptians gods and to kill off the sacred animals held in reverence by the Egyptians. He then fortified the walls of Avaris and prepared for war against Amenophis. Next, he sent an ambassador to the exiled Hyksos leaders and formed a military alliance. The Hyksos sent 200,000 soldiers to join with Osarseph's forces. To be clear here, the story sets up a symbolic conflict between Seth-worshipping invaders from the wilderness and a legitimate Horus-king.

When Amenophis learned of the coming invasion he remembered the seer's prediction that Egypt would suffer for thirteen years at the hands of its enemies. He arranged protection for the sacred animals and icons and then hid his five-year-old son, "Sethos, also called Ramesses" with a friend. After making these security arrangements,

Amenophis assembled an army of 300,000 of Egypt's finest soldiers and marched against the Osarseph-Hyksos alliance. But at the last moment, he had a sudden fear that his actions would be construed as an attack on the gods and, rather than engage the enemy, he pulled back his troops and withdrew to Memphis. There he gathered the sacred animals and withdrew his forces to Ethiopia, where the local king gave him land and protection.

Osarseph ruled the land for 13 years, instituting a reign of terror. He burned cities, mutilated sacred images, killed the sacred animals and had his followers eat the sacred beasts. At some point during Osarseph's reign, according to Manetho, the usurper changed his name to Moses. At the end of the prophesied time, Amenophis and his son (now confusingly named Rampses—that is, with a letter "p" inserted into the middle of his name—advanced from Ethiopia with a large army and drove the enemy deep into Syria, killing many of them along the way. And so the story concludes.

Note here that the child is hidden away at the age of five and that the attack on the Egyptian gods and sacred animals lasted for 13 years. Akhenaten began his religious revolution in Year 5, and it lasted 13 years. Like Osarseph, Akhenaten rejected the Egyptian gods. This, together with the name Amenophis is what leads Egyptologists to identify this story with Akhenaten. The connection to Moses and the Jews, however, is limited to a simple sentence about the name change, which Manetho could have easily inserted into an existing story.

What we know of Manetho seems to suggest that he had good sources for his history of Egypt even though it is heavily compromised by the fact that our Manetho sources have jettisoned much of the history and have badly garbled much of what they preserved. Nevertheless, given the historical, theological and embarrassment problems Egypt faced from Akhenaten's reign, it is likely that this story in large part preceded Manetho and he integrated it into his history. Whether Manetho found the Moses connection in his source material or inserted it as an interpretation of events, much as Josephus assumed the Hyksos kings were the Hebrews, we don't know.

If we break down Manetho's story on a literary level, we have a broad reconstruction of the Horus-Seth conflict. Osarseph would be the rebellious Seth figure. The five-year-old child would be the Horus figure hidden away to protect him from Seth, and who comes back as an adult to defeat Seth and become king. The Sethian nature of the usurper is reinforced by the alliance with the Seth-worshipping Hyksos and an enemy population that originates in the wilderness. The Manetho story seems to draw upon the later anti-Seth traditions following the New Kingdom.

If we look to the biblical Exodus story, we see, with one important difference, a substantial parallel to the Manetho story. In the biblical version Moses is the Horus figure, and the pharaoh is the Sethian figure. It is Moses who is hidden away as a child and comes back as an adult to avenge the enslavement of his people. Therefore, in the Egyptian story, the child is hidden away after the slave revolt and in the biblical account the child is hidden away before the revolt. This change may have been necessitated by the fact that in both versions, Moses leaves Egypt with his followers.

Beyond this initial child-avenger scenario, we have several additional parallels. In both Manetho and the bible, the pharaoh fears a particular group of Egyptian residents; he enslaves the people whom he fears; the slaves are isolated from the rest of the country; the slaves initially ask to go only to a different location in Egypt; a god punishes Egypt for the act of enslavement; the slave leader causes great devastation to befall Egypt; and the slaves are chased out of Egypt by the pharaoh.

In other similarities between Manetho and the biblical account, the respective Horus figures. Ramesses and Moses, both have a desire to see God. In the Egyptian story the slaves suffer from leprosy, and in the biblical story Moses, his brother Aaron, and his sister Miriam also suffer from leprosy. One of the largest portions of the Book of Leviticus, part of the Moses cycle, deals with leprosy. In the Egyptian story, the slaves are assigned to the city of Avaris. In the biblical story the slaves are assigned to Pi-Ramesses. But that city received that name during the reign of Ramesses II. It was previously known as Avaris. So, both stories place the slaves in the Sethian Hyksos capitol. And, of course, both Horus children, Ramesses and Moses, are raised as a son of the legitimate pharaoh.

The parallels between the biblical account and the Manetho story are quite striking. Although the parallel details are not in the same sequential order, the wide range of parallel detail suggests, at the very least, that either Hebrews knew a version of Manetho's story and adopted it as their own with a few changes, or an Egyptian knew the biblical story and adopted it for Egyptian purposes. Since Manetho's story starts out as, and clearly constitutes, a white-washing of Pharaoh Akhenaten's reign using largely Egyptian traditions and symbols and history I am inclined to see Manetho relying on an earlier Egyptian source, some version of which may have been known to the biblical author of the Exodus story.

In this talk, I have attempted to just scratch the surface of a much larger inquiry into a much larger range of Egyptian sources for biblical stories. Here I am just raising just a few questions, out of a great many more, that I think require further investigation by both Egyptologists and biblical scholars. In conclusion, let me leave you with one final set of images showing the vast influence of the Horus-Seth mythology on surrounding cultures.

