

BETWEEN THE LINES

A Deeper Look...

#968- EGYPT: House of Enemies and Refuge

As we've discussed together on the program, except perhaps for Babylon, no alien nation is as commonly referred to or so predominant within the Hebrew psyche as Egypt. We first find the father of Judaism, Abraham, heading that direction and that nation and its mentality is still spoken of as late as Revelation 11.

But what do you really know about Egypt? Let's see if we can't enhance your understanding so that we might enrich your Bible perceptions...

- **Egypt was not only the first of the great ancient civilizations** but also endured the longest span of time, over 3,500 years! Much of that is due to the buffering of its location on the map. These people lived through eight great spans of time... the Early Dynasties (2920-2757 b.c.), the Old Kingdom (to 2134 b.c.), the First Intermediate Period (to 2040 b.c.), the Middle Kingdom (to 1640 b.c.), the 2nd Intermediate Period (to 1550 b.c.), the New Kingdom (to 1070 b.c.), the 3rd Intermediate Period (to 712 b.c.), and Late Egypt which only ended when Egypt became a province within the Roman Empire (30 b.c.). This spans 30 Dynasties of various Pharaohs and governors... many of whom were considered to be semi-divine.
- **You might be amazed to know that Joseph arrives in Egypt very late in this history...** He comes to ascendancy during the 2nd Intermediate Period when the shepherd kings of the Hyksos actually ruled Egypt and that is why the Bible can say "there arose a Pharaoh who knew not Joseph" comes about after the war of independence.
- **The geography of Egypt is terribly important** for a correct understanding of the land and its people. Surrounded by ancient impassable barriers (Mediterranean to the north, Sahara to the west, the desert frontier to the south, the Red Sea and Sinai and Arabia to the east) the only path of threat from invasion was the northeast corridor, which we call "Goshen".
- **The "inhabitable" slice of Egypt was really only 2-14 miles wide and about 700 miles long.** Very few people survived apart from that thin strip of land where the Nile would annually flood, bringing rich top soil from the heart of Africa. It was from that silt that the ancient name of Egypt was derived... Kemet, "the black land".
 - The population of Egypt probably never exceeded five million which should give you an idea of another reason why 600,000 Hebrew men (plus their wives and families) could be seen as such a threat to the stability and security of the nation.
- **Much of what we know about Egypt** and her daily life and priorities come from the preservation of those concepts through Egypt's preoccupation with death and the preparation for the afterlife.
- **Egyptians buried themselves with full provision** for the journey to the afterworld. Food and drink were the minimal provisions. The farther you lived up the ladder of society the more provisions you could accumulate. Meketre was a very wealthy man who lived in Luxor and his tomb contained no less than 24 cases of miniature carved servants, each one going about his appointed tasks for the benefit of Meketre. Oarsmen rowed miniature boats, tiny bakers stood in vats kneading bread with their feet, brewers, carpenters, weavers, scribes, and other artisans all were made ready for their eternal service to the lord of the manor.
- **The ultra-dry climate of Egypt has preserved things in a remarkable state for our study.** Therefore we know that the diet of Egypt was varied and appetizing...especially for the upper

class. Breads and wheat-barley beer were the staples of all as were onions, cucumbers, lentils, peas, beans, and varied forms of lettuce. The more prosperous Egyptian also would have lived on a diet of such things well-labeled and categorized wine, beef, pork, duck, fish, dates, figs, carob, cakes, and honey. A trained Egyptian cook would use a variety of spices, oils, and thickeners. Obesity was seen as a sign of wealth.

- **Egyptian life was sprinkled with various forms of diversion and entertainment.** Sporting events were common among the wealthy, as were various forms of musical entertainments. It was not at all uncommon for an Egyptian noble to have music constantly provided in the form of reed players, percussion instruments, harp and string musicians, and singers of all ages.
- **The study of afterlife preparation** (*The Book of the Dead*) was the major focus of Egyptian theology. There were several competing schools of theology (at places like Thebes and Memphis), which vied for the loyalty, affections, and support of the nation. Each taught their own perceptions of the pantheon of the multiplied deities.
- **Tomb robbing was rampant in ancient Egypt** and the thieves were a rather unholy lot to boot. It was common practice to use the mummies of children as torches while they looted the parents' graves. It seemed that no matter how elaborate the preparation to avoid this fate very few graves lasted very long before they were completely pillaged and emptied of their booty. (One gravesite alone in the Valley of the Kings was so filled with items that it took 300 workers two days to empty it!)

In Conclusion: We could go for pages and pages, but suffice it to say that the Israelites left a fully developed society in order to have the "privilege" of living in a desert wilderness for 40 years. Now do you see why they craved the "leeks and onions of Egypt"?

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**Alliances With The Aliens:** Aligning yourself with Egypt was not the only temptation in Israel's history. Even though the Lord forbade that practice (Deuteronomy 7 and Judges 2) it didn't stop Israel from trusting in alliances with pagans around them- and they always paid for it in the end. Here are a few of those episodes for your consideration and study...

- Joshua 9: The Gibeonite treaty eventually comes back to haunt Israel.
- I Kings 3: A treaty marriage to the Egyptian princess was only the first of many.
- I Kings 11: The treaty marriages eventually backfired horribly.
- I Kings 15: Asa seeks alliance with Ben-hadad of Syria... one bad mistake.
- II Kings 16: Trusting Assyria just opened the door to that nation's treachery.
- Nehemiah 13: Alliances with Ashdod, Moab, and Ammon are condemned.

**In Conclusion:** It never worked. Though alliance with Egypt was often seen as being the solution to problems for Israel it always inevitably came crashing down around them. Apparently God knows what He's talking about!