

The search for Adam, Eve, and creation in ancient Egypt

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Noah's third son, Ham, is directly linked to the land of Egypt in Psalms (78:51; 105:23, 27; 106:22), which is called the 'Land/tents of Ham'. Ham would have known about creation, Adam and Eve, and Earth's history up to his generation before the Flood from his father Noah. Ham (who witnessed the Flood) would have received this pre-Flood knowledge via Noah's teaching from writings handed down to the generations from Adam. Post-Babel, Ham would have passed such knowledge onto his descendants in the newly settled Egyptian state, which become increasingly paganized over time. Such knowledge would still include memories of Adam and Eve, the etymology of their names, their Fall, and knowledge about creation. I explore those connections in this article, focusing on Egyptian linguistic evidence and inscriptions. I conclude that Ancient Egypt knew of Adam and Eve and worshipped them as gods, and that Egyptian belief in creation is strikingly similar to Genesis at specific points.

When it comes to knowledge about creation and the pre-Flood world, it is instructive to understand that Genesis reveals the astonishing lifespans of the pre-Flood patriarchs, who lived on average to around 900 years of age. Genesis 5 leads us to the realization that Adam lived at the same time as Methuselah, who in turn lived contemporaneously with Noah.¹ That being the case, it is perfectly reasonable to assume that Noah had divinely revealed knowledge passed on to him about creation, Adam and Eve, their Fall, and 1,656 years of pre-Flood history, which later became the basis of Genesis 1–9. Noah likely received these accounts in written form, handed down to the generations from Adam onwards, which logically accounts for the *toledoth* structure of Genesis 1–11.² From the biblical evidence provided, I formulate hypotheses 1–8 (figure 1). I will investigate these predictions—that Ancient Egyptian religion contains knowledge about creation (1), Adam and Eve's names (2, 8), and their Fall, which is comparable to the account in Genesis 1–3.

Ham's line became pagans

Ham dishonoured his father (Genesis 9:22, 24) resulting in Noah's blessing of Shem and Japheth (Genesis 9:25–27). Noah's curse was specifically placed on Ham's son Canaan. Scripture remains silent regarding any blessing on Ham's descendants in general, including the Egyptians, through Mizraim (Genesis 10:6). From the archaeological and textual evidence examined in this article, all evidence points to Ham's posterity paganizing the creation and Flood knowledge handed on from Noah.

Prediction 1. Creation concepts, equivalent to Genesis, will appear in Egyptian paganized religion.

Prediction 2. The names of Adam and Eve should appear together as a discernable couple.

Prediction 3. Adam will be connected to Egyptian ideas of the Flood (see later explanation).

Prediction 4. Knowledge of creation, Adam, and Eve will occur in Egypt's oldest inscriptions, including the most significant textual corpus, the 5th Dynasty Pyramid Texts (PT).

Prediction 5. Deified ancestors: Adam as a deified ancestor will be discernable in Egyptian religion.

Prediction 6. Pharaonic references: Adam as the first living human being should be an important concept, and so would be expected in Pharaonic inscriptions.

Prediction 7. Temple and worship: if Adam was worshipped in Egypt, evidence of a temple/s and worship dedicated to him will be expected.

Prediction 8. Meanings of Adam and Eve's names should be preserved in Egyptian onomastics, when compared to their biblical Hebrew names.

A brief overview of Egyptian cosmogonies

Ancient Egypt had three main beliefs about the origins of the gods and creation. These arose in three separate locations in Egypt, each with its own worship centre. Known by their Greek names: Heliopolis (located within present-day Cairo), Memphis (20 km south of Cairo), and Hermopolis (323 km south of Cairo).³ These Egyptian creation beliefs all shared common ideas: concepts of a primordial ocean, a primeval hill, and nature as divine.⁴ A fourth theology focuses on the creation of humanity, centred around a temple on the island of Elephantine at Aswan (870 km south of Cairo) which



Figure 1. Eight hypotheses based on implications of Genesis history

described a creator god called Khnum.⁵ For this study the cosmology centred in Heliopolis is of particular interest.

Heliopolitan theology

The Egyptian city of Heliopolis⁶ was a regional centre of Re-Atum worship from pre-dynastic times. An important surviving remnant of Heliopolis is the Temple of Re-Atum obelisk, a 68 ft (20.73 m) high red granite obelisk (weighing 120 tons), erected by Senusret I of the 12th Dynasty.

Texts inscribed in 5th Dynasty pyramids describe Atum, the first creator god, who emerged from the primordial flood waters (called Nun) ascended the primordial hill (the first land of creation) and initiated the work of creation (PT-1248).⁷ PT-1652 and PT-1653a describe Atum ‘sneezing’ or ‘spitting out’ two offspring deities, a son called Shu (representing the air) and a daughter called Tēfnut (representing moisture). From these two, other gods were believed to have descended by natural procreation. This is described in the Great Amun Hymn which states: “The living gods who came forth from Re[-Atum], the Ennead, the children of Atum”.⁸ The Great Ennead of Heliopolis were nine primeval gods descended from Atum. However, Egyptologist David Silverman points out: “Quite often, the traditional Ennead includes a tenth god, usually Horus... or Re (the sun)”.⁹ PT-1655 lists the Enneads’ names: “Atum, Shu, Tefēnet, Gēb, Nūt, Osiris, Isis, Seth and Nephthys.”¹⁰ For this study, the identity and meaning of the first creator deity, Atum, is of particular interest, who will be discussed later. It is also instructive to recognize that after Adam there are a further nine generations to Noah, which may be reflected in the 9 generations of the Ennead, although this is speculative.

Egyptian creation belief vs Genesis 1

Some intriguing literary connections between Egyptian and Hebrew cosmology have been demonstrated

by scholars.¹¹ Genesis 1:1 contains the Hebrew word רֵאשִׁית (rēšîṯ) “beginning, first, starting point” (HALOT-8618) which describes the initiation and moment-in-time of God’s creative act. The Hebrew root of this word is: ראש (rōš) “head, chief” (HALOT-8602). The exact parallel is seen in the Old Kingdom (OK) Egyptian word *sp-tp.i* “first occasion; primeval times” (Wb 3, 438.1–6; 5, 278.3–4). The hieroglyphic sign (note the ideograph for head) is: // .

It should be recognized that, just like the Hebrew word for ‘beginning’

(and a number of Semitic and Afro-Asiatic languages), the Egyptian word *sp-tp.i* is derived from the Egyptian root *tp* meaning “head, beginning; chief” (Wb 5, 263.3–265.10; 266.5–6, 7–11). The hieroglyphic sign (note the ideograph for head) is: . Egyptologist James Hoffmeir recognizes these similarities, and that in both the Egyptian and Hebrew understandings “creation marked the beginning of time”.¹²

Another example is the OK term, *kmz* () meaning “to create; to produce; to devise” (Wb 5, 34.3–36.5). This word shares its root with *kmz* () an OK word, meaning “to hammer out (metal)” (Wb 5, 36.16–37.6). OT theologian John Currid has noticed the exact parallel between the Egyptian words for create with the Hebrew words used in the creation account.¹³ On day two of creation (Genesis 1:6–8) God created the heavens. The Hebrew word רָקִיעַ (rāqîaʿ) is used, which means “sky, firmament” (HALOT-8991). This word shares its root with רָקַע (rāqāʿ) which in the Peil and Pual stems means “hammered, beaten flat, a metal sheet” (HALOT-8998) a word associated later with metalworking. The Hebrew, like the Egyptian cosmology, portrays God as the master craftsman, constructing the heavens. However, neither the Bible nor the Egyptians thought in terms of a solid, metal-domed sky,¹⁴ but rather one of divided waters.

Genesis 1:6–9 describes God separating the waters to create an ‘expanse’ and gathering of waters together, so dry land could appear. Similar Egyptian cosmological beliefs can be discerned, whereby separation is a key motif in creation.¹⁵ For instance, Coffin Text (CT) 80.39 describes Atum’s mode of creating the cosmos “when he separated Geb (the earth-god) from Nut (the sky-goddess).”¹⁵ Currid discusses the Leiden Stele, which exalts Ptah as “the great god who separated the sky from the earth.” He points out that Genesis 1 uses the Hebrew verb *bādal* meaning “to separate” five times to describe God’s creative activity. Currid recognizes this motif also appears in the Egyptian creation myths “A parallel exists here. That is to say, both civilizations believed that

the separation of natural phenomena was an expression of the creative act.”¹³

How do we explain the similarities?

What should we make of parallels between Egyptian theological terms and concepts for creation, (pre-Hebrew occupation) and their similarities to the Hebrew Bible? OT theologian Gordon Johnston recognizes Genesis 1 “clearly rejects the Egyptian polytheistic deification of the sky, ground, and air. It does not, however, dramatically distance itself from Egyptian cosmic geography.”¹⁶ Currid suggests the parallels can be understood in terms of Hebrew polemics, i.e. the Genesis creation account was written, in part, to critique the Egyptian theologies.¹⁷ These scholars are correct to see the similarities, but Scripture was not written primarily to critique pagan thought. God’s Word as inspired, historical truth, by its very nature, would challenge later pagan thinking. Scripture was not merely competing for attention in the marketplace of ideas in the Ancient Near East (ANE). Rather, the similarities of ANE thinking with Scripture should be seen in terms of pagan religions borrowing or corrupting biblical concepts.

Specifically, for this study, Ham took with him into Egypt knowledge of creation and Adam and Eve, passed on from Noah, and Ham’s first-hand experience of the Flood. Therefore, deep connections between the Bible and Egyptian ideas of creation and the Flood should be expected, despite Ham’s descendants’ paganism. From a historical, biblical perspective, this is a better way of explaining why there are parallel Egyptian concepts of creation compared to Genesis.

Egyptian concepts of the breath of life and image of God

Genesis 1:27 describes God creating humans in His image, and imparting life to Adam when He “breathed into his nostrils the breath of life” (Genesis 2:7). These specific aspects of creation are clearly developed in Egyptian religion. For instance, the 10th Dynasty (c. 2025 BC) *Merikare* wisdom text (pCarlsberg VI) states that when their god created humans “He made the breath of life for their nostrils. They are his images (*snnw*) which came forth from his body.”¹⁸ (*Snnw* means “second, likeness, image” (*Wb* 3, 460.6–17) written using the determinative of a statue (𓆎𓅓𓏏𓏏). CT-80.43 states “My life is what is in their nostrils, I guide their breath into their throats.”¹⁹ In CT-76.13 Atum is addressed as “you who exhaled the breath which is in the mouth of Shu,”²⁰ revealing divine breath as integral to the Egyptian concept of human creation. Currid correctly points out “No similar doctrine is known among the Babylonians or Sumerians.”²¹ The Egyptian motif of divine breath imparted to creation is widespread, a motif even transferred to the Pharaoh.



Figure 2. Relief from birth temple at Dendera. Khnum moulds a living being, accompanied by the frog-goddess.

Origin of death—Eden vs Egypt

Genesis 1–2 describes the pre-Fall creation, where no death or suffering existed, which parallels Egyptian ideas. Later cosmogonic demotic texts²² (Carlsberg papyri 5) describe a ‘Golden Age’ in primeval world history, when the Ogdoad²³ reigned, during times of “peace and joy”, when “crocodiles did not seize and serpents did not bite”.²⁴ The texts allude to death’s origin: “Death came into existence, flying to every [pl]ace which is und[er] the sky.”²⁵ In these texts, creation and the pre-Flood world are remembered, but seemingly confused and compressed theologically. Egyptologist Mark Smith who translated the papyri states:

“This implies that there was a period in the development of the cosmos when there was no death. Similarly, the much earlier Pyramid Text 571 speaks of a time *n hpwt mwt*, ‘before death came to be’... Kakosy has suggested that death was probably created as a consequence of man-kind’s rebellion against the sun god, described in the Book of the Heavenly Cow²⁶... Life is said to have emanated from the Primaeval Ocean [Nu/ Nun], while death is an emanation of a being identified only as ‘the serpent’... The breath of life is what causes all things to live; the breath of death is what causes them to die.”²⁷

The Egyptian theology at this point strikingly echoes Genesis 1–2 with its pre-Fall paradise, and death associated with the Fall and serpent.

The man of clay

Genesis 2:7 states that Adam was created and “formed” from the “dust of the ground”. The Hebrew term צֶרֶף (*yîšer*) “as a potter to form, fashion” (*HALOT*-3901) is frequently applied to a potter making a vessel from clay.²⁸ Within Egyptian cosmology, the concept of humanity’s creation by the

Table 1. Adam and Eve's Hebrew semantic ranges, by phonetic root

HALOT#	Translit.	Translation	Ref.	Text Example
139	<i>ādām</i>	"man; mankind, people [personal name of first man]"	Gen. 2:7a	"... the LORD God formed the man (אָדָם)..."
147	<i>ādāmāh</i>	"earth, from clay, red tilled soil"	Gen. 2:7b	"... of dust from the ground (אֲדָמָה)..."
2102	<i>dam</i>	"blood, of man or animals"	Gen. 9:6	"Whoever sheds the blood (דָּם) of man..."
144	<i>ādōm</i>	"red, reddish-brown, blood coloured"	Gen. 25:30	"Let me eat some of that red (אָדָם) [stew]..."
BDB#	Translit.	Translation	Ref.	Text Example
2872	<i>hawwāh</i>	"Eve"	Gen. 3:20a	"... called his wife's name Eve (חַוְוָה)..."
3007	<i>hāy</i>	"alive, living"	Gen. 3:20b	"... she was the mother of all living (חַיָּה)"

gods from clay is clearly developed. For instance, the god Khnum was believed to be the creator of humans, which he formed on his potter's wheel, from clay (figure 2).

Adam and Eve—meanings of their names

My previous articles dealt with the biblical phenomenon of paronomasia (puns), whereby the Hebrew biblical text leaves phonetic markers to connect names with concepts, thereby elucidating their meaning.²⁹ OT theologian John Wenham states:

"This play on similar sounding words, paronomasia, is a favorite device of Hebrew writers ... phonetic allusions to 'ādām "man" have been noted ... the whole story reverberates with allusions to the word 'ādām, and to the name of Eve *hawwāh*, just as the flood story has many puns on Noah's name ..."³⁰

Adam's creation from the dust of the ground reveals the 'earthy' nature of Adam. From the Genesis text the phonetic connections can be discerned between "the man" and the "ground" in Genesis 2:7.

וַיִּצְרֶה יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים אֶת־הָאָדָם עֹפָר מִן־הָאֲדָמָה וַיִּפַּח בְּאַפָּיו
נְשֵׁמַת חַיִּים וַיְהִי הָאָדָם לְנֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה:

"... then the LORD God formed the man (*ādām*) of dust from the ground (*ādāmāh*) and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man (*ādām*) became a living creature" (Genesis 2:7).

The name Adam sounds like 'earth' (*ādāmāh*), whereby a play-on-words (pun) is made in Hebrew to establish semantic and theological connections to Adam's name.³⁰ Furthermore, 'blood' is connected with Adam's name by the phonetically similar word (*dam*) Genesis 9:6:

שֹׁפֵךְ דָּם הָאָדָם בַּאֲדָם דָּמוֹ יִשְׁפָּךְ

"Whoever sheds the blood (*dam*) of man (*ādām*), by man (*ādām*) shall his blood (*dam*) be shed ..."
(Genesis 9:6).

The colour 'red' is a phonetically similar word (*ādōm*), occurring at Genesis 25:30:

וַיֹּאמֶר עִשָּׂו אֶל־יַעֲקֹב הֲלִעִיטֵנִי נָא מִן־הָאָדָם הָאָדָם הִזֶּה כִּי
עָיִף אָנֹכִי עַל־כֵּן קָרָא־שְׁמוֹ אֶדוֹם:

"And Esau said to Jacob, 'Let me eat some of the red (*ādōm*) [stew—this red stew], for I am exhausted!' (Therefore, his name was called Edom [*ādōm*])" (Genesis 25:30).

So, within the Genesis text, there are clear phonetic correspondences between the name 'Adam', 'man/ mankind', 'soil/ ground', 'blood' and 'red colour' (table 1). Similarly, the Genesis text leaves phonetic clues to interpret Eve's name, Genesis 3:20:






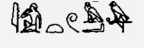
וַיִּקְרָא הָאָדָם שֵׁם אִשְׁתּוֹ חַוְוָה כִּי הוּא הִנְתָּה אִם כָּל־חַי:

"The man called his wife's name Eve (*hawwāh*), because she was the mother of all living (*hāy*)" (Genesis 3:20).

The paronomasia is more apparent when Eve's name is compared to the qal and piel aspects of 'life', i.e. חַיָּה (*hayyā*) "to be alive, to revive, to preserve" (HALOT-2815) (cf. Deuteronomy 6:24). Wenham states: "The terms *hayyīm*, *hayyāh* (life, living...) audibly resemble the name of Eve."³⁰

From evidence in the Genesis text, the semantic range for Adam and Eve's names are listed by Hebrew phonetic root (table 1).

Table 2. 'Adam' phonetic equivalent Egyptian names

RPN#	Phonetic equivalent 'Adam' Personal Names	Hieroglyph	Date
I, 51.24	<i>itm-ḥtp</i> "Atum is gracious"		NK
I, 399.25	<i>dmi</i> (untranslated)		OK
LGG#	Phonetic equivalent 'Adam' Divine names	Hieroglyph	Date
VII, 411 ff.	<i>tm; tm.w</i> "Atum"		OK
VII, 426.9	<i>tmw</i> "The People"		MK
I, 90.8	<i>ḏdmw</i> "angry, glowing red, red"		OK
I, 611.4	<i>itm</i> "The Eblaite goddess, Adamma"		NK

Prediction 8 expects that via Ham's influence, these phonetic and semantic correspondences for the names of Adam and Eve would have passed into Egyptian language, onomastics, and religion. The following evidence presented here supports this hypothesis and is presented in tables 2 and 3.

Phonetic considerations for Adam and Eve's names

An important question to ask is: Are there phonetic equivalent Egyptian personal and divine names that can be

considered equivalent to Adam and Eve's Hebrew names? The following phonetic considerations need to be taken into account in order to accurately identify any potential correspondences:

The initial Hebrew weak consonant *Alef* ʾ in Adam's name corresponds to the Egyptian vowel /i/. The Hebrew *Dālet* ד corresponds to both Egyptian voiced dentals, /d/ and /t/. Linguist Antonio Loprieno explains that evidence "inferred through Coptic, brought these phonemes in the phonetic

Table 3. 'Eve' phonetic equivalent Egyptian names














RPN#	Phonetic equivalent 'Eve' Personal Names	Hieroglyph	Date
I, 425.27	<i>ḥwj</i> (untranslated)		OK
I, 232.10	<i>ḥṣw</i> (untranslated)		OK
LGG#	Phonetic equivalent 'Eve' Divine names	Hieroglyph	Date
V, 13.15	<i>ḥwy, ḥṣy</i> "The Flood"		Grk-Rom
V, 13.16	<i>ḥṣy</i> "The naked one"		NK
V, 14.3	<i>ḥṣw</i> "bird of prey"		MK
V, 54.6	<i>ḥwwy</i> "The two ḥw-gods"		MK

Table 4. Egyptian vocabulary containing phonetic ‘*tm*, *dm*’ root words

Wörterbuch#	Egyptian	Translit.	Translation	Date
V, 453.1		<i>dmꜣ</i>	“to clot [blood]”	OK?
I, 153.14-18		<i>idm.i, dmi</i>	“high quality; red linen”	OK
GDG ³⁵ I, 126.2, 128.1		<i>idm</i>	“Edom”	NK
V, 369.4		<i>tmḥ.y</i>	“red ochre”	NK
V, 305.7-16; 308		<i>tm.w, tmm</i>	“everyone; humankind”	NK
V, 305.3-6		<i>tm</i>	“everything”	OK
V, 308.2-3		<i>tmꜣ.t</i>	“ancestress; mother”	LP

proximity of Semitic emphatics: most likely /d/ = [t’].”³¹
Linguist Orel Vladimir also noted:

“The Hamito-Semitic [HS] dental emphatic [t’] was not preserved as such in Egyptian. In several cases, etymologically sound comparisons imply its development to *t* while other valid and traditionally accepted etymological equations are based on its change to *d*. Comparisons based on older Egyptian forms show a complicated but perceptible complementary distribution in which several factors are of decisive importance. Generally speaking, in the anlaut [first sound of a word] HS *t- yields to Egyptian *t*- while elsewhere it develops to Egyptian *-d*.”³²

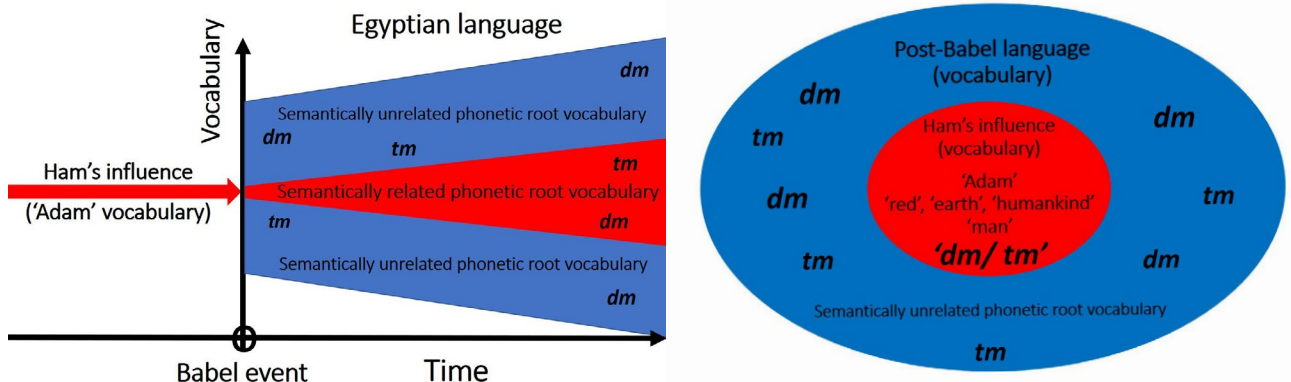
Lastly, the terminal Hebrew *Mēm* מ in Adam’s name is phonetically equivalent to the voiced bilabial Egyptian /m/. With these phonetic considerations in mind the following

nearest phonetic equivalent Egyptian personal and divine names bearing the strong bi-consonantal roots *dm* and *tm* are presented in tables 2, 3.

*RPN*³³ records 5 *tm* personal name variations and 9 *dm* name variations, phonetically equivalent to Hebrew Adam. *LGG*³⁴ records multiple examples of *tm* and 2 *dm* divine name variations.

Eve’s name: phonetic considerations

For Eve’s name, the initial Hebrew *Hēth* ה is equivalent to Egyptian voiceless pharyngeal fricative /ħ/. The middle Hebrew *waw* ו is equivalent to Egyptian /w/. The terminal Hebrew *Hē* ה is equivalent to Egyptian voiceless glottal fricative /h/, but in the word-final position, is used to indicate the Hebrew ‘a’-vowel, equivalent to Egyptian vowels /j/, /y/ or

**Figure 3.** Ham’s influence on Egyptian language and religion (Adam vocabulary)

/w/. Table 3 lists Egyptian personal and divine names phonetically equivalent to Hebrew Eve.

The RPN Egyptian Lexicon lists 7 personal names that phonetically match Hebrew Eve, specifically, 3 *hwj* and 4 *h3w* name combinations. LGG records multiple examples of *hwy*, *h3y* variant divine names.

Do Egyptian names demonstrate equivalent semantic ranges compared to Hebrew Adam and Eve?

Clearly, there are phonetically equivalent personal and divine Egyptian names compared to Hebrew Adam and Eve. However, can it be demonstrated these names carry equivalent semantic ranges when compared to the meanings of Adam and Eve's Hebrew names? Table 4 offers evidence consistent with this hypothesis:

Discussion of results

A *Thesaurus Language Aegyptiaca* (TLA) search for words containing *tm* phonetic roots was made, returning 33 words, and *dm* returned 31 words. Table 4 lists 8 words dating from OK to Late Period (LP) that match the semantic range of Adam's Hebrew name. The Egyptian root *tm*, like the Hebrew root for Adam, *dm*, is shared by NK words *tm.w*, *tmm* "everyone; humankind", which points back to OK *tm*, "everything". Phonetically equivalent OK words include: *dm3* "to clot (blood)", *dmi* "fine red linen", NK *tmh.y* "red ochre", and *idm* "Edom". Divine OK names occur: *3dm* "Adm, Ademu, a divine being" meaning: "red, glowing red, angry" (Pepis I, II, PT-689). Significantly, the root *tm* is also shared by the first god named within the Ennead (group of nine gods), specifically, "Atum" (*tm*; *itm.w*), whose name appears as far back as the 5th Dynasty Unas PT-215–219.

The examples demonstrate the Egyptian equivalent name 'Adam' possesses a phonetic value and semantic range like biblical Adam, evidence supporting the hypothesis that Ham influenced Egyptian language, onomastics and religion (figure 3).

However, for the nearest Egyptian phonetic equivalent names for Eve: *hwj*, *h3w*, *hwy*, *h3y*, I found no evidence that these roots occur in Egyptian words sharing the semantic range of Hebrew Eve. Therefore, the name was either lost within Egyptian history, or these words are unrelated. Nevertheless, the female version of Atum, *tm3.t*, means "ancestress, mother" which is equivalent to the title given to Adam's wife Eve in Genesis 3:20.



Figure 4. Re-Atum killing Apophis at the Ished tree, tomb of Inherkau (from kairoinfo4u⁴³)

Representative OK text examples sharing *dm*, *tm* roots in context

NK, oToronto A 11, [vs. 11]: Letter from Ini-heret-chau to Vizier Chay

<r> *di.t rh p3y = j nb sty qmj qnj 3w, t-jb tmh*

"For information to my gentleman: ocher, resin, yellow dye, rush red, red ocher ..."

OK, Giza, East Field, Mastaba of Khafkhufu I (G 7130, 7140), facade (line [5])

sntr jdm

"Frankincense, red linen fabric ..."

NK, pLondon BM EA 10477 (papyrus Nu), Tb 145 (line [8])

jw = j rh.kw rn n tmm.w tp, jw-3 gbb

"I know the name of humanity before Geb."

pBrooklyn 47.218.84

sms wn = [f] ... tm3.t = [sn]

"The eldest was... [their] Mother ..."

Pyramid Pepis I, PT 689§2090b

3dm [...]

"Ademu [you who rage as Sobek (?)]"

Adam, tree, and serpent vs Atum, tree, and serpent

Genesis 3 narrates the account of the Fall of Adam at the tree of knowledge in response to the serpent's temptation. Ham would naturally have known of this account from his

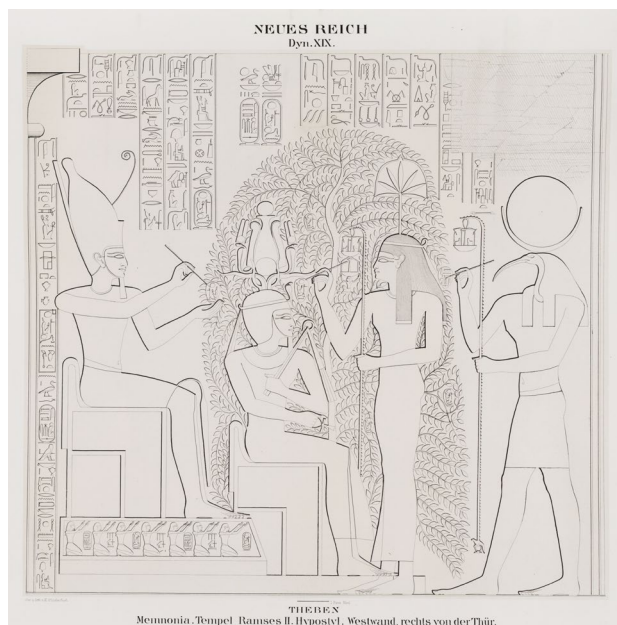


Figure 5. Atum (seated top left), Thoth (standing far right) and Sheshat (standing, middle) writing the length of the reign of the king, Ramesses II (seated middle), on leaves of the Ished tree. (After Ernst Weidenbach 1818–1882.)

father Noah. Does Egypt have a discernably similar account involving Atum? The answer is a resounding yes.

Egypt's evil serpent *par excellence* is called Apophis (appearing in inscriptions from the 21st century BC). Apophis was considered the most dangerous of the 'chaos monsters' who threatened divine order—he was the counterpart of the creator god.³⁶ The Egyptian Book of the Dead of Hunefer (c.1280 BC) contains an illustration of Ra (Re)-Atum, as the "Great Tom Cat" (a natural enemy of snakes) battling and crushing/decapitating the head of Apophis, under the sacred *Ished* tree; "growing in Heliopolis that was linked to the destiny of all beings".³⁷ Similar images appear in 20th Dynasty tombs (figure 4). The myth was subsequently enacted by priests who made models of Apophis which were trampled, stabbed, and burned.³⁸

Within the Genesis text, the curse is pronounced specifically upon the serpent's head, which would be "crushed" (Genesis 3:15).³⁹ There are clearly some remarkable links here with the Genesis account. However, the Egyptian version may designedly polemicize the Genesis account, by having Atum be victorious over the serpent, in which case Ham's descendants corrupted the story.

Eden's tree of knowledge versus Egypt's Ished tree

The Ished tree,⁴⁰ like Eden's tree, was related to knowledge. This can be demonstrated from reliefs from the

Ramesseum at Thebes (c.1300 BC), which picture Thoth (the god of wisdom) seated on a throne and Sheshat, (a goddess of writing, known as “foremost in the library”) accompanied by Atum writing on the leaves (figure 5). The purpose was to fix “the length of a king’s reign by inscribing his name on the leaves of the Ished tree at Heliopolis”.⁴¹ Ished fruit appear in OK tomb wall inscriptions at Giza, within listings of food provisions for the afterlife. Like Eden’s tree of knowledge, concepts of length of life (reign of the king), and wisdom are combined in Egypt’s Ished tree. After killing Apophis, Atum split the Ished tree in two,⁴² perhaps reminiscent of Eden’s twin trees—life and knowledge (Genesis 2:9).




NK, pLondon BM EA 10477 (pNu), Tb 017 (line [60])

“I am the great cat [Atum] on whose side the Ishdet [Ished] tree was split in Heliopolis, on that night of fighting and guarding the wicked and on the day on which the enemies’ enemies were destroyed.”

Ished 'sounds like' tree of knowledge in Hebrew

וַיֵּץ הַחַיִּים בְּתוֹךְ הָאֵן וַיֵּץ הַדְּעַת טוֹב גִּרְע:

“...the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the **tree of knowledge** of good and evil” (Genesis 2:9).

Eden's "tree of knowledge" in Hebrew עֵץ (ʿēṣ) (*HALOT*-7205 "tree") and דָּעַת (daʿat) (*HALOT*-2138 "knowledge, discernment, understanding") sounds phonetically like the OK spelling of Ished (*īšd.t*) (*Wb* 1, 136.13) (דָּעַת   ). The name likely derived from Ham, which later became corrupted, but was faithfully preserved in Genesis 2:9. (The theoretical corruption of *ēṣ daʿat* > *īšd.t* may have followed this simple path: phonetically, 'tree' and 'knowledge' became fused. The voiceless alveolar affricate /ts/, written in Hebrew as Tsade (צ), shifted phonetically to Egyptian voiceless sibilant š (š > š). The voiced epiglottal stop, marked in Hebrew as Ayin (ע), was expressed as an Egyptian vowel, and not being marked in hieroglyphs, was possibly dropped.

Conclusion

This article briefly surveyed several intriguing connections between Egyptian cosmological belief and biblical creation. Egypt's Heliopolitan creation theology had Atum as its chief deity, who emerged from the Primeval waters of Nun and generated nine gods (Ennead), reminiscent of the nine generations from Adam to Noah. Adam's Hebrew name by its semantic range and phonetic value is equivalent to Egyptian Atum, *jtm*. Atum had a female consort *tm̃t*, meaning "ancestress, mother", equivalent to Hebrew Eve "mother of all living" (Genesis 3:20). Mythology surrounding Atum offers striking similarities to the biblical Fall narrative.

Atum crushing the serpent's head by the Ished tree closely parallels the biblical creation narrative of the Fall of mankind by the serpent's temptation. The OK spelling Ishdet is strikingly similar to the Hebrew "tree of knowledge". The evidence presented here is consistent with Ham influencing Egyptian belief and language at fundamental levels and fulfills hypotheses 1–8.

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