

Moses:  
The Righteous Sky Gazer



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By

Shlomo Giora Shoham

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P U B L I S H I N G

Moses: The Righteous Sky Gazer, by Shlomo Giora Shoham

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## CHAPTER ONE

### MY FORMATIVE YEARS

When I was born, my father, King Amenhotep IV who later changed his name to Akhenaten, gave me the name Mose, a common Egyptian name which means “a man is there.” Quite soon, however, my name was changed to Me-Shu. Me was given to me by my father’s Viceroy who was a Habiru, the chief of a Semitic tribe. My father imported this tribe from Canaan after his monotheistic revolution in which he installed Aten, the Sun God, as the sole God instead of the numerous polytheistic gods of the various theologies in Egypt. The Egyptians resented the demotion of their familiar gods like Amun, Osiris, Horus, Isis, Nephthys and Nut and the myriads of lesser gods. Also, the priests of Amun had administered the religious and civil affairs of Egypt for many years and their demise and expulsion left a vacuum in the power structure of Egypt.

My father couldn’t trust any of the priests and functionaries of the demoted Egyptian deities, hence he invited the Habiru to help him administer Egypt with the assurance that these foreigners would be loyal only to him and to no one else. Since my father was totally occupied with his religious revolution and the affairs of state, he entrusted my education to his Viceroy, Ozarzip, who enlightened me not only about the Egyptian religion and culture but also about his own Habiru religion and culture. My relationship with him became so close that eventually I regarded him as my adoptive father.

Ozarzip recognized my charismatic potential and predicted that one day I shall become a lawgiver. His ancestors came from Ur Kašdim (Ur of the Chaldees) and Harran in Mesopotamia. Therefore, he gave me the name Me – which means ‘law’ in Mesopotamian mythology. From a very early age I was fascinated by the sun, moon and stars in the heavens. I wandered around with my head lifted up to the skies. Therefore, my mother, Tiye, named me Shu, “sky” in Egyptian. Tiye was also my grandmother since my father sired me with his own mother.

I also had a very bad stammer. That made me reserved, shy and ill at ease. Some words are more difficult for those who stammer to pronounce.

Consequently, those who stammer do not say what they want but what they can.

My stammering was the cause of my most heinous sin in the eyes of the Lord at Mei Meriva. God commanded me to speak to the rock in His name to make the water spout out of it. This would let the People of Israel quench their thirst and stop their whining against me and blaspheming against the Lord. However, I was so stressed when I had to pronounce the Lord's name that I couldn't utter a word and I trembled so badly to overcome my stammering paralysis that I was at a loss of what to do. I had to speak to the rock to provide water to the complaining hordes of thirsty Israelites but I was mute and my vocal cords didn't respond to my strenuous exertion. The need to produce water pushed me into a thoughtless automatic action of hitting the stone with my rod like a zombie and the rock mercifully responded with flowing water. God held it against me that I transgressed against his command to talk to the stone with the divine Logos of his name and forbade me to enter the Promised Land.

On a deeper level of understanding, God was vindicated this time as at all the times. He saw that I wasn't really eager to leave the desert where I inaugurated, formed, and developed under his direct guidance a new universal religion which, in all modesty, had never been accomplished before. The monotony of the desert, its monochromatism, and the wandering makes an anchor for abstraction and an abstract God. Not so the agricultural and urban life in Canaan with its fertility rites and the holy prostitution of the Astarte priestesses. Consequently, the Promised Land was not for me, as God rightly surmised, and the Mei Meriva incident was just a pretext.

Incidentally, how did I become a stutterer? Well, my father was omnisexual. He impregnated all the females around him: mother, wife, daughters, concubines, priestesses and maidservants. He also entered into all the males around him including sons. Since he was not only a king but also a god, intercourse with him was a coveted privilege. I, however, resented it since it was painful and disgusting to me. As the result of one such very painful intercourse with my father, I started to stammer badly and avoided all sexual contact both with females and males. When my father saw how badly I was affected by his advances, he left me alone and I retreated into a reclusive loneliness burrowing into myself for signs of transcendental grace. Incidentally, this traumatic experience with my father was the reason why, when I became a lawgiver, I made incest a cardinal sin, together with idolatry and bloodshed.

My first years of life were spent in No-Amon, the imperial capital erected by my grandfather Amenhotep III on the eastern bank of the Nile,

midway between the Nubian desert and the Eastern desert on the shores of the Red Sea. My grandfather was a megalomaniac. Suffice it to look at the two colossal statues seated at the two sides of his funerary temple at the Western side of No-Amon. These statues depicting the emperor in full regalia were meant to stun, awe, strike and overwhelm their viewers. And they succeeded in doing so. King's emissaries and ambassadors streamed from all over Africa, Europe, the Middle East and Asia to No-Amon to pay tribute to Amenhotep III who turned the New Kingdom of Egypt and its 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty into the power center of the ancient world. No power dared to challenge mighty emperor Amenhotep III who was not just a king but the head of an omnipotent empire. The architecture of No-Amon was indeed intended to overpower, paralyze and stultify foreign visitors.

The temples were bordered by two gold plated pylons at the sides of its gates. Its walls were surrounded by silver plated columns inlaid by lapis lazuli. Foreign visitors were not the only ones stunned by my grandfather's temples and palaces. I also was leveled by the ostentation of my grandfather's imperial capital. One day I wandered to a not too impressive tomb of the vizier Ramose, one of my grandfather's late ministers in Western No-Amon. In it I discovered the most delightful fresco. It depicted a brother and sister, the brother and the sister-in-law of the vizier Ramose. They were brother and sister but also lovers. They embraced leisurely, smiling with their almond-shaped eyes, holding hands while their sensuous lips were exchanging playful passions. The girl had an elaborate curled wig while the boy wore a shorter more serene headpiece. What a gentle and sensitive contrast with the pomp and flourish of my grandfather's imperial art.

When we moved to Akhet-Aten, the Horizon of the Sun God, the new capital built by my father from which he intended to consolidate his monotheistic revolution, I felt that I had arrived in my element. The new capital, about a whole day's chariot ride to the north of No-Amon, was built in a bay of the Nile shaped as the sign of the Horizon in our holy script. Hence, the name of the new capital was denoted as Akhet-Aten, the Horizon of Aten, the unique God. The city itself was centered next to a long and broad road built from the north to the south of the bay, parallel to the banks of the Nile.

A Jubilee festival palace and the King's abode were the central edifices around which were built administrative offices of government. These were flanked by two large temples of Aten from which the new monotheistic creed promulgated its doctrines. The houses of the priests and the administrators of the new religion were small mud houses whitewashed and austere decorated. The whole city was parched by the hot eastern

desert winds. The dry clean-swept capital had an ascetic air which agreed with my temperament and suited my reclusive tendencies.

My father's Viceroy Ozarzip and I became very close and he soon assumed the role of my teacher and mentor. My father was too busy with the affairs of state and the spreading and consolidation of the new monotheistic religion to devote any time to my upbringing and education. Ozarzip became my educator, teacher and mentor. Inevitably he based his teaching on his Habiru creed, tradition and culture, which I found interesting and appealing. His Semitic nomadic ethos suited my distaste of luxury, hedonism and lavish pomp. Modesty, deprivation and restraint seemed to me the fount of purity, righteousness, and the ascendancy of the soul over the vicissitudes of the body.

Very early in our relationship I rejected Ozarzip's homosexual advances. He realized that he should make do with the numerous lads in the Royal court at Akhet-Aten and also avail himself of the omnisexual appetite of my father. I always had an inner smile when someone mentioned the heroic righteousness of Ozarzip in refusing the advances of the wife of Potiphar, Ozarzip's master and benefactor. The more plausible explanation for Ozarzip's "heroic righteousness" was that he never cared for women.

Anyway, I was bent on picking his brain about the religion of his Semitic ancestors. It seems that the initiator of the Habiru cult was Ozarzip's great grandfather Abraham who migrated to Canaan from Haran in Mesopotamia near the lands of Mitanni and Naharin.

Ozarzip explained to me some obscure events in his ancestor's history by reference to the Hurrian culture adopted by the Western Semites in Central Mesopotamia. Ozarzip told me that the myths about his great grandfather recount that when Abraham travelled to Egypt, the reigning Pharaoh was struck by the beauty of Abraham's wife Sarah. Abraham was apprehensive that the Pharaoh would kill him in order to take his wife. Abraham asked Sarah to declare that she is his sister and not his wife and therefore available as a possible consort of the king. When the Pharaoh took Sarah into his harem, he was afflicted by many diseases and he realized that God was warning him to stay away from Abraham's wife. Abraham and his wife were released without harm and allowed to proceed back to Canaan.

This scenario repeated itself with Abimelech, the king of Gerar in the Pharan desert in northern Sinai. Since Abraham called Sarah his sister, the king of Gerar felt free to wed her and add her to his numerous wives. However, God appeared to Abimelech in his dream and warned him not to touch Sarah because she is married to Abraham the prophet, and if he does touch her, he will surely die. Abimelech protested that Abraham told him

that Sarah was his sister and he was therefore innocent. God replied in the dream that since Abimelech tried to wed Sarah in good faith, He appeared in the king's dream to warn him to not lay his hands on Sarah so that no further damage would befall him. Abimelech then released Sarah, gave her and Abraham many presents, and sent them home with his blessing. In return, Abraham prayed that the progeny and livestock of Abimelech would proliferate.

Ozarzip enlightened me that one should not judge Abraham pejoratively because of his rather shameful behavior toward his wife since in Hurrian tradition, a sister or mother can also be adopted as a wife and in this case the sister as an adoptive wife is a double protection both as a sister and as a wife, enjoying the familial privileges of both these roles.

Ozarzip singled out his grandfather Isaac as the weakest link in his patriarchal lineage. Ozarzip accounted this by the ultimate treason a father can commit against his son: his sacrifice to prove an unwavering belief of the father in a tyrannical absolutist God. This atrocious behavior of Abraham, stressed Ozarzip, was not spontaneous or on the spur of the moment but rational and calculated since Abraham had to travel for three days to the Mount of Moriah on which he was meant to sacrifice his son. Also, Isaac was a willing victim. He knew that he was to be sacrificed as a *holokauston*, a burnt whole offering, which Ozarzip pronounced in Greek in which he was fluent. Therefore, when his father bound him to the sacrificial altar, Isaac asked his father to also tie his hands together so that when his father cuts his throat, Isaac would not grab the blade, injure himself, and become unfit for a burnt whole sacrifice.

It seemed to Ozarzip that the most humane figure in the whole episode was the devil. He came to Abraham and reprimanded him: "You screwy old man. At the age of 100 you beget a son and now you have lost your mind and you are going to sacrifice him?" Abraham chased the devil away prodded by the absolute command and the authoritarian mandate of an unwavering God. The Devil then came to Isaac and pleaded with him: "How many years your poor mother suffered until she begat you and now your demented father is about to slaughter you. Isaac also drove the devil away, becoming an accomplice to a hideous sacrifice to a despotic God. No wonder Isaac was known to posterity as the "fear of Isaac," a fearful, anxious and stressed person resulting mainly from the trauma of this cruel sacrificial experience perpetrated by his father.

Hence Isaac was overall a weak-willed unimpressive person. Ozarzip recounted the legends circulating among the Habiru concerning the betrothal of Isaac to his wife Rebecca. When Abraham wished to choose a wife for Isaac, he called Eliezer, his trusted master of the house, to go to

Nahor in Naharaim where Abraham's family in Mesopotamia was located and choose a bride for Isaac. Abraham then made Eliezer swear that he will never choose a bride for Isaac from among the Canaanite families and their daughters. Indeed, when Eliezer came to Nahor, he found near the well a girl who offered not only to draw water for him to drink but also to water his camels. That was the preordained sign from God that the girl was destined to be Isaac's wife. Eliezer asked her for her name and she answered that she was Rebecca, the daughter of Bethuel, the son of Milcah who was the wife of Nahor, the brother of Abraham. Eliezer gave her and her father many presents and announced that Abraham, the brother of Nahor, would like his son Isaac to wed Rebecca as his wife. When both Nahor's family and Rebecca herself agreed to the betrothal, Rebecca went with Eliezer to meet Isaac, Abraham and their families at the well of Lechai Roi in the Negev in Canaan. Apparently, Rebecca fell for the virile, charming and charismatic Eliezer or at least she figured that Isaac, her husband to be, was as robust, husky and handsome as the house manager. Hence, when she came on camel-back to the well of Lechai Roi in the Negev and saw the unimpressive Isaac, she fell off the camel in disappointment.

Ozarzip's unfavorable account of his ancestors included also his narrative of his father Jacob. Isaac loved Esau – typical of a weakling who adores his strong antithesis, especially if he is his own progeny, as compensation for his own physical and mental deficiencies. Jacob was his mother's boy, wily, astute and conniving, whereas Esau was straightforward, honest and a gentleman in his rough way. As a shrewd operator, Jacob recruited the willingly given connivance of his mother Rebecca to cheat Esau of his birthright and the blessing of his father.

Irrespective of the personality of the Habiru patriarchal ancestors, they bequeathed two central pillars to the Judaic religion. First, the relationship between God and the patriarchs was contractual through a covenant with each one of the fathers. Second, the Gods of the patriarchs were not monotheistic but henotheistic. Ozarzip used this Greek term to denote a group of gods with one God being superior to the others. So we have El Tzevaot, the Lord of Hosts, El Shaddai, the Lord of Demons, and El Elyon, the superior God being a *primus inter pares*. In this way, Ozarzip also showed his erudition.

Ozarzip told me that his first encounter with my father was way back much earlier than the present massive importation of the Habiru from Canaan to help my father, the king, administer Egypt. It seems the Egyptians hated my father and his bizarre, perverted and incomprehensible to them monotheistic religion.

Ozarzip was a very astute manipulator and he tended to mystify his past so that people would fill in the gaps of information in his biography by their imagination. This inflated and aggrandized the Viceroy's life history. Legend has it that Ozarzip would not confirm or deny that he was sold as a slave by his brethren because they hated him since his father loved him more than them. The myth goes on to recount that God himself organized Ozarzip's sale to a caravan of Ishmaelites bearing spices from Gilead to Egypt since he intended Ozarzip to achieve greatness in the land of the Pharaohs. The Ishmaelites sold Ozarzip to Potiphar, Pharaoh's captain of the guard.

Ozarzip even today is exceptionally good looking. He had a high forehead, thick black eyebrows over glittering violet eyes taking up most of his face. His straight Greek nose towered over the most sensuous heart-shaped lips. When he smiled, the full red lips parted to reveal a mouthful of pearly white teeth. A strong chin completed the aesthetic perfection of his face. He was dressed with the gilded gown of a Viceroy. He held the Ankh and flail of his office.

His Nubian short wig was covered by a gold and black headdress topped by a solid gold Cobra Uraeus. He had a circular false beard fastened to his chin by a gold chain. His appearance was spectacular and dashing. No wonder that when he arrived at Potiphar's household, Zuleika, the chief wife of the master, immediately became infatuated with the handsome, youthful Ozarzip and she ordered his transfer to her retinue as her personal aide without delay. When he entered her living quarters, she waited for him completely naked in her double bed, covered only with a thin curtain of red silk giving her body a sensuous glow.

A slave girl offered him an earthenware mug of cold beer and stewed frog legs which were supposed to be an aphrodisiac. When Ozarzip started to refresh himself slowly with the cold beer, the slave girl whispered to him that when he finishes drinking, her mistress expects him to entertain her sexually. Ozarzip answered the girl solemnly that he could not possibly betray his master Potiphar by taking liberties with his wife. Ozarzip believed this excuse would extricate him from his quandary without his having to divulge that he is attracted to men and boys and not to women and girls.

When the girl gave Ozarzip's response to her mistress, Zuleika's face became twisted with rage. Zuleika whispered another message to the girl who hurried to Ozarzip and asked him to lend his coat to her mistress since she was naked and feels cold. She assured him she will return the coat to him the moment her mistress gets dressed. Ozarzip took off his coat and gallantly handed it to the girl, expressing a hope that her mistress would be

able to warm herself by it. Then Zuleika whispered another message in the slave girl's ear and the girl disappeared in a hurry. After a while, Potiphar came with two guards who whipped Ozarzip and ordered him to prostrate himself in front of the master. Then Potiphar spoke angrily to Ozarzip: "How dare you, Habiru trash, molest my good wife. After she transferred you to her retinue, you tried to take advantage of her graceful intentions by trying to satisfy your prurient lust which my honorable mate resisted and for proof snatched your coat off your dirty back. Therefore you are going to rot in prison until the pleasure of our divine king, the Pharaoh, decrees otherwise."

Ozarzip became very popular in prison. He manipulated the prison guards and the power elite of the prisoners by shrewdly allocating his sexual favors to both for lucrative considerations. He was also very adept at the interpretation and divination of dreams. His brothers had derisively and grudgingly called him "the dream monger."

Two of the prisoners, who had been the Pharaoh's butler and baker, heard about Ozarzip's ability to interpret dreams and they recounted to him their recurrent dreams. The butler dreamt that a vine sprouted forth in shoots, then leaves and grapes, and he pressed the grapes in Pharaoh's cup and he gave the king the full cup. Ozarzip's interpretation of the butler's dream was that soon Pharaoh would restore him to his former position and he would resume his duties of serving the king his drinks. Ozarzip beseeched the butler that when this happens, he should beg the king to have mercy on Ozarzip and deliver him out of the dungeon in which he was wrongly imprisoned. The butler promised to do this but when he was pardoned by the Pharaoh and restored to his former position, he forgot about his promise to help Ozarzip.

The interpretation of the baker's dream, that birds ate the bread that the baker had baked for the Pharaoh while it was in a basket balanced on the baker's head, was rather grim. In three days, Ozarzip predicted, the king would hang the baker on a tree and the birds will devour his flesh. Indeed this also came true.

One day the king dreamt that he stood on the bank of the Nile and seven fat healthy cattle came out of the water and then seven thin sickly cattle came out of the river and devoured the healthy fat animals. The next night the Pharaoh dreamt that seven ears of corn, full and fresh, grew on one stalk and seven thin ears of corn blasted by the wind fell on the healthy ears and ate them up. The king was troubled by these dreams and told them to his butler who served him wine. Then the butler told the king about Ozarzip. The Pharaoh ordered that Ozarzip be brought to him



immediately. When the king saw the prisoner, the omnisexual Pharaoh was immediately taken by Ozarzip's good looks.

The prisoner readily interpreted the king's dreams. Both dreams, Ozarzip explained, predict that seven years of plenty would be followed by seven years of famine. Hence, advised Ozarzip, the king has to see to it that during the seven bountiful years, stores should be filled with the produce of the fields to provide food for both people and livestock during the lean years. The Pharaoh was so impressed with Ozarzip that he released him from prison and appointed him to be his Viceroy in charge of the seven years' plan. Very soon they also became lovers.

Ozarzip and my father spent a great part of every day and many nights together. Apart from their mutual sexual attraction, Ozarzip, as Viceroy, had many functions of state and a central role in the project of amassing the crops and livestock products during the fat years of plenty to prepare for the lean years of famine.

The Pharaoh was also very interested in the religion of Ozarzip's fathers in conjunction with the monotheistic revolution that he was carrying out in Egypt. When Ozarzip was expounding the principles of the religion of his fathers for the king, I was allowed to be present and I absorbed with great interest the foundations and history of the Habiru religion as recounted by Ozarzip.

My father was sitting on his throne in the palace called "the Mansion of the Ben-Ben" in the "Select of Places" at Western No-Amon. The king had the double-crown of Upper and Lower Egypt on his head. The solid gold uraeus on his crown had the curved neck of a cobra. Its two poison glands, bursting at their seams with poison, formed a deadly triangle. The cobra's mouth was wide open and its hollow golden poison teeth were aimed at whatever enemy the king might have in front of his face. The snake's forked tongue was molded from gold and studded with blue diamonds. Its two eyes were two huge rubies lending the Pharaoh's face an eerie, weird and chilling demeanor.

The king's appearance below the crown was striking. His eyes were yellowish green and their shape had the contour of outsize almonds flanking a long and boldly chiseled nose. His false beard supported a large chin which had above it the most sensuous lips, full, strong and curled at their edges. When he smiled, two rows of large, strong teeth were revealed through the narrow aperture formed by his slightly parted lips. His teeth were yellow-colored as the result of his constant munching of narcotic roots brought to him as an offering by the Midianites of Kadesh Barnea. His gown was woven from blue silk and gold thread. He wore nothing underneath it and his well-built muscular body, of which he was very

proud, stretched the elastic gown with every movement of his limbs. When he sat on his throne, he clutched his ankh and flail as an acquired habit and he waved his flail whenever he became nervous or was harried by his many opponents within Egypt and his enemies outside the country.

People are often astounded by the great disparity between my father's actual physique and the effeminate statues of the Pharaoh with their wide haunches, developed breasts, and round belly. This was the result of my father's express orders to his official sculpture, Bak, to depict him as both masculine and feminine, as both the mother and father of his people.

His solid gold throne leaned against a gilded wall painting of the sun disk, Aten. Through the hands attached to each ray of light, Aten is forever radiating his grace to be shared equally by all plants and life forms.

There is, however, an unusual, bizarre and weird feature shared by all the extended royal family. All of us have an elongated skull due to the accumulation of water in the upper cranium in early infancy. The doctors in the morgues of Osiris called people with this feature "water heads." This uncanny elongated skull became the fashion in Egypt since the populace wished to emulate the royal look. Therefore, men, women and children fitted a bronze cover to their heads lending it an elongated appearance just like the heads of royalty.

My own head was naturally elongated but I also had two sizable bumps on top of my head which looked like horns. That is why the children nicknamed me 'the Goat' and ridiculed me as the 'stammering goat'. That is why I took great pains to hide my bumps with a thick short Nubian wig. I concealed my stammer by playing dumb and uttering, when absolutely necessary, only a few short monosyllabic words that I could say without a stutter.

I had a relatively high forehead for an Egyptian, which could be linked to the foreign lineage of my mother Tiye. I also had very large ears that I inherited from my father. When I was vexed, I moved my forehead and my scalp which caused my ears to flap. I had the large eyes and straight sculptured nose of my father except that the color of my eyes was black and not yellow-green like his. My sensuous lips and strong chin resembled very much his mouth and chin. I also had the strong physique of my father but at my young age I was tall and spindly. I wore a bodice and skirt of blue silk embroidered with gold thread worn by princes and princesses. On my neck I had an Aten pendant of gold studded with red opals given to me by my father on my 13<sup>th</sup> birthday.

## CHAPTER TWO

### OZARZIP

Ozarzip started to recount the main tenets of the creed of his fathers and both my father and I were entranced by his eloquence. “As you well know,” Ozarzip commenced his didactic presentation, “my fathers are from nomadic stock. We graze our flocks of goats and sheep in the outskirts of deserts and the slopes of torrent beds. We are despised by the land tillers of Egypt and Canaan. This is why we are so loyal to you, my patron majesty and esteemed prince Me-Shu.”

Ozarzip’s face burst into a captivating wide smile which revealed his mouthful of pearly white teeth and created four dimples in his face, two in his cheeks, a third in the tip of his nose, and the fourth in the slit which divided his chin into two mounds. Candid statements like this endeared Ozarzip to my father. He never lied, he never flattered, and he never minced words or exaggerated in hyperboles like the court lackeys who told my father what they thought my father wanted to hear. In truth, my father despised flatterers and liars. The bond between my father and Ozarzip was based not so much on carnal attraction as on the love of truth. Whenever they met or parted, they greeted each other with “Ankh em Ma’et” (“Live in Truth”).

The collective name of Ozarzip’s ancestors was “Habiru,” a social aggregate of nomads of Western Semitic stock. They led caravans from Mesopotamia to Egypt via Canaan. They were mostly carrying spices from the international spice markets in Babylon to the distributors and middlemen in Gilead and Moab, their final destination being the spice hungry Canaanites and Egyptians. The camel and donkey caravans to Canaan and Egypt were carrying allspice, aniseed and caraway from Syria and Lebanon, cardamom, hot peppers and cinnamon from India, and coriander, mint, ginger and sesame seeds from Persia. On their way back to Canaan and Mesopotamia, they carried grain from Egypt.

I was amazed at Ozarzip’s wide and deep erudition for both abstract and mundane matters.

“Since I had the good fortune, Sire,” Ozarzip told my father, “to interpret your dreams about the imminent famine in the area, and due to

your foresight, we became the purveyors of grain for all the countries east of the Mediterranean Sea.”

“Legend has it,” Ozarzip returned to his didactic account of the history of the Habiru religion, “that the founding fathers of our religion were the three patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, who migrated to Canaan from Haran in Mesopotamia.” This Ozarzip had recounted to me previously but not to my father. “The Patriarchs and their tribes in Canaan were emotionally, ethnically and culturally attached to their tribal origins in Mesopotamia and they insisted that their male progeny chose their wives from their kindred origins in Mesopotamia and not of the daughters of the Canaanites in whose land they dwelt as guests, neighbors and “visitants.”

Ozarzip then offered a cultural and social explanation which I found convincing for the fact that his mythological ancestors, which nobody was sure whether they indeed existed, were such great religious innovators. First he pointed out the fact that their reference group, being their tribe in Mesopotamia and not their Canaanite neighbors, made for their isolation. Legend has it that Lot, Abraham’s nephew who dwelt in Sodom, received the two angels who wished to reconnoiter the depravity of Sodom before destroying it and Gomorrah. The people of Sodom asked Lot to deliver the angels to them so they could sodomize them. When Lot refused, they rebuked and reprimanded him saying ‘This fellow came here to sojourn and now he wants to judge us’.

“Second,” related Ozarzip didactically, “the Habiru were shepherds despised by the land tilling Canaanites as well as by the Egyptians. Being nomads, the Habiru didn’t value goods, riches and property. For nomads, too many goods that would not fit on the back of a camel are a liability. Hence, their God was not concrete like the gods of the Canaanites and Egyptians but an abstract God which is not confined by time and space. Presently, with the famine in Mesopotamia and Canaan, many of the Habiru migrated to Egypt, which because of your majestic foresight, became a land of plenty while the rest of the area was plagued by famine.

Since the Habiru were shepherds derided by the Egyptian land tillers, they were relegated to a very isolated area in Lower Egypt. They also brought their indigenous religion with them, the main tenets of which I am going to relate to you, but first let us refresh ourselves,” Ozarzip pleaded with my father.

The Pharaoh clapped his hands and a procession of young boys and girls, completely naked, came in with trays of cold beer in earthenware mugs. Both my father and Ozarzip helped themselves with large mugs of beer and quail roasted in sizzling olive oil as appetizers. After my father and Ozarzip devoured a few quail and downed them with mugs of beer,

they concluded their refreshment with fresh figs from Nubia, dried dates from Palmyra, and large black grapes from Abydos.

Then came the final phase, the refreshment which nauseated me most: The boys performed oral sex with Ozarzip and the girls with my father. Since the semen of royalty was considered sacred, its ingestion brought blessedness. Therefore, the boys and girls competed with each other for the privilege of swallowing the ejaculations of the king and his Viceroy. I was disgusted by this sexual license which was customary in the Pharaoh's court but I felt it in my innermost self to be depravity.

I left the throne room of the Ben-Ben Palace and went out to the balcony of the Gem-pa-aten colonnade that had a huge Aten disk of gold plated bronze and only three rays. These had as their termination not the all giving outstretched hand palms but hieroglyphs of Ankh-Live Em-in Ma'et-Truth. I then swore to forego the prurient indulgence of the flesh and pursue the righteousness of the soul and the purity of my spirit which sprouted from within me as the word of the One true God. This will make me worthy of my name: Me-Shu, the righteous star-gazer, the seeker of the one good, virtuous, moral, incorrupt, pure, faultless, irreproachable, just and equitable God in heaven.

When I returned to the Ben-Ben throne room, the boys and girls with their food trays were gone and I was welcomed by my father and Ozarzip with a condescending chuckle and an exhortation: "Here comes our 'Puritan Me-Shu'."

Ozarzip was ready to resume his didactic discourse on the religion of his forefathers. "The one primal God was not exclusive," he said, "but the leading God among other gods. Even the creation of man was a cooperative venture of the chief deity in collaboration with the other gods. However, an immortal soul was infused in man by the leading deity whereas the profane mortal body was the creation of the lesser gods."

"As you can see, hear and feel, Sire and Prince Me-Shu, we are far from righteous. Hence, we would be considered sinners by the gods of our fathers. Morality and purity are the condition precedent for the chief God. He is a spiritual essence who can dwell among his people and let His holy presence, his spiritual epiphany, reveal right conduct to his followers. The carnal functions of the body and the prodding of desire, passion and coveting are the domain of the lesser gods. Only the spirit and its revelation of purity stem from the abstract, invisible, timeless and spaceless main God."

"This is why my ancestors insisted on their male progeny marrying the women of their original stock that have presumably been exposed to the revelatory truths of the one abstract God and not marry the Canaanite,

Moabite and Phoenician women who were led by the covetousness of their senses. The Bedouin nomadic wives to be chosen for the male progeny of our ancestors would reject covetousness and embrace the frugal asceticism of the camel riders and tent dwellers who despise property and the accumulation of worthless and superfluous property and goods. The purity of spirit and the modesty of the soul of the desert wives would assure the probity of their children and the selfless obedience to the rules of an all-giving, bodyless and therefore non-coveting, non-craving, and non-desiring abstract God.

“It has to be admitted, however,” Ozarzip warned up to his subject, “that my ancestors stem from a cruel culture. As you may well know, the Babylonian creation myth depicts Marduk, the chief Deity, as fighting his mother Tiamat. When he was just about to carve her body into two parts, the creation myth declares that Marduk ‘conceived works of Art’. Imagine, Sire and Prince Me-Shu,” Ozarzip infused into his voice a resonance of righteous indignation. It always amazed me how he had complete control of his vocal chords, using them with virtuosity to impress, cajole, woo or reprimand his audience. “Marduk is just about to kill his mother and split her body, and this matricidal savage brutality gives Marduk an artistic inspiration. He presently splits her skull and cuts her arteries to let her blood ooze out of her. Then he cleaves her body ‘like a fish into two parts’. From the upper part he forms heaven and from the lower part he fashions earth. Marduk created the first Man from the blood of Kingu, a general of his slain mother.”

“The absolute authoritarian cruelty of our ancestor’s God is extant in His order to Abraham, our first Patriarch, to sacrifice Isaac, the second Patriarch and Abraham’s only begotten son. But first, we must take a closer look at the *Akedah* myth itself. When Abraham built the altar, bound his son, and took the knife to slay him, an angel of the Lord ordered him not to lay his hand upon the lad and showed him a ram caught in a thicket by its horns. It is said that ‘Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering instead of his son’.”

“The original Habiru version states that Abraham offered the ram as a burnt offering *tahat* his son. *Tahat* can mean not only ‘instead of,’ but also ‘after’. Consequently, some interpreters claim that Abraham sacrificed Isaac and afterwards slaughtered the ram. They cite traditional sources, according to which Abraham did slay Isaac and a quarter of a log (a Habiru liquid measure) of his blood was poured onto the altar. Also, Isaac’s ashes were believed to have been strewn and scattered on the altar, and Isaac’s soul was raised to paradise as a reward for his noble sacrifice. These interpreters claim that after the *Akedah*, ‘Abraham returned unto his

young men'. Abraham returned by himself; there is no mention of Isaac, who must have been offered as a burnt sacrifice on the altar on top of Mount Moriah."

"This interpretation of the *Akedah* myth raises a number of problems. One rather confusing answer is that the story of Isaac presents more than one myth or more than one Isaac. If myths are a projection of personal history, then the *Akedah* myth is of prime importance as psychological source material, irrespective of its historical truth. Consequently, the *Akedah* myth may serve as an archetype of covert father-son relationships, both in its version as a temptation of Abraham or its interpretation as a consummated burnt offering of Isaac. Whether the event is viewed as a fulfilled command or deliberate etymological confusion in action, the impact on the father-son relationship is the same."

"The interpretation that Isaac was slaughtered as a burnt offering is in line with the ancient custom in the Middle East to offer children, especially the first-born, to the gods. A Moabite king is said to have sacrificed the crown prince, when the battle went badly for him, in order to regain his military fortunes. The Habiru imitated the Canaanites and Phoenicians by offering their children to the Ba'al, or by throwing them into the red-hot bosom of a metal Moloch. These offerings were practiced in the valley of Hinnom, which became synonymous in Habiru with hell."

"Later, the gods were cheated and had to make do with domestic animals instead of a human first-born. The offerings of the animals were conducted as if they were human. The calves offered to Dionysus were attired with children's clothes and babies' shoes so that the deity would think he was receiving real children and not animal substitutes. In times of great stress, parents reverted to the sacrifice of their children, but gradually substitutes of human sacrifice received full religious sanction and became symbolic of the archetypal sacrifice of the *Akedah* myth. Circumcision became a ritualized substitute for the sacrifice of the newborn son, and the sounding of the ram's horn is symbolic of the sacrifice in the *Akedah* myth."

"The Isaac Syndrome conceives of the father as a stern authoritarian. The interpretation of the *Akedah* myth explains that God ordered Abraham to go to the land of Moriah (three days of travel) so that he will sacrifice his son not out of hurried obedience to God's command but rather after three days of thinking and in a sober and determined state of mind."

"The most humane figure in the *Akedah* episode is none other than the Devil. When Abraham was about to slaughter his son, the Devil came and reprimanded him: 'What happened to you old-timer? You seem to have lost your heart. A son was given to you when you were 100 years old and

now you are about to slaughter him'. When the Devil saw that Abraham was adamant, he went to Isaac and said: 'You poor son of your poor mother. How much pain and suffering did she undergo until she begot you and now this old father of yours is out of his mind in his old age and is about to slaughter you'. The fact that the Devil is the one to invoke ethics, pity and grace is important in this context: if absolute and abject submission to the command of the Lord (as the projection of the archetypal father) is the epitome of pious righteousness, then any attenuating emotional considerations must come from the Devil. This is even truer if the Devil speaks with the voice of the preconscious dynamism that identifies the absolute command of God as the covert infanticidal wish of the father."

"To come to my own father Jacob," Ozarzip did not soften his tone of censure when talking about his immediate parent, "I have already related to you, my Sire and Prince Me-Shu, the tricky, conniving, crafty and deceptive nature of my father Jacob. He stole the birthright from his brother, my uncle Esau, who was a nice guy and a gentleman." Ozarzip stressed the point by lowering his voice but augmenting its treble until it sounded like a litany. "Jacob developed a power-based relationship with God and engaged in a fierce competition of strength with a countenance of God which Jacob won. Thence his name was changed to Israel – the one who struggled with God and prevailed. This is a misnomer," argued Ozarzip. "How can a God who should be omnipotent be vanquished by a mortal? This means that the God of the Patriarchs is not omnipotent. He has other gods to reckon with who compete with Him all the time. Hence the God of the Patriarchs is not the only God," concluded Ozarzip. "He is an El-Elion, a supreme God who has to contend with other local gods with whom He is in constant conflict, yet make with them pacts of convenience and ad-hoc concords. The Mesopotamian God of our Patriarchs," continued Ozarzip, "is fickle, capricious and irresolute. The account of the creation by the Mesopotamian God as conceived by the Patriarchs was that Man was created of dust and He breathed a soul in him through his nostrils and created a woman, a mate for Man, from his rib. He also forbade the first couple to eat from the Tree of Knowledge in the Garden of Eden in which they were installed because He was afraid of competition. If they ate from it, they would be like gods. After the first couple ate from the Tree of Knowledge, He played hide and seek with them like a capricious parent. Consequently the Patriarchs had to anchor their relationship with such an erratic God on a dual pact and treaty made and signed violently with the blood of the circumcision of every male and supplemented by the blood of animals in a ritual reenacted separately with each patriarch."



“However,” the voice of Ozarzip became sweet and tender, “how fortunate, Sire and Prince Me-Shu, are we to live in this land of plenty, order and stability where the rule of the Pharaohs, dynasty after dynasty, year after year, and the ever predictable cyclic of Nile flood tides make for recurrence, solidity and strength for thousands of years. Our account of creation, in the light of your august ideals, shows organization and planning in the formation and conduct of the Universe. Even Man and Woman were created in one body, like the image of your own body sculptured by your brilliant court architect Bak who made you the epitome of both male and female, father and mother, in one body. Bless you, Sire and Prince Me-Shu, for making us content and happy under the constant shining of the Aten.”

Ozarzip kissed the hand of my father and kissed my hand also, then sat down exhausted. “We earned a substantial evening meal,” he pleaded, meaning of course, a combination of food and sex. I excused myself quickly with my father and Ozarzip reprimanding me for my excessive puritanism and retreated to my quarters in the Ben-Ben Palace.

When I entered my sleeping room, I sat on my bed which was quite spacious. It had a bronze frame upholstered with camel hides and a thick hemp cloth stuffed with soft papyrus grass that made a comfortable mattress. My cushions were made of Persian silk filled with goose feathers.

I helped myself to some figs, fresh dates and black grapes from a tray of lapis-lazuli placed by a slave on a wooden chair with arms of carved ebony and a seat made of baby crocodile hide. After I had my fruit meal, I lay on my bed and summarized for myself the salient points of Ozarzip’s information delivered to my father and me about the religion of his Habiru ancestors.

First of all, the Habiru Gods had no personal name but were denoted by their titles as local Gods. The leader of or superior to the other Gods was El Elyon, the superior God that implies that the other Gods are subordinate to him. Second, there was not any single unique, spaceless, timeless universal God. Third, El-Shaddai was the God not only of the people in a given region but also of the other gods present in that region.

The God of Ozarzip’s ancestors was the God of the Covenant. He received the allegiance of his believers for a consideration: their protection from their enemies and the augmentation of their number so they could inhabit and inherit the lands they abide in that, in their case, is Canaan – the Promised Land. The covenant was separately enacted by God with each of the three Patriarchs. There were no temples and priests for the nomads to worship their God. When they wished to pray or experience a

revelation or enact a covenant with Him, all they needed was to build an altar, to erect a high place of worship, or to select a stone to serve as a site for supplication during their wandering.

A naked slave girl entered my bedroom, brought a mug of cold beer on a copper tray, and offered what she denoted as ‘a good night of sexual services’. I declined, stuttering heavily, and asked for a glass of water. When she brought the water, I detected a slight frown on her face. I fell asleep dreaming that I was ridiculed by the naked slave girl deriding my impotence.

In the morning I was awakened by the naked slave girl who fanned me with a papyrus fan fastened to a palm branch. She brought me also a mug full of grape juice pressed from the vines of the Faiyum oasis which were watered by volcanic springs containing sulfurs and chlorides which gave them a special tangy taste that I liked. After I drank half a mug of grape juice, I lay on my back daydreaming and ignoring the slave girl who had this morning a puzzled look on her face pondering the reason for my ignoring her sexual services.

Little could she know that all my emotional fervor was directed towards Marit-Aten, my half-sister, a princess of about my age who inherited the good looks of her mother, Queen Nefertiti. Marit-Aten’s crown had the Aten disk fastened to a solid gold tiara placed on a full size wig to cover the elongated cranium which she inherited, like all our family, from our father the king. Her almond-shaped eyes were elongated and accentuated by black mascara. Her long straight nose had very sensitive nostrils which sniffed the air with every show of emotion or mood.

Her red, blue and terracotta tunic revealed two finely shaped breasts which usually had erect nipples constantly excited by her pent up ardor. She wore tightly fitting green slacks which emphasized her elegant pelvis. She always held in her hands the ankh and flail, signifying her royal descent. My infatuation with her was completely clandestine because whenever she passed me by in the palace I was paralyzed and struck dumb lest I utter a word and my ugly stutter would be revealed.

Although I soon would be expected to attend another session of Ozarzip’s instruction of my father on the religion of his ancestors, I still lay on my back, daydreaming about my beloved Marit-Aten. Once I was privileged to attend a command performance of the Princess who had a wonderful voice of a canary. She undulated with her vocal chords and plucked her string musical instrument and her divine music praised the grace of the Aten. She had a flowering water lily stuck in her wig. A wide necklace of gold thread, in which carnelian, lapis-lazuli, turquoise and

amethyst stones were woven, covered her long neck. She had a transparent yellow silk tunic that accentuated her finely shaped breasts and nipples and her adolescent pubic mound that was just beginning to be covered by finely curled black hair.

My reminiscences of Marit-Aten excited me so much that my member swelled visibly. The slave girl looked at it expectantly, surmising that soon her services would be required. But I was ashamed of my prurient desires for Marit-Aten, my beloved. Instead of entering the warm bath which the slave girl had prepared, I jumped into the cold water pool to calm my prurient passions for my love. The slave girl had a flabbergasted look on her face, believing that her princely master had lost his sanity.

While soaking in the cold pool, I pondered that I had to suppress my lewd carnal passions. I detested the behavior of my father and Ozarzip, both of whom molested the pubescent girls and boys who grimaced with pain while they were harassed to satisfy the lascivious lust of their masters. I vowed that if and when I have the power, which does not seem very likely right now, I shall forbid incestuous relationships. I shall decree that sexual relationships should be performed only in purity for the sole purpose of reproduction and all concupiscent lasciviousness should be suppressed.

I put on a white canvas tunic and a Nubian wig to cover my elongated cranium and bumps. Then I hurried to the throne room at the Ben-Ben Palace for the morning session of religious indoctrination with my father and Ozarzip.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE NEW CITY AND THE NEW RELIGION

When I entered the throne room, I noticed that the usual serene demeanor of my father had changed into livid rage, twisting his face into a frenzied fury. His face was crimson and his eyes were bulging and bloodshot. His full lustful lips were wide open uttering a torrent of vehement curses against the treacherous priests of Amon, the bigoted scoundrels and thieves of the funerary temples of Osiris, and the prejudiced paganism of the Ennead of gods of On that depict a mechanical causality of nine gods (Atum, Shu, Tefnut, Geb, Nut, Osiris, Isis, Set and Nephthys) without any coordination between them. I heard my father shout, "These ignorant multitudes do not understand that only one single God can synchronize all the functions of the universe."

Ozarzip, who prostrated himself in front of my father, uttered "Yes, Sire. You are right, Sire. These are vile, sinful and corrupt criminals who have to be punished severely," accentuating each word by pounding the floor with his fists in front of the king's throne. I stood at the entrance to the hall paralyzed with fright. I had never seen my father so exasperated.

"No! No! No!" my father exclaimed emphatically. "I am not going to meddle with these insignificant vermin." He accentuated each word with a crack of his flail in the air. "I am going to build a new capital a long way north of No-Amon and a long way south of Moph, in the desert near a protective curve of the Nile emulating the sacred hieroglyph sign for a horizon. The new immaculate city of our unique God, the Aten, would be duly denoted Akhet-Aten, the Horizon of Aten. Built from brand new materials and erected from foundation to roof from new pure substances fit to worship in the spirit of our new religion, our unique God and master, the Aten. We shall leave our enemies and detractors to rot in their holes like worms in excrement."

My father sat down breathing heavily while Ozarzip rose slowly, applauding with his hands and exclaiming approvingly, "How wise, my Sire. What a clever decision, Sire. Your wisdom is unfathomable, Sire. We will build a new pure capital for our new immaculate religion of the Aten."

My father then sat on his throne and Ozarzip sat on a low bench just in front of him, moving to and fro in tense expectation. I approached my father and kissed his hand. He reciprocated with a rare show of affection by stroking my head with a gentle tenderness that I did not suspect he possessed.

After he made the decision to move his capital to Akhet-Aten, he became more reserved but bursting with pent up energy to carry out his purpose with a single-minded tenacity. He lost interest in the discourses of Ozarzip on the religion of his forefathers and I remained the Viceroy's only devout student.

In the fifth year of my father's reign, he changed his name from Amenhotep the IV to Akhenaten. He travelled with his retinue to the site of the planned new city of Akhet-Aten to lay the foundation stones for the new capital, its palaces, temples, tombs, and the residences of the functionaries of the new religion. Some 500 people attended this festive occasion. On the 13<sup>th</sup> day of the 8<sup>th</sup> month of the 5<sup>th</sup> year of my father's reign, the foundation stones for Akhet-Aten were placed near an altar erected on a desert plateau midway between No-Amon and Moph. Our extended family, the nobles, the high officials, soldiers and their attendant slaves were transported from the cultivated western side of the Nile around the towns of Meir and Asyut to an arid and parched stretch of desert on the eastern bank of the Nile where the New Capital of Akhet-Aten was planned.

The king was standing on his gilded chariot harnessed to two horses, a white horse representing Lower Egypt and a red horse Upper Egypt. He was dressed with a white and red robe, crowned by the double-crown of Lower and Upper Egypt. Above his crown an Aten gold disk was rotating with the wind and spreading the light rays of the unique God up to the horizon of the range of mountains surrounding the site of Akhet-Aten, the Horizon of Aten. Priests were pouring libations of beer, wine and oil on the altar while novices were carrying hot cast-iron frying pans spreading incense around the altar ... a mixture of cinnamon, sage, cardamom, ginger and nutmeg. Most of the nobles and the king's retinue, except the soldiers and guards, were protecting their heads from the scorching sun with parasols, refreshing themselves with cold beer, and being attended by slaves fanning their faces.

The king, however, was entranced by his prophetic address to his retinue about the new creed to sprout from Akhet-Aten. He was not protected from the searing desert sun by fan-bearing or shade-carrying slaves. On the contrary, the king seemed to cherish the rays of the life-giving Aten. He appeared to draw energy and grace from his God and

master and the heat of the sun served him as a source of divine energy for his inaugural address for the unique religion of the Sun God. My father's hands were raised above his head, his face was flushed, and his open mouth gushed words in a feverish torrent. His appearance was more of a prophet announcing a new creed than a monarch who should be serene and composed with the dignity of the Ma'et, the goddess of truth.

My father started his address by negating the existing religious system using heated rhetoric, logic, sarcasm and ridicule. He was very excited and from time-to-time so carried away by the enormity of the occasion that his speech became garbled. His first target of attack was the theology of On. "Lo and behold," opened my father sarcastically, "the sea, the great sea, the immense sea in the most popular theology of On in Lower Egypt is Nun – chaos – yet this chaos is also called 'the father of the Gods'. Can chaos, turmoil and turbulence create the Ma'et, the order, the stability necessary for the existence of the world?" my father asked rhetorically. "Of course not," he answered emphatically, waving his flail in the air for a further accentuation of the negation.

"But this is not all," my father warmed to his subject. "The absurdities increase, accumulate and multiply. Atum, the chief god of On who was supposed to issue out of Nun, the chaotic waters, creates the main gods of On, the Ennead, by an unusual, to say the least, performance: he masturbates with his long penis which reaches up to his mouth and ejaculates therein his semen. In his orifice, his two first offspring are spawned: Shu the God of Air and Tefnut, his twin sister, Goddess of Dew and Rain, which are the first two divinities of the Ennead of On. How were they born? They were spewed by their father out of his mouth. Could you imagine my colleagues, partners and brethren a more undignified parturition for the first two gods of the Ennead of On?"

My father's eloquence generated its inner momentum. "Shu and Tefnut," my father continued, "the first couple of the Ennead of On, begat the second couple, Geb and Nut. Geb the earth God was cruelly separated from Nut his spouse and lover by Shu. Geb tried to fight his oppressor but to no avail. So he lay defeated under the feet of the tyrant Shu. Raised on one elbow, and with one knee bent, he emulates the mountain ranges. Now my compatriots," the Pharaoh raised his voice, "why this excess of cruelty? Why should Geb, the consort, wait in anger and anguish and lament his separation from his bride? Why was this evil perpetrated in the first place? Was there any reason whatsoever other than the callous wickedness and arbitrary baseness of his father? I may ask you again, my loyal compatriots, who would acquiesce in this senseless oppression of these so-called Gods?"