

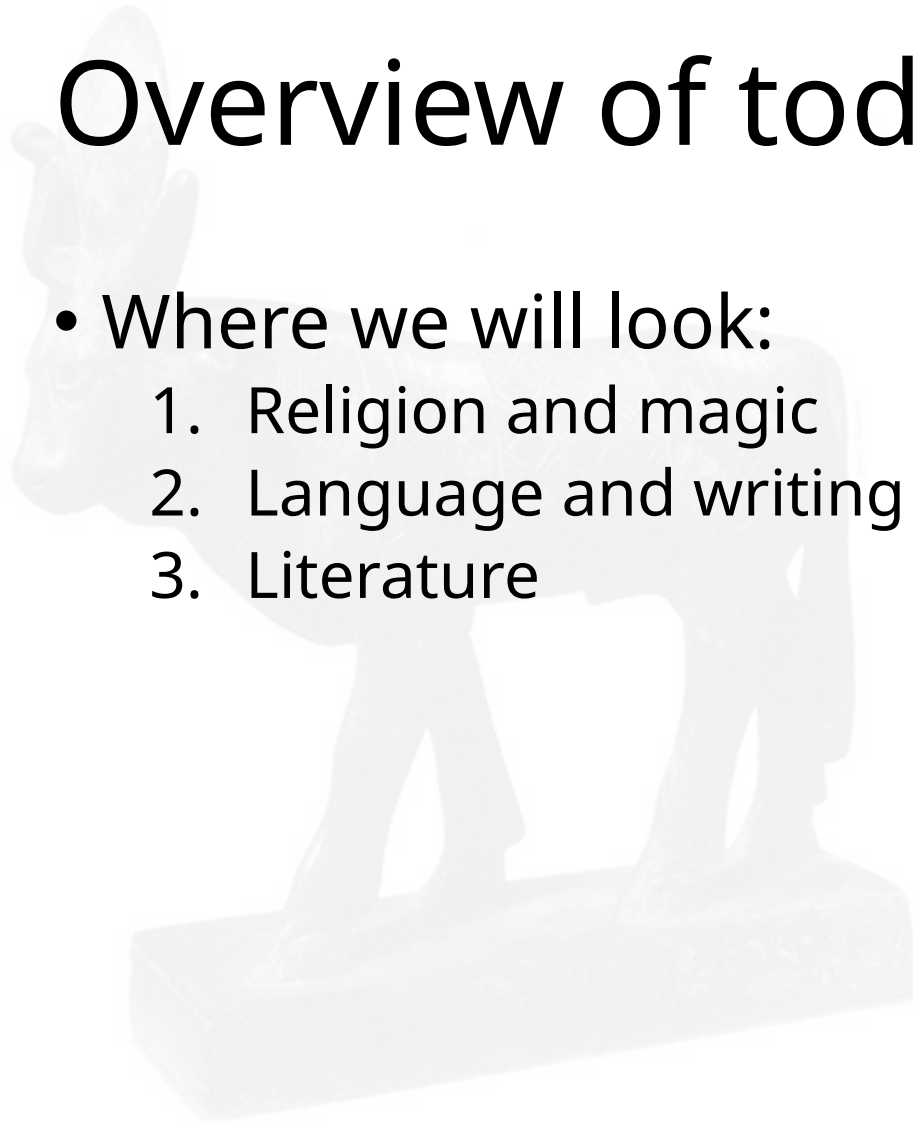
What Can Ancient Egypt Tell Us About the Bible?



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Overview of today's talk

- Where we will look:
 1. Religion and magic
 2. Language and writing
 3. Literature



Before beginning...

- Who does this?
- What do we mean by the Bible?
- What about Joseph, the Exodus, Moses, and Monotheism?



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Two identical Egyptian cow statues, likely representing the goddess Isis, are positioned on either side of the text. Each statue is a dark, polished material, possibly bronze or black granite, and stands on a rectangular base. The cow is depicted in profile, facing left, with a lotus flower on its head. The background is a plain, light color.

Egyptian influence on the Hebrew Bible:

Religion and Magic

Religion and Magic:

Magical practices

Numbers 5:11-31

- “Then the priest shall put these curses in writing, and wash them off into the water of bitterness. **He shall make the woman drink the water of bitterness that brings the curse, and the water that brings the curse shall enter her and cause bitter pain.** ... When he has made her drink the water, then, if she has defiled herself and has been unfaithful to her husband, the water that brings the curse shall enter into her and cause bitter pain, and her womb shall discharge, her uterus drop, and the woman shall become an execration among her people. But if the woman has not defiled herself and is clean, then she shall be immune and be able to conceive children.”

Numbers 5:11-31

- The idea that magic is a power that can be ingested and made effective is seen in common practice in Egypt.
- Example:
 - One would pour water over small statuettes called *cippi* depicting the child Horus.
 - The water would take on the magical *effectiveness* of the spells written on the statue.
 - By ingesting the water, the devotee ingests the power of the spell.

Religion and Magic:

Numbers 5:11-31

- Related to this is the Egyptian equivalence of *tasting* and *experiencing*, as well as *swallowing* and *knowing*.

Horus cippus, Oriental Institute
museum
(Ptolemaic Thebes)



Carravaggio, *Madonna and Child with St. Anne*
(Galleria Borghese, Rome)



Numbers 5:11-31

- This text and the parallel idea in Egyptian magic expresses an important idea: magic is itself neutral, but it can be used for either “bad” or “good” effects.
 - The same action (“swallowing” words) can both protect you from snake bites, and induce an abortion.

Numbers 5:11-31

- Other ideas of the effectiveness of swallowing from the Hebrew Bible:
 1. Ezekiel swallowing the scroll.
 2. The Tree of Knowledge and the Tree of Life in the Garden of Eden

Another similar magical practice:

- Cursing enemies “as wax melts before the fire” (Psalm 68:2)
- Matches Egyptian practice seen in literary texts:
 - P. Westcar (Middle Kingdom)
 - Setna stories (Roman Period),
 - Greek *Alexander Romance* (based on Egyptian traditions).

Execration objects

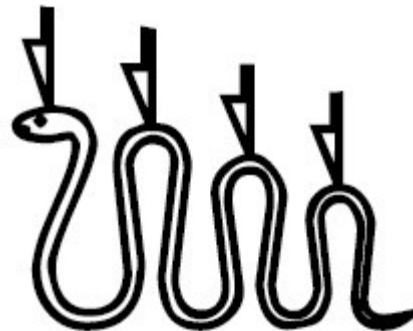
- From Jeremiah 19:

Thus said Yahweh: “Go and buy a potter’s earthenware jug. Take with you some of the elders of the people and some of the senior priests, and go out to the valley of the son of Hinnom at the entry of the Potsherd Gate, and proclaim there the words that I tell you...

... Then you shall break the jug in the sight of those who go with you, and shall say to them: Thus says the Yahweh Sebaoth: So will I break this people and this city, as one breaks a potter’s vessel, so that it can never be mended.”

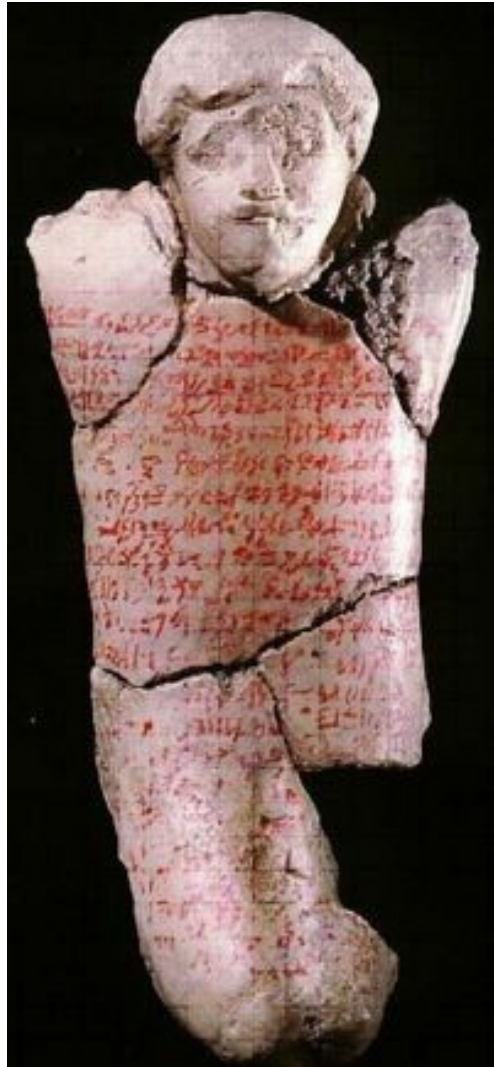
Execration objects

- In Egyptian thought, by disabling something's outer form it is made ineffective.
- This is the flip side of the idea that tasting/swallowing = knowing.
- Expressed in hieroglyph'



Execration objects

- This concept finds expression in a number of magical acts:
 - Ritual desecration and *damnatio memoriae*
 - Execration figurines and texts
 - The ancient ritual of “Breaking the Red Vases”



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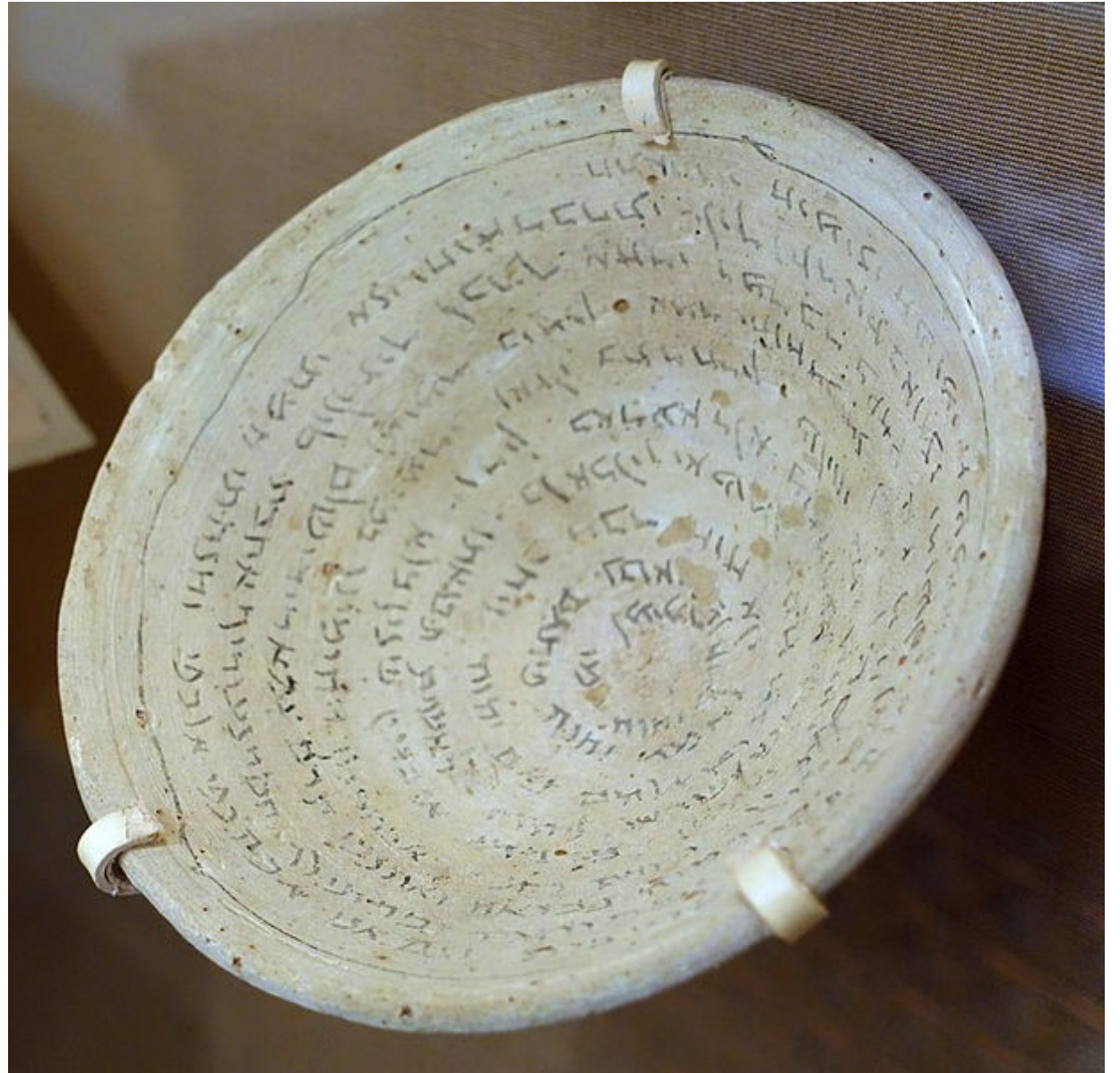
Religion and Magic:

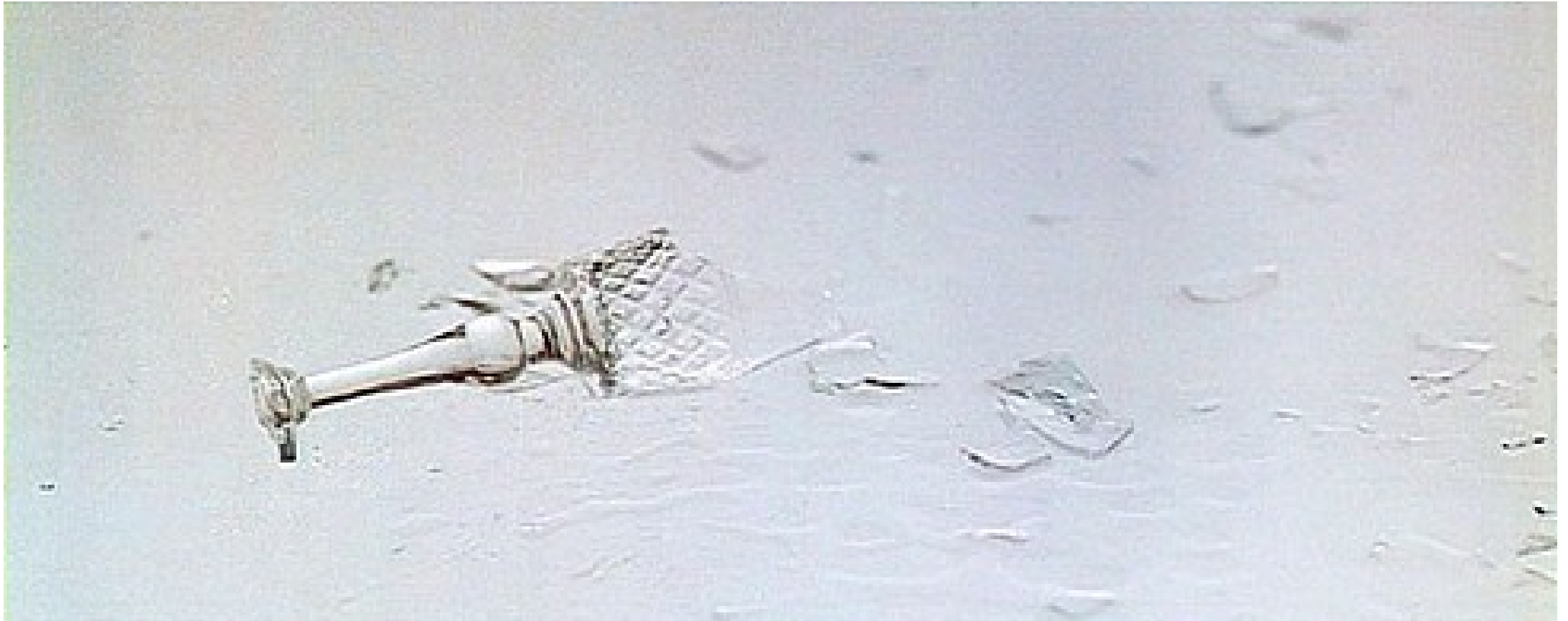
Execration objects

- Compare Psalm 2:9:

You shall break them with a rod of iron,
and smash them into pieces like a potter's vessel.

Aramaic incantation bowl from Nippur,
Sassanian Period (Oriental Institute
Museum)





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Execration objects

- From Qoheleth (“Ecclesiastes”) 12:

Remember your creator in the days of your youth, before the days of trouble come ... because all must go to their eternal home,

The mourners will go about the streets
Before the silver cord is snapped:
The golden bowl is broken
The jug is broken at the fountain
The wheel broken at the cistern
The dust returns to the earth as it was,
And the breath returns to God who gave it.

Religion and Magic:

Circumcision

Stela of Uha (Oriental Institute), First Intermediate Period



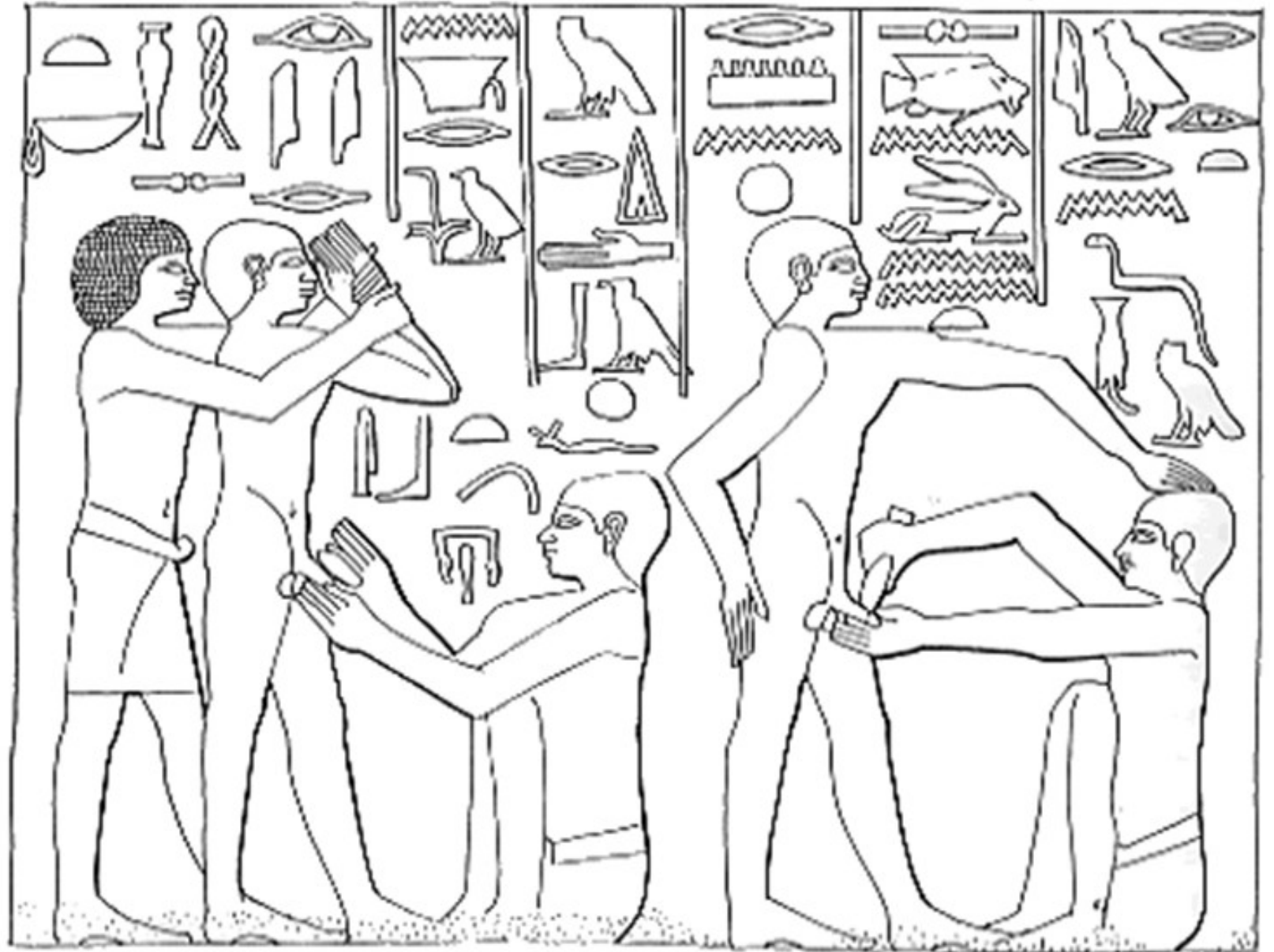
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Detail from Stela of Uha (Oriental Institute):

“I was circumcised with 120 men. There was no one who struck, there was no one who was struck. There was no one who scratched, there was no one who was scratched.”

Depiction of circumcision,
from the tomb of Ankhmahor,
Dynasty 6, near pyramid of
Teti (Saqqara)



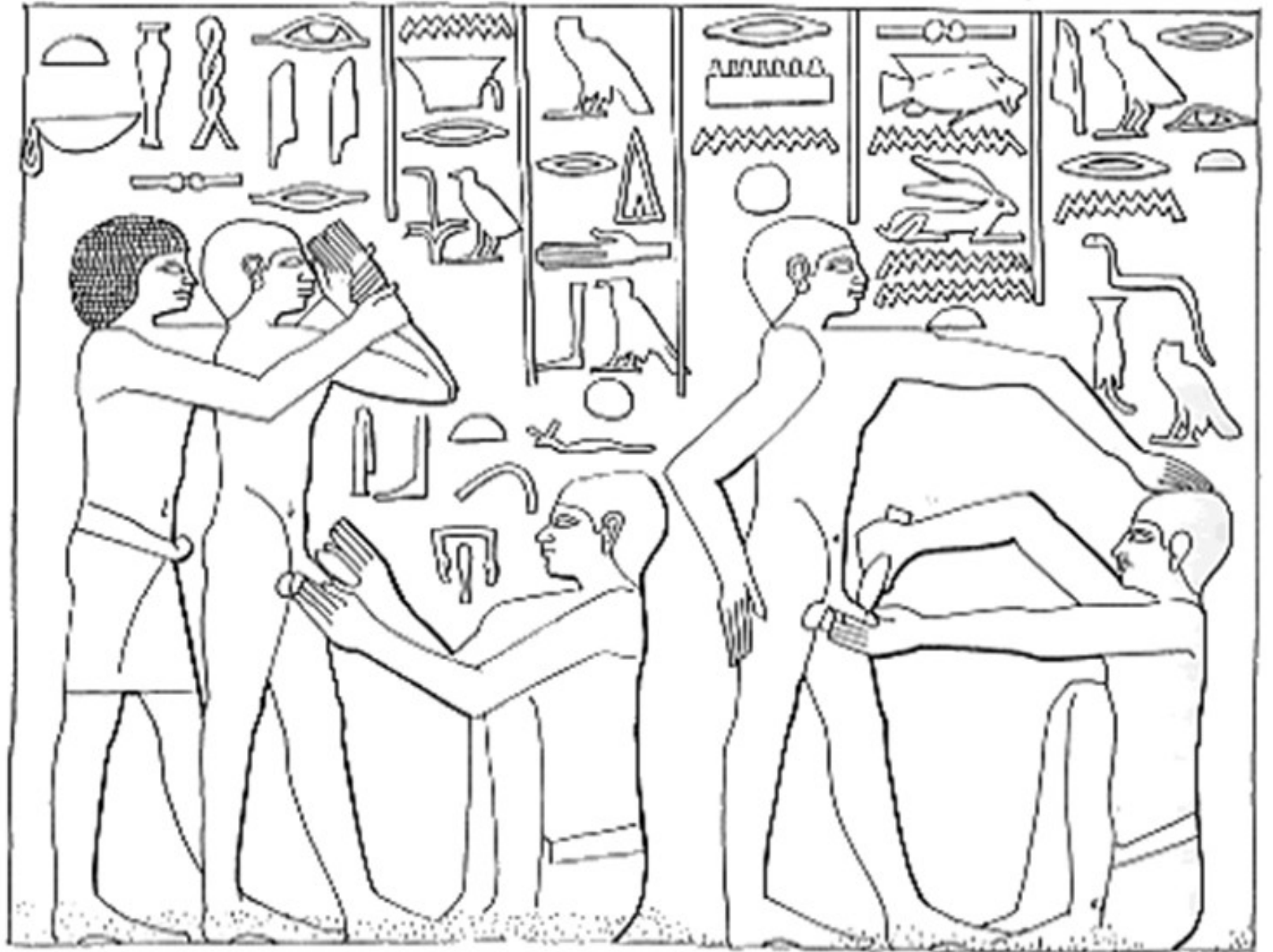
Translation of captions
("speech bubbles"):

"I am doing as you please."

**"Hold him! Don't let him fall
down!"**

"I will proceed carefully."

"Make a thorough cut!"



From the Precinct of Mut at
Karnak, Dynasty 25



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Circumcision

- Other references to circumcision in Egypt:
 - Herodotus (late 5th century BCE):
 - **“They are the only people in the world---they at least, and those who learned the practice from them---who use circumcision.”**
 - **“ [Their priests] practice circumcision for the sake of cleanliness, considering it better to be cleanly than comely.** The priests shave their whole body every other day, that no lice or other impure thing may adhere to them when they are engaged in the service of the gods.”

Circumcision

- Other references to circumcision in Egypt:
 - Victory Stela of Piye (Dynasty 25)
 - “These kings and counts of Lower Egypt who came to behold the beauty of His Majesty, their legs were like the legs of women. **They could not enter into the palace since they were uncircumcised and eaters of fish**—such is an abomination of the palace. However, **king Namlot entered into the palace since he was pure and did not eat fish.**”

Circumcision

- The meaning of circumcision in Egypt:
 - Rite of initiation
 - Religious and cultic purity
 - National identity
- Who was circumcised?
 - Adult males, not infants
 - Priests, but also the general public
 - Note: some royal mummies are uncircumcised (e.g. Ahmose, Dyn. 18)

Religion and Magic:

Circumcision

- The meaning of circumcision in the Hebrew Bible:

Circumcision

- The meaning of circumcision in the Hebrew Bible:
 - Rite of initiation
 - Seen especially in covenant treaty ceremonies, such as with Abraham (Genesis 17) and between Israel and Shechem (Genesis 34).

Religion and Magic:

Circumcision

- The meaning of circumcision in the Hebrew Bible:
 - Religious purity
 - Is used as a potent metaphor (“uncircumcised heart,” “uncircumcised lips”).

Circumcision

- The meaning of circumcision in the Hebrew Bible:
 - Precursor to marriage and fertility
 - Moses' wife Zipporah circumcises him (Exodus 4).
 - Abraham only has a son with Sarah after he is circumcised.

Religion and Magic:

Circumcision

- The meaning of circumcision in the Hebrew Bible:
 - National identity

Circumcision

- The meaning of circumcision in the Hebrew Bible:
 - Originally an apotropaic rite (warding of evil)
 - A Phoenician myth relates how the god El circumcises himself (and sacrifices his son) to escape danger.
 - As a religiously sanctioned shedding of blood, circumcision may have played this role in Genesis (warding off God's anger).

Circumcision

- Why is circumcision so important in the Hebrew Bible (and Judaism)?
 - A common Levantine practice, shared with Egypt, may have taken on a deeper significance once Judeans lived among the non-circumcised in Babylon during the Exile.
 - A similar phenomenon happened during the Hellenistic period, since the Greeks believed circumcision was uncomely.

Circumcision

- Who influenced whom?
 - Traditional view: the practice was practiced in Egypt from a very ancient time, and spread from there to the Levant.

Circumcision

- Who influenced whom?
 - View to the contrary:
 - The method of circumcision seems to be different in each culture. Circumcision as described in the Hebrew Bible is “complete,” while in Egypt it may have only been “partial.”
 - The “partial” technique may be an ancient Levantine practice, based on the famous “Amuq G Figurines” discovered by the Braidwoods (of the OI), dating from ca. 2800 BCE.

Circumcision

- Side note:
 - The only Egyptian word preserved for “foreskin” is a loanword from Semitic.



- Egyptian *gurlota* ~ Hebrew *‘orlah*
- The word is attested for the first time during Dynasty 19.

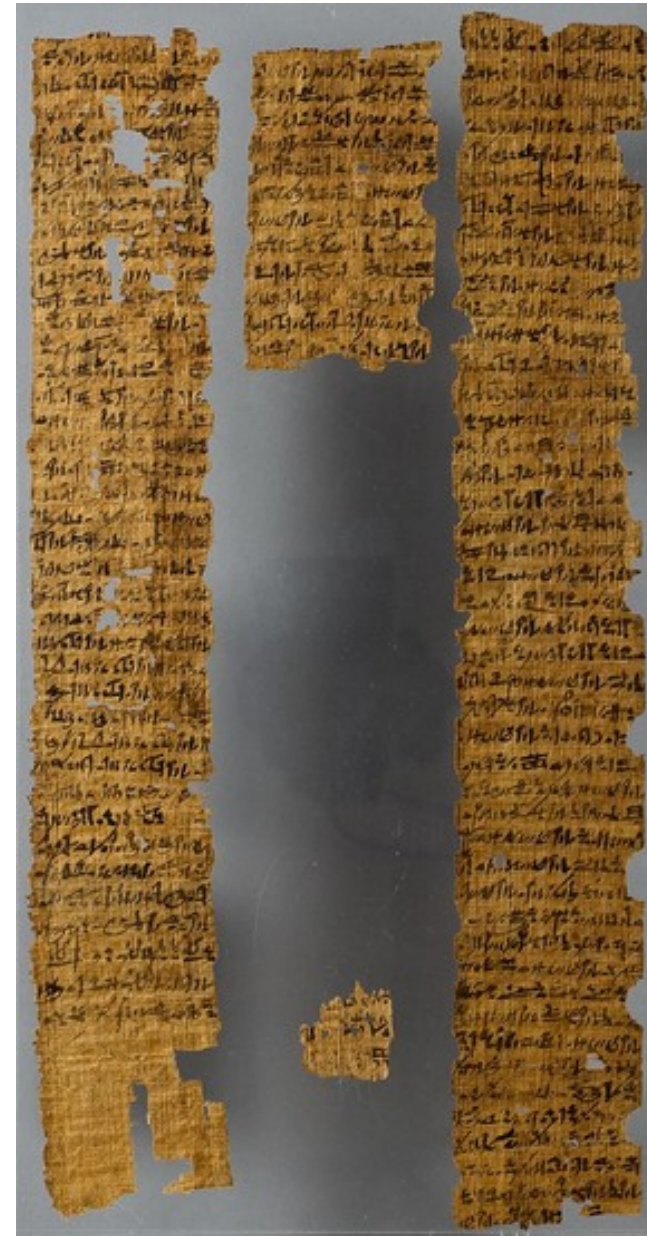
Religion and Magic:

Scrolls as amulets

Scrolls as amulets

- Similar to the case of Numbers 5, where the written word has magical potency.
- Temples in Egypt would give oracular decrees to individuals which detailed the promises of a divine figure to protect its owner in manifold ways. This is well attested in the Third Intermediate Period.
- These could be rolled up and worn around the neck as amulets.

Amuletic oracular decree, Third Intermediate Period (Oriental Institute)



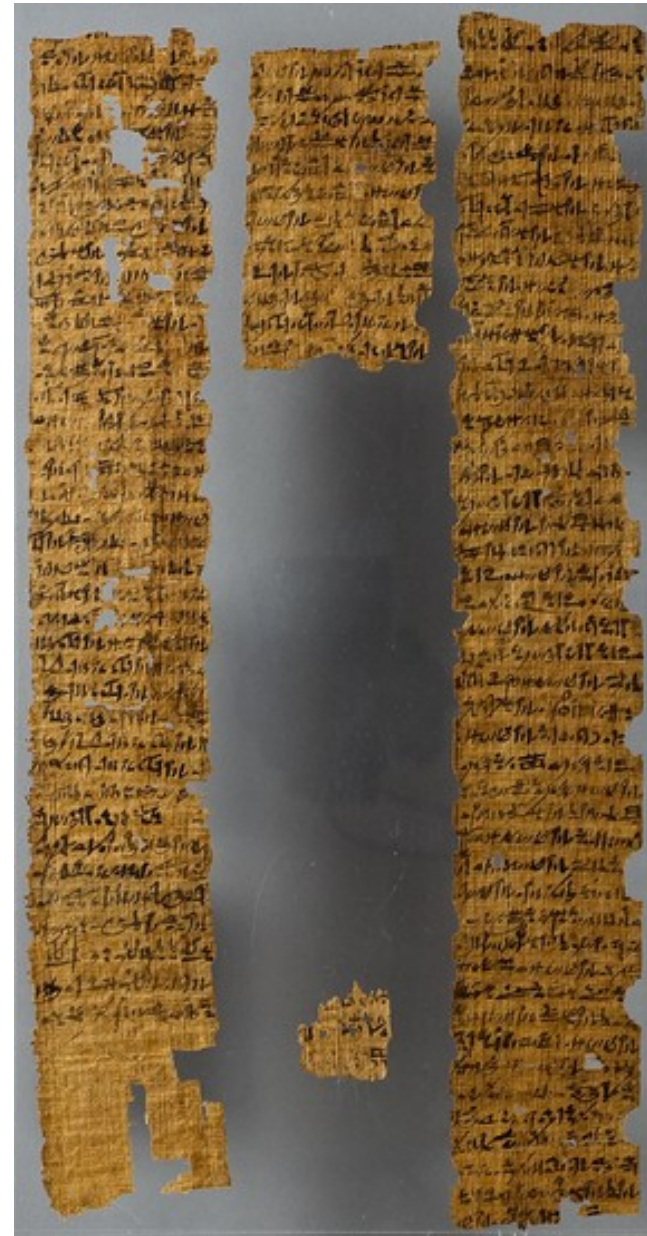
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Amuletic oracular decree, Third Intermediate Period (Oriental Institute)

(Spoken by the goddess Nekhbet)

“I shall keep her healthy in her flesh and her bones...I shall grant her life, health, and a great and goodly old age...I shall keep healthy her whole body---every limb---and her entire frame from her head to her soles...I shall keep her safe from every evil intention of every god and every goddess resident in heaven, earth, or the underworld”

(Trans. Robert Ritner)



Apotropaic silver scroll (one of two) found at Ketef Hinom (SW of Jerusalem), ca. 700-650 BCE.



-- הברו (כ)
-אָנִיהוּ-
-רִיָּה (ו)
--ךָעָה-
-שִׁבְרַכ
יְהוָה ו
(י) שִׁמְרַכ
יָאֵר יְה
(וה) פְּנִי
(אל) יִכּוּ
שִׁמְלֶךָ ש
לוֹ (מ) --

-- --
-- כִּמ --

-וֶרְנ-

From the Ketef Hinnom scroll:

May Yahweh bless you and
may he keep you.

May Yahweh make
his face shine ...

From Numbers 6:22-
27:

May Yahweh bless
you and keep you.

May Yahweh make
his face to shine
upon you,

and be gracious to
you. May Yahweh lift
up his countenance

upon you, and give

you peace.

Scrolls as amulets

- Compare the *tefillin* or “phylacteries” from the Hebrew Bible (called *ṭoṭafot*).
 - “It shall be for a sign upon your hand, and as a *ṭoṭafot* between your eyes, for with a mighty hand Yahweh brought us out of Egypt.” (Exodus 13:16).



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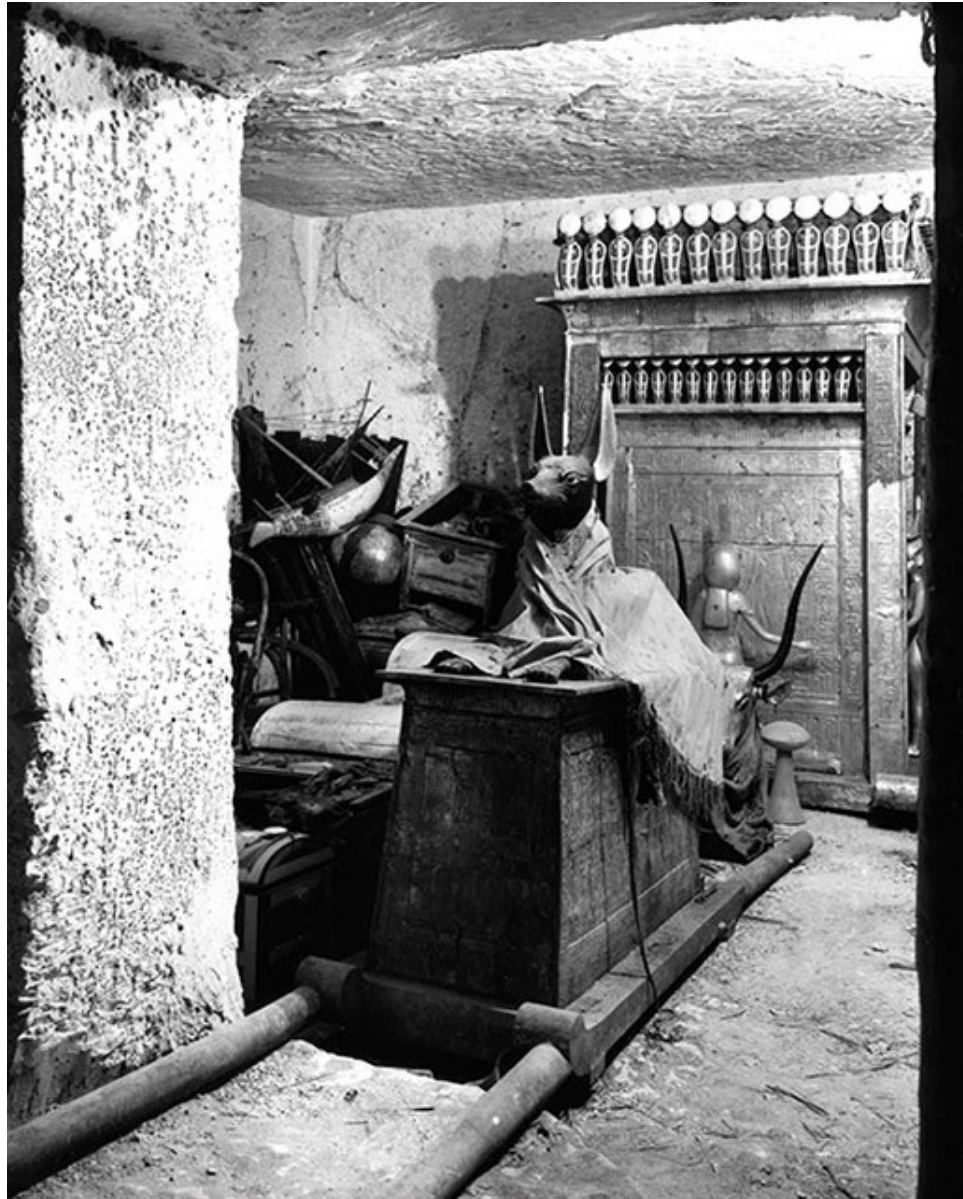
Religion and Magic:

The “Ark of the Covenant”



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Anubis Shrine from the tomb of Tutankhamun (Dynasty 18), as discovered



Stele from Abydos (Ramses II)



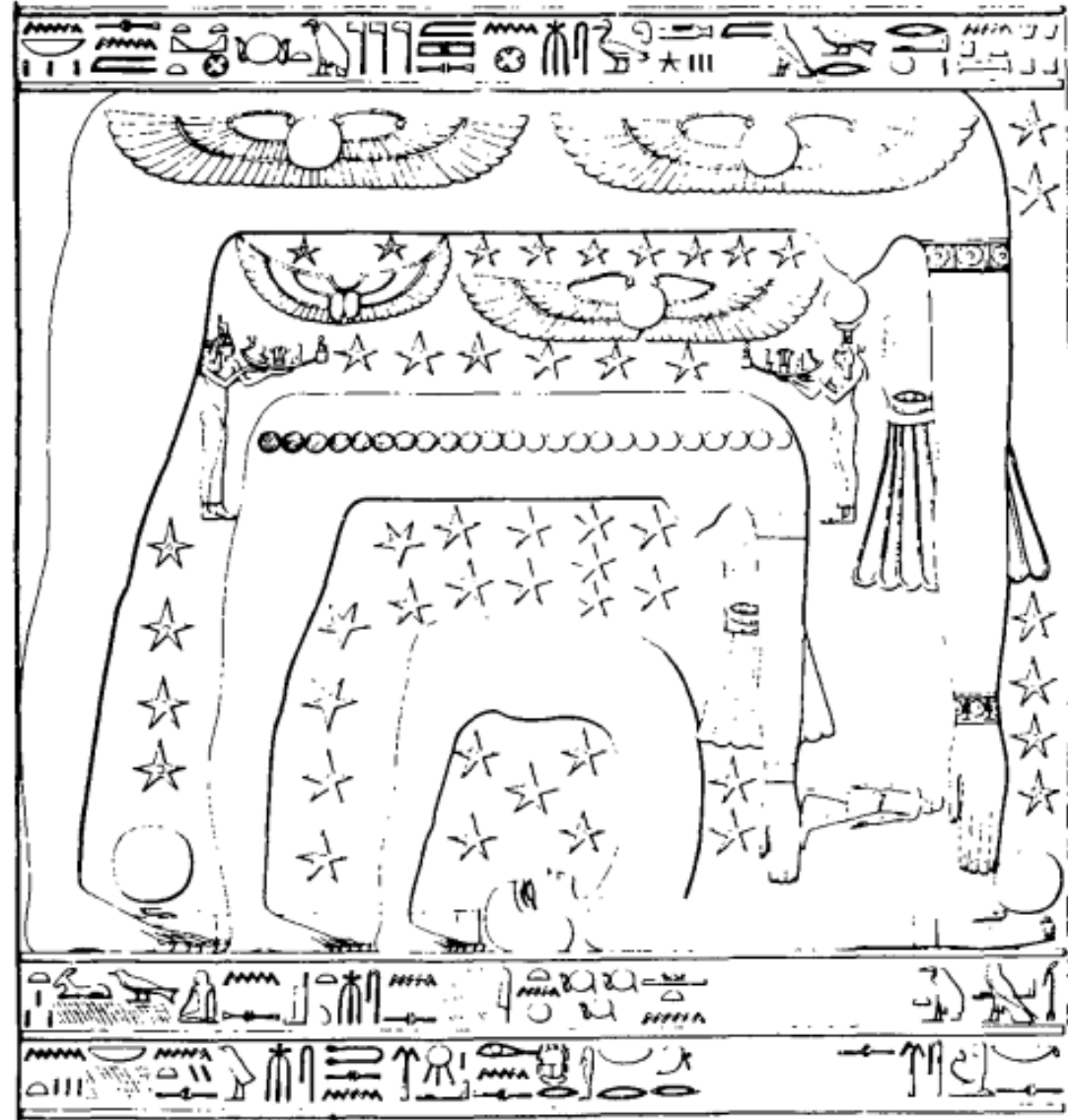
“Worldview”

“Worldview”

- The following examples show that the worldview of Egypt should be counted among that of Mesopotamia and the Levant when understanding the meaning of biblical imagery.

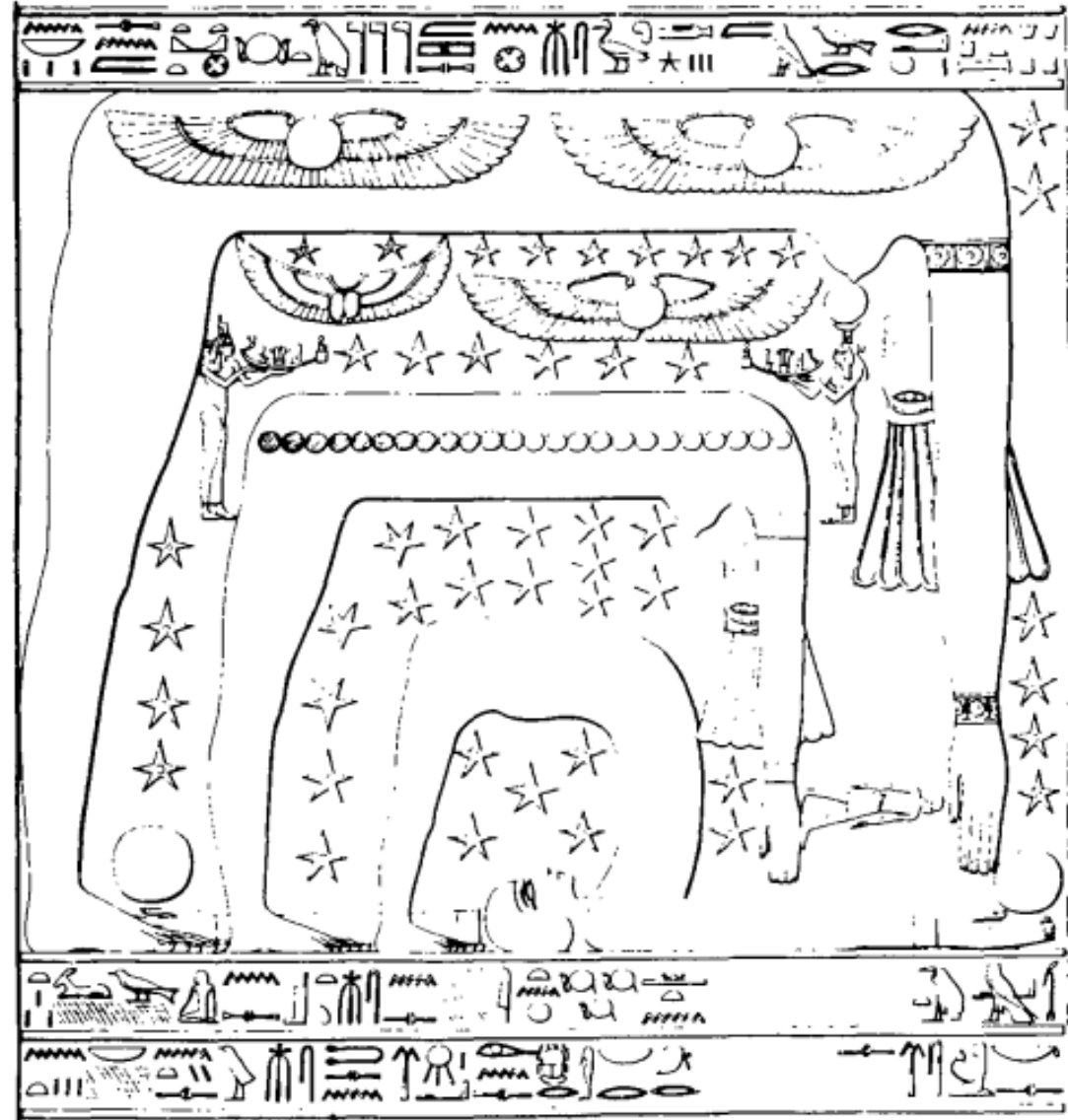
From Temple of Philae (reign of Ptolemy IX)

God said, "Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters." ... God called the dome Sky. ...
God said, "Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear." ... God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good. (from Genesis 1)



From Temple of Philae (reign of Ptolemy IX)

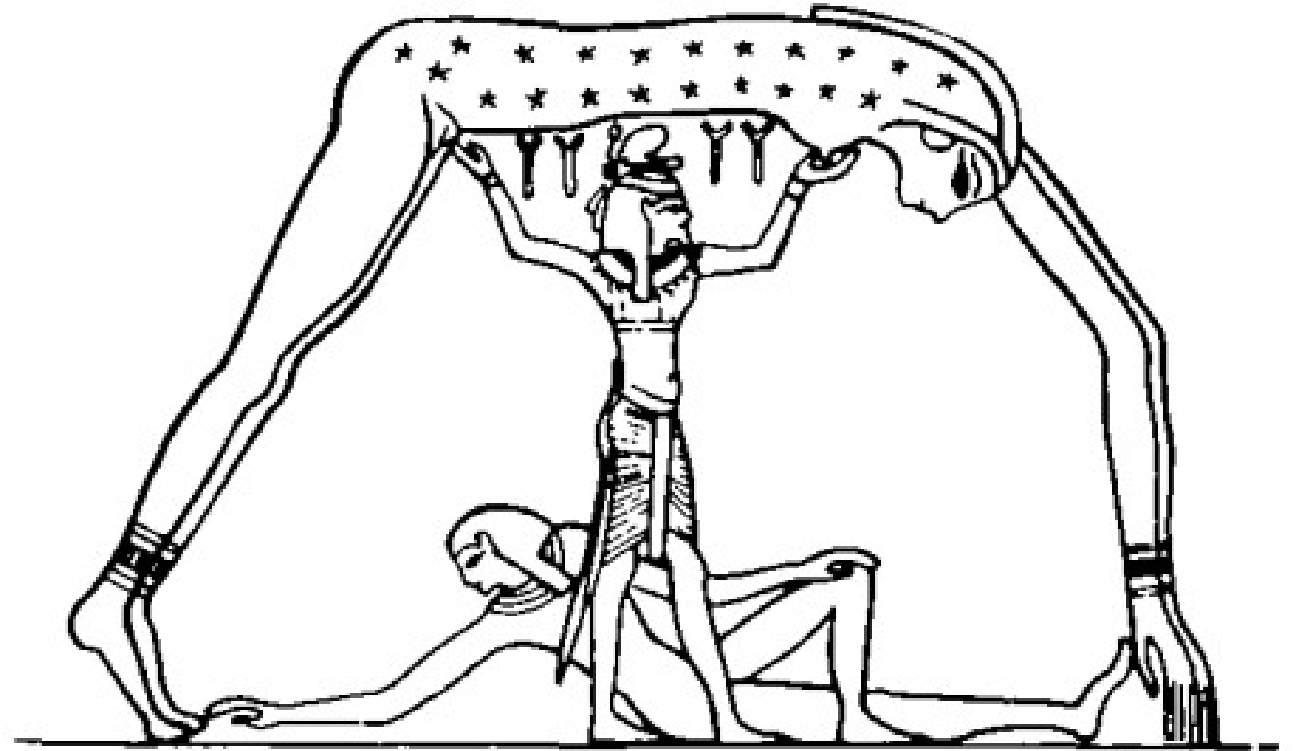
“O Yahweh, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens.” (Ps 8:1)



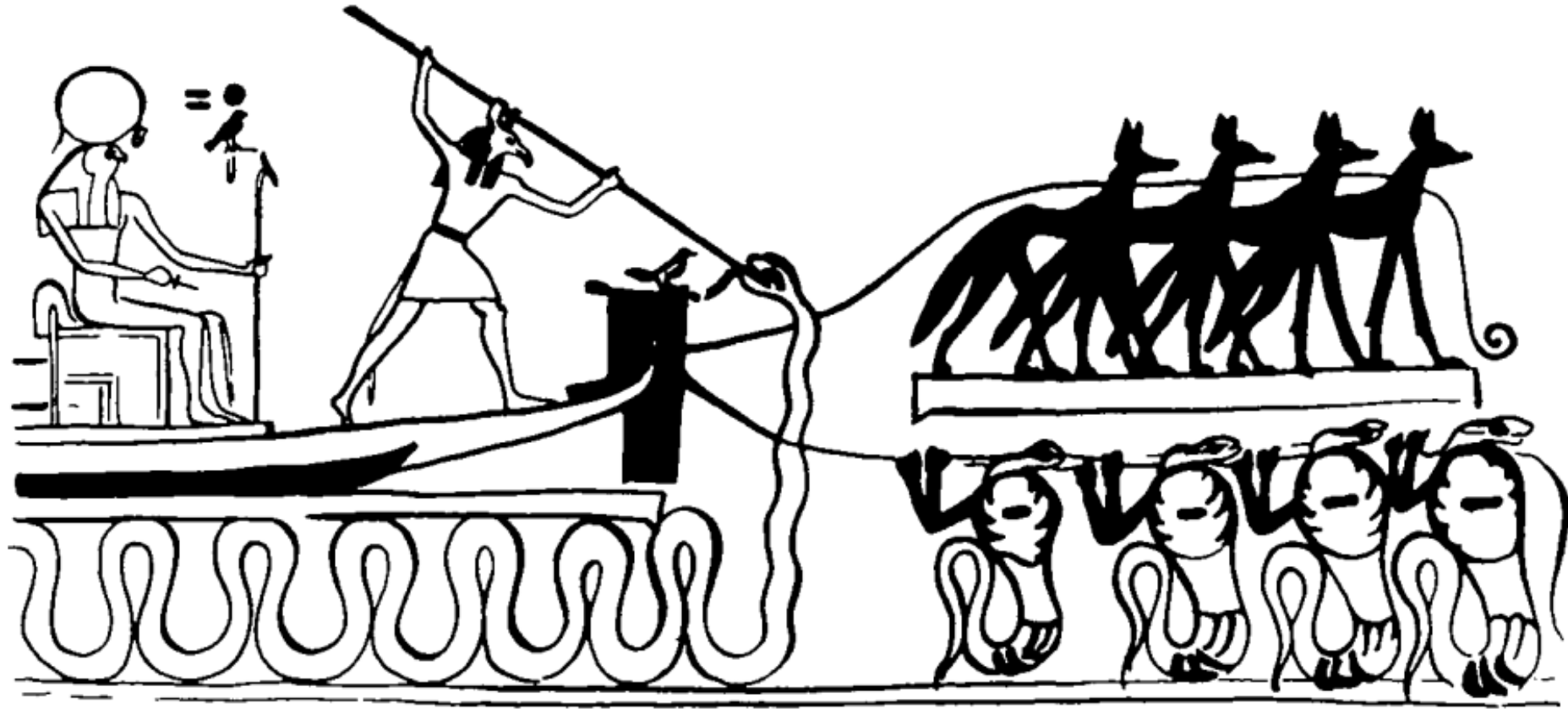
From a New Kingdom sarcophagus

“By the word of Yahweh were the heavens made.” (Ps 33:6)

“Yahweh secures the heavens by his wisdom.” (Proverbs 3:19)



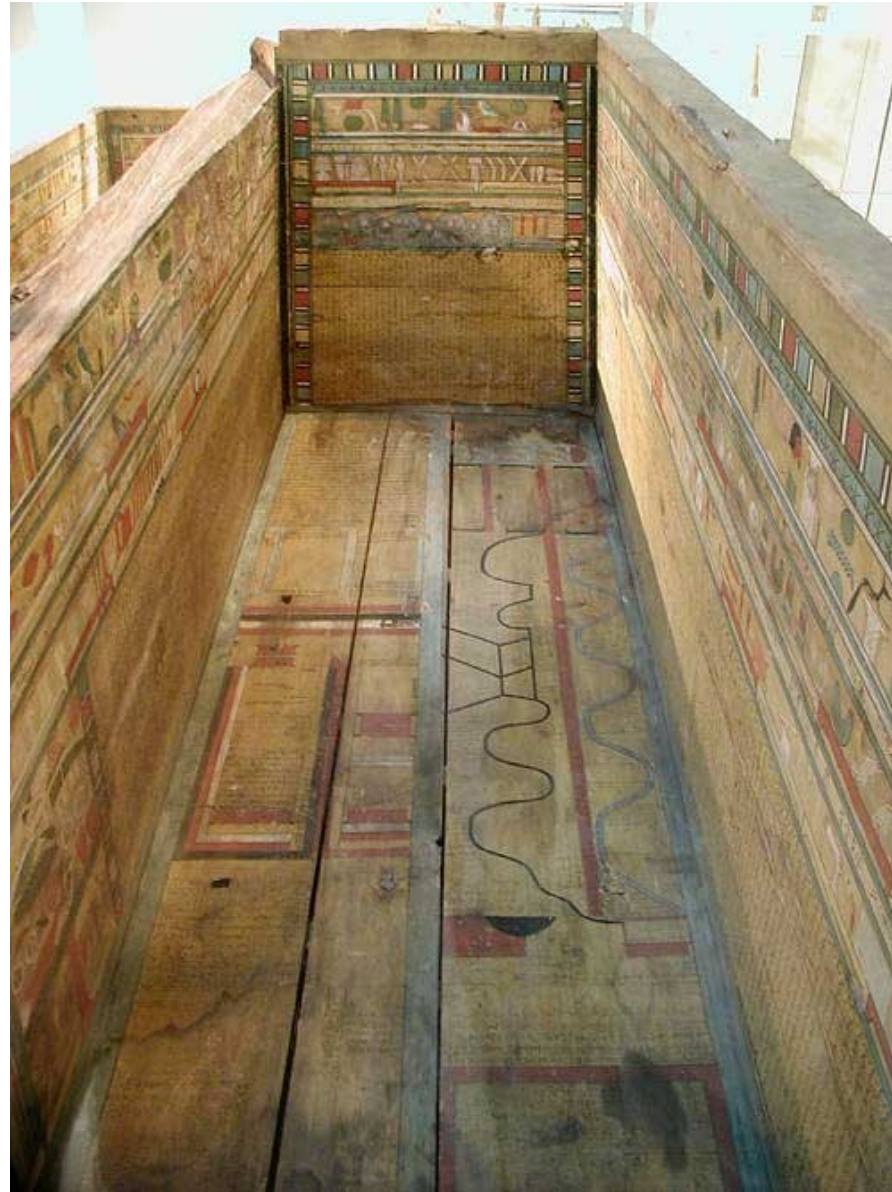
From the Book of the Dead of Heruben
(Dynasty 21)



“Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?
Tell me, if you have understanding.
Who determined its measurements—surely you know!
Or who stretched the line upon it?
On what were its bases sunk,
Or who laid its cornerstone
When the morning stars sang together
And all the heavenly beings[a] shouted for joy?

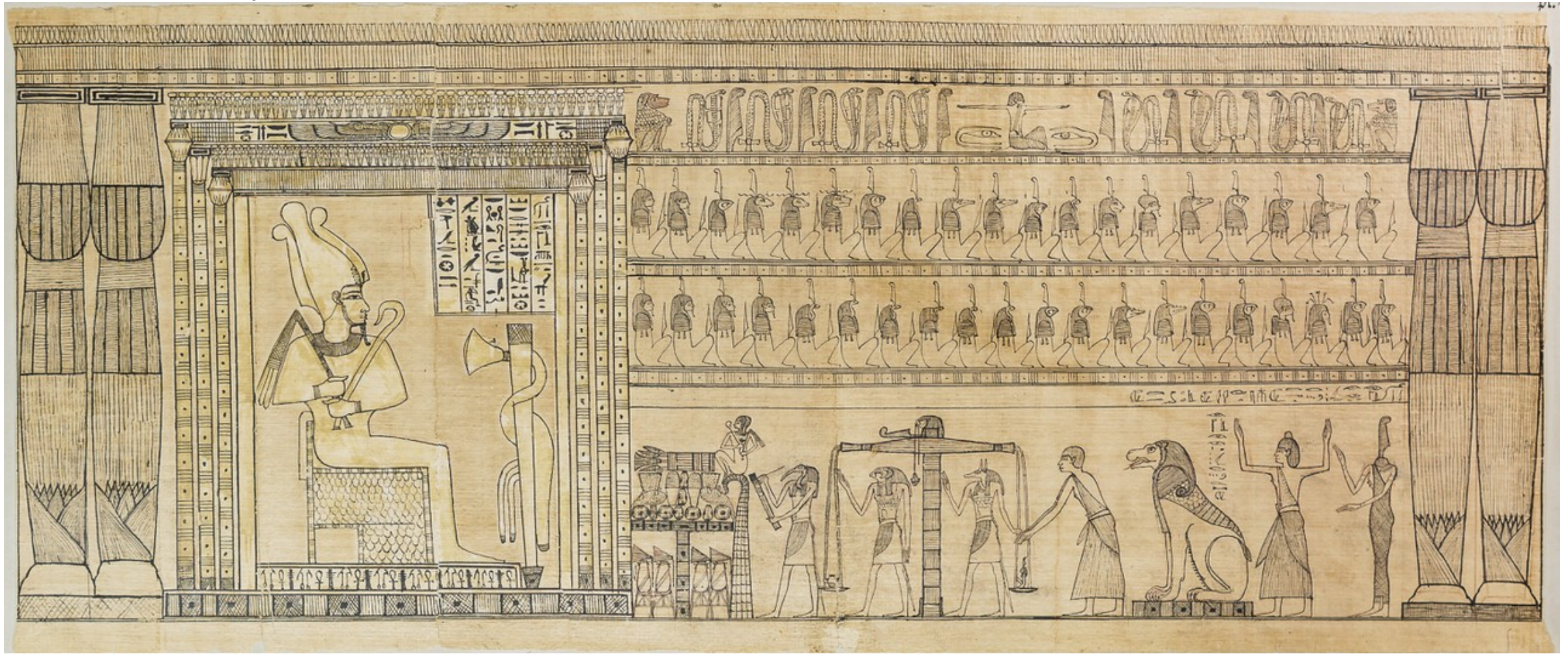
...

Have you entered into the springs of the sea,
Or walked in the recesses of the deep?
Have the gates of death been revealed to you,
Or have you seen the gates of deep darkness?
Have you comprehended the expanse of the earth?
Declare, if you know all this.” From Job 38



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From a Ptolemaic Book of the Dead (Oriental Institute Museum)



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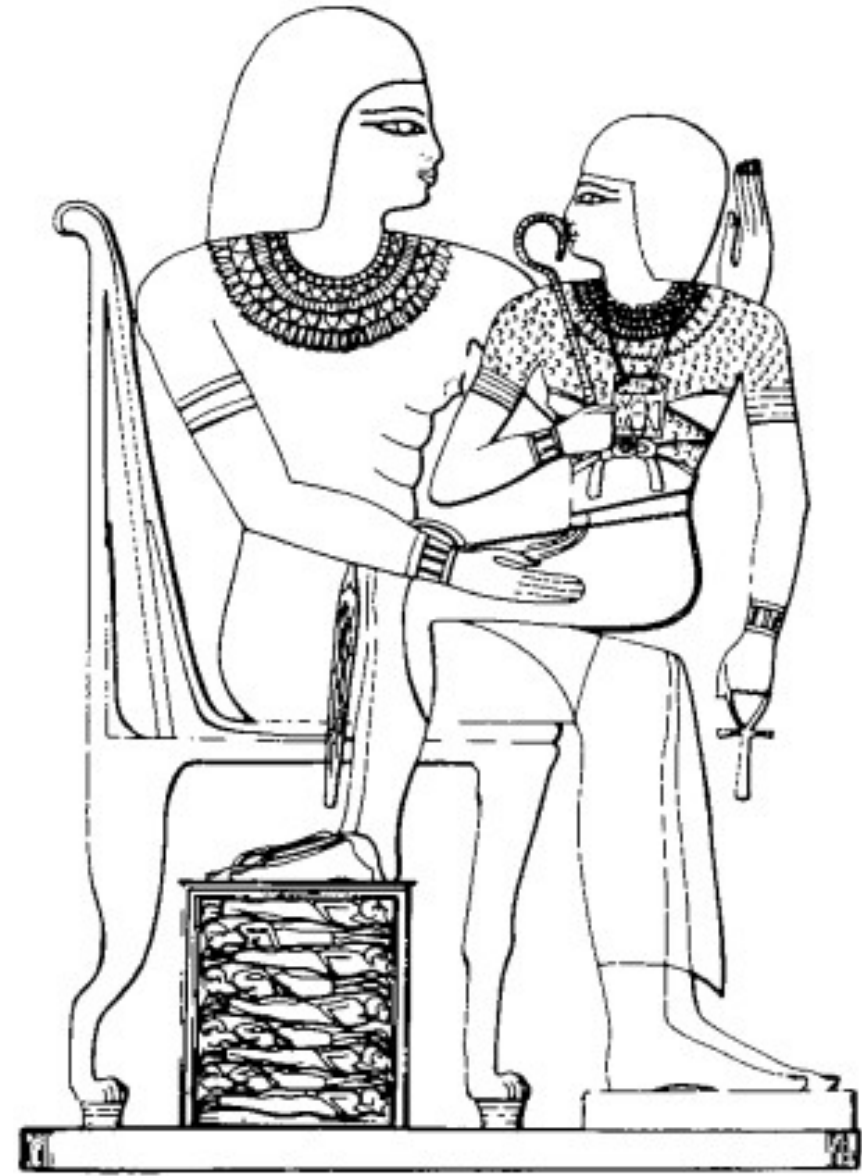


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Those of low estate are but a breath,
Those of high estate are a delusion;
In the balances they go up;
They are together lighter than a breath.
Put no confidence in extortion,
And set no vain hopes on robbery;
If riches increase, do not set your heart on them. From Psalm 62

Therefore Sheol has enlarged its appetite
And opened its mouth beyond measure;
The nobility of Jerusalem[b] and her multitude go down,
Her throng and all who exult in her. From Isaiah 5

Painting from tomb of Hekaerneheh
depicting Thutmoses III (Dynasty 18)

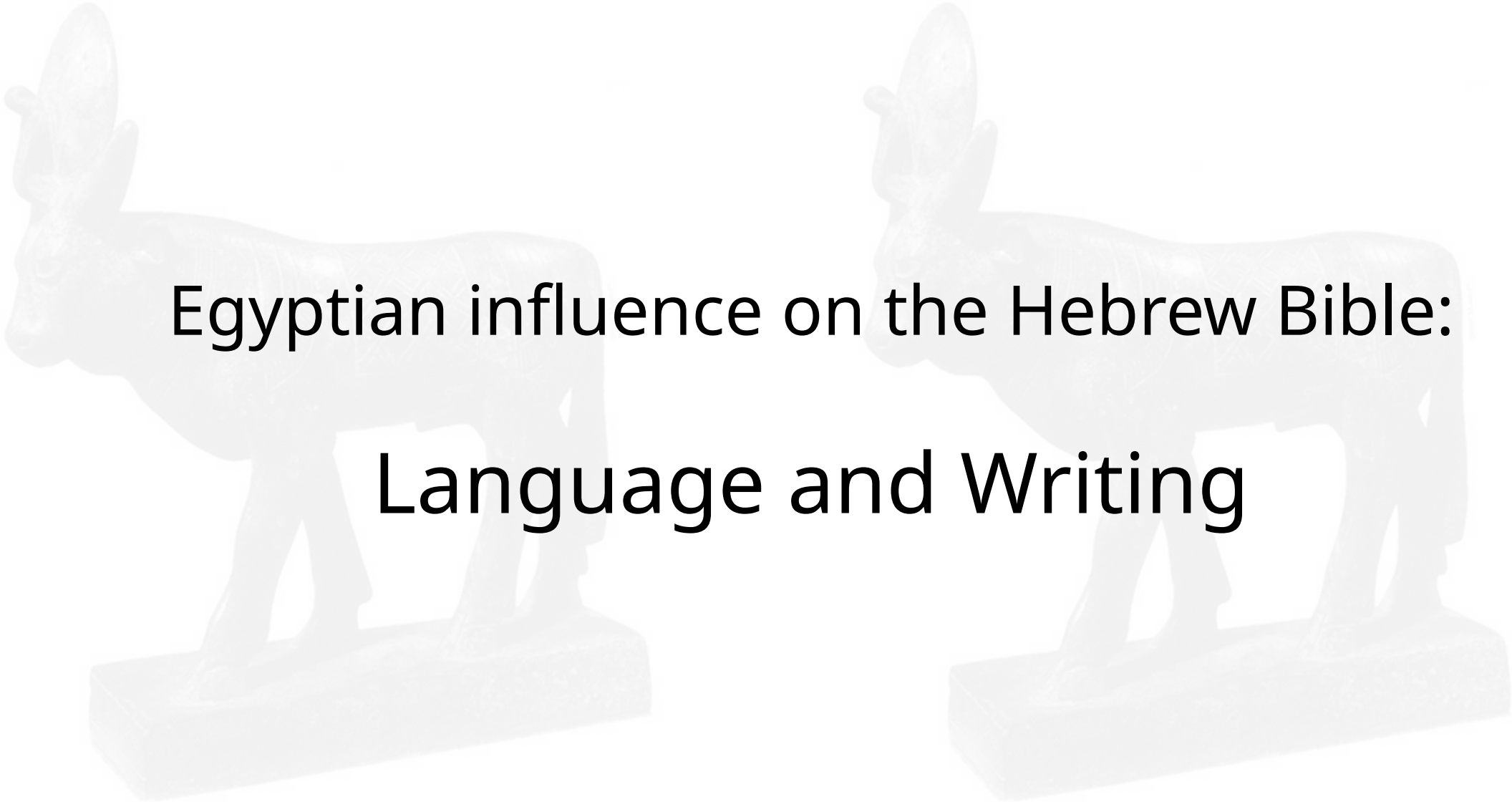


Painting from tomb of Hekaerneheh
depicting Thutmoses III (Dynasty 18)

Yahweh says to my lord:
"Sit at my right hand
Until I make your enemies your
footstool."



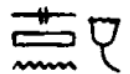

Psalm 110:1







Egyptian influence on the Hebrew Bible: Language and Writing

Egyptian and Hebrew

- Some Egyptian words used in the Hebrew Bible:
 1. *'efah*, a measure for dry goods = Egyptian 
 - cf. Coptic *oipe* and *aipi*.
 2. *ḥātam* "to seal" = Egyptian *ḥtr* 
 3. *shoshan* "lily" = Egyptian *sšn* 
 4. *tēbāh* "ark" (as in Noah) = Egyptian *dbꜣ* "shrine, coffin, boat" 

There are perhaps 50 or 60 more.

Egyptian and Hebrew

- Some Egyptian names used in the Hebrew Bible:
 1. *ḥap* "Apis bull" = Egyptian *ḥp* 
 2. *par'oh* "Pharaoh" = Egyptian *pr-cʿ* lit. "Great House" 
 3. *'āsnath* "Asenath," wife of Joseph = Egyptian *ns-nyt* "She who belongs to Neith"
 4. *siserā'* "Sisera" (Judges) = Egyptian *ssy-rʿ* (nickname of Ramesses II)
 5. *pinḥās* "Phineas" = Egyptian *pʿ-nḥsy* "The Nubian"

Egyptian and Hebrew

- General implications of Egyptian words used in Hebrew:

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Egyptian and Hebrew

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 - Many words, especially proper names, use the Late Egyptian article *p³* and *t³* “the,” which means they were borrowed into Hebrew relatively late.

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- General implications of Egyptian words used in Hebrew:
 - Not unique to Hebrew: all other nearby ancient languages related to Hebrew had loan words from Egyptian.
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 - Many words, especially proper names, use the Late Egyptian article *p3* and *t3* “the,” which means they were borrowed into Hebrew relatively late.
 - Many words are measurements, luxury goods and other items, and words that relate to writing technology (“ink,” “papyrus,” “scribal palette”).

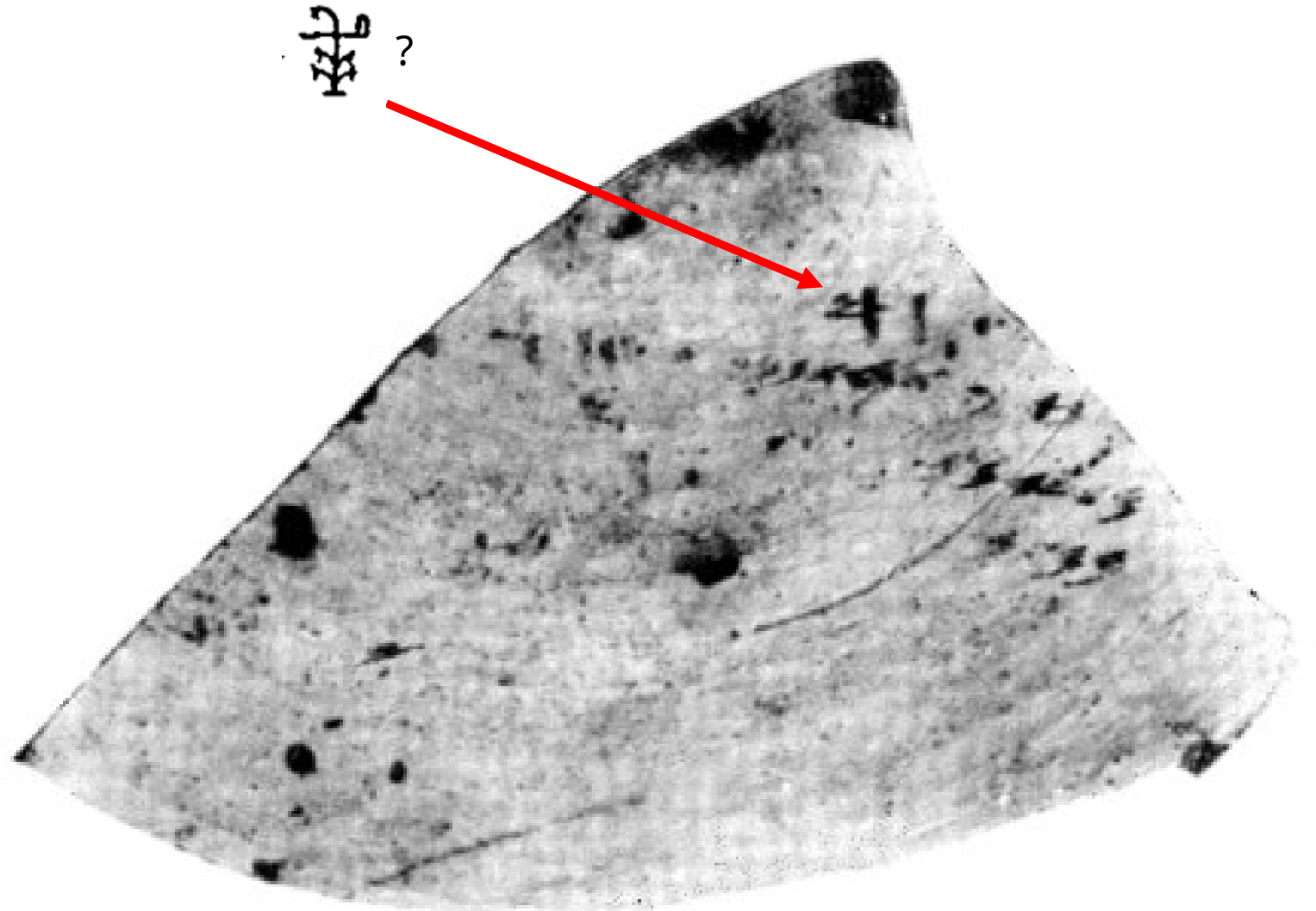
Egyptian and Hebrew

- Egyptian phrases found in Hebrew:
 - To mourn by “putting one’s face between one’s knees” (1 Kings 18:42, said of Elijah).
 - Ethical conduct as a “way of life” (Proverbs 6:23, Psalm 16:11).

Numbers and accounting

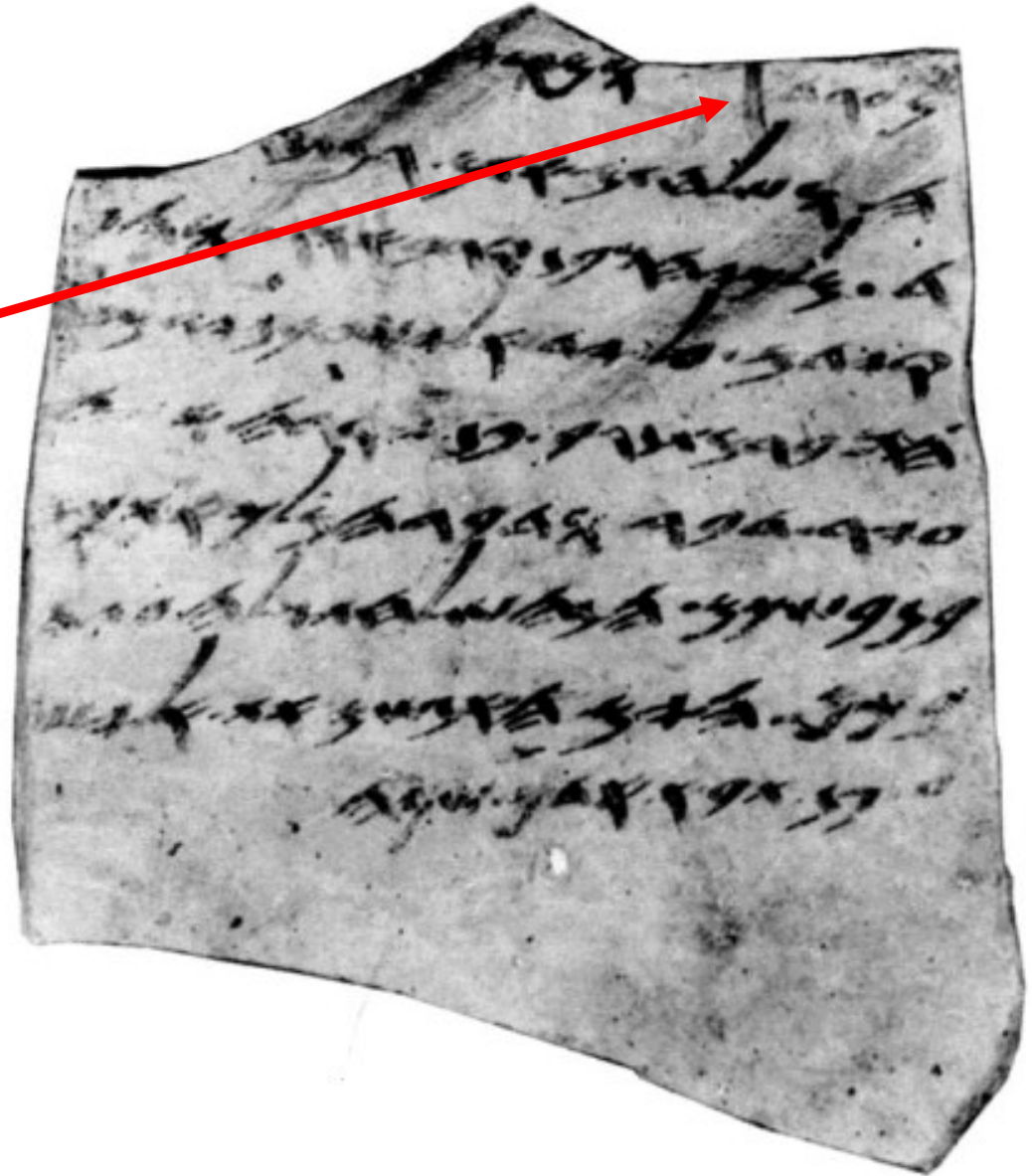
- In addition to loanwords used for units of measure (“ephah”), Judean scribes used Egyptian numerals in hieratic form exclusively to represent numbers.
 - If hieratic was not used, the numbers were written out as words (i.e. “one” instead of 1).

Ostrakon from Arad (Negev region, far south Judah), no. 25



Ostracon from Arad (Negev region, far south Judah), no. 24

The hieratic numeral 50



Scribal practices

- Biblical literature was composed and compiled using similar **media** (scrolls and ink) and **method** (scribal practices) as found in Egypt.

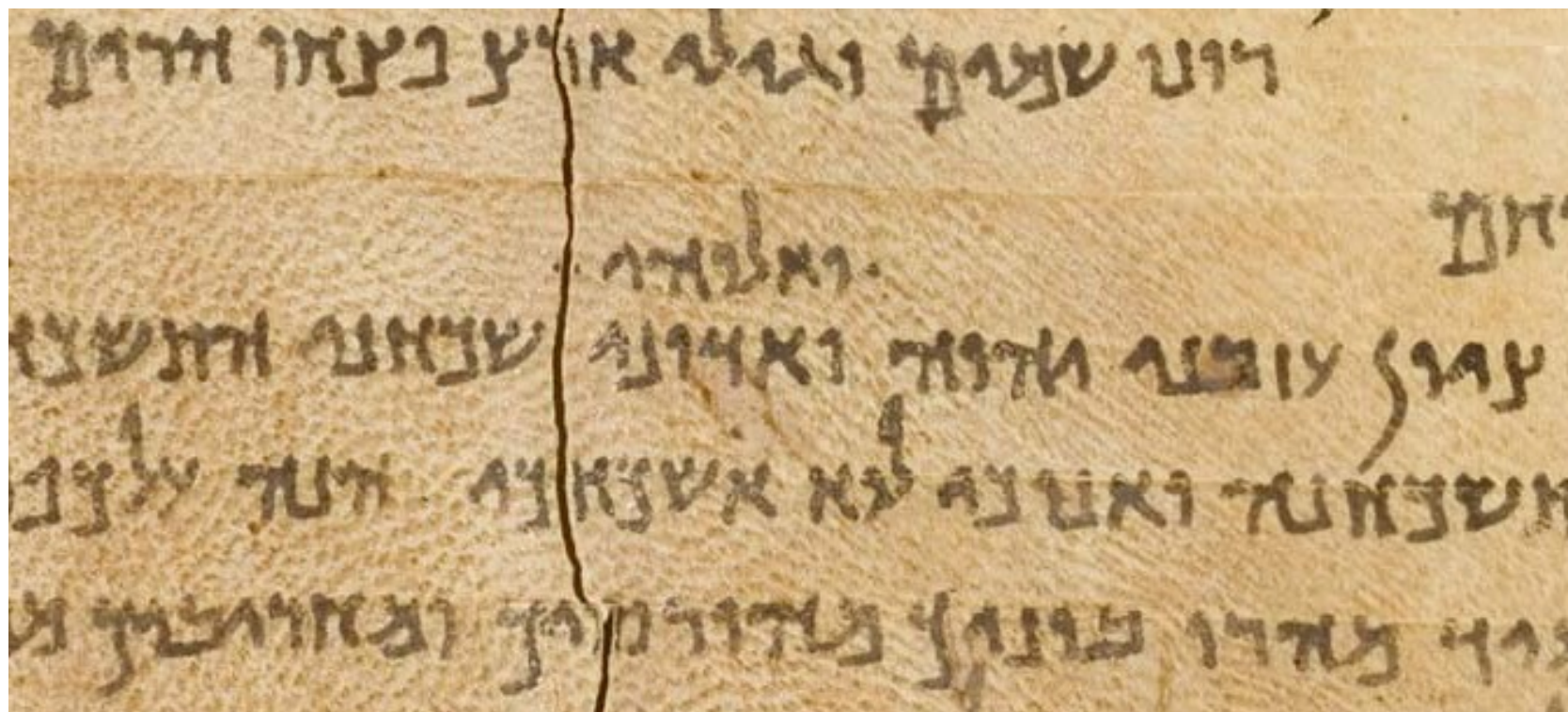
Scribal practices

- Why?
 - Economic reasons
 - Made possible by similar writing systems which are historically related

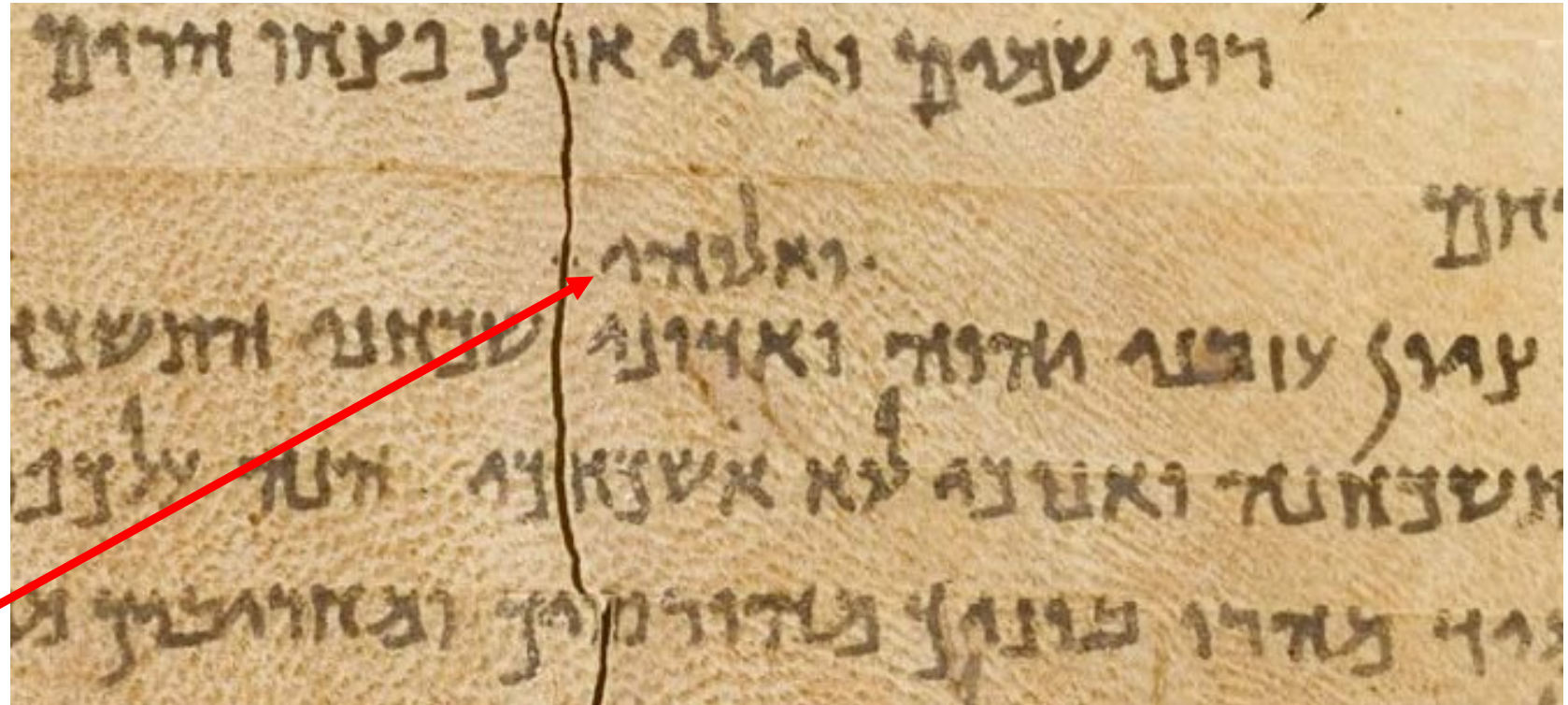
Scribal practices

- Understanding how scrolls were produced and written, especially **how errors and corrections are made**, is important for interpreting the Hebrew Bible.

Isaiah 49:14 from the "Great Isaiah Scroll" found at Qumran

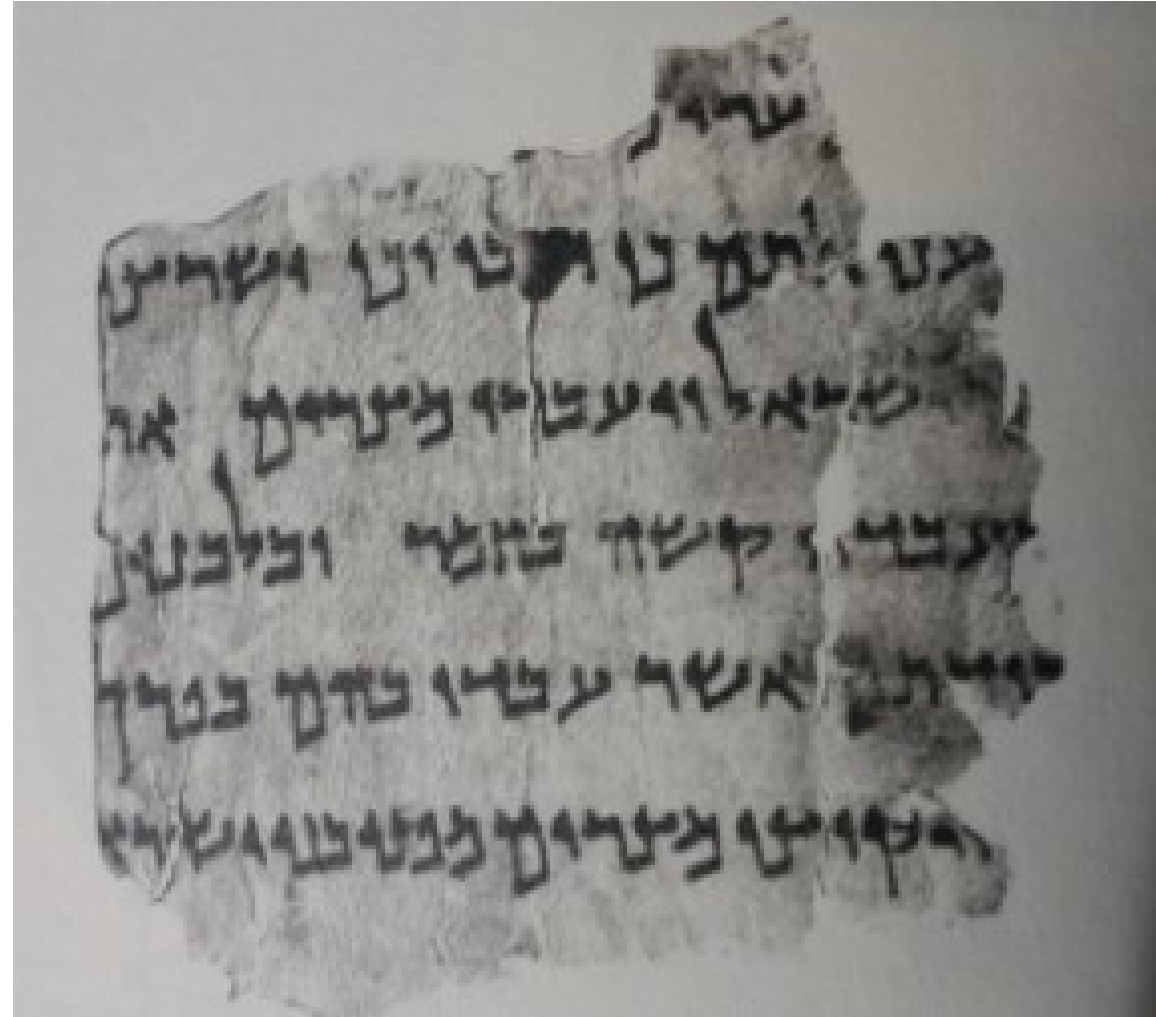


Isaiah 49:14 from the "Great Isaiah Scroll" found at Qumran

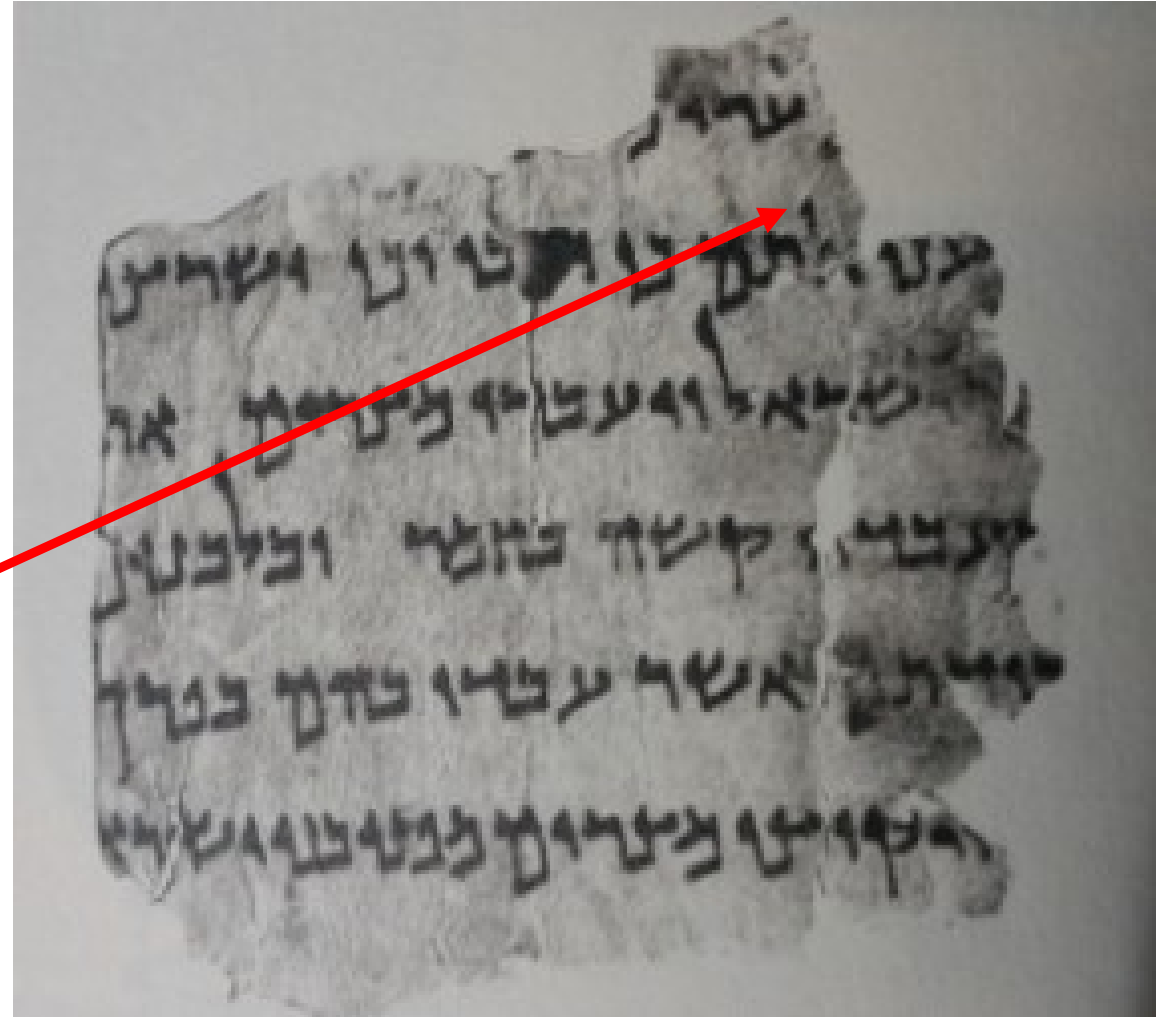


Supralinear scribal correction: "my god" is meant to replace "my lord."

Fragment of Exodus 1:11-14 from the
Dead Sea Scrolls

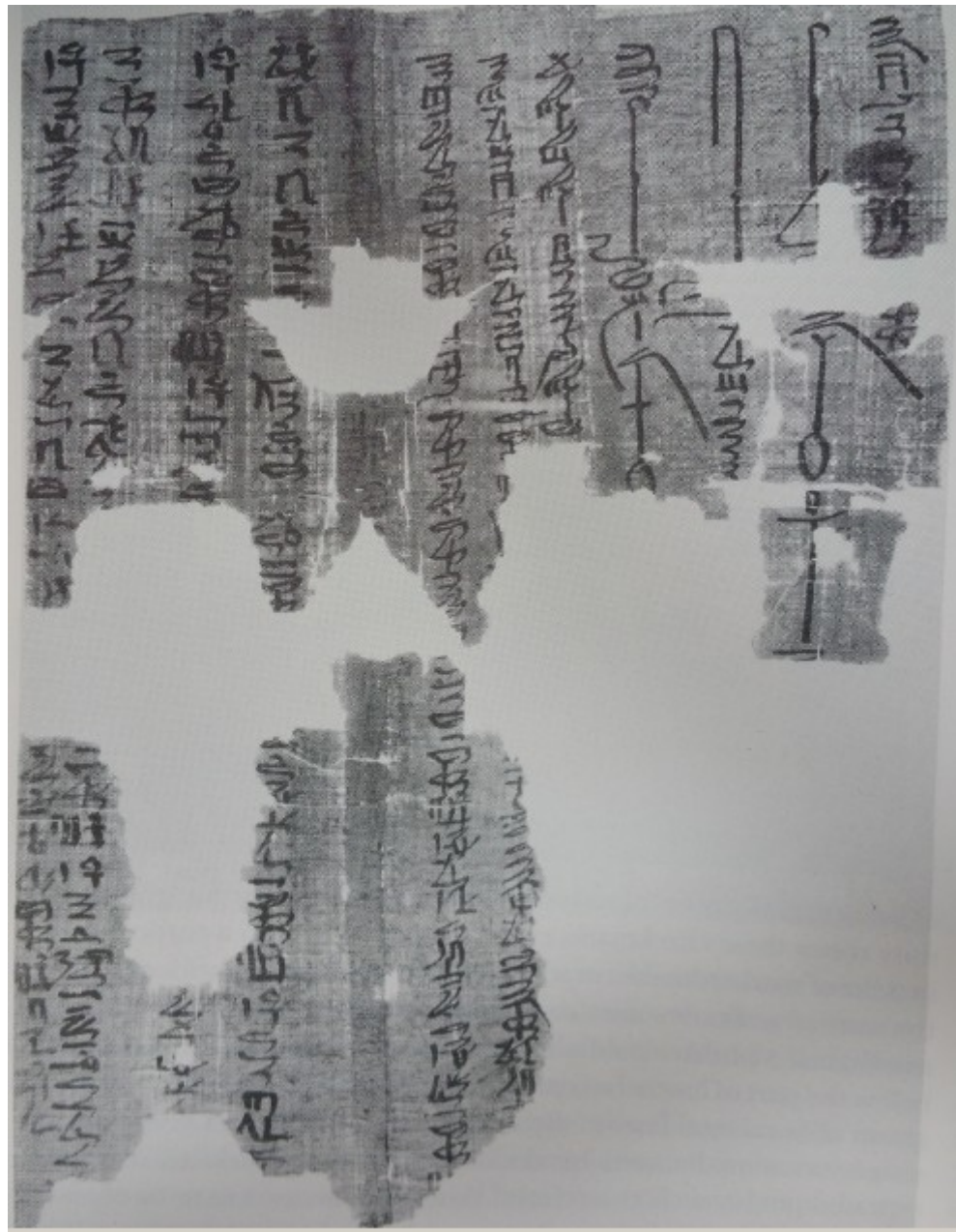


Fragment of Exodus 1:11-14 from the
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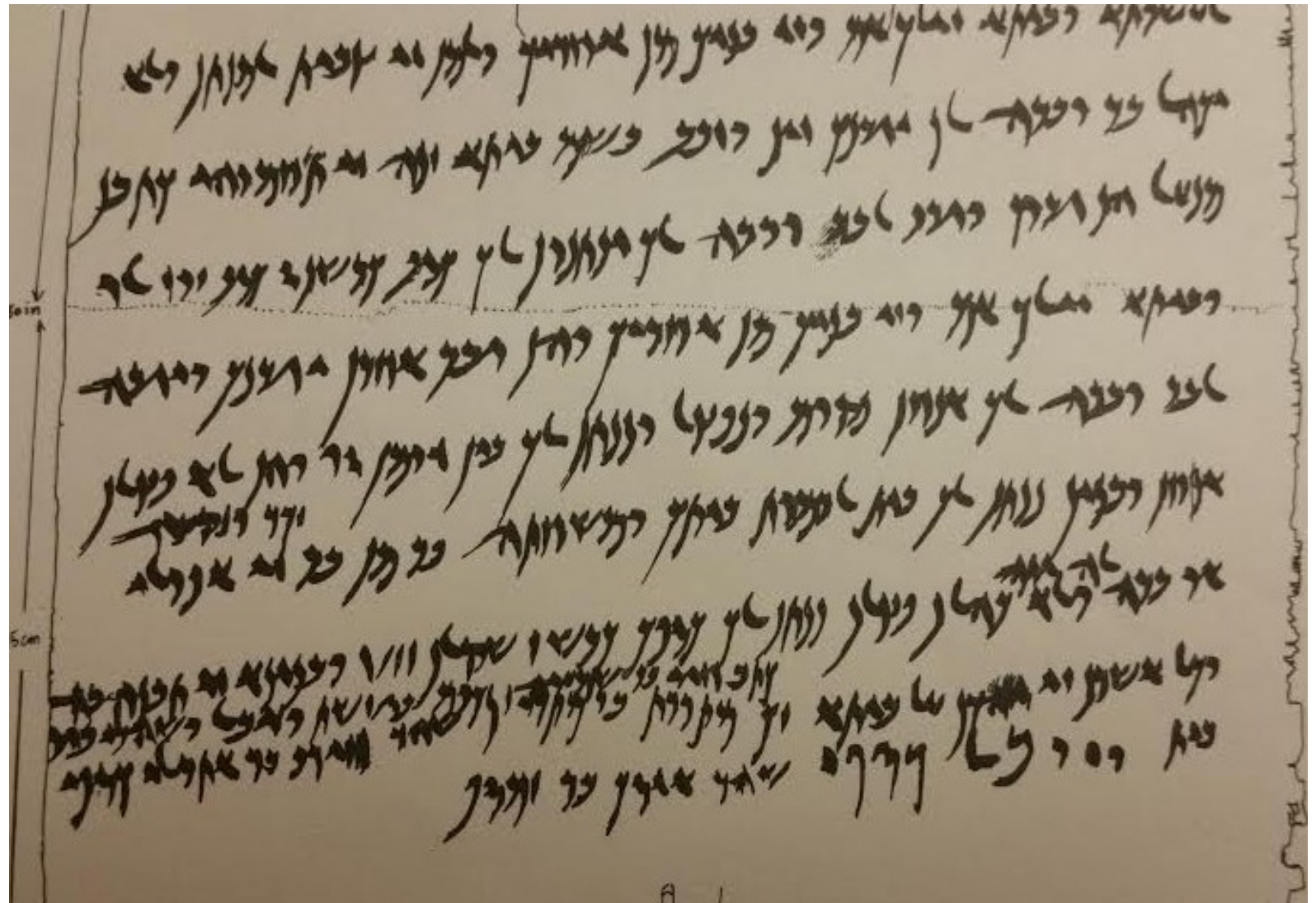
A scribe inserted a "w," which rises slightly above the line, after finishing the word (or the section).

Scribal practices evident on an early Middle Kingdom letter (ca 2000 BCE)

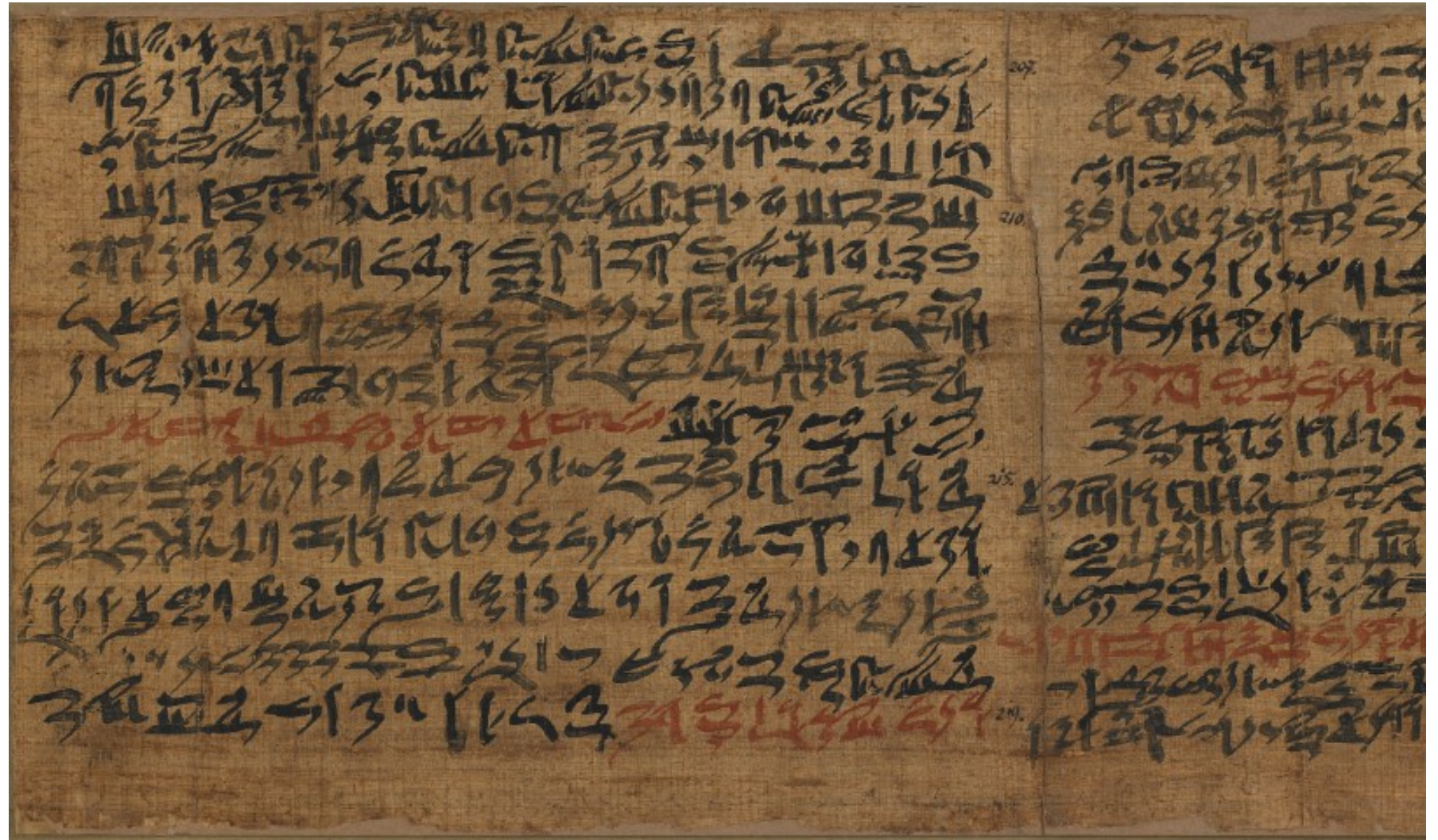


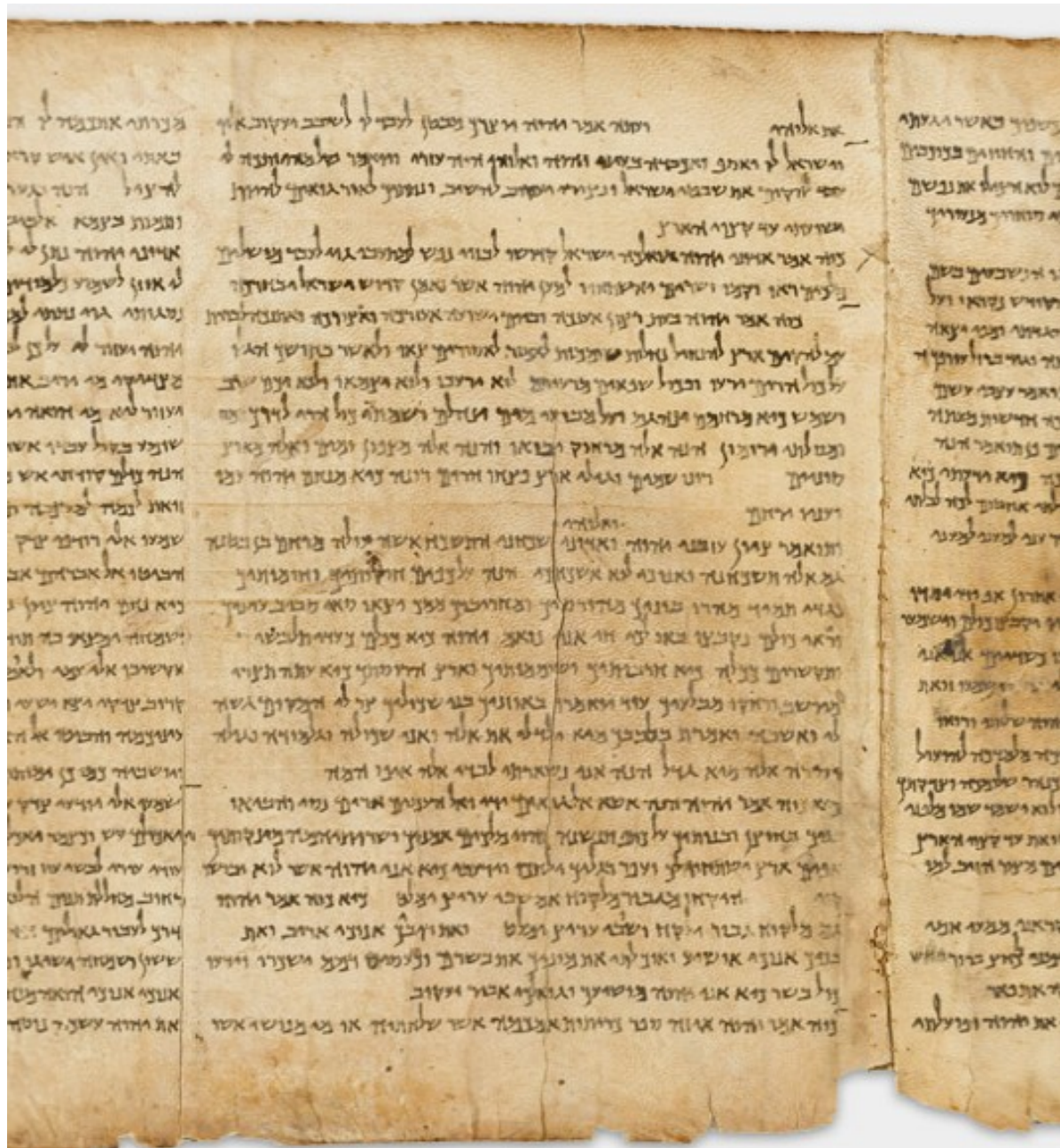
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End of an Aramaic contract
from Elephantine



A copy of the Tale of Sinuhe (Dynasty 12)





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Scribal practices

- Was biblical literature written on papyrus scrolls and in a similar fashion to Egyptian scrolls?

Scribal practices

- Was biblical literature written on papyrus scrolls and in a similar fashion to Egyptian scrolls?
 - The only physical evidence we have is from the Dead Sea Scrolls, which are from the Roman era, and are mostly written on parchment (made from leather).

Scribal practices

- Was biblical literature written on papyrus scrolls and in a similar fashion to Egyptian scrolls?
 - Allusions in the Hebrew Bible itself to scrolls suggests, however, that technology and practice similar to that of Egyptian scribes was utilized.

Scribal practices

- Jeremiah 34
 - The king of Judah had pieces of a scroll composed (by dictation) by Jeremiah cut into shreds and thrown into the fire.

The use of special knives to cut papyrus is known from Egypt.

Only papyrus scrolls, not parchment scrolls, could be cut so easily and burned.

Scribal practices

- The book of Deuteronomy
 - Frequently alluded to as a “scroll” in the Hebrew Bible.
 - In its original state, was meant for public consumption and reading.

Scribal practices

- The imagery of “erasing”:
 - Compare Isaiah 44:22: “I wipe away your sins like a cloud, your transgressions like mist.”
 - Also compare the ritual in Numbers 5, where the writing on the scroll is washed away.

Ink on papyrus (not parchment) was able to be erased with moisture and rubbing.

Cf. the determinative on the Egyptian word for “erase” 

Scribal practices

- The prophet Ezekiel was commanded to eat a scroll:
 - “As I looked, there was a hand stretched out to me, holding a written scroll. He unrolled it before me, and it was inscribed on both the front and the back; on it were written lamentations, dirges, and woes. He said to me, ‘Son of man, eat what is offered to you.’”

Papyrus scrolls in Egypt were often written on the front and the back.

Papyrus was edible (though probably the lower part/roots).



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Scribal practices

- Traces of these scribal practices should be sought in the Hebrew Bible as we have it today.
- Besides corrections and errors, methods of ordering and storing scrolls, as well as the maximum length of text that a scroll allowed, could be used to understand the biblical text.

Scribal practices

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Scribal practices

- One literary composition may be too big for one scroll.
Example: Chronicles, which is divided into 1 and 2 Chronicles in our bibles.
- This is because the entire work was too long for one scroll: two needed to be used.

Scribal practices

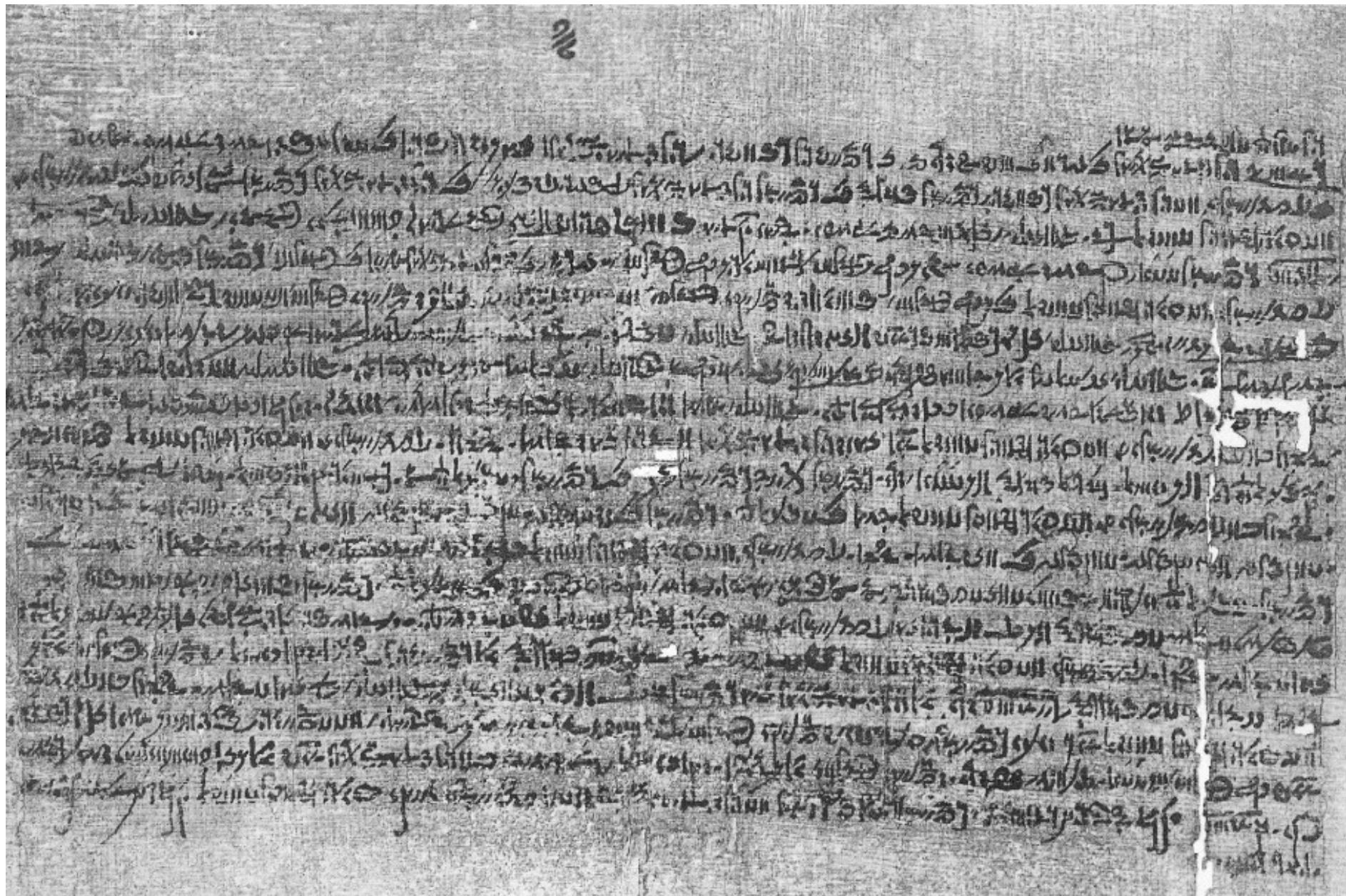
- Catch phrases were used at the end of one scroll and the beginning of another in order to keep them together in libraries:

“And in the first year of King Cyrus of Persia, when the word of Yahweh spoken by Jeremiah was fulfilled...” (2 Chronicles 36:22)

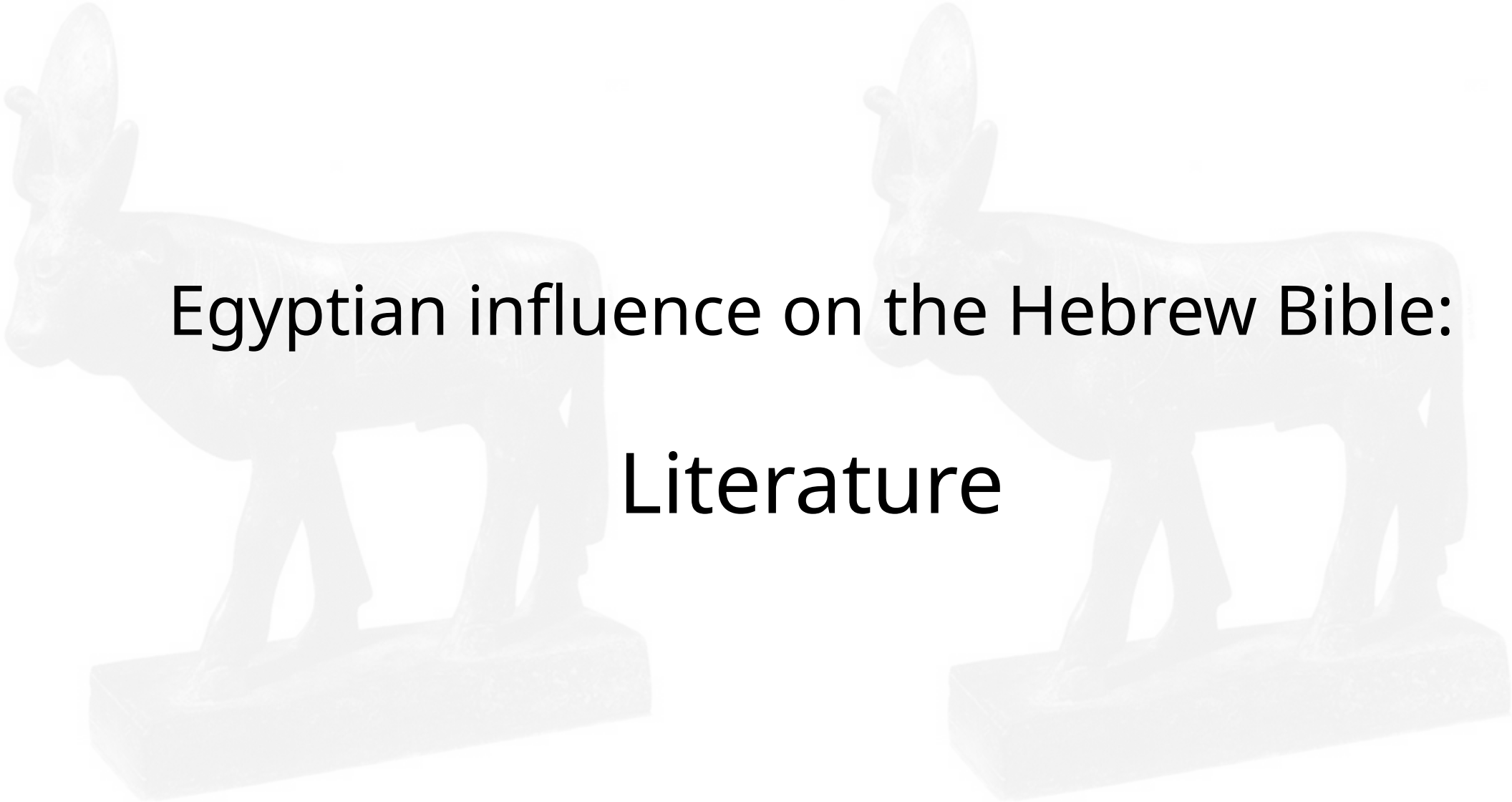
“And in the first year of King Cyrus of Persia, when the word of Yahweh spoken by Jeremiah was fulfilled...” (Ezra 1:1)

Scribal practices

- A similar use of catch phrases can be found in a Demotic narrative text (Setna II), and is known all the way back in cuneiform libraries in the Bronze Age Levant.



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Egyptian influence on the Hebrew Bible: Literature

Literature

Types of literary influences

1. Allusions
2. Literary genres
3. Textual culture

Proverbs and Amenemope

- In 1924, Adolph Erman discovered that Proverbs 22:17-24:22 not only alludes to, but is based on, a portion of the Egyptian *Instruction of Amenemope*.

Proverbs and Amenemope

- *Amenemope* dates from the Ramesside period, and was one of the most popular literary works in Ancient Egypt and, as the biblical allusion attests, in the Near East.

Handwritten text in three columns on an ancient papyrus scroll. The script is a form of Egyptian hieroglyphs. A small number '4' is written at the top center of the scroll. The text is arranged in approximately 15 lines per column, with some lines containing multiple columns of writing. The papyrus is aged and shows some wear and tear, particularly at the bottom right corner.

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Proverbs 22:17-23:11

Words of the wise.

Give your ear and hear my words
And direct your heart to my knowledge,

For it will be pleasant if you keep them in
your belly that they may all be secure on
your lips, in order that your trust may be in
Yahweh, I have taught them to you, even
you, today.

Have I not written for you **thirty** in
deliberation and knowledge, to teach you
the truest of words

From *Amenemope*

Give your ears,
That you may hear the things
that are said. Give your heart
to understand them.

Let (my words) rest in the
casket of your belly. They will
be a mooring ring on your
tongue.

Look to these **thirty** chapters:
they divert, they instruct. They
are the foremost of all books.
They make the ignorant wise.

Proverbs and Amenemope

- The allusions in Proverbs are so clear that Michael V. Fox has reconstructed the way the scribe actually read *Amenemope* as he composed.
- Readings by the Hebrew scribe followed the order of the text in the scroll of *Amenemope*, and it seems that he read through *Amenemope* five times while composing this portion of Proverbs.
 - You cannot “flip around” in a papyrus, but must roll it continuously.

Literature: allusions

Other important examples of intertextuality

- The memoir of Nehemiah in light of the career of the Egyptian Udjahoresne (both during the Persian empire), as presented in an autobiographical inscription.

Literature: allusions

Other important examples of intertextuality

- Lexical and conceptual correspondences between Psalm 104 and Egyptian solar hymns, especially the Great Hymn to the Aten.

Literature: allusions

Other important examples of intertextuality

- Correspondences between a description of Palestine in the Middle Kingdom Egyptian *Tale of Sinuhe* and Deuteronomy 8.

Similar literary genres

- Just as important, if not more so, than studying actual examples of intertextuality (since these are so hard to prove) is the study of similar *genres of literature*.

Similar literary genres

- Some literary genres found in the Hebrew Bible may be derived from genres invented in Egypt.
- Even if there is no relation of origin, similar expression invites comparison and research.

Love poetry

- The clearest example.
- The Song of Songs in the Hebrew Bible (aka “Song of Solomon” and “Canticle of Canticles”) is of a piece with Egyptian love poetry from the late New Kingdom, known from several collections.

Love poetry

- Because the Egyptian love poetry was written, at the minimum, 300 years before the Song of Songs (probably significantly longer), and was written in a very difficult and artificial literary idiom, there may not have been literary dependence.

Love poetry

- Nevertheless, the similarities suggest that authors in Egypt and Judah were drawing on similar traditions.
- Perhaps the Egyptian poetry found its way to the Levant, engendering a series of imitations and a growth of a native tradition, which spawned the Song of Songs.

Love poetry

- Similarities among the poems:
 - Often taking place in the form of dialogue between two lovers.
 - The lovers affectionately refer to themselves as “brother” and “sister.”
 - They often lament mutual inaccessibility.
 - Highly sensuous and erotic imagery and symbolism.

Love poetry

- From an Egyptian poem:

“Your love is as desirable...as oil with honey, [as fine linen] to the bodies of noblemen, as garments to the bodies of gods.”

“My heart desires to go down to bathe myself before you, that I may show you my beauty in a tunic of the finest royal linen, which is drenched in oil.”

(Trans. Michael V. Fox)

Love poetry

- From the Song of Songs:

“How beautiful are you, my darling, how beautiful! Your eyes are doves seen through your veil. Your hair is like a flock of goats streaming down Mount Gilead.”

“My beloved reached his hand through the door, and my insides groaned for him. I arose to open to my beloved, and my hands dripped myrrh, my fingers, liquid myrrh, on the handles of the lock. I opened to my beloved, but my beloved had turned away and gone.”

(Trans. Michael V. Fox)

Love poetry

- Differences:
 - The Egyptian poems are at times humorous, dramatic, and expressing fickle and childish emotions.
 - The Song of Songs demonstrates an unparalleled marriage of rustic sensibility with exquisite imagery...the most intense emotions expressed with perfectly formulated physical descriptions.

(N.B.: the Egyptian poems are a corpus, while the Song of Songs is a single composition)

Love poetry

- The Song of Songs, once more:

“Come, my beloved, let’s go to the field. We’ll pass the night in the countryside; we’ll go early to the vineyards. We’ll see if the vine has blossomed, the bud opened, the pomegranates bloomed.”

Literature: genres

Other genres of literature

- Historical writing and annals
- Short stories and prose fiction
- Autobiographies
- Wisdom literature

The Egyptian legacy of the Hebrew Bible

- The first translation of the Hebrew Bible was made in Alexandria, into Greek, beginning in the 3rd century BCE.
- Some of the earliest exegesis of the Hebrew Bible was produced in Egypt as well (Philo).
- Continued literary activity by Jews with roots in the Hebrew Bible took place in Egypt (*Joseph and Aseneth*).
- Translations made into Coptic by the native Egyptian Christian church.

Conclusions

- Types of interaction:
 1. Cross-cultural similarities
 2. Direct dependence

Conclusions

- Where would the influence of Egypt have been felt?
 - The elite levels: scribes and priests.
 - The people as a whole.

Conclusions

- How does knowing about Ancient Egypt help us interpret the Hebrew Bible?
 - The religious milieu
 - Religious and magical symbolism being employed
 - A shared worldview of the cosmos and the divine
 - Similar ways of producing and organizing literature
 - Transnational relevance of certain forms of speech and literary genres



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