Eden in Egypt

by Ralph Ellis

Introduction

The location of the Garden of Eden and the whereabouts of the Tower of Babel have perplexed theologians and historians alike for hundreds if not thousands of years. And so sparse is the information and so intractable is this conundrum, that many have chosen to consign the Book of Genesis to the realms of mythology and legend. In other words, none of it actually happened.

However, as we have seen from my previous articles on astrology within the Bible, it is entirely possible to find real science and real history where others have failed to see anything bar fantasy and fiction. The methodology for achieving this is not to get sidetracked by Western socio-religious constraints. Simply discard what we think we know, and start afresh with a blank sheet and an open mind. Pretend that the Torah has just been unearthed in Egypt, and we know nothing about it. So, reading afresh in this manner, what can we discover about the Garden of Eden and the Tower of Babel? Surprisingly, the answer to this, is 'a surprising amount'.

Eden in Egypt

Many authors have attempted to identify and locate the legendary Tower of Babel in Sumer, in modern Iraq. However, with all due respect to their tireless research efforts, a location in Mesopotamia for this legendary pyramid is not the only conclusion that we can draw from the meagre information that is available to us. And the obvious alternative location can be gleaned from some of the opening verses in the Book of Genesis, which say:

> *And a river went out of Eden to water the garden; and from thence it was parted, and became into four branches. Gen 2:10*

Now there is only one river in this region that passes through a garden and then divides into four branches, and that is the Nile - which runs through the valley oasis of Egypt before branching out at the Delta. And while the Nile may only have two branches nowadays, it did have four in antiquity. However, readers might exclaim that the Torah specifically names the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, and so this cannot be so. But of course the Torah does not actually mention these famous rivers at all, it mentions the חדקל Chiddeqel and the פרת Parath. But is the Chiddaqel the Tigris and the Parath the Euprates? Some of the biblical references do not readily support that argument, and point more towards Egypt.

Besides, if we turn to Josephus Flavius' record of this Genesis account, we see that the actual names and locations of the rivers of Eden had been lost to us by this time. Josephus says of Eden:

> *Now the garden was watered by one river, which ran round about the whole earth, and was parted into four branches. (Antiquities 1:1:3)*

The four branches mentioned here are then identified by Josephus as being the: Ganges, Euphrates, Tigris and the Nile. Now that is some garden! Clearly, by the time Josephus was writing his version of the Old Testament, the name and location of these rivers had been corrupted or lost. And yet Josephus was copying from a much older version of the Torah/Tanakh than the classical Old Testament in use today. Josephus was using the Torah that had been taken from the Temple of Jerusalem in AD 70, which dated from the time of the Babylonian exile. And yet even this early version of the Torah appears to have been confused as to where the four branches of the Eden river lay.

But if the names of the branches had been garbled by the 6th century BC, perhaps the description of the layout of this river may be a little more reliable - in brief, it was a long river running through a garden that eventually parted into four branches. So let us run with that idea and see where it takes us to. The possibility exists, therefore, that the Book of Genesis was referring to Egypt and to the Nile, and not to Mesopotamia at all. This is a suggestion that gives us some further interesting possibilities, but the prospect of finding a comprehensive explanation and a location for Eden and its integral Adam and Eve story seemed impossible, as the narrative and genealogies from this early part of the Bible initially seem too fragmented and confusing to provide a verifiable history. However, if Eden was in Egypt, and if Eden contained a famous garden and a famous first lady and first man then there may well be a good explanation for this story, and a comparable description of it in the historical record.

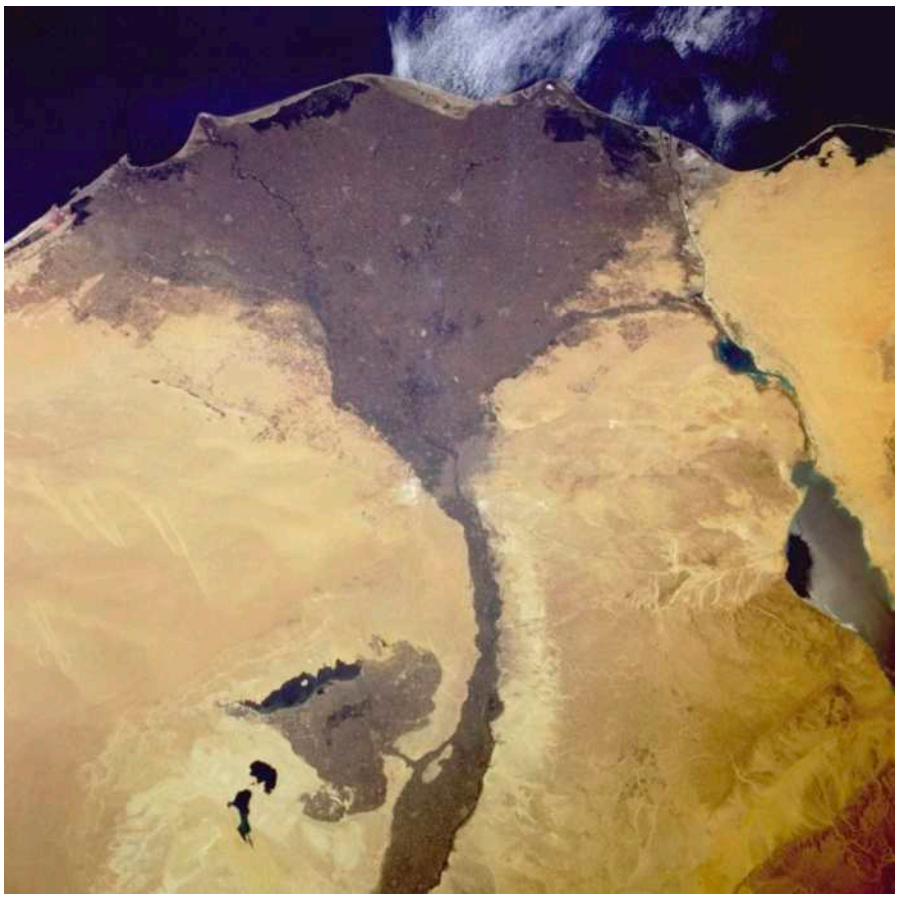


Fig 2.1 The river Nile runs through the strip oasis (garden) of the Nile valley, and then divides into a number of branches. In antiquity, there were four branches. The Garden of Eden should therefore be located somewhere along the eastern banks of the river Nile.

So what did the term 'Eden' (Heb: עדן) really refer to? Firstly we should note that the Aramaic *ayin* ע consonant can be transliterated into English as either an 'e' or an 'a', and so the name Eden could easily be read as an Aden. And if the Garden of Eden was in Egypt then we may well have a direct Egyptian counterpart of it, for we know that there was a Garden of Aden (Aten) located in Middle Egypt. That garden was created by Pharaoh Akhenaton for his god, the Aton. And yet there is a further similarity here, for the name for the Aton can also be spelt as Adon.*1 In addition, the god Aton was spelt with the reed glyph, which is the Egyptian equivalent of the Hebrew *ayin* ע, and so the god Aton could equally be pronounced as Iten or Eten (and as Iden or Eden). The similarity here is beginning to look interesting.

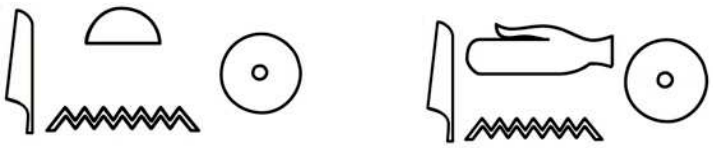


Fig 2.2 The hieroglyphs for the god Aten or Aden (Eten or Eden).

Furthermore, if we spell the name of the Egyptian Eton or Edon with an *aleph* instead of an *ayin*, then we might well derive a word like Aton or Adon אדן, which just happens to be one of the many names for the Israelite god (in Joshua 3:11 Psalms 12:4 among many other verses). Yes, the singular Israelite god of Israelite monotheism in Egypt had the same name as the singular god of Pharaoh Akhenaton's monotheism in Egypt. Does anyone really believe that this is a coincidence?

And so we can be fairly certain that one of the many guises of the Israelite god had an Egyptian flavour; which should not be very surprising to readers, since that is where the Israelites came from. The Israelites were from Egypt, not Babylon, and so any absorption of language and creed by the Israelites would have naturally had an Egyptian flavour. And since the Israelites are reputed to have left Egypt on their Exodus just after the Amarna era of Pharaoh Akhenaton, and since the Israelites were among the first monotheists, just like Pharaoh Akhenaton, perhaps we can confidently surmise that they had picked up some Atonist influences while in Egypt - including one of the many names for their supposedly singular god.

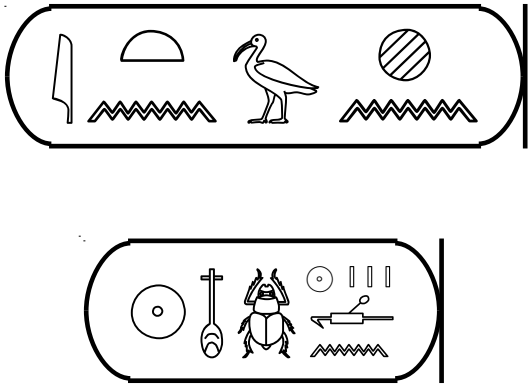


Fig 2.3 The cartouches for Pharaoh Akhenaton.
They read as: Akhenaton Neferkhepure Ua-enre

Garden, East of Eden.

However, if the biblical Eden (Aden) was connected with Akhenaton's god Aten (Aden or Eden), the possibility exists that the concept of a Garden of Eden was based upon Akhenaton's Garden of Aten (Eten), the sumptuous paradise-garden dedicated to the god Aten at Amarna.*2 So when Josephus Flavius says that Eden lay to the east he was correct, for Amarna and its Garden of Eden (Garden of Aten) did indeed reside on the east bank of the Nile. It would seem that the information in these ancient records is often correct, you just have to be very careful about how you read it.

However, this is not simply an assumption in isolation, for this interpretation gives us a strong similarity with the accounts of Manetho, the 3rd century BC Egyptian historian. Manetho said of a similar location that:

> The king ... assembled all those in Egypt whose bodies were wasted by disease: they numbered 80,000 persons. These he cast into the stone-quarries to the east of the Nile, there to work segregated from the rest of the Egyptians. Among them, Manetho adds, there were some of the learned priests, who had been attacked by leprosy. (Manetho Fr 54)

Again we need to read this paragraph critically and laterally, for Manetho did not want to directly record who these people really were. in reality, the maimed priests and lepers were the despised Atonists of Pharaoh Akhenaton - the heretic pharaoh who had been deleted from history - and they were being exiled to a barren location in Middle Egypt now known as Amarna. Manetho describes this location as being 'stone-quarries to the east of the Nile', because Amarna was on the east bank of the Nile and it would indeed have resembled a stone quarry at this early stage in its construction. What we appear to have here, is multiple similarities between Adam's Garden of Eden and Akhenaton's Garden of Aden.



Fig 2.4 Two images of the naturalistic artwork from Amarna. Pharaoh Akhenaton oversaw a revolution in artwork in Egypt, using techniques and styles that were borrowed from Minoan Crete. It is highly likely that this artwork was based upon a real garden at Amarna - the Garden of Aten or Garden of Eten. Unfortunately, most of these frescos were destroyed by locals in the last two centuries, as often happens in this region.

But if all of this is so, then this might give us a very different view of the Genesis narrative. Was this really a creation epic, or was it something completely different? - a hymn to be sung in a temple, for instance. When looked at in this light it suddenly becomes clear that the Genesis 'creation epic' is actually the same as Akhenaton's *Hymn to the Aten*, his glorious celebration of the dawn of a new day. *3 In which case, it is likely that the Hymn to the Aten was sung to greet the dawn - the beginning of each new day - and this concept has been confused in a later era with the beginning of all creation. Thus when god was supposed to be creating birds and allowing them to fly, the birds were actually waking from their sleep and greeting the Sun-god Aten, just as the Hymn to the Aten relates. Indeed, the birds were doing this in the Garden of Eden (the Garden of Aten) at Amarna.

Adam and Eve

So if the Garden of Eden was located at Amarna, then what of Adam and Eve? The first thing to note is that Adam and Eve were the first man and first woman. But then so too were Pharaoh Akhenaton and Queen Nefertiti. Just as the American president and his wife are known as the First Man and the First Lady, so too were Akhenaton and Nefertiti. So the Genesis description of them was not wrong - just confusing (and deliberately so).

Note also that Adam and Eve were famed for being innocently naked in their idyllic Garden; but when they were eventually banished from this Garden they became embarrassed by their nakedness and were forced to cover up. This, I believe, is another direct allusion to the famous royal couple from Amarna. Yes, Akhenaton and Nefertiti did indeed float through their beautiful palaces at Amarna in a state of near nakedness, and scene after scene portrays the royal couple in either see-though diaphanous robes or being completely naked. And this probably did cause a bit of a stir in the Egyptian 'media' - the

gossiping in the market squares. Think what a media storm would erupt today, if Queen Elizabeth and the Duke of Edinburgh were photographed strolling naked through the gardens at Buckingham Palace!



Fig 2.5 A 'lumpy naked body' depiction of the Fall and Expulsion of Adam, by Michaelangelo.



Fig 2.6 Akhenaton and Nefertiti naked at Amarna, just as Adam and Eve were naked in the Garden of Eden. The third torso is of an unknown Amarna queen/princess in a diaphanous robe that is so revealing she might as well be naked.

However, when Amarna was destroyed and the royal couple were forced to flee from their palace (there is no evidence for their deaths there), they would have been forced out into the big wide world of sailors, artisans and farmers. Their usual nakedness, which seemed so respectable and befitting within the confines of the royal court at Amarna, would have looked positively indecent in a rural village or town. There was nothing else to do, except cover up!

Tower of Babel

The topic that inspired this article was actually the Tower of Babel, not the Genesis story, so how does this novel information about Eden effect the famous tower of many languages? Well, the story thus far is one with a distinctly Egyptian flavour, and so if we travel with the descendants of Adam and Eve (Akhenaton and Nefertiti) northwards from Amarna, we arrive at the land of Shiniar שִׁנְעָר, the 'land of two rivers' where the Tower of Babel was built. Well, perhaps, but I rather think that the location they arrived at was actually Shiniyr שְׁנִיר, the land of the 'mountain of snow'. And where is the Mountain of Snow, where a massive 'tower' was to be built? Giza, of course.



Fig 2.7 The Tower of Babel at Giza. Originally, the two main pyramids at Giza would have been covered in pure white limestone, and known as the Snow Mountains, or Shiniyr.

Remember that the Great and Second pyramids were originally covered in pure white limestone, and so they would indeed have looked like two snow-covered peaks standing on the Giza plateau. And so it is likely that the Tower of Babel (the Migdal Babel מגדל בבל) was one of the pyramids on the Giza plateau. But if that is so, then what does Migdal Babel mean?

The first thing to note is that *migdal* is an Egyptian word that is pronounced as *maktal* meaning 'tower'. Then we come to the Aramaic *babel* בבל which is said to mean 'confusion' or 'scatter', much as the biblical story relates. But anyone who has studied Egyptology would instantly know that the Egyptian word *berber* refers to a pyramid rather than a tower, just as its determinative hieroglyph demonstrates. Furthermore the 'r' to 'l' transliteration, that is so common when transposing from Egyptian to Aramaic, would render this word as *belbel* in the Torah, just as the Egyptian *maktar* was eventually rendered as *maktal*. And this Egyptian-to-Aramaic translation is further confirmed by the similar Egyptian and Coptic word *berber* (*belbel*) meaning 'expel', which is exactly what happened to the people of Shiniyr.

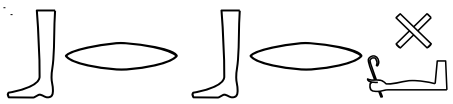


Fig 2.8 The Egyptian berber (belbel) meaning 'expel' or perhaps 'scatter'. The similar Coptic word berber confirms this translation from the Egyptian.



Fig 2.9 The Egyptian maktar berber (maktal belbel) meaning 'tower pyramid'. The Tower of Babel was therefore a pyramid - the Great Pyramid of Giza.

What we have here is a complete and comprehensive explanation for the meaning and location of the Tower of Babel. In reality the Genesis epic was an Egyptian story and history, and not something derived from Babylon - a region that the Israelites did not go to until the 6th century BC. In reality, the famous Tower of Babel was located in Shiniyr, the land of the snow-white pyramids which is known today as the Giza plateau, and the Migdal Babel is now called the Great Pyramid. And this is not the end of this fascinating story, of course, because the history of the **Migdal** tower continues right up into the 1st century, and the equally momentous epic of the New Testament. And there, in Judaea, a much later vestal virgin priestess of the pyramids became almost as famous as the tower she was named after - Mary **Migdal**ene, the blonde Princess of the Tower....



Fig 2.10 Mary Migdalene, the Princess of the Tower, lowering her ginger-golden hair down for her lost prince. (Illustration from the fairytale Rapunzel.)

Conclusion

Once more we have seen good evidence that there are elements of real history within the Torah, and that this biblical history often relates stories, events and locations that are closely linked with Egypt. It is likely, therefore, that the entire Genesis story has come from the peculiar events of the Amarna era, when Egypt's first monotheist pharaoh was banished to a barren plain on the eastbank of the Nile. It was in Amarna that Pharaoh Akhenaton penned the Hymn to the Aten, and an analysis of this hymn has demonstrated direct parallels with the account of Genesis. But if all of this is true, then the inescapable and potentially explosive conclusion to be drawn, is that Adam and Eve were Akhenaton and Nefertiti. And so the entire cult of Judaeo-Christianity was based upon the life of Egypt's heretic pharaoh, who was exiled and created a new city and a new kingdom in Middle Egypt - a founder and leader who has been all but expunged from the religion he created.

References:

*1 The god Aton or Aten is spelt as Aden in 'The Book of Precepts of Amenemapt, the son of Kanekht'.
*2 Paradise: meaning 'a walled garden'.
*3 The Great Hymn to the Aten, N. de G. Davies, The Rock Tombs of El Amarna.

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