ALLIANCE UNIVERSITY

PEOPLE OF INTEGRITY RUN FROM SEDUCTION

EGYPTIAN BATA AND THE BIBLICAL JOSEPH FLEE FROM MARRIED WOMAN

ABSTRACT

Every culture has its stories. Every story has its elements. Using those elements, a side-by-side comparison will be made with the biblical story of Joseph and Potiphar's wife and the Egyptian story of the two brothers. The integrity of these men leads to leadership positions overseeing Egypt.

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INTRODUCTION

Every culture has its stories. Matthews and Benjamin explain, “Every culture in the ancient world shared in a common stock of stories from which they drew and to which they contributed” (Matthews and Benjamin 238). This concept is found in the Egyptian literature The Story of Two Brothers and the Bible story Joseph and Potiphar's Wife. Motifs can be “found in many other texts found across the world” (Greer, Hilber and Walton 108) and these two stories tell a motif of sibling rivalry and seduction. This paper compares the two stories by focusing on the various elements of a story: setting, plot, conflict, characters, resolution, theme, etc., and it will also include background information and cultural connections. Significant social-cultural features are found in Ancient Near East texts and Biblical texts that deepen the meaning and influence of the stories. Although told in different periods, the Biblical story of Joseph and Potiphar’s wife and the Egyptian story of Two Brothers contain many similarities in the first portion of their stories because ANE societies share general motifs. The later sequences or chapters show significant contrasts; therefore, this analysis paper aims to give a side-by-side comparative examination of the two stories.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

According to Matthews and Benjamin, the French scholar Emmanuel de Rouge', published the first translation of the Stories of Anubis and Bata in 1852 (Matthews, Victor H; Benjamin, Don C). During the research for this paper, it was discovered that the British Museum had housed the Papyrus d' Orbiney, which adorns its name because it was purchased in 1857 from Madame d' Orbiney. This version seems to be a "fairly literal rendering of the story as it is found transcribed in Alan H. Gardiner's Late Egyptian Stories" (Papyrus d' Orbiney). "The D' Orbiney Papyrus presents one of the more famous of Egyptian literary compositions, variously interpreted in modern times as a fairy tale, a historical allegory and a political satire, among others" (Papyrus). The British Museum's manuscript appears to be the only known copy of the tale which "is a highly entertaining but also sophisticated tale written in literary New Egyptian, telling of two semi-divine protagonists and their adventures, from which it derives its modern title The Tale of the Two Brothers" (Papyrus). The story is dated 1225 BCE in the 19th Dynasty making it part of Egypt's New Kingdom era.

The Story of Two Brothers parallels many Biblical stories. The motif of sibling rivalry can be seen in Cain and Able (Gen 4:3-16) and in Jacob ad Esau (Gen 25:19-33:20). The subject of talking animals is seen in the story of Balaam (Num 22:28-30) with a talking ass. As well as propositioning of wives as seen in Joseph's life. (Matthews and Benjamin, Old Testament Parallels) For more biblical parallels, see the list on page 10 of this document.

The narrative about Joseph, son of Israel, is found in the Biblical book of Genesis, chapters 37-49, and tradition credits Moses as the writer even though the story happened 400 years before the Torah's Ten Commandments were given. The life account of Joseph started with humble beginnings but demonstrated how he rose to the position of power because the Lord was with him. Joseph was born in 1915 BCE, sold into Egypt in 1898 BCE, and became the head of Egypt in 1885 BCE making this story during the period considered to be Egypt's Middle

Kingdom (NIV Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible xxxiii). If these dates are accurate, the biblical story was told before Egypt's The Story of Two Brothers.

SETTINGS

The folktale setting for Two Brothers has a mythological setting (Pritchard 11) and starts on the homestead of the elder brother Anubis. Bata travels to the Valley of Cedar after Anubis chases him and later to Pharoah's location as he pursues his wife, whom the divine assembly created for him. The setting for Joseph and the Potiphar's Wife occurs at the Pharaoh's Captain of the Guard's dwelling and continues to include the locations of the prison and later throughout Pharoah's kingdom.

TONE AND STYLE

The African folk story of the two brothers "served for entertainment, rather than ecclesiastical or moral purpose, the story is colloquial and is so translated"(Pritchard 11). Another source states that "Folk literature …often served utilitarian purposes" (Greer, Hilber and Walton 103). The Story of the Two Brothers was written in the third person and carried a mood of anticipation for justice to be done. Justice was served in the first portion of the story with the killing of the evil wife. After the adventures of the two semi-divine brothers, both Bata and Anubis were in the position of Pharaoh and his official. Similarly, the Biblical story of Joseph and Potiphar's Wife (Gen 39 NIV) was also told in the third person with the same tone of unfairness for the righteous person. Unlike the Egyptian tale, Joseph was imprisoned for his alleged crime (Gen 39:20), but years later, as a result of favorable situations, Pharoah put Joseph

"in charge of the whole land of Egypt" (Gen 41:41). Both of these ancient Near East stories share a triumphant ending for the men falsely accused.

STORY CHARACTERS

Bata, the narrative's protagonist, was a hard worker as he made clothes, was a cattle rancher, plowed and harvested the fields, and "did all kinds of work," like preparing and making meals. Bata was handsome, "There was no one like him in the entire land. Why, the strength of a god was in him" (Pritchard 11). He was "strong, righteous and blameless, so the divine assembly of Egypt often let him use divine power" (Matthews, Victor H; Benjamin, Don C 72). Anubis, Bata's elder brother, was a married villager who owned his own home and took in his younger brother after the passing of their parents and treated Bata as a son. The first antagonist of this Egyptian tale is Anubis' seductress wife, who is later killed for her wrongdoings. Later in the story, Bata's god-made wife takes the antagonist role as she has an affair with and marries the Pharoah. Throughout the story, re-Harakhti (sun god) and an assembly of gods protect Bata and intervene on Bata's behalf. Interestingly, in other renderings of the tale, the older brother's name is Anpu, and it is explained that the sister-in-law was jealous of Bata, which was the motive of her seduction. The names of the gods are changed to Harmachis (god of the sky), Khnum (potter god and creator god, and Hapi (Nile god), and Bata goes to the Valley of Pine.

Joseph is the protagonist of his story. He was loved more by his father Israel than any of his brothers (Gen 37:3). Thus, his older brothers were jealous of him (Gen 37:11) to the point of selling him to the Ishmaelites (Gen 37:28) and convinced their father that Joseph was killed by a wild animal (Gen 37:32). Joseph, like Bata, was a hard worker and handsome (Gen 39:6b). Potiphar, who purchased Joseph from the Ishmaelites (Gen 39:1), is an essential supporting

character in Joseph's story and parallels with Anubis. Potiphar's wife, the story's protagonist, lustfully took notice of Joseph (Gen 39:7). The Israelite's God was constantly with Joseph and blessed everything Joseph oversaw with prosperity (Gen 39:2).

SIMILAR PLOTS

Bata is "a conscientious young man who was falsely accused of a propels of adultery by his elder brother's wife after he has rejected her advances" (Pritchard 11). The British Museum gives an excellent summary of The Tale of Two Brothers.

> "The story begins by presenting an idyllic household consisting of Anubis, his wife, and his brother, Bata. Their pleasant lifestyle is disrupted when the wife of Anubis tries unsuccessfully to seduce her brother-in-law. She then claims that Bata attacked her. Believing his wife, Anubis initially turns against his brother and forces him to leave the family. Anubis later discovers his wife's disloyalty and kills her" (Papyrus).

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Like the Two Brothers' storyline, Joseph was in charge of the master's home, and things under his care succeeded (Gen 39:3 – 6a). The official's wife propositioned Joseph, but he refused to accept the advances. As a result, false allegations were made stating that Joseph was the one desiring sexual relation with the wife (Gen 39:13 – 14), so he was sent to prison. Both Joseph's and Beta's story continues with several chapters and episodes, respectfully, which is where the storyline differs.

Interestingly, Bata and Joseph experienced calamity early in life, leading them to reside in new locations. Bata's parents died, resulting in him living under the guardianship of his brother, and Joseph's brothers sold him into slavery, subsequently leading Joseph to be bought by Potiphar. Both have a similar storyline until, as stated, Bata is exiled and Joseph is

incarcerated. As Bata's story continues, more mythology comes into the account. As Joseph's story continues, he successfully interprets dreams. Both men end up in leadership positions in Egypt, one as Pharoah and one as Pharoah's second in command (Gen 41:1), and both restore their sibling relationships.

Cultural Connection: Honor and Shame

Ancient Near East was an honor and shame society. "In the world of the Bible, honor entitled a household to live, shame sentenced it to death" (Matthews and Benjamin, Social World of the Ancient Isreal 143). "Shame was the inability of a household to fulfill its responsibilities to its members or its covenant partners" (Matthews and Benjamin, Social World of the Ancient Isreal 144). "Honor demands that every member of a household always act with altruism and generosity" (Matthews and Benjamin, Social World of the Ancient Isreal 184). The wives in both stories violated this fundamental principle of selflessness to satisfy their sexual inclinations bringing potential shame. The husbands needed to respond to the alleged adultery acts, which culturally could have demonstrated supremacy over their households; therefore, they were righteous in their anger, first towards the accused men and then their wives.

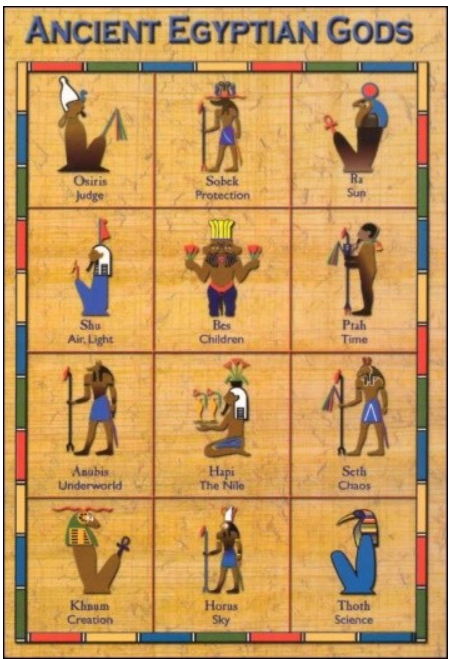
In this ANE period, infidelity was punishable by death; thus, Joseph being incarcerated was not a standard punishment for such a crime. This knowledge gives evidence that Potiphar honestly did not believe that "Joseph, his slave, was guilty of sexually assaulting his wife. Otherwise, execution would have been the swift and normal response. Instead, Joseph was confined where political prisoners were kept to await trial, judgment, or execution" (NIV Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible 87). Potiphar, the captain of the guard, jailed Joseph under his supervision, and Joseph gained the favor of the warden (Gen 39:21) and was given authority

over the prisoners (Gen 39:22). “In other words, Joseph was transferred to another part of Potiphar’s house” (NIV Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible 87). All that to say, Potiphar had to take action against Joseph to regain the honor of his wife and household, but he did it in such a way that spared the life of an innocent man.

The fate of Bata’s sister-in-law was not as fortunate as Potiphar’s wife’s. After Bata explains and cuts off his phallus, Anubis believes Bata is innocent of the accusation. Anubis returns home and kills his wife. As stated earlier, death was an acceptable action resulting from adulterous behavior.

CONFLICTS

One element of compelling stories is the establishment of conflict. Literature Arts education explains that conflict can be man vs. fate, man vs. man, or man vs. self and can be internal or external. The apparent conflict for both Bata and Joseph is man vs. man/woman. Both endure the external conflict of man vs. woman/wife, which creates the conflict of man vs. man/husband. In addition, Bata experiences an internal conflict of man vs. self, resulting in Bata castrating himself by cutting off his phallus and throwing it into the river to be consumed by fish. What conflict was Bata addressing with such dramatic action? If the penis, especially when erected, was typically used in reference to male potency or his dominancy ----------, then perhaps Bata was expressing that he was no dominant threat to Anubis. Such action convinced Anubis of Bata’s innocence, leading Anubis to kill his wife – a man vs. man/wife conflict. We do not see such an internal conflict with the character Joseph.



Cultural Connection: Mythology and Theology

According to research, The Tale of Two Brothers "has the character of mythology both in the names of its characters and several important parallels to episodes in Egyptian mythology" (Papyrus d' Orbiney). Anubis is the ancient Egyptian god of death rites and guide of the underworld, and Bata is known as the Egyptian bull god. Furthermore, later in the story, Bata turn into Bata bull, then Bata tree, from which a splinter falls into the wife's mouth; she swallows it, and she is impregnated, creating baby Bata who becomes the son of his wife and Pharoah and grows to succeed the throne to become pharaoh.

A divine assembly is part of the folktale. It is said that "Bata was young, strong, righteous and blameless, so the divine assembly of Egypt often let him use divine power" (Matthews, Victor H; Benjamin, Don C 72). While in the Valley of Pine and after he built his house, Beta left his home and met the Ennead (a group of nine gods) (Papyrus d' Orbiney). Ancient Egypt, like all cultures surrounding Israelites, was a polytheistic society. Polytheism was not only a statement of the number of deities but also the essentialness of the community of those gods, which contributed to their identities (Walton 53).

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Israel was a monotheistic society. "In the Old Testament … Yahweh is the sole authority responsible for carrying out the functions associated with deity" (Walton 56). The Old Testament scriptures use several names to encompass the sole authority of Yahweh. Several verses containing the Joseph story state that the Lord was with Joseph (Gen 39:2, 3, 21, 23). Even though both stories involve perspective deities, Joseph's life story only mentions one God, the God of the Israelites, Yahweh.

FINAL RESOLUTIONS

Pritchard ends his “The Story of Two Brothers” entry in *The Ancient Near East* with the Beta going to the Valley of the Cedar and Anubis going home to kill his wife, throw her to the dogs, and mourn for his brother. However, there are more episodes to the story.

> “The gods have fashioned a wife for Bata. Unfortunately, she rejects him in favour of the king. To regain her, Bata assumes a sequence of different forms, the last being a persea tree. Bata's wife orders the tree to be cut down. A splinter from the tree flies into her mouth, 'she swallowed it, and in a moment, she became pregnant.’ Bata is reborn, now as her son, and becomes king of Egypt. He elevates his brother, Anubis, to succeed him, overcoming the catastrophes that had beset the pair.” (Papyrus)

Likewise, Joseph’s story extends past the incident with Potiphar’s wife, highlighting his success over other prisoners, including as a dream interpreter (Gen 40), leading to interpreting Pharoah’s dreams (Gen 41) and being put in charge of Egypt (Gen 41:41–57). For some, obtaining Pharaoh’s signate ring (Gen 41:42) may be the desired resolution; however, a more appropriate final resolution is restoring Joseph’s relationship with his brothers and father (Gen 42-50).

MESSAGE AND REALITY

The Story of Two Brothers was written for entertainment purposes. Nevertheless, one can glean from the message that Egyptian gods can show favor and act on behalf of the humble as “a humble young brother who eventually becomes a Pharaoh of Egypt” (Papyrus d' Orbiney) using the interventions of gods. However, gods can also act in their own best interest, as the Nile god did in wanting Bata’s wife for himself. Similarly, in Joseph’s story, Yahweh is constantly with Joseph, allowing Joseph to succeed and prosper in all his responsibilities. This ancient story supports the message that the man who fears the Lord will be blessed (Ps112:1), and if God is for someone, who can stand against that person (Rom 8:31).

According to the NIV Cultural Background Study Bible, readers from different cultures bring a range of experiences and insights to their Bible reading, however when one reads God's Word in the concrete framework in which He gave it, one can hear the message in its authentic, original cultural setting allowing one to apply it to their different settings. Therefore, one of the questions readers of these stories can ask, based on the lives of Joseph and Bata, is, who or what is tempting or seducing you? Another way to ask is who or what has your heart and your faithful devotion?

CONCLUSION

The Holy Bible is the inspired word of God. One can find God communicated through culture to replace his people's views of himself with a better one, but he never desired to replace all of their cultural attributes (NIV Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible ix); therefore, it is wise to be aware of the ANE thinking and cultural aspects. In this analysis paper, the similarities and differences between the Hebrew story of Joseph and the Egyptian tale of Bata were considered and discussed by focusing on the story's various elements. The Canonical account of Joseph and Potiphar's wife and the Egyptian Tale of the Two Brothers contain many similarities in the first portion of their stories because ANE societies shared

Ways the Story of Two Brothers Parallels with the Bible
(Matthews, Victor H; Benjamin, Don C 427-462)

Type of Parallel		**Biblical Reference**
Plot	Providing a wife	Gen 2:18
	Breeding	Gen 30:40-43
	Seduction	Gen 39:7-12 Gen 39:17-19
	Woman manipulates ruler	Esth 2:15-19 Matt 14:6-11
	Talking animal	Num 22:28-30
Motif	Sibling rivalry	Gen 4:3-18 Gen 25:19-33:30 Gen 37:1-45:28
Genre	Fable	Num 22:28-30
Social Institution	Oath before divine patron	Num 30:2 2 Chron 6:22-23
	Mourning ritual	2 Sam 1:2

general plots, motifs, genres, and social institutions. The later sequences or chapters of the narratives showed significant contrasts; therefore, this analysis paper formulated a side-by-side comparative examination of the two stories and mentioned how the Story of the Two Brothers parallels many passages of the Bible. The Bible, being the living word of God, is still used by God to communicate his desires for his people to live a better way; therefore, readers can glean the message that God wants his people to be people of integrity and run from seductive things of this world which try to seduce them into unfaithfulness to God.

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