

## THE LITERARY MOTIF OF THE EXPOSED CHILD (cf. Ex. ii 1-10)

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Ancient Near Eastern man made his gods in his own image, and breathed into them his own spirit. It should come as no surprise that when he told stories about them his vocabulary and imagery were drawn entirely from his own, human, experience. The same literary motifs which occur regularly in tales of human exploits, and are clearly derived from contemporary society, appear with equal regularity in the stories about the gods, the myths. There is no reason to give priority in this regard to the myth over the legend, and the statement "stories of the gods are in all nations the oldest narratives" <sup>1)</sup> is surely incapable of proof. Nor are there grounds for eliciting and underlying "mythological system" recognition of which provides the key to the forms of ancient Near Eastern literature. <sup>2)</sup> The myth-maker and the story-teller are simply drawing on a common pool of devices, a common store of literary motifs. <sup>3)</sup> It may well be that a given motif through some extraneous circumstance comes to have a close connexion with a particular myth, so that all stories of human beings which employ that motif seem consciously to regard the myth as a *locus classicus*. The story of a fine youth torn to pieces by a wild beast, his fate attested by

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1) H. GUNKEL, *The Legends of Genesis* (Schocken, New York; 1964), 14.

2) Cf. the "mythological descriptive method" of WINCKLER and JEREMIAS. The postulate of "depotentized" gods and myths behind literature ostensibly secular in tone unfolds such an embarrassing wealth of uncontrollable possibilities that this fact alone is sufficient to render it suspect. The only answer required to a reconstruction such as VÖLTER'S (*Die Patriarchen Israels im Licht der Aegyptischen Mythologie* [Leipzig, 1921]), wherein the *Grundlage* of the Patriarchal Stories is found in Egyptian mythology and the Patriarchs identified with Egyptian gods, is that it is ingenious, but quite unnecessary and *a priori* improbable.

3) Cf. the remarks in E. MEYER, *Israeliten und ihre Nachbarstämme* (Halle, 1906), 149.

only his blood-stained garment, could probably find everyday parallels in many ancient societies of the Levant; but it has become the classic account of how the fertility god met his end.<sup>4)</sup> An ancient peasant, listening to such a story told of a human hero, would doubtless recall at once the myth of the god. But the reverse would also surely be true: regaled with a re-telling of the myth, the peasant would think of tales of mortals who had suffered a similar death, and perhaps recall members of his own community who had been devoured by carnivores. The sharp line which moderns tend to draw between human hero and god, legend and myth, did not exist for the ancient. Another example of a motif which has become inseparably connected with a deity is the drowning motif in Ancient Egypt.<sup>5)</sup> Drowning was one of the ways in which, according to Egyptian mythology, Osiris met his fate; and at a very early date this mode of death was so closely identified with Osiris that the motif, wherever it occurs in Egyptian literature, cannot rid itself of Osirian overtones. But one is not justified in using this coincidental connexion of drowning with Osiris as a literary "Open Sesame", however significant it may be for Egyptian theology. The undue stress, sometimes approaching an obsession, which priestly intellectuals with a bent towards mysticism might lay upon parallels which they found between cult and legend, myth and social custom, should not lead us to believe that ancient man found it impossible to create literature outside of the context of myth.<sup>6)</sup>

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4) Cf. M. ASTOUR, *Hellenosemitica, an Ethnic and Cultural Study in West Semitic Impact on Mycenaean Greece* (Leiden, 1965), 259 and n. 3, where it is alleged that "most of the motifs in the Joseph Story are more or less euhemerized motifs of the Tammuz-Adonis myth." To the present writer this seems an overstatement. To judge at least from the two major motifs of the story, viz. Joseph and his brothers, and the Re-instated Wiseman, the Joseph Story belongs to a late genre of wonder-Märchen (e.g. Ahikar, II Khamois, Onkhsheshonqy, Daniel, etc.), which has but tenuous and remote links with fertility myths. It is undoubtedly significant that all the motifs mentioned by ASTOUR are quite incidental to the plot of the Joseph Story, and some (e.g. the coat motif of chapter 37, the prison of chapter 39, and the coffin of chapter 50) could be argued to be secondary accretions to the original narrative.

5) J. G. GRIFFITHS, *The Conflict of Horus and Seth* (Liverpool, 1960), 7 n. 3, and the references there given.

6) One thinks specifically of such esoteric and artificial literary creations as the Jumilhac Papyrus, Papyrus Salt 825, or even the Pyramid Texts, which are overloaded with symbolism. Contrast these with the popular Märchen, like Sinuhe, the Sailor or the Two Brothers, and one will find that the mythological allusions in the latter are sparse and incidental. Even in the Contendings of Horus and

A common literary motif used of gods and humans alike is the story of the hero cast away in infancy. The social phenomenon which gave rise to this motif is the exposure of infants.<sup>7)</sup> The reasons for this cruel act undoubtedly varied. It might have been perpetrated through economic necessity,<sup>8)</sup> or because of some religious taboo, or even to protect a child whose life was in danger. How better to allay the suspicion of him who desired the death of the child than to feign the abandonment of the wretched babe in the wilds? In the stories which employ this motif the reasons given fall into three categories: I. the child is exposed through shame at the circumstances of its birth; II. the king (or whoever is in power), either at the instigation of an oracle or simply because the child is a potential threat, seeks to kill the child who is fated to supplant him; III. a general massacre endangers the life of the child.<sup>9)</sup>

I. In the first type the shame occasioned by the birth reflects a strict morality, such as might be found in a closely-knit rural community or tribal group.

1. The Hurrian sun god sees on earth a beautiful heifer, and mates with her in the form of a bull. The heifer bears a child which is human in form, and, aghast and ashamed by the sight of her biped son, she determines to kill him. But the sun god intervenes and removes the child to a deserted spot where, at his command, two birds protect and nourish it. A fisherman whose wife is childless now lights upon the baby,

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Seth, the mythological background of which is undeniable, interest centres, not upon the mythological associations which would have been well-known to the ancient listener, but upon characterization and humour.

7) For Near Eastern light on this practice, see B. CHILDS, *JBL* 84 (1965), 110 ff.

8) Cf. El's reason for abandoning his children in the desert: T. H. GASTER, *Thespis* (Doubleday Anchor Books; New York, 1961), 432f.

9) The motif investigated here has been treated often. See in particular, ASTOUR, *op. cit.*, 307 f; SIR J. G. FRAZER, *Folklore in the Old Testament*, II, (London, 1918), 437 ff; N. W. HOLLEY *JHS* 69 (1949), 39 ff; A. JEREMIAS, *The Old Testament in the Light of the Ancient East*, II, (London-New York, 1911), 93 ff; O. RANK, *The Myth of the Birth of the Hero* (New York, 1952); A. J. TOYNBEE, *A Study of History* (Galaxy Books, New York; 1962), III, 259 ff, VI, 450 f. Examples from the New Comedy are discussed by GILBERT MURRAY in *CQ* 37 (1943), 46 ff. The present paper is not concerned with examples drawn from mediaeval literature, for which see especially S. THOMPSON, *The Folk-tale* (New York, 1951), 122 ff, 139. The motif is M 371 in THOMPSON'S *Motif-Index of Folk Literature*, V, (Bloomington, 1935).

and sensing that the community will deal well with him if he has a son, he takes the child home and passes it off as his own. The rest of the text is lost, but it is likely that the child grew up to be a hero or demigod well known in legend.<sup>10)</sup>

2. The Indian sun god falls in love with the beautiful princess Kunti, and she bears him a male child. Her parents refuse to believe her unlikely story, and express shock at the evidence of their daughter's promiscuity. The girl is obliged to put her baby in a basket and cast it into the river. Rescued by a childless couple, the baby is brought up in a rural setting and becomes a mighty hunter.<sup>11)</sup>

3. The goddess Derceto, whose cult site was close to Ashkelon, enjoys an impulsive love affair with a plebeian youth but regrets it almost at once. In shame she kills her lover and exposes the child she bears upon the hills of Palestine. But the baby, nourished in the meantime by doves, is at last found by a shepherd and brought up as his own. It is probable that this tale originally recounted the birth of one of the fertility deities. In the historified form in which Diodorus relates it, however, the child is Semiramis, the later queen of Assyria.<sup>12)</sup>

4. The son of the Mother-goddess is mutilated by the gods. From his severed members an almond tree comes up. Nana, a woodland nymph and daughter of the river Sangarius, eats some of the fruit of the tree and finds herself pregnant.<sup>13)</sup> When the child is born his mother exposes him on the bank of the river where he is found by the Mother-goddess Cybele. The child grows up to be the handsome youth Attis, and becomes Cybele's favorite.<sup>14)</sup>

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10) J. FRIEDRICH, *ZA NF* 15 (1950), 225-34; for parallels to the motif of a god mating with a cow in Sumerian and Canaanite mythology, see ASTOUR, *Hellenosemitica*, 85 ff.

11) FRAZER, *op. cit.*, 451 ff; RANK, *op. cit.*, 16.

12) DIODORUS *Bibl.* ii, 9; cf. M. BRAUN, *History and Romance in Graeco-Oriental Literature* (Oxford, 1938), 7.

13) Cf. the passage in the Two Brothers in which Bata's wife inadvertently swallows a chip of wood and becomes pregnant: *D'orbiney* 18 :4 ff; for the motif of conception through eating a vegetable substance, see S. THOMPSON, *op. cit.*, V, s. v. T 511.0-4.

14) A. F. PAULLY, G. WISSOWA, *Real Encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*, I, (Stuttgart, 1894), 767 f; II, (Stuttgart, 1896), 2247 ff; O. SEYFFERT *Dictionary of Classical Antiquity*, (Meridian Books; New York, 1957), 85.

5. The first son born to king Sam of Sistan has white hair, and the mother through shame conceals the birth. When Sam discovers the fact he has the child exposed on a mountain. But a great bird rears him there, and when Sam hears of it and goes to see, the bird flies down with the son. Sam relents and nominates the child his successor. <sup>15)</sup>

6. Suidas records that Ptolemy Soter was exposed at birth on a bronze shield out in the wilderness. An eagle found the child and with its outstretched wings protected it from the elements, and nourished it on the blood of slaughtered quails. <sup>16)</sup>

7. Antiope, daughter of Nycteus, yields to the advances of Zeus who cohabits with her in the form of a satyr. When she flees from her outraged father to the protection of the king of Sicyon, the latter is murdered by her uncle. She is then brought back in chains to her father, but on the way gives birth to Amphion and Zethus whom her uncle exposes on a mountain. Brought up by a shepherd, the twins grow to manhood and later are reunited with their mother. <sup>17)</sup>

8. Melanippe is raped by Poseidon and in due time gives birth to the twins Aeolus and Boeotus. These are exposed in the wilds and their mother is blinded and put in prison. Meanwhile a cow has found the babies and feeds them. At length shepherds find the twins and bring them up. <sup>18)</sup>

9. In the Epidauran version of the birth of Asclepius Coronis bears him while accompanying her father on a military campaign. The birth is in secret, and afterwards the child is exposed upon a hill near Epidaurus where various animals suckle it. <sup>19)</sup>

10. Hippothoon is born to Poseidon and Alope. The mother is put to death by her angry father, and the baby exposed in the wilds. But a mare finds him and suckles him until some shepherds chance that way. They take the child home with them and bring him up. <sup>20)</sup>

11. Ion, the eponymus ancestor of the Ionians, is born to Kreusa and Apollo in a cave on the Athenian acropolis. The mother exposes the

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15) RANK, *op. cit.*, 21.

16) SUIDAS, s. v. "Lagos."

17) M. CARY and others, *The Oxford Classical Dictionary* (Oxford, 1949), 45.

18) MURRAY, *op. cit.*, 47.

19) PAUSANIUS ii, 26; SEYFFERT, *op. cit.*, 75.

20) *Ibid.*, 298.

child in a basket, but Apollo has the basket whisked off to Delphi where Ion is brought up by the priestess. 21)

12. Sargon is born in secret into a family which has apparently been at home in upland country. His birthplace, however, is a city on the Euphrates. There his mother puts him in a reed ark and casts it upon the river. Found by a drawer of water, Sargon is brought up as his son. Although no reason is given for the secrecy of the birth, it is clear that it was interdicted by someone. Sargon was probably not the object of a jealous king's search, but simply the bastard offspring of a woman whose station in life condemned her to childlessness. 22)

13. Queen Humai, nominated successor to her husband, exposes her baby in a box and sets it afloat upon the Euphrates. It lodges against a stone and is found by a tanner who takes the boy home and brings him up. When the boy reaches manhood he enters the queen's army and fights so bravely that Humai recognizes him. The two are reunited, and the son is duly nominated heir apparent. 23)

14. A ghostly male figure suddenly appears upon the hearth of Tarachetius, king of Alba, and remains there many days. An oracle informs the king that if he gives a virgin to the spectre her son will become a mighty man of great renown. So Tarachetius orders his own daughter to go to the apparition. But the daughter refuses and sends her handmaid instead. When the servant bears children the king in a rage imprisons both women and sends a servant to dispose of the twins. The servant lays them beside the Tiber, but a wolf appears and suckles them, while birds feed them with bits of food. At last they are found and raised by a herdsman. 24)

One should note especially the fertility connexions of this form of the motif. In the Levant, Asia Minor and Greece it is employed to embellish the account of the birth of the hero god, the dying and rising god of vegetation. 25)

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21) RANK, *op. cit.*, 17.

22) H. G. Güterbock, *ZA NF* 42 (1934), 62 ff; P. JENSEN, *RIA* I, 322; translated in PRITCHARD, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*<sup>2</sup> (Princeton, 1955), 119. For the prohibition of child bearing among Babylonian priestesses, see ASTOUR, *JBL* 85 (1966), 188 ff.

23) RANK, *op. cit.*, 19 f.

24) PLUTARCH *Romulus*, 3.

25) Cf. G. MURRAY, *CQ* 37 (1943), 47 ff; *idem*, *JHS* 71 (1951), 120 ff.

II. Those tales in which the motivating factor is a prophecy that an unborn child will take over the kingdom reflect a more sophisticated, dynastic milieu, in which hereditary kingship and problems of succession are of great importance.

15. A prophecy warns Senechorus, king of Babylon, that a grandson yet unborn will one day wrest the kingdom from him. To prevent its fulfilment he confines his unwed daughter to the acropolis and forbids her to consort with men. But by an unseen husband she bears a boy whom the soldiers at once throw over the parapet in the hope of even yet frustrating the prophecy. An eagle seizes the boy as he falls and deposits him gently in a garden. When the keeper of the garden chanced upon the baby he takes him home and brings him up as his own son, naming him Gilgamesh. Upon reaching manhood Gilgamesh fulfils the prophecy and becomes king of Babylon.<sup>26)</sup>

16. Astyages, king of the Medes, is warned in a dream that his grandson will take over all Asia and presumably oust him from the throne. When his daughter gives birth to Cyrus, Astyages orders the child to be killed. But the royal steward who is assigned the task cannot bring himself to do it, and hands the baby over to a herdsman for exposure in the forest. The herdsman likewise is reluctant to carry out the order, and substitutes his own still-born child, bringing up Cyrus as his own. Eventually, of course, the prophecy is fulfilled.<sup>27)</sup>

17. Warned in a dream that his future grandson will one day drive him from the throne, Astyages orders the child exposed. The herdsman responsible for carrying out the deed abandons Cyrus in the forest, and goes home where his wife has just given birth to a dead baby. On learning of the child's exposure, the wife pleads that her still-born son be substituted for the living child. When the herdsman returns to the forest, he finds a bitch suckling the baby.<sup>28)</sup>

18. King Afrasiab of Turan receives the son of his enemy into his court, and marries him to his daughter. A prophecy predicts that his future grandson will do him harm, so he kills his son-in-law. But his daughter is already pregnant, and when the son Khaikhosru is born he is given to a herdsman for a rustic upbringing. Convinced finally that

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26) AELIAN, *Hist. animal.* xii, 21.

27) HERODOTUS i, 108 ff; RANK, *op. cit.*, 24 ff.

28) *Ibid.*, 32 f.

his grandson is a harmless simpleton, Afrasiab crowns him his successor. 29)

19. Zohak, king of Iran, is warned in a dream that a certain child Feridun will one day dethrone him. So he goes in search of him. But his mother hides the child in a forest where it is suckled by a cow. Later, when the pursuing Zohak gets too close to the forest hideout, she carries him to a hermit on a mountain. At the age of sixteen Feridun descends from the mountain and fulfils the prophecy. 30)

20. An oracle states that Aegysthus, the son of Thyestes and his daughter Pelopia, will avenge his father on Atreus. At his birth his mother exposes him, but he is discovered and reared by shepherds. Later Atreus unwittingly adopts Aegysthus as his own son. 31)

21. Acrisius learns from an oracle that his daughter will bear a son who will one day put him to death; so he shuts her up in a subterranean cell of bronze. But Zeus cohabits with her there, and she bears him a son, Perseus. Acrisius is skeptical of his daughter's explanation, and shuts both her and the baby in a chest which he throws into the sea. Washed up at Seriphus, Perseus is taken out alive, and brought up by a shepherd. 32)

22. Aleos, king of Tegea, is warned by an oracle that his sons will die through a descendant of his daughter. So he makes her a priestess, thus condemning her to chastity. But Zeus ravishes her and she gives birth to Telephus.

Version 1: Aleos has them thrown into the sea in a box, which is carried to the end of the Mysian river and found by Teuthras, who marries the mother and adopts the baby.

Version 2: Auge, the daughter, exposes the child and escapes to Mysia. The child is nursed by a doe, found by shepherds, and at length taken to king Korythus who adopts him. 33)

23. Because an oracle warned that one day baby Oedipus would murder his father, he is ordered to be exposed in the wilds. The herdsman

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29) *Ibid.*, 36 f.

30) *Ibid.*, 37 f.

31) PAULY-WISSOWA, *op. cit.*, I, 973.

32) APOLLODORUS, *Lib. ii. 4, 1*; HOLLEY, *op. cit.*, 39 f. A chest figures also in one of the versions of the birth of Adonis: ASTOUR, *Hellenosemitica*, 308.

33) RANK, *op. cit.*, 21 f; FRAZER, *op. cit.*, 445 f; HOLLEY, *loc. cit.*; for the suggested derivation of "Telephus" from the Hittite "Telepinus," see G. CONTENAU, *La civilization des Hittites et des Hurrites des Mitanni* (Paris, 1948), 121 f.



responsible for carrying out the command passes the child on to a shepherd. At last the queen of Corinth takes charge of him and brings him up. <sup>34)</sup>

24. A portent which occurred shortly before the birth of Paris suggested that the baby would one day bring misfortune upon Troy. So Priam has the child exposed on Mt. Ida. For five days the baby is suckled by a she-bear, and when the king's slave comes to confirm the child's death, he is surprised to find him still alive. Not wishing to kill him with his own hand, he takes him home and brings him up as his own son. Another version of the tale states that Paris was found and reared by shepherds. <sup>35)</sup>

25. A late account of the birth of Hercules tells how Alcmene hid her new-born baby in a field for fear of Hera whose consort Zeus was the father. After Hera had made several abortive attempts to kill the child, Athene rescued him, and not knowing who the real mother was, took him back to Alcmene in the hope that she would consent to bring up this foundling. <sup>36)</sup>

26. Amulius expells his brother Numitor from the throne of Alba, puts to death all his nephews, and prevents his niece Sylvia from marrying by making her a vestal virgin. But when Sylvia is raped by Mars and gives birth to the twins Romulus and Remus, Amulius murders her too, and sends his men to drown the babies in the Tiber. The trough in which the children are placed is not submerged, but lodges at the base of a tree where it is discovered by a wolf which suckles the babies until they are discovered by the king's herdsman. This man takes them home and brings them up in his house. <sup>37)</sup>

27. Substantially the same tale must once have been told of Fabius, son of Hercules and a nymph, who was born and abandoned on the banks of the Tiber. <sup>38)</sup>

III. A general massacre endangers the life of the child. The massacre may have nothing to do with a prophecy regarding the future career of the child. In some cases there is a prophecy, but the king or

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34) FRAZER, *op. cit.*, 446 f.

35) RANK, *op. cit.*, 20 f.

36) *Ibid.*, 44 ff.

37) LIVY, *Hist.* i, 4.

38) PLUTARCH, *Fabius*, 1.

ruler does not know the identity of his future rival, and so resorts to a widespread pogrom. <sup>39)</sup>

28. A late, embellished, version of the Moses story ascribes Pharaoh's policy of killing the male infants to the warning a wiseman gave him that one of the Hebrew women was about to give birth to a deliverer. <sup>40)</sup>

29. A story about the birth of Augustus which circulated two centuries after the event recounts that just before his birth the Roman senate was warned by an omen that a king of Rome was about to be born. Thereupon they decreed that for one year the rearing of a male child would be illegal. The sequel, however, as Suetonius records it, does not involve the casting away of the child. <sup>41)</sup>

30. The birth-narrative of Jesus, recorded in Matthew, belongs here, although the abandonment of the child in a deserted spot is replaced by a flight *through* the desert to Egypt. <sup>42)</sup>

31. The birth-narrative of Pyrrhus as told by Plutarch may fall in this category, although here we may be dealing with historical fact. When Pyrrhus was a baby a rebellion broke out in Epirus, and most of his family was annihilated. The survivors fled the city with the baby, but found their path to freedom blocked by a swiftly-flowing river. At this juncture some friendly natives of the place came to their assistance and fashioned some make-shift rafts out of the trees which grew by the river bank. And so baby Pyrrhus escaped the executioner's sword by floating across the river on a raft. <sup>43)</sup>

32. The story of Moses birth seems to belong in this third category. At a time when the king of Egypt was having all male children born to the Israelites drowned in order to prevent the growth of that people, Moses' mother determined to save her child. So, like Sargon's mother, she constructed an ark for her baby and, like the servants of Amulius, placed it in the shallows by the shore of the river. Like the wild animals in other versions, Miriam stood guard nearby to see what would happen to the ark. And, like Oedipus, Moses was found and cared for

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39) TOYNBEE, *A Study of History* VI, 451 n. 3.

40) JOSEPHUS, *Ant. Jud.* ii, 9; GINZBERG, *The Legends of the Jews* II (Philadelphia, 1910), 254 ff.

41) SÜETONIUS, *Augustus*, 94.

42) *Matt.* ii.

43) PLUTARCH, *Pyrrhus*, 2.

by a female member of the royal house, in this case Pharaoh's daughter. Whether the present tale is a reworking of an earlier—perhaps Egyptian—version, in which Pharaoh's daughter is the mother and Moses is predicted to be the next king, <sup>44</sup>) cannot be ascertained. But I can see no evidence of such a secondary reworking, and it is equally likely that the canonical version of the story represents the primary adaptation of the motif to the person of Moses. <sup>45</sup>)

In the above summary of examples of this motif Egyptian literature is not represented. Did Egypt not know the motif? Was its literature never affected by its introduction from a foreign literary tradition?

Similar stories are sometimes found in Egypt, but they are not true parallels. In the Westcar Papyrus <sup>46</sup>) King Khufu, apprised of the fact that the wife of a certain priest of Re will give birth to children who will supplant Khufu's dynasty, is noticeably upset by the prophecy. But unless we assume an unrecorded version of the tale in which the king seeks the life of these children, we cannot compare the story with the motif of the abandoned wonder-child. For in the Westcar Papyrus

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<sup>44</sup>) Cf. E. MEYER, *op. cit.*, 46 f.; H. GRESSMANN, *Mose und seine Zeit* (Göttingen, 1913), 7 ff.

<sup>45</sup>) Ex. ii 1-10; see most recently G. FOHRER, *Überlieferung und Geschichte des Exodus (BZAW 91)*; Berlin, 1964), 19 f. Certain dislocations in the plot of Ex. i-ii might suggest the prior existence of a slightly different version which has been here modified: e.g. a logical inconsistency in Pharaoh's motive for slaughtering the innocents (cf. S. Sandmel, *The Hebrew Scriptures, an Introduction to their Literature and Religious Ideas* [New York, 1963], 373 f.), the presence of only two midwives, the implication that Moses, who has Miriam as an older sister, is the first-born of his mother. A possible reconstruction of this prior version might be sketched as follows: king is somehow told that woman's male child is to supplant him, two midwives sent to dispose of child, woman already delivered, secretes child in ark, etc. But there is no reason to believe that such a *Vorlage*, if it even existed, was attached to the name of Moses. Such an attachment came about, it seems, primarily through the false etymology of the name "Moses." But it is equally possible that the unevenness is directly due to the lack of skill of the redactor who first attached the name of Moses to this birth motif, and then attempted to insinuate it into the existing tradition. In the latter he was obliged to retain and accommodate two elements of long-standing, viz. the tradition of the bondage (already an integral part of the credos), and the tradition that Miriam was Moses' older sister. To make the birth motif coherent he had to preface it with the slaughter of the innocents, and in the process he introduced the aetiology of the midwives (which may have enjoyed a radically different function and form prior to incorporation): cf. NOTH, *Exodus* (SCM Press; London, 1962), 24.

<sup>46</sup>) A. ERMAN, *The Literature of the Ancient Egyptians* (London, 1927), 43 f.

the prophet hastens to add that the change of dynasty will come only after three generations have passed, and this is sufficient to allay Khufu's fears.

The birth of Horus appears at first glance to be the best example from Egyptian literature of the motif examined here.<sup>47)</sup> After the death of Osiris his pregnant wife Isis, the kite, flees the wrath of her brother-in-law Seth, the wild pig (?),<sup>48)</sup> who is determined to exterminate Osiris's seed. Isis flees to the impenetrable marshes of the Delta where, among the papyrus clumps of Khemmis, she brings forth her son, Horus, the falcon. Hidden in his "nest" among the papyrus, Horus grows up, and the remoteness of his hiding place frustrates every attempt Seth makes to find him. At last the mature Horus comes forth to champion his dead father, and drives his uncle Seth out of Egypt.

Much as this tale appears to incorporate the motif of the abandoned wonder-child, there are certain basic differences which cast serious doubt on the attractive identification of the two. First, Horus is not cast away and abandoned in a marshy district for his own safety; rather, his mother happens to be in the marshes for her own safety when Horus is born.<sup>49)</sup> Second, the picture the Horus-myth conjures up has a different milieu and different principals from that which is sketched by the myth of the hero abandoned in infancy. We do not see a child in basket or trough abandoned by members of a human community on riverain land. Instead we are in a marsh; a bird perches upon a gently swaying stalk, beneath her a nest with her helpless young inside; other friendly animals, including a cow, linger near protectingly; through the reeds in search of the nest a loathesome, predatory quadruped slips swiftly and noiselessly. This is a nature setting, not one drawn from human society.<sup>50)</sup> The imagery and motivation are adequately accounted for by the natural phenomenon, and are connected only secondarily with considerations of social relationships. Third, the hatred of Seth for Horus, the reason for which is not clear from the

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47) R. T. RUNDLE-CLARK, *Myth and Symbol in Ancient Egypt* (London, 1959), 186 ff; A. ERMAN, *A Handbook of Egyptian Religion* (London, 1907), 34; S. A. B. MERCER, *Horus, Royal God of Egypt* (Grafton, 1942), 102 ff.

48) P. E. NEWBERRY, *JEA* 14 (1928), 211 ff.

49) Cf. ERMAN, *La Religion des Egyptiens* (Paris, 1952), 100.

50) It may be derived from the myth of the papyrus goddess Uto and her child Nefertum: S. MORENZ, J. SCHUBERT, *Der Gott auf der Blume* (Ascona, 1954), 33.

birth narrative alone, is in reality something retained from two older myths, the myth of the murdered god Osiris, and the myth of the conflict between Horus and Seth. In both these myths the hatred of Seth for Osiris and Horus respectively is basic to the plot, and is readily understandable. The birth of Horus is a later creation, a bridge which served to link these older myths by making Horus the son and heir of Osiris, and thus turning the Horus-Seth conflict into the attack of an avenging son.<sup>51)</sup>

Of late an attempt has been made to combat the prevailing view that the birth narrative of Moses in Exodus owes nothing to Egypt by adducing some mythological episodes in a late, hieroglyphic papyrus.<sup>52)</sup>

51) On the equivocal role played by Horus in the two myths, see J. G. GRIFFITHS, *The Conflict of Horus and Seth* (Liverpool, 1960), 12 ff.

52) W. HELCK, *VT* 15 (1965), 48. Professor Helck's observations on the same topic which interested the present writer in a recent article (*VT* 13 [1963], 401-18) are interesting and well chosen, but I do not think he has weakened the case there presented. I was dealing in that article with Exodus i 11, and conclusions were that of the toponyms פָּחַם and רַעְמֵסֶס one is of late origin and the other is applied to a town attested from the sixth century B. C. onwards. These conclusions rested, as did those regarding *Čkw*, or תַּכְּת on the consistent presence of the town determinative after a certain date, and its consistent absence before it. I do not find תַּכְּת in vs. 11, and I know of no passage in the Bible which preserves a tradition of Israelite building operations there (*pace* HELCK, *op. cit.*, 37 f). Helck's statement (*ibid.*, 38) „Das Nichtbestehen eines Ortes kann also aus dem Fremdlanddeterminativ nicht gefolgert werden" is quite true, and I acknowledged the misleading nature of such determinatives in my article (*op. cit.*, 407). But my argument was not based on the presence or absence of the hill-country determinative in one or two instances, but on its consistent use to the exclusion of the town determinative in the early texts. With regard to the text in the Anastasi Papyrus I have not overlooked the attributive „which are in *Čkw*," (so HELCK, *op. cit.*, 39). We must examine the wording of Anast. VI, 54-7 closely. The writer says that they have finished checking a beduin tribe through "the fortress of Merneptah Hotepirmaat L. P. H. which is <in> *Čkw*." This is merely their point of entry, not their destination, which was "the pools of *Pr-Itm* which are <in> *Čkw*." If they were only getting water at the fortress, the verb *sš* (<*snš*> "to pass by") would surely not have been used. This is a clear indication of the physical separation of the fortress from the pools of *Pr-Itm*. Yet both fortress and pools were in *Čkw*, which plainly implies that at the time when the papyrus was written (late New Kingdom) *Čkw* was the designation of a region. Regarding the Hebrew רַעְמֵסֶס I must continue to protest that it could not have been derived from Egyptian *Pr-R<sup>c</sup>-ms-sw*. All the supposed Egyptian examples with elided *pr* are susceptible of other, more plausible, explanations. The example HELCK cites in his article (*op. cit.*, 42), viz. "the sculptor of Ramses Maiamun, Paya," must allude to the deified Ramses, and not to the

The episodes in question are briefly recounted in the Jumilhac Papyrus, a text of Ptolemaic date published by Vandier.<sup>53</sup>) They are not, however, told for their intrinsic interest, nor in fact is there anything to suggest that they had an independent literary transmission. Their sole purpose in the Jumilhac Papyrus is to elucidate the origins of the name of the Jackal god Anubis (Egyptian *Inpw*), and to explain how it came about that this god was identified with Horus. The purpose is aetiological, the device used is the familiar play on words which makes use of homonyms or similar sounding phrases. The pertinent passage reads as follows:<sup>54</sup>) "As for Uto the mistress of *Dwn-cwy*,<sup>55</sup>) that's Isis the mother of Anubis. As for Horus the child who is in this place, that's Anubis the son of Osiris, when he was a precious lad in the arms of his mother Isis. As for (the name) 'Anubis,' it was applied as a name to Horus since he was young.<sup>56</sup>) As to the fact that he was called 'Anubis' by his mother Isis, it was spoken with respect to the wind, the water and the mountain: the *i* is wind (*tw*), the *n* is water,<sup>57</sup>) and the *p* is mountain.<sup>58</sup>) She called his name after that of his father, the hidden one, in order that he (or it?) might be exalted in him (or it?). Afterwards Re said, 'As for him (*in p<sup>3</sup>y*), that's me,' and so his name Anubis came into being. Another version: Seth was

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toponym *Pr-R<sup>c</sup>-ms-sw*. Paya's title should be compared with "the carver of Amun," "the chief of the sculptors of Amun," "the goldsmith of Amun," "the draftsman of Amun," and others formed on the same pattern (cf. G. LEFÈBVRE, *Histoire des grands prêtres d'Amon de Karnak* [Paris, 1929], 47 f). The title indicates that its bearer "belongs to" the god, simply through membership in the god's community, or temple estate, as the variant *pr Imn* "Amun's estate" (not a toponym!) in place of *Imn* clearly shows (*ibid.*). In support of a New Kingdom pronunciation \**Ri<sup>c</sup>amsēšē* for *R<sup>c</sup>-ms-sw* "... fast wie im A. T. ..." (*op. cit.*, 43), HELCK cites the form *Ri-am-še-ši* in KUB III 124, 10. He thus ignores the regular and ubiquitous *Ri-a-ma-še-ša* for a single anomalous example, which is found, moreover, in a passage displaying an unusual and hesitant orthography (e.g. *ma(!)-ya* [*mry*, "beloved"] instead of the usual *ma-a-i*). The apparent unfamiliarity of the writer of this fragment with the Egyptian language—EDEL (*JNES* 7 [1948], 22) doubts that it came from Egypt—should caution against using it as evidence of the contemporary pronunciation of native Egyptians.

53) J. VANDIER, *Le Papyrus Jumilhac* (Paris, no date).

54) *Ibid.*, VI, 2-16.

55) The Eighteenth Nome of Upper Egypt: VANDIER, *ibid.*, 25 ff.

56) *Inpw*, "royal child," A. ERMAN, H. GRAPOW, *Wörterbuch der ägyptischen Sprache* (Leipzig, 1925), I, 96 : 5-6.

57) In Egyptian *n* is denoted by one wavy line, the noun "water" (*mw*) by three.

58) *Cw*; the significance of this last equation, as indeed of wind, water and mountain to the essence of Horus, is quite obscure; see VANDIER, *op. cit.*, 155.

ranging about looking for Horus when he was a child in his nest at Khemmis. His mother hid him in a papyrus-(thicket), and Nephthys' mat (?)<sup>59</sup>) was over him. She hid <him> as 'Child-who-is-in-the-papyrus-(thicket)' (*inpw imy w<sup>3</sup>ġ*), and so his name Anubis came into being, and *Mht imy Wt* became his cult image.<sup>60</sup>) Another version: he was sailing about in a boat (*inpw*) of papyrus, and Isis said to Thoth, 'Let me see my son who is hidden in the marshes.' Thoth said, 'See him!' And Isis said, 'Is that him (*in p<sup>3</sup>y pw*)?' And that's how his name Anubis came into being, a name which on that account is given to every royal child."

There is indeed some slight parallelism here between the details of the Horus myth and the birth narrative of Moses. In both we encounter a craft of papyrus, the hiding of the child in a marshy place,<sup>61</sup>) the pursuing villain bent on murdering the child, and the protecting sister (Nephthys).<sup>62</sup>) HELCK states with due caution, "Ob hier tatsächlich ägyptische mythenmotive bei dem Entstehen der Geburtsgeschichte mit wirksam gewesen sind, wage ich nicht zu entscheiden, aber man sollte doch bei der Herleitung nicht von vornherein ägyptische Abkunft ausschliessen und sich nur auf mesopotamische beschränken, besonders da solche ägyptischen Mytheneinflüsse ja auch sonst im hebräischen Raum feststellbar sind."<sup>63</sup>)

The fact is, however, and its importance cannot be minimized, that the parallels cited come from the Greco-Roman period when literary cross-fertilization had been going on for a long time. By the time that the Jumilhac Papyrus was written Egypt had been sufficiently exposed to both Hebrew and Classical literature for influences from those

59) See VANDIER, *ibid.*, 157.

60) *Ibid.*

61) Cf. RUNDLE-CLARK, *op. cit.*, 187 ff. For the opening of the container where the child is secreted by the unwitting offspring of the villain, see the Harris Magical Papyrus IX, 1 ff, 8 ff (E. AKMAR, *Le Papyrus Magique Harris* [Upsala, 1916], 33 ff), in which passage the casket in which Horus is hiding (see H. SCHAEFFER, *ZAS* 41 [1904], 81) is opened by Megy the son of Seth. But I do not think the parallel is especially close.

62) The protection of the child by various deities is very old; cf. already PT 1375.

63) *Op. cit.*, 48.

64) Late versions of the Osiris and Horus myths show this happening: cf. J. G. GRIFFITHS, *op. cit.*, 85 ff; HOLLEY, *op. cit.*, 44. According to a version of Osiris's birth recorded by PLUTARCH (*De Iside et Osiride*, 12), an oracle announced the god's nativity to a man who was drawing water, and charged him with

sources to have crept into the age-old myths.<sup>64</sup>) Nor can one counter that the passage translated reflects independent material of genuine antiquity. The vocabulary used by the writer, even the words on which the puns depend, show clearly that the stories in this part of the papyrus at least came into existence at a late date.<sup>65</sup>) Aetiology is the sole concern of these brief, poorly-written snatches of narrative; it is their *raison d'être*. Remove it, and nothing remains. The stories are the concoction of a theologian whose chief intent was to explain the identification of Anubis with Horus. They do not constitute evidence of a version of the Horus myth cast in the mold of the motif of the exposed child, upon which the Hebrews could have drawn for details for the tale of Moses. The narrative of Exodus 2 still finds its closest parallel in the Sargon legend, and parallels almost as close in Classical literature.

The classification of the examples of the motif already cited may be facilitated by tabulating the criteria as follows: (See page 225.)

It does not seem possible to the present writer to elicit any evidence for the history of the motif on the basis of the criteria of the second and third columns. Grouping of the examples on the basis of motive for abandonment, interesting though it may be in pointing up the sociological milieu of the various stories, fails to show a meaningful bifurcation in the motif. And there is no reason, as we have already said, to enunciate as a generalization that examples in which gods and goddesses figure are necessarily earlier than examples in which the cast is exclusively human. Indeed the nature of the motif makes it inappropriate for mythology. Gods are usually conceived as endowed with great power. How could such beings or their offspring be cast away like unwanted members of the human community? It is far more likely that those examples in which gods and goddesses play a part belong to an advanced stage in the humanization of the pantheon, and are patterned on tales told of human heroes. It will do no good to object that

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the child's upbringing. This is clearly a poor adaptation of the primary motif in which a water-drawer *found* the child, and then made an ad hoc decision to raise him.

65) *Inp*, "boat of papyrus," is found only in Ptolemaic texts: ERMAN-GRAPOW, *Wörterbuch* I, 96 : 4; the cow (Hathor) is an old member of the divine entourage which protects Horus in the marshes, but the interpretation of the hieroglyphic sign for cow as *qn*, "mat" (VANDIER, *op. cit.*, 157) depends upon a Ptolemaic value for the sign.



*The literary motif of the exposed child*

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No.	Principals	Motive	Place of Abandonment	Abandoned in	Abandoned by	Rescued by	Reared by
1	human & divine	shame	wilds	—	father	fisherman	(same)
2	human & divine	shame	river	basket	mother	farmer	(same)
3	divine	shame	hills	—	mother	doves	shepherd
4	divine	shame	river bank	—	mother	animals	goddess
5	human	shame	mountain	—	father	bird	(same)
6	human	?	wilderness	shield	?	eagle	?
7	human & divine	shame	mountain	—	uncle	shepherd	(same)
8	human & divine	shame	wilderness	—	mother	cow	shepherd
9	human & divine	shame	mountain	—	mother	goats	centaur
10	human & divine	shame	wilderness	—	mother	mare	shepherd
11	human & divine	shame	cave	basket	mother	god	priestess
12	human & divine	shame (?)	river	basket	mother	drawer of water	(same)
13	human	fear	river	box	mother	tanner	(same)
14	human	shame	river bank	—	grandfather	wolf, birds	herdsman
15	human	fear	thrown from height	—	soldiers	eagle	gardiner
16	human	fear	forest	—	grandfather	herdsman	(same)
17	human	fear	forest	—	grandfather	bitch	herdsman
18	human	fear	wilderness	—	grandfather	herdsman	(same)
19	human	fear	forest	—	mother	cow	hermit
20	human	fear	wilds	—	mother	goat	shepherd
21	human & divine	fear	sea	chest	king	shepherd	(same)
22 (1)	human & divine	fear	sea	chest	king	king	(same)
22 (2)	human & divine	tear	wilds	—	mother	doe	shepherds
23	human	fear	wilds	—	father	herdsman	queen
24	human	fear	mountain	—	father	bear	shepherds
25	human & divine	fear	fields	—	mother	goddess	mother
26	human & divine	fear	river bank	tub	king	wolf	herdsman
27	human & divine	?	river bank	—	mother (?)	?	?
28	human	fear	river bank	basket	mother	princess	(same)
29	human	fear	—	—	—	—	—
30	human	fear	desert	—	(parents accompany)	—	—
31	human	revolution	river	raft	—	natives	—
32	human	fear	river	basket	mother	princess	(same)

the earliest example listed above (no. 1) employs divinities as *dramatis personae*; for this tale of the sun god and the cow is basically the motif of the lustful god who mates with an animal, to which has been appended the independent motif of the exposed child.

The information provided by the fourth and fifth columns is more helpful. On the examination of these criteria two versions of the basic abandonment motif appear. In the first, the version with which Biblical scholars are most concerned, the child is placed in a light craft (ark, basket, chest, etc.) and cast upon the waters, whence in due time it is rescued by a human being (Nos. 2, 12, 13, 21, 22 [1], 26, 28, 31, 32). This form of the motif, through a coincidental resemblance, was easily confused with the myth of the drowned or submerged god, which was especially popular in Egypt.<sup>66</sup>) In Classical times the contamination of the one motif by the other is quite evident.<sup>67</sup>) In the second version the place of abandonment is either the forest or the hill country, and the water craft is dispensed with. In keeping with the rural setting the role of rescuer and guardian is played by various denizens of the countryside, including animals, birds, shepherds, cowherds and gardeners.

Where did these two versions of the motif originate? Are we to look for a particular geographical area, or must we postulate independent literary creations in many areas, more or less simultaneously? Admittedly, freely-composed tales on the same general subject could arise in the oral tradition of many widely-scattered peoples having no contact with one another. But the motif of the hero put into the water in a basket, or cast forth upon the hill, as far as plot is concerned, seems confined within rather restrictive limits: unlucky birth, danger to baby, abandonment, rescue by animals or rustics. Here surely is a motif which became popular and standardized in one culture, and then because of the widespread influence of that literary tradition, was disseminated among other literatures as well. When one examines the dispersal of the motif in ancient times, from Central Asia and north-west India to southern Europe, one literary tradition alone suggests itself as exerting sufficient influence directly or indirectly in all these areas to account

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66) Cf. Osiris (R. ANTHES, *JNES* 18 [1959], 199), or the Primaeval god submerged in the Nun (RUNDLE-CLARK, *op. cit.*, 46 f).

67) HOLLEY, *op. cit.*, 42 f.

for the presence of the motif, and that is the literary tradition at home in the plain of the Tigris-Euphrates. From here come the two oldest examples of the first version of the motif (Nos. 12 and 32), and here the very concept of consigning a life in a bark to the waters of a great river in order to preserve it, is very much at home.<sup>68)</sup> The second version, which has a comparable dispersal among ancient literatures, must have had its origin in a mountainous region where rivers did not readily suggest themselves as the most efficient means of disposing of infants. May we propose the highlands of Armenia and the northern Zagros, to the north and east of Mesopotamia?

To discern "lines of descent" among the thirty-two examples epitomized is difficult in the extreme. Moreover it may be misleading, since many seem to be *de novo* compositions with but a reminiscence of the framework of the motif, and not adaptations or borrowings of specific stories. Nevertheless some derivations can be pointed out. No. 28, for example, is clearly an embellishment of no. 32, and 30 is probably a re-working of the motif as exemplified in no. 32; but whether the latter is a direct adaptation of the Sargon legend (no. 12), or whether the motif enjoyed independent popularity among the West-semitic peoples, it is virtually impossible to decide. The story of Humai (no. 13), however, is surely a direct descendent of no. 12, and the same may be said of no. 2, though in the latter case a debt is also owed to no. 1 (in both stories the lover is the sun god). Those examples in which birds play the role of rescuer or sustainer (nos. 1, 3, 5, 6, 9,<sup>69)</sup> 14, 15) should probably not be linked together too closely, for in other respects the stories show marked divergence. That form of the second version of the motif in which either the father or mother or both take on animal form, is attested by the historified no. 17<sup>70)</sup> which perhaps provided the inspiration for nos. 18 and 19, and by no. 7 which in turn was the model for nos. 8, 14 and 26. If Astour's derivation of Zethos from זית is correct,<sup>71)</sup> one might postulate for no. 7 a West-semitic Vorlage now lost. Such a Vorlage, if it existed, was probably current in

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68) Cf. the Babylonian Account of the Flood.

69) ASTOUR, *Hellenosemitica*, 308 f.

70) HERODOTUS i, 110, where it is recorded that Cyrus's (human) foster-mother bore the name *Spaco*, or "bitch."

71) *Op. cit.*, 213.

the second millenium, as was no. 1, and also in all probability nos. 3 and 12. These four stories, then, two Mesopotamian and two Levantine, would be the earliest examples we possess of the motif of the exposed child.