

Hymn to the Aton

This week's lecture is on the Egyptian New Kingdom. During that time, Egypt experimented with monotheism. The individual who did this was Akhenaten. He and his wife Nefertiti wrote the following hymn:

AKENATEN'S THE HYMN TO THE SUN (Aton)

When thou settest in the western horizon of the sky,

[1st comparison, verse 20]

The earth is in darkness like the dead.

They sleep in their chambers

Their heads are wrapped up.

Their nostrils are stopped

And none see the other.

While all their things are stolen

Which are under their heads

And they know it not

Every Lion cometh forth from his den

[2nd comparison, verse 21]

All Serpents they sting

Darkness The world is in silence.

He that made them resteth in his horizon.

[22. The Sun riseth, they get them away,

and lay them down in their dens. 23. Man

goeth forth unto his work And to his labor until

the evening.]

Bright is the earth when thou riseth in the horizon.

[3rd , 22]

When thou shinest as Aten by day

Thou drivest away the darkness.

When thou sendest forth thy rays

The two lands (Egypt) are in daily festivity.

Awake and standing upon their feet

When thou has raised them up.

Their limbs bathed they take their clothing

Their arms uplifted in adoration to thy dawning

Then in all the world they do their work.. [4th, 23]

All cattle rest upon their pasturage

The trees and the plants flourish

[12. By them the birds of the heavens have their

habitation. They sing among the branches.]

The birds flutter in their marshes, [5th, 12]

Their wings uplifted in adoration to thee.

All sheep dance on their feet.

All winged things fly,

They live when thou hast shone upon them.

[25. Yonder is the sea great and wide. Wherein

are things creeping innumerable. Both small and

great beasts. 26. There go the ships.]

The barges sail upstream and downstream alike.

[6th, 26]

Every highway is open because thou dawnest.

The fish in the river leap before thee.

Thy rays are in the midst of the great green sea.
Creator of the germ in woman
Maker of the seed in man
Giving life to the son in the body of his mother
Soothing him that he may not weep.
Nurse (even) in the womb.
[29. Thou hidest thy face, they are troubled.
Thou takest away their breath and they die.
And return to their dust.]
Giver of breath to animals, every one that he maketh
When he cometh forth from the womb [7th, 29]
On the day of their birth
Thou openest his mouth in speech
[27. These wait all for thee. That thou may give them
food in due season.]
Thou suppliest his necessities.[8th, 27]
When the fledgling in the egg chirps in the shell
Thou givest him breath there-in to preserve him alive.
When thou hast brought him together
to (the point of) bursting it in the egg
To chirp with all his might,
He goeth about on his two feet
When he hath come forth therefrom.
How manifold are thy works,
They are hidden from before (us)
O Sole God, whose powers no other possesseth.
Thou didst create the earth according to thy heart
While thou wast alone
Man, all cattle, large and small
All that are upon the earth
That go about on their feet
(All) That are on high
That fly with their wings
The foreign countries, Syria and Kush,
The land of Egypt
Thou settest every man into his place
Thou suppliest their necessities
Everyone has his possessions
And his days are reckoned
The tongues are divers in speech
Their forms likewise and their skins are distinguished
(For) thou makest different the strangers.

It has long been recognized that there are similarities with Psalm 104 in the Old Testament.