

Come to Understanding

They also that erred in spirit shall come to understanding,
and they that murmured shall learn doctrine. — Isaiah 29:24

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The Goddess and Her Golden Calf

Soon after Israel left Egypt, where they had lived as slaves for more than four hundred years, they turned to worshipping gods other than Yahweh. While Moses was away receiving the commandments from Yahweh, Aaron collected jewelry from the people to make them a golden calf:

- 4 And he received *them* from their hands, and fashioned it with an engraving tool, after he had made it a molten calf: and they said, These *are* your gods, O Israel, which brought you up out of the land of Egypt. -Exodus 32

The people of Israel were excited, declaring that it was the calf, not Yahweh, that represented the gods which brought them out of Egypt. Why would Israel think that a calf brought them out of Egypt?

During the time of the Exodus of Israel from Egypt, which some believe to be around 1491 B. C.¹, the Egyptians worshipped the goddess Hathor in the form of a cow.² Hathor, whose name means the “house of Horus,” was known in Egypt under various other names, including Isis. She was worshipped as the “Universal Mother,” the “Mother of Gods,” the “Queen of Heaven,” the “Virgin Mother,” and the “Mother of Horus.”³ Hathor (Isis) served as both the mother and wife of the god Horus.⁴

[¹The Companion Bible: Appendixes, King James Version, Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1990, p. 53; ²Patrick Fairbairn, *The Imperial Bible-Dictionary, Vol. 1*, London: Blackie and Son, Paternoster Row, 1866, p. 143; ³Helena Blavatsky, *Isis Unveiled*, Pointe Loma: Aryan Theosophical Press, 1919, p. 209; ⁴James P. Allen and Peter Der Manuelian, eds., *The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts*, Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005, p. 432]

The photograph below shows the head of a statue of the goddess as a cow (her horns are now missing) from ancient Egypt around 1450 B.C.



Head of the Goddess Hathor
[©Trustees of the British Museum
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Around 600 B.C. the goddess, under the name Isis, was depicted as a woman wearing a headdress with cow horns holding her son, Horus.



Goddess Isis and Son, Horus
[©Trustees of the British Museum
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As Israel was preparing to worship the golden calf, they were likely worshipping the goddess through her son, Horus. In doing so, Aaron declared that this would be part of their worship during a feast to Yahweh. Then they started eating, drinking, and, finally, “playing!”

- 5 And when Aaron saw *it*, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made proclamation, and said, Tomorrow *is* a feast to Yahweh.
6 And they rose up early on the next day, and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play. -Exodus 32

When Moses returned and saw the people of Israel dancing naked around the golden calf, he broke the stone tables containing Yahweh’s commandments.

- 19 And it came to pass, as soon as he came near to the camp, that he saw the calf, and the dancing: and Moses’ anger grew hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and broke them beneath the mount. -Exodus 32
25 And when Moses saw that the people *were* naked; (for Aaron had made them naked to *their* shame among their enemies:) -Exodus 32

As Israel worshipped the golden calf, they were likely performing the kind of sexual rituals that were associated with worshipping the mother goddess:

“The worship of all mother goddesses in ancient times was accompanied by revolting unmoral rites which are referred to in condemnatory terms in various passages of the Old Testament, especially in connection with the worship of Ashtoreth, who was identical with Ishtar and the Egyptian Hathor.”⁵

[⁵Donald A. Mackenzie, *Myths of Babylonia and Assyria*, London: The Gresham Publishing Co., 1915, p. 96.]

So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense,
and caused them to understand the reading. — Nehemiah 8:8

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Even after Israel eventually entered into the promised land, they again succumbed to the temptation to worship the goddess. After the death of Joshua, Israel worshipped the Baal gods as well as the goddesses, which were known in Canaan as the Ashtaroth:

- 12 And they forsook Yahweh God of their fathers, which brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods, of the gods of the people that were round about them, and bowed themselves to them, and provoked Yahweh to anger.
- 13 And they forsook Yahweh, and served Baal and Ashtaroth. -Judges 2

Fearing the Philistines, Israel was eventually persuaded by the prophet Samuel to put away their Baalim (the plural of Baal) and their Ashtaroth and return to Yahweh:

- 4 Then the children of Israel did put away Baalim and Ashtaroth, and served Yahweh only. -1 Samuel 7

However, Solomon, the last king of the united kingdom of Israel, having been influenced by Hiram, the King of Tyre, by the Queen of Sheba, and by his many wives, returned Israel to goddess worship:

- 4 For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, *that* his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with Yahweh his God, as was the heart of David his father.
- 5 For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. -1 Kings 11

Solomon angered Yahweh by ignoring Yahweh's command to stay away from the goddess and the other gods:

- 9 And Yahweh was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned from Yahweh God of Israel, which had appeared to him twice,
- 10 And had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods: but he kept not that which Yahweh commanded. -1 Kings 11

Consequently, Yahweh promised to take all but a remnant of the Kingdom of Israel away from Solomon's family upon his death. He gave ten of the twelve tribes of Israel into the hand of Jeroboam, Solomon's servant (see 1 Kings 11-12).

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Jeroboam, who had been living in Egypt, then proceeded to make golden calves for the ten tribes to worship

- 28 Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold, and said to them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold your gods, O Israel, which brought you up out of the land of Egypt.
- 29 And he set the one in Bethel, and the other put he in Dan.
- 30 And this thing became a sin: for the people went to worship before the one, *even* unto Dan. -1 Kings 12

He created his own religion by making "high places" for worship and even setting up his own priests, ignoring the word of Yahweh which required them to be Levites:

- 31 And he made a house of high places, and made priests of the lowest of the people, which were not of the sons of Levi. -1 Kings 12

Lest the people of Israel who could still remember some of God's word might be tempted to returned to Jerusalem to keep the Feast of Tabernacles that Yahweh ordained to begin on the fifteenth day of the seventh month (see Leviticus 23:34), Jeroboam ordained an imitation feast. This feast of the fifteenth day of the *eighth* month gave Israel an opportunity to continue their festival-like worship before the golden calves of the mother goddess, Hathor:

- 32 And Jeroboam ordained a feast in the eighth month, on the fifteenth day of the month, like unto the feast that is in Judah, and he offered upon the altar. So did he in Bethel, sacrificing to the calves that he had made: and he placed in Bethel the priests of the high places which he had made. -1 Kings 12

The mother goddess, by whatever name, was also known as the Queen of Heaven. Even after the kingdom led by Jeroboam was destroyed for worshipping her, Judah (ruled by the descendents of Solomon) did not learn. They brought the worship of the Queen of Heaven to Jerusalem, provoking Yahweh again to anger:

- 17 See you not what they do in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem?
- 18 The children gather wood, and the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead *their* dough, to make cakes to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings to other gods, that they may provoke me to anger. -Jeremiah 7

Even after Judah was finally destroyed and a remnant fled to Egypt, they ignored the word of Yahweh and did what they loved to do:

- 17a But we will certainly do whatever thing goes forth out of our own mouth, to burn incense to the queen of heaven.... Jeremiah 44

Because of the sins of Aaron, Solomon, Jeroboam, and many others, millions of people have been deceived into giving to the goddess and her golden calf, by whatever name, the glory that only belongs to Yahweh. He says:

- 8 I *am* Yahweh: *that is* my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images. -Isaiah 42