



57. AHRIMAN

Jot's copied the deteriorating clay tablets of Akkad.¹ She made one copy for the queen in Djddjdu who was the keeper of the tablets, the other for the queen upriver in Thebes. Among other names, they were called Ahriman (lah-ar-y-imn, *two secret reeds of lah*), and they were used in governance of the Nile and Euphrates for the next thousand years until Darius and sons suppressed them in favor of Zoroastrian scriptures.² Jot's story of Ahriman was buried in Homer's *Odyssey*! How much of it can be restored?

¹**Jot** is my nickname for Tiresheas (ti-r-resh-ea-s, *great scribe to the queen*) Joset (djhw-set, *daughter of the ibis*) Mrith (mrit-h, *housekeeper*, "Martha"), the daughter of king Laius of Thebes and queen Jocasta of Hbrnn, and a sister of Josef and his brothers. She was a novice at Karnak while the volcano grew and blew on Thera ("Santorini"). [See Vol. 3, chapter 51 (ed).] As a young scribe, c. 1530 BCE, she witnessed the attack of the seven against Thebes and the burning of dynastic records that had been maintained there for at least five centuries. [See Vol. 3, chapter 53 (ed).] Subsequently, her writings became the oldest on record in Josef's new library, the bedrock for later literary matter of Thebes, but she wrote also for a library newly constructed at Djddjdu, near her mother's home. Her work supported three great queens: her mother Jocasta, her niece Maeriah of Kebh, and Maeriah's daughter Amasis ("Ahmose," "Antigone"). She documented the wars of Hyksos expulsion, the rise of the Amazon dynasty at Thebes, the Amazon transformation of Minoan Crete, the introduction of the great law into Egypt, and the strategic alliances of the Thebans with Phoenicians, Babylonians and Kebhites that were to establish Empire 3, sadly the misnamed "the New Kingdom." Jot died at about age 44 on an expedition to Crete, c. 1509 BCE. Revisionists began to ruin her writings soon after the Amazons lost power, c. 1458 BCE, but her literary remains are to be found in Genesis, Exodus, Judges, John, Homer, classical Theban plays and Thebiads. [Secrets Vol. 3 generally concerns Jot and her disciple Ysmni aka Ismene (ed).]

²**Ahriman** (from ar-r-imn or lah-ar-imn), the great law papyri of empires 2-4, was defamed by barbarians as a god of evil, a black god opposed to the Aryan Ahura Mazda. It was a hard sell for the Zoroastrians in multiracial Egypt and Babylon where the old law remained in practice. I should add that by the end of the Achaemenid empire, its racist foundations had been rejected even in Iran. Modern Zoroastrianism is not ancient Zoroastrianism. Racist traditions of Achaemenid Zoroastrianism were abandoned in major reforms during the late classical period.

THE VOYAGE OF AMASIS

adapted from *Odyssey* 1-7

[adapted from *Odyssey* 1] Now it was evening in Thebes. Iah's eye was open as wide as it goes, but the more light that she shed on the people outside the dark palace, the more she worked herself up for a cry.³ "Father," she said, turning her gaze toward the sinking heart of Re, "the papyri are ready in Djddjdu for delivery to Karnak, but who will dare to take them up there? The river teems with pirates, and Thebes is full of thieves! How I miss that excellent man, Josef! I cry whenever I hear his name is mentioned.⁴ And now his body is gone again, and his son is missing, too! His wife and daughter are prisoners in their own house! Night after night I watch rioters ruin their estate. Do you not see their crimes by day? Have you no memory of Josef? Don't you care about him anymore? Where is he? And where is valiant Hmssez? And where are the investigators who ought to be looking for them?"

"Iah, my darling daughter," brilliant Ibrem replied, "I won't argue with you. Thebes is in chaos. It is just as you say. When Karnak burned and my sons vanished from the Aten, all memory of the past disappeared among mankind.⁵ They have forgotten everything we did for them, but I forget nothing. Yes, I perfectly well remember Josef, and I see all of the crimes against his estate and mine. In due time, sweetheart, in due time your house will receive the papyri, but first there are gluttons to slaughter, a hundred evil gluttons! Yes, I see the rogues who have been butchering my cattle day after day, and I promise you, it won't be long before you will see their blood dripping on those fine old palace walls! Yes, this I promise you! It shall be done! See how I bow my head."⁶

Now the fiery one sank from view in the west, but Iah was aroused. She was more impatient than ever before to see the great papyri in her beautiful new house. Climbing high above the

³ **Iah** is the place of scribes but also a person in charge. Eiah, as I call her (ie-iah, *rising moon* or *high iah*, "Leah"), was the boss, and her daughter, not yet rising, I call Iah. Eventually, Iah rose to co-rule the empire as Imnyhtip (imn-y-h-ti-p, *the queen of the house of two secrets*, "Amenhotep"). I believe that the extended and sometimes comic narrative written for the coronation of Iah and Amasis, c. 1516 BCE, became the major source for the *Odyssey*.

⁴ **Josef** (djhw-h-se-f, *male son of the house of djhw [ibis]*, "Joseph"), son of Laius and Jocasta, son in law of Jacob of Kebh, ruled Thebes during the Hyksos Wars, c. 1535-1530 BCE. By his wife Maeriah, he had a son Hmssez (*male son born of the house*, "Ahmose") and two daughters Hmsset (*female son born of the house*, "Amasis") and Ysmni Su-re-h (*house of the sons of Re*, "Sarah"). Josef came to power after the attack known as the Seven Against Thebes, when old Karnak was destroyed. He rebuilt it as the temple of Onn before he was murdered by enemies. His posthumous epithet Re-z-qnn khai (re-z-qnn khai, *noble man of Re, the examined one*, "Sequenre Khai") refers to his spirit resurrected in the sun.

⁵ **Aten**: the disk of the sun where the resurrected spirits of the sons of Abram resided and shone down on the earth to keep the order of the past. Abram himself resurrected as **Ibrem** (ib-re-m, *in the heart of Re*), i.e., in the center of the sun, a possible origin of the name Abraham in Genesis.

⁶ **Iah and Ibrem** are lunar and solar avatars of Kebh and Thebes, the cities united in the marriage of Maeriah and Josef. The prophecies of Ibrem are read as he "bows," i.e., sinks into the horizon against the shifting background stars of the zodiac.

palace wall at Thebes, she shone ever more deeply into the courtyard. At table after table of rowdy guests, terrorized servants were pouring out the good beer, and passing out the choicest meats from the best suckling pigs of Josef's farm and the fattest calves of all the cattle of the sun.

The rioters were gorging themselves while gaming for girls of the household, girls selling their favors as dearly as they could, but young princess Ahoime sat alone, eating nothing, for she was deep in grief. If only her father Josef and her twin brother would return, surely then the pirates would run for their lives, and the honor and dignity of the family would be restored, but when? When would they return? Would it be too late for her? Would she already have been taken as a slave by some disgusting old lecher? Night after night, fantasies of escape had crossed her mind, but this evening was different. When the moonlight struck her, it changed everything. Abruptly, she was drawn out of her seat, away from the tables, into the tower and up the staircase, past her mother's room, past her own room, all the way to the rooftop. Who was there in full armor with the crescent on her shield? Was it the messenger she had expected? How did warrior get up there? Did he not climb the stairs?

"Rid your house of those thieves, girl," the helmeted figure called to her in no weak woman's voice. "Rid your house of them! Turn them away!"

"Speak quietly," the girl responded in a whisper. "Downstairs they will hear you. Who are you? I'm called Ahoime. It means *I'm in pain*. It's short for Ahoimemesat, meaning *I'm the daughter born to suffer*. My mother is called Aho-ti-p which means *the queen of suffering*."

"Don't talk like that," the fighter snapped at her. "You don't know what you were born to do."

"Do you understand the situation here," the girl asked. "There are no men in our house. My father and my brother were taken from us. My mother and I are guarded here by criminals. Did you see them downstairs? Our servants obey them, not us."

"One day, Amasis, you will be called Himimssati."⁸

"What did you say," the girl asked. "Tell me again what you said."

"Himimssati. It means that you were born in majesty to be a king. You will be a king."

⁷ **Ahoimemesat** (ahw-im-ms-sat, *daughter born in suffering*, "Ahotep"), aka Hmsset (h-ms-se-t, *female son born of the house*) aka Entignny (n-ti-gnn, *no weak queen*, "Antigone") aka Inihipea (ini-hip-ea, *finder of the great law*, "Inheppea"), was the heiress of Josef of Thebes and Maeriah of Kebh. She co-ruled Amazon Thebes, c. 1516-1494 BCE. Accounts of her life, written by her aunt Jot and sister Ysmni, were corrupted by Khaemwas, obedient son of the great chiseler Ramesses 2. They degraded further and further during political disputes over Egypt and Babylon in the time of Ashurbanipal, Nebuchadnezzar, David, Darius, Alexander, Pompey, Caesar, Antony, Octavius, Titus and Athanasius.

⁸ **Himimssati**: him-im-ms-sat-ti, queen's daughter born in majesty for a king.

“This is no joke! As I said, didn’t I say to you, my brother is lost? Maybe he’s lost forever like my father and his brothers. Maybe I no longer have a family, except my poor mother here and my sister nun, and my mother’s sister nun who lives in hiding somewhere in the swamps, if she’s still alive.”

“For now,” the specter said, “your name shall be Amasis, which means *she quickly attacks*.”⁹

“What does she attack?”

“Have you been listening? You must rid this house of thieves! Now tell me how you plan to do it. Tell me.”

“Attack the pirates? Shall I tell them that my noble grandfather is returning? He’s a sphinx, the great sphinx. Some story like that might scare them off.”

“You’ll need more than a good story,” the spirit replied. “There are a hundred pirates here, and they must not be under-estimated! They sail very well. To attack them, you’ll need the best navy in the world, the best ships and the best sailors.”

“Phoenicians?”

“Right. I have them almost ready for you.”

“Thanks for that,” the girl said. “When will they be here?”

“You must go for them.”

“Go? Go where?”

“To their port, down by the sea in Shaarea.”

“My mother won’t let me go.”

“Say to her the messiah is coming. I must go to her.”

“Who is coming?”

“The messiah, Iah-s-ms, she born of Iah.”

“A daughter of the moon?”

“Your mother knows all about it. Say to your mother, the messiah is coming, and she will let you go.”

“I can’t go anywhere. I’m a prisoner here, as I told you.”

⁹ **Amasis** (amm-as-s, *she quickly attacks*), an epithet reflecting her military strategy, apparent in her final victory at the battle of Kadesh.

“Old Phrunhyws will take you, he and his son Nuymun. They’re loyal. They’ll keep your secrets.¹⁰ You must go with Phrunhyws now and return with the navy before your house is destroyed. With your bow, you will lead the slaughter of the pirates.”

“I never shot anybody.”

“You’re no child any longer, Amasis. Look at yourself. You’re already as tall as your brother.”

“You know my brother? Is he all right?”

“Time has come for me to go, time for you to make for yourself a name as noble as any of your fathers.¹¹ Go quickly and get help before it’s too late.”

The moon then hid in clouds, the rooftop darkened, and the warrior vanished down the stairs, but Amasis was awakening. She was no girl anymore, really—and no fool or coward, either.

[adapted from *Odyssey* 2] She was made of the same brave stuff as her father. Though she had been born behind her brother, he was covered in blood but she had a foothold on him, maybe a good sign for her though not for him. Her chest expansion allowed her to make a deep-sounding voice, much like her brother’s voice after it broke, nearly as loud as her father’s voice when he yelled at the servants. Disguised in her brother’s cap and beard, &c., she would pass for him. She would captain a ship and rescue him, wherever he was. How surprised and grateful he would be! Then they would find their father, and the three would return leading the fine navy that already awaited her! And why shouldn’t she shoot the pirates? Was she born to be a slave?

Preparation for the voyage

In the morning, having gained permission from her mother to travel, Amasis descended to the storeroom where the floor once had been stacked with piles of gold and bronze, where the walls had been lined with casks of fine wines and precious oils, where rows of scented chests had been filled with linens and spare clothes of every kind. Of princely outfits that now remained, she picked out the largest, which appeared to cover everything, and a purple mushroom hat that her aunt Jot had made as a gift for Hmssez: it was large enough to hold all of her long curls. She ordered the door-keeper to draw whatever good wines remained, and to pour them into small casks with good lids, and also to fill twenty leather bags with barley meal, though the grain was old and slightly mouse-eaten, one bag for each of her crew. Then she swore the old woman to secrecy and told her of a voyage to find her brother and to return with him and with Josef and a fine navy, too, the best in the world. They would show no mercy to the plunderers, or to any of the household servants who were disloyal!

¹⁰ **Nuymeun** (nwy-meun-[f], *garrison of return*, “Noemon”) and **Phrunhhyz** (ph-rw-nhh-z, *he of the eternal lion attacks*, “Phronius”) are loyal servants who may have had prominent roles in the original text but receive only passing mention in the *Odyssey*.

¹¹ **Fathers**: through his father Laius, Josef traced his line back for at least 600 years to Intef 1 (“Saürtutu”) and Intef 2 (“Abram”). Those records were maintained in Karnak until they burned in the Hyksos attack known as “Seven Against Thebes,” c. 1535 BCE.

The door-keeper asked no questions but went about collecting the supplies for the voyage while Amasis dressed as her brother hurried down to the queen's pier, where in her most swaggering voice she ordered the boatman Nuymen, son of Phrunhhyz, to ready a ship and crew to sail after sundown. His loyalty never waivered, and before darkness settled over the land, he indeed slid a black ship into the water, rigged her with tackle and sail, and tied her to the end of the pier. Phrunhhyz meanwhile sent for a crew, and as evening fell they began to arrive. In all, there were twenty oarsmen.¹²

The moon returned to Thebes near sunset that day. She focused her light on the outlaws which made them drink and drink again and again until darkness, when their cups fell from their hands. And when their bodies were slumped in the seats where they sat, she closed their eyes and set them dreaming on nasty things. And when all of them were soundly sleeping, she whispered to Amasis, "your crew has taken their provisions from the palace. Already they are on board at their oars, waiting for you, so hurry. No more delay! It's time to go, now or never!"

Amasis refreshed her appearance as her brother, and then she hurried down to the dock, met the captain Phrunhhyz and went aboard, but none of the crew were fooled by her disguise.

Ahotip Pnelupi¹³

[adapted from *Odyssey* 4] Early on the next morning, guards by the gate of the palace were hurling stones and spears aimed at a mark they had set on the ground, when Nuymen son of Phrunhhyz came up to them from the pier. He said to their leader Enkhynuez, son of Euaithiz, "do you know where Ahoime went? She made off with my ship in the middle of the night, and she took my crewmen, too. I'll need them tonight to pinch the mules that you want . . ." ¹⁴

This Enkhynuez was hot-tempered in general, as required to rule his mob, but as soon as he confirmed that the princess was missing, his heart burst in flames and smoked with rage. "You and your father!" he roared, "you swindlers, you helped her to escape! Which way did they go?"

"Up to Kebh, I would guess," Nuymen answered before Enkhynuez hit him in the teeth. The boatman fell, knocked out cold, and nobody went to his assistance, but the games stopped

¹² **Crews of twenty** apparently were standard for armies of the Nile in this period. Fifty Myrmidon ships carried a thousand men, but the sea-going ships of the Phoenicians, carrying crews of fifty-two rowers, were unsurpassed for speed and fire power.

¹³ **Ahotip** (aho-ti-p, *the queen of sorrow*) was an epithet applied to widowed queens. The epithet **Pnelupi** (pne-l-wpi, *the divided Nile is overturned*, "Penelope") specifies Josef's widow Maeria who resigned during the expulsion of the Hyksos from the Nile.

¹⁴ **Enkhynuez** (enkhy-nw-z, *man of oaths*, "Antinous") was warlord of Antinoopolis, Nome 12 of northern Egypt, a region on the river just north of Cusae. That district had been Hyksos territory prior to the battle of Cusae in which the Thebans defeated a Hyksos-allied queen 1529, the year before the battle of Avaris. To speculate about background missing from the text of the *Odyssey*, Euaithiz (ewai-thi-z, *thief transgressor*, "Eupeithes"), father of Enkhynuez, allied with Thebes at Cusae and he was rewarded with the title of overlord. After the battle of Avaris, Enkhynuez was entrusted to guard Thebes while the Theban navy was fighting rebels up in Qash. Enkhynuez then threw in with those rebels and hoped to gain power in Egypt.

quite suddenly, the players shut their mouths, and on command they followed Enkhynuez through the gate. In an instant all were seated at the tables in the courtyard, and their leader was fuming at them. Meanwhile Pnelupi stood back from her upstairs window, back far enough to be unseen but not too far to hear what was said down below.

“Ahoime escaped last night,” Enkhynuez scowled. “Were all of you drunkards asleep? How else could it have happened? Were you paid to look the other way? By all the gods, I’ll make all of you pay for that girl unless you bring her back! She’s worth an f’n fortune! Now get on your ships! Go after her, and kill all the crooks that took her, kill every last f’n man, whoever they are, and be sure they’re dead. Leave no witnesses, but take her alive, and don’t harm even a single hair on her head, or you’ll be f’n sorry!”

When the speech ended, the queen peeked out and saw guards hurrying away toward the river. She knew what they were doing, but then she thought that she ought not to know, so she summoned an interpreter who knew the Medju language, a cautious man of dual loyalties who had agreed to keep watch on the pirates for her.¹⁵ Having heard the talk in the courtyard, he reported to the queen that Ahoime had been taken away by ship in the middle of the night, and the sailors were going to find her and bring her back. Hearing this, the queen appeared to be in shock. Though not quite the actress that her sister was, she looked very much as if her heart had sunk within her. For a time she was speechless, but at last her eyes filled with tears, and then she began to wail, “Daughter, where are you? Who took you away, child? I warned you a hundred times never to leave the house! Were you taken to be sold? Where are you?”

The interpreter appeared to be fooled. “Ahoime wasn’t sold,” he interrupted. “She escaped in the night. Enkhynuez is furious.”

When the queen had heard the full report, she dismissed the man and summoned her maids. From all parts of the palace they gathered around her and in a chorus loudly echoing her griefs. How many of them knew the truth about Amasis, I don’t really know, but I doubt that there many more than one.

“I suffer more than any woman on this lawless river,” Maeriah complained. “First, my poor husband was entombed for a mere three days when his mummy was lost in a storm. Then my son, my only son sailed off to who-knows-where to find the body or for whatever reason he had, who-knows-why. He never told me, and now nobody knows where he is. The only joys remaining in my life were my daughters, and now the elder child has run away without telling me. My twins are somewhere at the mercy of wind and waves. Why? Who knows where they are is? What happened last night? Some of you must have known when Hmsset left her room,

¹⁵ **The Medju** (aka Medu, aka Medes) lived south of Kebh in the region of Qash (“Kush”). It appears that Enkhynuez has Medju-speakers among his pirate band, and they use that language in Thebes, supposing that few or none understand it. A Medju faction are supporters of Pnelupi’s brother Creon to rule as king in Thebes, so they are holding her in her palace while Creon gathers support for his takeover.

but you never awakened me! Nobody asked me for permission to open the doors. Why? What were you thinking? You hussies, she was your responsibility! Who let her out? Who saw her leave? Is Thebes to have no king and no heiress?¹⁶ Am I to have no husband, son or daughter, and none of their remains to console me until I die? Have none of you anything to say? All silent? Are you too ashamed to speak? Go now, some of you, and call Julius: he's working nights by the river.¹⁷ Ask him if he saw Ahoime leaving last night. Find old Laertes, too, and ask whether he saw her.¹⁸ Maybe one of them saw in which direction she sailed, or what boat it was, or who was on board with her. In any case, send them to me."

Now the oldest of woman spoke up, she who had nursed the twins. "O Pnelupi," said Iryea much too loudly,¹⁹ "none of your workmen can have recognized the princess in her disguise. Even to me, after I watched her put on her brother's coat and hat, she looked exactly like him, and that's exactly how she looked when she left the palace last night. 'Hmsset,' said I to her, 'why with your father and your brother missing, why will you be risking your own life now in the flood?' 'Nurse,' said she to me, 'it's none of your business. If you were loyal, and not so friendly with the pirates, you would never ask me such a question.' Well, I tried to stop her, but you know how strong that girl is."

"You never called for help!"

"She told me that Iah inspired her plan. Iah had promised to protect her. I should not interfere."

"You had no permission to let her go!"

"She was afraid that you would oppose the will of Iah."

"You should have told me!"

"She made me swear an oath not to tell you. I promised her not tell you for a week, and now already I have broken that promise."

¹⁶ **No heiress:** succession was disputed. If prince Hmssez was dead, and if he died without any living sons or brothers, then Creon contended that he should be king. Some maintained that Hmssez was not dead, and others said that he was dead, but he had a living brother "Kamose" who should be king. Jot took keen interest in these disputes as she was (as we would say) executrix for the royal family. It appears that she supported Maeriah to rule as queen mother until Amasis came of age to act in her own right, and in the end she supported Amazon joint rule by Maeriah and Amasis.

¹⁷ **Julius** (djo-ewa-z, *he looks after night*, "Dolius") an epithet for a night watchman, or perhaps Jolaius (djo-laius, *he looks after [the sphinx of] Laius*), a caretaker of the king's shrine, or maybe Joewaz (djhw-ewa-z, *he looks after the house of the djhw*).

¹⁸ **Laertes** (aa-we-rth-z, *he repairs unique ruins*, "Laertes"), father of Djoewaz, is a master builder who repairs tombs and monuments, aka Iarrytz (iarryt-z, *man of grapes or man of vines*), a drinker. Tiresheas loved puns.

¹⁹ **Iryea** (Iryea, *door-keeper*, "Euryclea") may derive from iry-ea, *great eyes*.

The dispute went on longer than necessary to convince everyone to believe it was genuine, but at last the old nurse brought it to a close. “May gracious Iah forgive me,” she cried. “Pnelupi, pray to Iah, and I’m sure that Iah will deliver us. All of us must pray. Let us pray to both Iah and Re. They cannot hate you so much that they will allow both of the twins to die!”

After these and similar sentiments had been spoken, the queen at last dried the tears from her eyes and wisely turned away from the window. Some of the women began to pray aloud to Iah, and others to Re since it was daytime, but outside the window and not far from it down in the courtyard, Enkhynuez thought that he had heard the whole argument, and he imagined that he knew what it meant, though he was wrong on both assumptions.

“The foolish queen thinks that I’ll marry her,” he quipped in broken Medju to his bodyguards. “She never dreams that she and her girl will be sold. A cut of that gold will reward every man of the crew that finds Ahoime and brings her back alive.” He and his guards then hurried off to the pier, quickly drew their ships into the flood, took up oars, and rowed away.

Now Maeriah was worried deeply. Planning to ask Re if ever she would see her daughter again, she waited on the rooftop that evening for sunset, but the sky remained heavily clouded, so she returned to her room. There she found some comfort reading and re-reading a secret letter from her sister queen Eliah²⁰ who had ruled the empire from distant Phhire,²¹ but now was widowed, living in exile among Phoenicians in Shaarea. Eliah was fortifying Djddjdu and leading her people as regent for her daughter Iah, the Nsytkaea.²²

The letter spoke comfort to Maeriah. “Greetings, Mary,” Eliah wrote, “The unknown soldier now is ready for his funeral.²³ Let us transport him up to Thebes as we have planned. Please

²⁰ **Eliah Dido Arete Tindiaru** (rwi-ea, *great dancer*, di-dwa, *give morning praise*, ar-ity-i, *my sovereign is oppressed*, or Ar-re-ti, *Re defends the queen or queen of Re’s reeds*, ti-ndj-iaru, *reeds protect the queen*, “Leah,” “Dido,” “Arete,” “Tindareus”), sister of Maeriah, was the elder daughter and principal heiress of Jacob of Kebh. She was the wife of Old Babylon king Samsu-Djytawi, (samsu-djt-tni, *eldest of old estate*, “Samsu-Ditana”) who traced his line back to Abram, Hammurabi and perhaps Sargon of Akkad. They fled to the Nile delta with their daughter Nsytkaea (the Odyssey’s Nausicaa) when Kassites invaded the Euphrates, c. 1531 BCE. The king was captured and murdered in Hyksos Avaris, but Eliah hid in the marshes where she built Djddjdu (“Judges”) and became the judge. She appears in Odyssey 4 as a dream figure with a name Iphthime (*messenger image*) which I reconstruct in the original of Tiresheas as a letter from Eliah.

²¹ **Phhire** (p-h-hi-re, *the husband’s house of Re*, “Hirey”): Babylon. The old empire was seen as a marriage between Nile wife and Euphrates husband.

²² **Nsytkaea** (nswt-kai, *high ruler*, “Nausicaa”) was heiress of Babylon who fled with her parents from Kassite invasions there in 1531 BCE. Eventually, with her cousin Amasis she co-ruled the empire as Imnyhutip (imn-n-hu-ti-p, *the queen of the decree of imny*), though revisionists replaced that name with “Amenhotep” and changed her sex to male as if she had been priest of Amun.

²³ **Unknown soldier** Manasseh (mn-eha-seh, *mummy warrior enduring*), reduplicated Mnheassha (mnh-ea-ssha, *great papyrus of the marsh*), was the great papyrus hidden for secret transport in a casket.

remind your daughter to wear her Phuonshy.²⁴ Strangers will be arriving here for the sailor games, but rest assured that she will be safe. May Re soon give to you every help that you desire. Leah.”

Yes, thank you, sister, Maeriah replied. Thank you a million times, but what about Hmssez? Is my son with you? When will he return home?

So the queen spoke, but the letter did not answer those questions.

A letter of Amasis to her cousin Iah the Nsytkaea

[adapted from *Odyssey* 6] Several nights later, Eliah’s daughter Iah was re-reading a letter in her lovely decorated room in the new palace under construction at Djddjdu. She had been heiress to the great empire of Akkad in the time before Babylon was destroyed by outlaw barbarians.²⁵ The family had been forced to flee: her father the king had led the loyalists to Egypt to resettle in Kebh, but the river had been blocked in Avaris. The king had been taken and now he was dead, but the people were hiding in the great reed marsh with empress Eliah, Maeriah’s sister. The letter was from Maeriah’s daughter Hmsset, a princess rather older than the Nsytkaea, one she never had met in person but a girl no doubt very elegant, graceful and well mannered, a young lady with the prettiest clothes.

“Greetings, princess,” the letter said, “what were our mothers thinking to have such lazy daughters as we are? The games are coming soon! All the best bachelors will be in your city to compete in the games, so I hope your good clothes will not be soiled and wrinkled in heaps on your bedroom floor! You and I need very clean clothes, noticeably cleaner than the clothes of our girls, but they should look their best for that occasion, too, of course. How else will we get attention from the most worthy of the athletes and their mothers? Shall we make a washing day of the day before the games? Yes, if you can leave your house, I’ll meet you at the laundry as early as possible after dawn on that day so that we will be ready for the young men to come courting on that same night! Please ask your mother for a covered wagon and mules we won’t have to walk all that long way in the sun. I look forward to our meeting. Hmsset”

The heiress awoke in the morning with that letter still in hand. She ran to the bedroom of her mother to tell her all about it. The queen was busy dressing for court that day, but she listened

²⁴ **Phuonshy** (phwvwnshy, *marsh headress*): a mushroom-shaped hat that was in fashion among aristocrats in the delta. See the sketch of Jot wearing a Phuonshy on page 1 above. The Phuonshy probably originated the name of the *Odyssey*’s Phaeacians, a people celebrated for their generosity, law, story-telling, athletics, weaving, sailing and navigational skills. I propose that these people now are identified Phoenicians, that Jot lived among them and wrote in a Phoenician script, and that one or more of her Phoenician-scripted writings was translated into archaic Greek, c. 775 BCE, introducing Homer to the Greeks.

²⁵ **Babylon**: the *Odyssey* refers to the land of Arityi’s husband as Hypereia (hi-per-*ea*, *great house of the husband*). Intermarriages between ruling families on the Euphrates and Nile had long sustained the empire.

carefully to her daughter's story, and she promised the wagon and mules and whatever else the girl had a mind for. "Be off with you now, Iah" she said, "and the servants will try to find a wagon big and strong enough to hold you and all of your clothes. Don't forget your hat!"

Soon there were two strong mules hitched to a rather large wagon outside the main entrance, where Iah's white-armed maids were carrying out load after load of dirty laundry.²⁶ Meanwhile, the queen brought out her daughter's purple Phuonshy, a very large gown that once belonged to prince Hmssez, a basket filled with all sorts of good things to eat and drink, and a cruse of golden body oil. When the wagon was loaded and the maids were aboard, Iah took the driver's seat, and she lashed the mules with reins and whip. Along of path of mud and stone through the marsh without flagging, they pulled her and her maids and everything.

When they reached the pools of clearest water, the maids unharnessed the mules and turned them out to feed on the sweet grasses that grew by the water side. Then they unloaded the wagon, took the laundry to the washing pools, put off the clothes that they were wearing, and threw all of the wash into the pools, where their mistress joined with them as they vied with each other in dancing out the dirt. And after the clothes had been well-stomped, they laid them out along the shore, where the river tides had raised a high beach of stone, and then they washing their bodies and anointing them with olive oil.

Finding that the clothes had not yet dried, they then began to sing and play with a purple ball, which almost discovered Amasis lying naked under a bed of leaves. She had waited a long time until she had given up on her cousin's arrival; she had been stomping her clothes when she had heard noises on the road. She had thrown herself under the bush and then watched in silence as her cousin and maids went about their dancing and play.

She peeked out from under her bush for a better look at them. Her cousin was of a skin color much darker than the stark whiteness of the maids, and as she thought about this, she accidentally snapped off a bough, that's when they noticed her. The maids ran as from some shaggy creature in the bush, some panther perhaps, or maybe a lion that stalked its prey in mud fresh from Ethiopia. They scampered off and hid like so many white sheep, but Amasis remembered to put on her hat, and Iah then appeared to take great courage into her heart. She stood firm and fearless, right in full view of the peeper.

How should they act? At first, Amasis thought that she should throw herself at Iah's feet, and embrace her knees as a suppliant, just for laughs, but then she thought that her cousin might not be the kind of girl who is allowed to joke around, and then she thought there was a slight chance that the girl before her might not be her cousin, as at first she supposed.

She decided to stay hidden and to beg for some clean clothes. "Are you a goddess from heaven?" she asked in her best male-sounding voice, loud enough perhaps for the maids to

²⁶**White-armed maids:** they apparently have come with the household from Babylon. They may be daughters of nobles of the court, but they are not trusted with every royal secret. Iah and Amasis have arranged to trick them about Amasis' identity.

hear, wherever they were hiding. "I never in my entire life saw a face or body so beautiful. I'm lost in admiration and wonder as I look at you. I'm so enthralled, I don't dare to clasp your knees, and beg you to help me in my distress, but in fact I do need some help."

"Yes," the girl replied. "I suppose you do need some help. How did you get into that bush?"

"Whoever you are, to tell you the truth, not that I ever would lie to a young lady so pretty as yourself, I was commanding a riverboat, a Memphite boat searching for my sister—my twin sister had been swimming in the flood, you see, when she was lost—and then something happened to me. What it was I can't remember now exactly, but my ship and crew and all my clothes are gone, except for this hat, and I awoke here just now, unless I'm still dreaming. Maybe my crew mutinied or we capsized and some great wave carried me and dropped me into this brush, but I don't recall it."

"You lost your sister? How can I help you?"

"O princess, for you must be a princess if you are not a goddess, or maybe you're one of those goddesses who lies to young men, or maybe you think I have lost my mind, but in any case have mercy on me, for I'm a stranger in this land, wherever it is, and I'm completely naked. Can you spare a little of your clothing for me, I mean the clothing on the beach, and tell me the way to the nearest town? I suppose there must be a town somewhere around here."

"Stranger," the heiress chuckled, "What happened to you should happen to nobody, here in this land you never will lack for clean clothes. The clothes of a prince happened to be floating in one of the pools, and the girls took them out and dried them."

"I'm amazed," Amasis said. "If they happen to fit me, may I borrow them from you?"

"You may have them," Iah said, "and you may have whatever else a refugee in distress reasonably may want. Luckily you have landed near Djddjdu, the most civilized city in the world, a city of refugees who care for others in need. I'm Iah, the daughter of the ruler. My mother is called Judge Arreti: she's the daughter of Jacob, king of Kebh, may he rest in peace. My mother is his heiress and also queen of Akkad and Babylon through her marriage to his majesty Samsu-Djytawi. I am the sole heiress to both of their estates, eventually."

Amasis replied, "Your Highness is unmarried?"

"Yes, but I'm looking for husband like you," the girl laughed. Then she called loudly to her maids, "come back, girls! It's safe! This handsome young prince is lost. He would like to try on the clothes that we found here this morning, but first give him a bath. Scrub him down, and when he's dressed, we will share our food with him."

Hearing this, one of the maids called the others, and as soon as they had dressed themselves, they came to see the black stranger, but as they approached they heard the manliest voice of a prince commanding them, "you maids, bring me clothes I can wear to the pool, and look away from me as I undress and bathe. In my country, men wash their own bodies."

They slipped the clothes under the bush to Amasis, and when she emerged in the ill-fitting gown of Hmssez, they took a towel and body oil and went to the bathing pool. They looked away as Amasis washed and oiled her body, but when she was drying her hair, hair flowing down in long, tight black curls onto her dark breasts, she saw that Iah was staring at her. Amasis quickly put up her wet hair under her purple cap and pulled on her brother's new washed gown, and she saddened to be reminded of him again.

They all ate and drank together, and Amasis quickly attacked her meal, partly because she was imitating her brother but mostly because it had been a long time since she last was fed. And when all had their fill of those good things that Arreti had prepared, the maids folded the dry laundry, and they placed it in the wagon with great care, and they yoked the stubborn mules. Then they sat in the grass for a very long time waiting for their mistress and the stranger to stop talking . . .

At last Iah said to her guest, "let's go. I'll lead the way in the wagon, and the maids will ride with me. Follow us on foot and stay away at a distance but not out of sight, for I fear that spies may be watching along the road. As we approach the city, and you see its high wall in the distance, there beside the road on the left is a meadow, and the monument of a lion in a lovely grove of poplars.²⁷ It looks like a copy of the sphinx of Laius, but it's my father's monument. Lie by the lion tonight, no farther away than he can hear you speak, and ask him to tell your fortune. Then, in the morning come to town and to court which is in the center of the city. I will send a maid to meet you and show you the way through the streets. She will be holding a pitcher, the same one that I have here, so you will recognize her. When you reach the courtyard, climb the stairs and go through the bronze door into the courtroom. Walk straight up to the judge, being sure that you are wearing that purple hat, as it is one that the judge will recognize. She's my mother, as I said, and it's a fine sight to see her seated on her throne, with noblemen all around serving in her court. Next to her throne is the place that belonged to my father, but it's empty, so never mind it. Go straight up to my mother, bow to her until she recognizes you, and then ask her to give you anything that you need."

They approached the wagon together, and Iah said to the maids, "I thought that this beautiful young man had come to compete in our games, so I wanted to hear all about him, but I am disappointed. He claims that he suffered an injury that prevents him from competing, so let us be on our way."

With that, she turned away from Amasis, quickly mounted the wagon, lashed the mules, and began back along the same path by which they had come that morning from the city. The slower maids who missed that ride followed on foot, and then at a long distance behind the slowest of them came Amasis, seeming to limp along, but the last maid in that procession always pointed the way to him.

²⁷ **A well in a grove of poplars:** this is a memorial garden of "Alcinous" Samsu-Djytawi. The "well" may have been an entrance or false entrance to his tomb.

The sphinx of Samsu-Djytawi²⁸

They didn't reach the lion's grove until sundown, and there as instructed Amasis stayed for the night. She was wakeful at first, keeping watch on the lion. As it never moved she finally slept, but no sooner did she sleep than the lion spoke to her.

"Amasis, Amasis," it said. "I'm your uncle Samsu-Djytawi, *the eldest of the old estate* as it were, but call me Samson. Yes, I married your mother's sister fourteen years ago, and for seven of those years we lived very nicely as king and queen in Akkad, but then nothing lasts forever, does it? Three years ago, without any provocation whatsoever, lawless cyclopes attacked us. They cut short my reign, for which the scribes have called me Nsythoez. They recognize that I should have stayed on as king for a lot longer.²⁹ We crossed the wilderness to Syria and took ship from Tyre to Avaris where I was murdered in the flesh, for which scoffers put me down as Alcinous,³⁰ yet I died so bravely that real authorities call me Eaemleaz."³¹

"Is it true that you tell fortunes," Amasis asked. "That's what Iah told me."

"Yes, it's true."

"How do you do it?"

"Well, I knew nothing about the future when I went on two legs or three, but now with these four paws under me, I know as much as I want to know about whatever is to come. Do you doubt me? Ask me anything you like."

"What should I ask about?"

"If you ask about tomorrow, then by tomorrow night you will know I was right or wrong."

"That's a great idea," Amasis said. "Where am I going in the morning? Can you tell me?"

"You will meet a maid in the city, and she will be carrying the pitcher that you saw at dinner yesterday. She will take you to the courthouse where you will ask the judge for help."

"Right, but will the judge help me?"

²⁸ **This section** uses the dream stele of Thothmes ("Tuthmose IV") and monuments of Kadesh to close a notable gap where Nausicaa directs Odysseus to sleep in her father's poplar grove, but nothing results from the direction. I think the original episode was edited by Ramesses 2 and later deleted for political reasons by Darius. In the original Egyptian, I speculate, the sphinx directed Amasis to recover Babylon from the enemies who overthrew him, and that direction was fulfilled in a postscript to the narrative where she and her cousin gained a great victory at Kadesh.

²⁹ **Nsythoez** (nsyt-hwe-z, *he of shortened rule*, "Nausithous"): an epithet for Samsu-Djytawi ("Samsu-Ditana") who was forced to flee from Babylon, bringing the so-called first dynasty of Old Babylon to a close.

³⁰ **Alcinous** (l-sin-aw-z, *dead brother lion*): how Samsu-Djytawi died is uncertain. I suggest that he perished in captivity of Hyksos in Avaris, as did Wadjaipuz. The Hyksos were trying to end the empire. But see Genesis 39.

³¹ **Eaemluz** (eae-m-l-ea-z, *his great lion is of valor*, "Eumelus").

“Yes, in a few more days. “She will give you the papyrus in a coffin and a fast ship to take you up to Karnak.”

“What’s name on the coffin?”

“Manasseh.”

“You do know all things!”

“Have you no more questions?”

“What things?”

“Questions of things further in the future? What about the time to come when you and Iah will be kings, ruling together, fighting together to regain Akkad?”

“Now you are teasing me, uncle.”

“No, you and Iah will win a battle for which you should be remembered forever. You will be on the march against the Hatti in Syria. As you enter the hill country south of Shabtuna, two foreign chiefs will report to you that your enemies are afraid of you, and they have fled, so you will proceed to cross the river Orontes without waiting for Iah or the Assyrians to join your Theban band. You will march north past Kadesh, but then toward noon the Hatti with a multitude of allies will close in behind you to the south. They will cross the ford of the Orontes and come at you, both infantry and chariots massed in a force as numerous the sands of the sea. You and the Thebans will be cut off and surrounded, but you will arm and mount your chariot ‘Victory of Thebes,’ and quickly charge at the multitude where none will stand before you. A hundred men will fall from your arrows or sprawl before your horses. You will fear nothing in your rage, but as you lose your horses, and your enemies close in upon you, and your death appears certain, you will call upon the triple Re, and they will descend in three chariots of fire, and strike with the force of a hundred thousand men. Iah and the Assyrians will rejoin you in that moment, and you will call to them, shouting, ‘Re is with us! The triple Re is our helper! He returns to us that which was taken from our fathers! Let all the Hatti lie in their own blood on the plain of Kadesh! Let all of them be offered up to Re in a great fire!’”³²

The court of Djddjdu

[adapted from *Odyssey* 7, with borrowing from *Aeneid* 1] A thick fog from the sea surrounded Amasis when she awoke. She arose and made her way unnoticed into the city, but to her left as she passed the deep-dredged harbor, the first morning sun cut the fog enough for her to see faint outlines of ships much larger than any she had seen before. Then she saw horsehead prows, and she knew that they were the famed wooden horses of the Phoenicians, the swiftest ships in the world! She hoped to return to Thebes in one of those. She hoped to lead a dozen of them, laden with real horses, chariots and archers to a slaughter of the pirates.

³² **Triple Re** was the sign of Abram’s Ur III. See Vol. 2, chapter 39. It was refreshed as the sign of three Theban martyrs who died in the Hyksos Wars and were seen as resurrected in the sun: Samsu-Djytawi, Josef and Hmssez.

When she reached the city gate, she saw a girl in common dress with an uncommon pitcher, but the same pitcher from which drinks had been poured out to her on the day before? The girl was not one of the white-armed maids. Was Iah herself waiting to guide her through the streets to the court?

“My dear,” Amasis said to her in manly voice, “I’m an unfortunate mariner, shipwrecked on your shore. Can you tell me, is this a lawless place or is it civilized? Do you have laws that protect strangers and a judge who follows those laws?”

“Yes, sir,” Iah replied. “The laws of this city protect stranded travelers very well. I believe that the judge will award you all the assistance that you need to return to your home, wherever it is. If you wish, I will show you the court building, for it’s not very far from my mother’s house. I’m going that way now, as it happens, so you can follow me, but stay close and take my advice: keep your hat on, and speak to nobody along the way. Look nobody in the face, and ask nobody questions, for many athletes have been arriving in town for the games, and women crowd around them to have a close look at their bodies and to touch them, if they can.”

Iah led the way, and Amasis followed keeping her head down but peeking up enough to see that the streets were bustling with workmen building houses and walls, and even the foundations for a large dance floor. It was a city already famed for dancers. In fact, the judge herself, Amasis’ aunt Eliah, often led the dancers.

They passed through the narrow streets without stopping until they came to the courtyard, where Iah pointed out the steps to the courtroom, and she then vanished in the fog. Amasis climbed the steps to the court alone, but sunlight shone out suddenly as she approached a great door of bronze. They struck curious engravings on the door: she recognized the glistening images of Sargon, Abram, and Hammurabi, but also there appeared to be a man dressed in the skin of a lion with bees buzzing around his head, and two figures at which she had to stop and see more closely. She turned her head so that the shadow of her hat fell over those two. Her eyes then watered at their likenesses to her father and brother, until she blamed herself for thinking such impossible things.

The courtroom was full of nobles, but as Iah instructed Amasis went straight before the throne of the judge. Iah’s mother could be addressed as Eliah when she was dancing but always she was Arreti when she sat as judge or queen. She was the elder daughter and principal heiress of Jacob of Kebh, and she had married the prince of Akkad and lived with him in Babylon until barbarians sacked the city. They fled with Iah and her brother John hoping to reach safety in Thebes and Kebh, but when they arrived at Avaris, they were stopped. They fled west into the wilderness, and eventually the king was taken, but Arreti found shelter in Ssharea³³ among the

³³ **Shaarea** (*great reed marsh*, “Scheria”) in another thousand years became home to Syrws of Djddjdu (“Cyrus,” ruled 556-539 BCE), and his sons Cambyses and Bardiya, all of whom claimed hereditary rights to rule in Babylon. The house of Duaud (“David”) in Sais disputed those claims, and the dispute led to the war that destroyed both cities and ended native rule on the Nile in 522 BCE.

Phoenician people. And now the king was dead, as was Joseph also, so the two widowed sisters Arreti and Maeriah. By law they were co-rulers of an empire they could trace back to Abram and they imagined to be much older, an empire that all but the most loyal subjects had considered to be at an end, until the recent battle of Avaris. The defeat of the Hyksos now offered hope for revival of the house of Abram, but where were the men to lead it?

Petitioners at court were expected to bow to the judge and remove their hats, but as Amasis bowed to Arreti she held on her head the purple mushroom hat that Arreti had made for Hmssez, a hat that the judge recognized at once. Amasis fell to her knees as she spoke saying, “your honor, in my distress I humbly pray to you for relief. I need help to return home to my own country, for I have been shipwrecked on your shore. I lost everything, all except for these clothes that I am wearing. A storm at sea washed me up on your shore, and I know nobody here.”

The judge knew the hat for her own handiwork. She had made one for her daughter and another just the same for her nephew Hmssez, in hopes that someday they might marry and rule together over the empire. Arreti also wondered if the loose-bodied cloak that the petitioner was wearing was not the one of the king her husband’s robes that she had put into her daughter’s laundry on the prior day.³⁴ She interrupted Amasis immediately, saying, “young man, before you speak further, as is the custom in this land, you must identify yourself by name and parentage.”

“Judge Arreti,” Amasis answered, “I am a person in great need, a stranger in this place that is famous all the world over for its hospitality to strangers. I have come from such a distant land that I cannot anybody here would recognize my name or my parents’ names, either.”

The judge replied, “are you ashamed of your name or your family? Why will you not tell us who you are or where you came from? Surely you have a name, and you had parents? In my experience, nobody goes without a name or parents.”

“I will tell you my good name and great parentage in due course, Your Honor.” Amasis did not know what to say. She did not know whether the people in the room would be her friends or enemies.

“Do you not remember who you are,” Arreti suggested. “Answer this question: who gave you the clothes that you are wearing? Did you say that you know nobody in this land?”

Amasis answered, “if I told you all of my misfortunes, judge, it would be a very long story, for the hand of heaven has been laid heavy upon me.”

The judge now appeared to be very displeased as she spoke, saying, “did you not take those clothes from my daughter and her maids yesterday when they were bathing in the river? Did you not spy on them when they were naked?”

“I came ashore naked, for I lost my clothes in the sea, but I found this hat and coat by a pool.”

³⁴ **The robe or cloak** (hati or perhaps hattii): body-covering protective clothing commonly worn in Babylon. It distinguished the Babylonians from others in the delta.

“Did you not rob them?”

“Judge, the princess graciously allowed me to wear these things. I will return them when I have other clothes to wear, but I am most thankful to whoever left them by that pool, and also to whosoever made them, for they’re the best I’ve ever worn in all my days.”

“You admit that you spied on my daughter and her maids! Where did you sleep last night?”

“Judge Arreti,” Amasis said, “I stayed in a grove by the river outside of town.”

“A poplar grove?”

“Yes, I slept there a little.”

Now the judge looked more displeased than ever. “Who told you that you could sleep there?”

“The princess herself, Your Honor,” Amasis replied.

The judge put on a very harsh look and said, “Mr. Nobody, as a shipwrecked mariner you have a right to a room in the palace. By law, I cannot deny you a room, or supper. I must house you and feed you, but I warn you do not rob or steal or commit any further misconduct as long as you are here, or you will be punished!”

“Your Honor,” Amasis said, “thank you for your hospitality. I hope you are not angry with the princess. She was gracious to me.”

“Young man,” Arreti answered, “I seldom become angry. Usually, it is better to be reasonable, I find, but at this moment the time allotted for your plea has expired. The guard now will take you to your cell.”

The judge then turned to another case, and a guard escorted Amasis into the dark palace.