THE BACKGROUND OF THE CEDAR FOREST TRADITION IN THE EGYPTIAN *TALE OF THE TWO BROTHERS* IN THE LIGHT OF WEST-ASIAN LITERATURE

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Abstract: *The Egyptian Tale of the Two Brothers describes how Bata spends time in the Lebanese Valley of the ʿš-tree. This episode differs in certain aspects from the remainder of the text, also employing foreign motifs – such as the creation of a woman to ease Bata's loneliness, the removal of his beating heart from his body and its resuscitation while still separate from it, and the Egyptian gods' wandering through the Lebanese valley. While several attempts have been made to identify the origin(s) of this episode, none have been convincing. This paper examines the non-Egyptian motifs in the light of Babylonian and biblical texts, suggesting that an ancient Levantine tradition which left its traces on these (but to date has not been found in the Ugaritic corpus) lies behind this section of the Tale.*

Key-Words: *Bata, the Cedar Forest, the Lebanese Beqaa, the Gilgamesh epic, the Garden of Eden, Ezekiel's prophecies*

The Egyptian *Tale of the Two Brothers*, dated to the Ramesside period (c. 13th century BCE), recounts the adventures of Bata and his brother Inpu that end with their coronation as kings of Egypt.[1] Replete with doublets and inconsistencies, as we shall see below, the story was evidently compiled from various traditions. In light of the fact that some of these exist elsewhere as independent stories, no scene, episode or even motif is necessarily indicative of the origin of the others. Each, thus, requires an independent analysis. Here, I shall examine the episode of Bata and his wife in the Valley of the ʿš-tree (*t3 int p3 ʿš*). My conclusions relate solely to this unit.

The numerous wonders with which the Valley of the ʿš-tree is associated and its location outside Egypt prompted some earlier scholars to suggest that it is a cosmic rather than an actual geographical site.[2] Eighty years ago, however, it was identified with a well-known landmark in the Beqaa Valley, where Rameses II camped before crossing the river of the Orontes on his way to Qadesh.[3] Around the same time, during the 1930s, the Ugaritic alphabetical texts – the sole contemporaneous literary works in West-Semitic – were deciphered. In the wake of these developments, several studies argued that *The Tale of the Two Brothers* is Levantine in its origin. This view has only been partially accepted. One of the reasons stems from the premise that the tale forms a single unit. The "Levantine interpretation" has thus been imposed on the composite account as a whole, despite the fact that only the initial episodes resemble West-Asian traditions (see below).

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[1] The dual reference to Seti-Merenptach in the papyrus led Schneider to link it with a specific event in the crown-prince's life: T. Schneider, Innovation in Literature on behalf of Politics. The Tale of the Two Brothers, Ugarit, and the 19th Dynasty History, *Ä&L* 18 (2008), 315–326. However, the dedication in the colophon to three different scribes may indicate that it was composed earlier while the crown-prince's name was added later: see G. Moers, New Kingdom Literature, in A.B. Lloyd (ed.), *A Companion to Ancient Egypt*, Chichester 2010, 2, 703. Cf. also W. Wettengel, *Die Erzählung von den beiden Brüdern. Der Papyrus d'Orbiney und die Königsideologie der Ramessiden*, OBO 195, Freiburg 2003, 233–258; J.F Quack, Review of W. Wettengel, *Die Erzählung von den beiden Brüdern*, *WdO* 35 (2005), 198–202. The contrast between the divine protagonists' names on the one hand, and their physical and narrative human features on the other, have led some to classify the document as a hybrid epic/myth: see S.T. Hollis, *The Ancient Egyptian "Tale of Two Brothers." A Mythological, Religious, Literary and Historico-Political Study*, 2nd ed., Oakville 2008, 13–43.

[2] See, for example, G. Maspero, *Contes populaires de l'Égypte ancienne*, Paris 1882, 13 n. 1; H. Altenmüller, Bemerkungen zum Hirtenlied des alten Reiches, *CdÉ* 48 (1973), 211–231, here 219 n. 1.

[3] A.H. Gardiner, Tanis and Pi Ramesse. A Retraction, *JEA* 19 (1933), 122–128, here 128.

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Another reason derives from the exclusive focus placed on the Ugaritic material, even in the absence of an Ugaritic parallel plot.[4] However, the Ugaritic material is not the only representative of the Levantine cultures. Traces of these were left in other languages and archives, such as in Mari, Emar, Hattuša and even Babylon, as well as later West-Semitic texts, i.e., epigraphic and biblical material from the first half of the 1st millennium BCE. In light of this, the present paper reinvestigates the specific episode that occurs in the Valley of the ʿš-tree, proposing that an ancient Levantine tradition that left its traces on Babylonian and biblical texts – but to date has not been found in the Ugaritic corpus – lies in the background of this episode.

Bata in the Valley of the ʿš-tree

For those unacquainted with the incident (Rubrum 9–11) and where it occurs in the *Two Brothers*, a brief summary is in order.[5] Bata, the protagonist, arrives in the valley in the wake of his flight from his brother's home. A wife is created for him there, whom he desires. Their idyll ends, however, when the wife's deeds reveal their presence to the Egyptians. She is taken to Egypt and Bata dies. This scene takes place after several twists and turns in the plot, each of which has parallels in various – primarily Mediterranean – texts. Thus, for example, Bata flees to the valley because he is falsely accused of having seduced his brother's wife. The motif of false accusation of seduction is well known in Israelite, Greek, and probably Hittite literature.[6] Fleeing to a foreign country – in particular the Levant – is also adduced in Egyptian and ancient Syrian literature.[7] The self-castration of Bata in order to prevent further charges of rape is an idea found independently in Syrian literature and eastwards.[8] Towards the end of the episode, the Sea lusts after Bata's wife. This tradition is known from contemporary Egyptian and Hurro-Hittite versions of the Storm-god vs. the Sea myth, as well as later Phoenician and Greek accounts (while other versions of this myth, lacking this tradition, occur in Ugaritic, Mesopotamian and biblical texts).[9] All these are hallmarks of a folktale that absorbs and blends diverse traditions.[10]

Arriving in the valley alone and castrated, Bata takes his heart out and places it on the top of the blossom of the ʿš-tree. One day, after having left

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4 The initial link between the *Two Brothers* and the Ugaritic corpus was based on the (negative) identification of Bata with Seth in pJumilhac, which has led scholars to regard Bata as representing the Canaanite Storm-god Baal. While this analogy might be earlier than its first documentation (cf. Quack, Review of Wettengel; *idem*, Corpus oder Membra disjecta. Zur Sprach- und Redaktionskritik des Papyrus Jumilhac, in W. Waitkus (ed.), *Diener des Horus. Festschrift für Dieter Kurth zum 65. Geburtstag*, Aegyptiaca Hamburgensia 1, Gladbeck 2008, 203–228), it does not necessarily point to a borrowing from the known Ugaritic accounts of Baal; see T. Schneider, Innovation in Literature; Wettengel, *Die Erzählung von den beiden Brüdern*. The description of the Sea as lusting after Bata's wife, for example – the closest scene to the Ugaritic material – recalls the Egyptian version of the story of the Storm-god combat with the Sea and its Hurro-Hittite counterpart rather than the Ugaritic one that ignores this detail; see W. Helck, Zur Herkunft der Erzählung des sog. 'Astartepapyrus', in M. Görg (ed.), *Fontes atque Pontes. Eine Fest-gabe für Hellmut Brunner*, ÄAT 5, Wiesbaden 1983, 215–223; N. Ayali-Darshan, The Other Version of the Story of the Storm-god's Combat with the Sea in the Light of Egyptian, Ugaritic, and Hurro-Hittite Texts, *JANER* 15 (2015), 20–51. The same is true in relation to *KTU* 1.12, where the only passage reminiscent of *The Two Brothers*, namely *KTU* 1.12 II 44–51, is much more obscure than the Egyptian account itself. Rather than countering speculations derived from the "Ugaritic proposal", I suggest a different perspective.

5 Assmann contends that this constitutes the "second book" of the *Tale of the Two Brothers*: J. Assmann, Das ägyptische Zweibrüdermärchen (Papyrus d'Orbiney), *ZÄS* 104 (1977), 1–25, here 4. The majority of the motifs discussed herein occur in the first half of the "second book".

6 See T.H. Gaster, *Myth, Legend and Custom in the Old Testament. A Comparative Study*, New York 1969, 218; D.J. Yohanan, *Joseph and Potiphar's Wife in World Literature. An Anthology of the Story of the Chaste Youth and the Lustful Stepmother*, New York 1968.

7 For the escape motif in Egypt, see J. Baines, Interpreting Sinuhe, *JEA* 68 (1982), 31–44, here 37; Hollis, *"Tale of the Two Brothers,"* 130–131. For its occurrence in West Asia, see E. Greenstein, The Fugitive Hero Narrative Pattern in Mesopotamia, in J.J. Collins, T.M. Lemos, and S.M. Olyan (eds.), *Worship, Women and War. Essays in Honor of Susan Nidith*, Providence, RI 2015, 17–35. Greenstein cites traditions from various places – the closest analogy relating to Idrimi, king of Alalakh.

8 See J.L. Lightfoot, *Lucian. On the Syrian Goddess*, Oxford 2003, 384–388. The earliest source Lightfoot adduces is the legend concerning Combabos and Stratonice. Appearing in *De Dea Syria*, this has later parallels in Persia, India, China, and northern Syria.

9 Helck, Zur Herkunft der Erzählung dessog. 'Astartepapyrus; D.B. Redford, The Sea and the Goddess, in S. Israelit-Groll (ed.), *Studies in Egyptology Presented to Miriam Lichtheim*, Jerusalem 1990, 2:824–835.

10 For an extensive bibliography relating to these subjects, see Hollis, *"Tale of Two Brothers,* 19–28.

his castle (*bḫn*),[11] he meets the Ennead (*t3 psḏt*) – i.e., the major gods of Egypt – walking through the valley while governing the entire land (*iw=sn ḥr šm.t ḥr ir.t sḫr n p3{y=s} t3 ḏr=f*). Saddened by his lonely state, they take pity on him:

> "Oh, Bata, Bull of the Ennead, are you alone here, having abandoned your town because of the wife of Inpu, your elder brother?"… They were very sorry for him, so Pre-Herakhti told Khnum: "Build a woman for Bata so that he does not live alone (*iḫ qd=k wʿn st-ḥmt n B3t3 tm=f ḥms wʿ*)."[12] Thereupon Khnum made for him a companion who was more beautiful in her body than any woman in the entire land, for <the seed of> every god was in her (*nty m p3 t3 <pn r> ḏr<=f> iw <mw n> nṯr nb im=s*)[13] … And he coveted her intensely …[14]

Revealing to his wife that he has laid his heart on the blossom, Bata admonishes her to keep safe by distancing herself from the Sea:

> He told her: "Do not go outside lest the Sea seize you (*tm p3 Ym {ḥr} iṯ3=t*), for I will be unable to rescue you from him, because I am a woman like you and my heart lies on the top of the blossom of the ʿš-tree. But if another finds it, I shall fight with him." Then he revealed to her all his innermost thoughts [lit.: opened his heart].[15] And many days after this, Bata went to hunt according to his daily habit. The maiden went out to stroll under the ʿš-tree which was next to her house. Then she beheld the Sea surging up behind her, and she hastened to flee from him and entered her house. So the Sea called to the ʿš-tree, saying: "Seize her for me (*wn.in p3 Ym ḥr ʿš n p3 ʿš m ḏd i.mḥ n=i im=s*)…"

Bata's wife is finally captured and taken to Egypt. At the king's demand, she tells him that her husband has placed his heart on the tree. Pharaoh immediately sends his soldiers to fetch it and Bata falls down dead when they cut it down. He revives when his brother Inpu places the heart – resembling a fruit – in a cup of water and gives it to him to drink. The brothers then leave the valley to return to Egypt.

A careful philological reading of the texts reveals more internal inconsistencies than in any other unit in relation either to previous episodes or Egyptian notions. Thus, for example, the creation of a wife to ease Bata's loneliness in the valley is awkward in light of the previous episode regarding Bata's brother's wife, indicating that there was no lack of women.[16] The sexual passion Bata's wife arouses in him is incommensurate in literal terms with his castration and his own presentation as a "woman" (10:2: *st-ḥmt*).[17] His removal of his beating

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[11] The term *bḫn* (Late Egyptian onwards) is customarily regarded as a West-Semitic loan word; see G. Takács, in *Etymological Dictionary of Egyptian*, Leiden 2001, s.v. *bḫn*; cf. *Wb* s.v. *bḫn*. Nonetheless, it does not bear any known mythological context, and can be counted with the numerous West-Semitic words that were adopted into Egyptian in this period (*contra* Wettengel, *Die Erzählung von den beiden Brüdern*, 125, who connected it to the detailed description of Baal's palace on Mount Zaphon in the *Baal Cycle*). Redford argues further that the episode as a whole reflects the influence of West-Semitic syntax on Egyptian, but did not elaborate this claim; see D.B. Redford, *Egypt, Canaan and Israel in Ancient Times*, Princeton 1992, 234 n. 104.

[12] Correct the erroneous *tm=k* of the manuscript into *tm=f*.

[13] Reconstruction according to 11.5.

[14] The English translation of the Tale of the Two Brothers follows E.F. Wente, "The Tale of the Two Brothers", in W.K. Simpson (ed.), *The Literature of Ancient Egypt. An Anthology of Stories, Instructions, Stelae, Autobiographies, and Poetry*, 3rd ed., New York 2003, 85–86, with minor changes. The Egyptian transliteration is based on A.H. Gardiner, *Late Egyptian Stories*, BiAeg 1, Brussels 1932, 19–20; cf. C.E. Moldenke, *The Tale of the Two Brothers. The d'Orbiney Papyrus in Hieratic Characters in the British Museum*, Watchung 1898, 35–38, 79–81, ll. 78–92; Wettengel, *Die Erzählung von den beiden Brüdern*, 123–143.

[15] This sentence is ambiguous, as the phrase "opening one's heart" (*wpi ḫ3ty*) refers both to Bata's metaphorical revelation of his secret and the disclosure of the physical location of his heart. Two sapiental texts, one in Akkadian from contemporary Levantine scribal schools (*Hear the Advice* 65–67; Y. Cohen, *Wisdom from the Late Bronze Age*, WAW 29, Atlanta 2013, 90–91), and another, very late, in demotic Egyptian (*The Instruction of Onckshesheonqy* 13:16–17; M. Lichtheim, *Late Egyptian Wisdom Literature in the International Context: A Study of Demotic Instructions,* OBO 52, Göttingen 1983, 78) use the same metaphor in order to caution against telling secrets to one's wife. If the author of the *Tale of the Two Brothers* was familiar with such a wisdom saying, he might have deliberately employed this motif as a way of foreshadowing the end of the story to his readers, i.e., the great misfortune Bata's wife will bring upon him.

[16] Cf. Petrie's harmonistic interpretation that the narrator related this fact in order to explain her lack of affection: W.M.F. Petrie, *Egyptian Tales. Translated from the Papyri, Series II: XVIII–XIX Dynasties*, London 1895, 78.

[17] Cf. G. Lefebure, *Romans et contes égyptiens de l'époque pharaonique,* Paris 1949, 150-151 and n. 48, who translates harmonistically: "(tu) ne pourrais pas te sauver de lui, car (tu) n'es qu'une femme aprés tout."

heart from his body and rejuvenation while still separate from it diverge from the standard Egyptian views of life and death reflected in various funeral texts. The idea that the gods rule the earth in person is at variance with Egyptian mythological sources that maintain that the gods reside in the cosmic realm or are said to take on human or animal forms. Finally, the local Egyptian audience, or possibly the narrator himself, appears to be unfamiliar with one of the most prominent motifs – the fruit of the conifer tree – by whose name the valley is known and on whose blossom Bata lays his heart. Rather than calling it by name, the narrator describes it as looking like a cluster of grapes (*i3rrt*).[18]

While the plot inconsistencies may attest to the fact that this episode comprises a blend of independent traditions, the foreign character of the details suggests a non-Egyptian provenance.[19] A comparison of the details with ancient West-Asian literature may help us identify the individual components from which the text has been compiled.

1. The ʿš-tree and its cones

Due to Egyptian texts that speak of the *ʿš*-wood as the most precious imported timber known at the time, this tree is frequently rendered "cedar" despite the botanical doubts that it is in fact the *Cedrus libani*.[20] The Ugaritic *ʾarz*, Akkadian *erēnu*, and Hebrew *ʾerez* – all traditionally rendered "cedar" – are similarly regarded as the most precious imported timber from Lebanon, but are equally uncertain in terms of their botanical species.[21] From a literary perspective, however, a parallel to the term *ʿš* in Levantine literature may prove instructive in regard to the question of its identification.

The fact that the *Leiden Magical Papyrus* refers to numerous Levantine and Syrian gods bearing local features and appellatives suggests that its compiler was familiar with this pantheon and mythology.[22] In ll. 4,9–5,2, he associates the *ʿš*-wood with one of the weapons of Baal, the

[18] This form of accommodation is known as "environmental-morphological adaptation", i.e. the local transmitter preferred a familiar, local object over the original foreign term, see n. 28.

[19] While we have to take for granted that the motifs were edited by (an) Egyptian author(s) (see, for example, the note above), they are conspicuously aberrant in comparison to other Egyptian sources. My interest here lies primarily in their extra-Egyptian connections. Thus, the Egyptian literary associations that have been proposed over the years will be not discussed. As I hope to demonstrate, in this respect this episode raises far more questions than it provides answers.

[20] Cf. W. Vivian Davies, Ancient Egyptian Timber Imports. An Analysis of Wooden Coffins in the British Museum, in W. Vivian Davies and L. Schofield (eds.), *Egypt, the Aegean and the Levant. Interconnections in the Second Millennium BC*, London 1995, 146–156, following R. Meiggs, *Trees and Timber in the Ancient Mediterranean World*, Oxford 1982, 405–409. The first to oppose the identification of the *ʿš*-wood with the *Cedrus libani* was V. Loret, Quelques notes sur l'arbre ÂCH, *ASAE* 16 (1916), 33–51, followed by A. Nibbi, Some Remarks on the Cedar of Lebanon, *DE* 28 (1994), 35–52; *eadem*, Cedar Again, *DE* 34 (1996), 37–59.

[21] The Sumerian term erin that occurs in *Bilgames and Huwawa* is commonly thought not to be the *Cedrus libani* since this species does not grow in the east. While the Akkadian *erēnu* referred to in the *Gilgamesh Epic* is generally considered to be the cedar, Dalley adduces several grounds for rendering "pine"; see S. Dalley, *Myths from Mesopotamia. Creation, the Flood, Gilgamesh and Others*, Oxford/New York 1989, 126 n. 20. The Ugaritic *ʾarz* and its Hebrew equivalent *ʾerez* are also regularly translated as "cedar," although some scholars maintain that they are a species of fir (*Abies Cilicia*); see L. Köhler, Hebräische Vokabeln II, *ZAW* 55 (1937), 161–174, here 163–165; J.C. de Moor, *Seasonal Patterns in the Ugaritic Myth of Baʿlu According to the Version of Ilimilku*, Neukirchen-Vluyn 1971, 167; cf. L. Koehler and W. Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, Leiden 1994, s.v. ארז; M. Weippert, Der Wald von Lab'u, in S. J. Wimmer and G. Gafus (eds.), *"Vom Leben umfangen." Ägypten, das Alte Testament und das Gespräch der Relgionene*, Münster 2014, 449 n. 4; G. del Olmo Lete and J. Sanmartín, *A Dictionary of the Ugaritic Language in the Alphabetic Tradition*, 3rd ed., Leiden 2015, s.v. *ʾarz*.

[22] The incantations in this papyrus refer to Baal, Resheph, Horon, Anat, Astarte, Qudšu, Nikkal, Šala, Adamma, Ušḫara, and Hammarig and some of their unique features; see H. te Velde, *Seth, God of Confusion. A Study of his Role in Egyptian Mythology and Religion,* PdÄ 6, Leiden 1967, 123–124; H. Goedicke, The Canaanite Illness, *SAK* 11 (1984), 94–100; H-W. Fischer-Elfert, Sāmānu on the Nile. The Transfer of a Near Eastern Demon and Magico-Medical Concept into New Kingdom Egypt, in M. Collier and S. Snape (eds.), *Ramesside Studies in Honour of K.A. Kitchen*, Bolton 2011, 189–198; N. Ayali-Darshan, The Identification of *Ḥmrq* in *Leiden Magical Papyrus I 343 + I 345* in Light of the Eblaite Texts, *JNES* 74 (2015), 87–89. The demon Samana, against which the papyrus is directed, is known from Babylonian incantations; see J. Nougayrol, Conjuration ancienne contre samana, *ArOr* 17 (1949), 213–226; I.F. Finkel, A Study in Scarlet. Incantations against Samana, in S. Maul (ed.), *Eine Festschrift für Rykle Borger zu Seinem 65. Geburtstag am 24. Mai 1994: "tikip santakki mala bašmu"* CM 10, Groningen 1998, 71–106; S. Beck, *Sāmānu. Ein vorderasiatischer Dämon in Ägypten*, ÄAT 83, Münster 2015.

Levantine Storm-god: "Baal (*Bʿr*) will beat you with the *ʿš*-wood that is in his hand, he will (beat) you again with the spears of *ʿš*-wood (*ḥny(w)t n ʿš*) that are in his hand."[23] The Ugaritic Baal stele in the Louvre (*Baal au foudre* [RS 4.427= AO 15.775]) provides a visual parallel of this literary scene, depicting Baal as embedding a half-tree/half-spear into his adversary, the Sea.[24] The Ugaritic *Baal Cycle* also paints a similar picture: "Baal looks ahead, his hand indeed shook, the *ʾarz* (-weapon) in his right hand" (*KTU* 1.4 vii 40–41).[25] These Ugaritic parallels confirm the Levantine tradition attested in the Egyptian incantation, which names Baal's weapon after the wood from which it is made. The Egyptian sorcerer thus appears to have rendered the Ugaritic *ʾarz* (which eventually transmuted into the Indo-European *Cedrus*) via the Egyptian term *ʿš*, leaving the weapon itself – *ḥny(w)t* – in its original West-Semitic language.

In our episode, the Egyptian narrator of the *Tale of the Two Brothers* linked the *ʿš*-tree with life and death; when the tree was cut down, Bata's heart stopped and he died. When it was later placed in a cup of water, he came back to life.[26] In light of its deviation from common Egyptian thought, Hellmut Brunner suggested that the author associatively linked the heart with the conifer fruit because of the latter's shape.[27] While this proposal is persuasive, the text specifically describes Bata's heart as looking like a bunch of grapes (13:1: *i3rrt*). Therefore, Wolfgang Helck correctly posits that this idea originated in the Lebanese conifer forests, i.e., the Valley of the *ʿš*-tree. From there it was transmitted to Egypt, where it was adopted to its new environment, changing the conifer fruit to a more familiar one, the *i3rrt*.[28]

2. The gods walking in the valley

As Fritz Stolz noted, Akkadian and Hebrew sources indicate that the Lebanese Cedar (= Akkadian *erēnu*, Hebrew *ʾerez*) Forest serves as gods' abode.[29] The earliest occurrence of this notion is

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[23] A. Massart, *The Leiden Magical Papyrus I 343 + I 345*, OMROsup, Leiden 1954, 16–17, 64–70; J.F. Borghouts, *Ancient Egyptian Magical Texts*, Nisaba 9, Leiden 1978, 18–19; Beck, *Sāmānu*, 122–123.

[24] See I. Cornelius, *The Iconography of the Canaanite Gods Reshef and Ba'al: Late Bronze and Iron Age I Periods (C 1500–1000 BCE)*, Fribourg 1994, 135–138, 172–173 and the bibliography cited therein. This image also occurs on several seals.

[25] The bellicose context of this sentence is clear from the previous line, in which Baal mocks his adversaries: "Enemies of Haddu, why do you tremble? Why do you tremble at the weapon of *Dmrn*?"; see E. Williams-Forte, The Snakes and the Tree in the Iconography and Texts of Syria during the Bronze Age, in L. Gorelick and E. Williams-Forte *et al.* (eds.), *Ancient Seals and the Bible*, Malibu 1983, 18–43; Beck, *Sāmānu*, 124.

[26] For the significance of the heart inside the body and the integrity of the body in Egyptian thought in contrast to the view arising from *The Two Brothers*, see J. Assmann, Individuum und Person. Zur Geschichte des Herzens im Alten Ägypten, in G. Boehm and E. Rudolph (eds.), *Individuum. Probleme der Individualität in Kunst, Philosophie und Wissenschaft*, Stuttgart 1994, 185–220; R. Meyer, Magical Ascesis and Moral Purity in Ancient Egypt, in J. Assmann and G.G. Stroumsa (eds.), *Conscience. Transformations of the Inner Self in Ancient Religions*, Leiden 1999, 45–64.

[27] H. Brunner, *Das Herz im Umkreis des Glaubens*, Biberach an der Riß 1965, 1:93; cf. A. Piankoff, *Le "Cœur" dans les texts égyptiens*, Paris 1930, 72, who argues that this is a unique case in Egyptian literature; E. Blumenthal, Die Erzählung des Papyrus d'Orbiney als Literaturwerk, *ZÄS* 99 (1972), 1–7, here 3, who contends that it constitutes a non-Egyptian folkloristic motif (E710 in Thompson's *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature*). Hollis (*"Tale of Two Brothers,"* 131–140) sought to demonstrate that it is nonetheless Egyptian in origin. Since the sources she cites depict the heart of the deceased, however, she merely succeeds in reemphasising the fact that this is not a standard Egyptian motif. See now also M. Pehal, *Interpreting Ancient Egyptian Narratives. A Structural Analysis of the Tale of Two Brothers, the Anat Myth, the Osirian Cycle, and the Astarte Papyrus*, Brussels/Fernelmont 2014, 110–116.

[28] W. Helck, Die Beziehungen Ägyptens zu Vorderasien im 3. und 2. Jahrtausend vor Chr., 2nd ed., Wiesbaden 1971, 495; cf. Wettengel, Die Erzählung von den beiden Brüdern, 147–148; Hollis, "Tale of Two Brothers," 142. This form of accommodation, which Honko calls "environmental-morphological adaptation," is well known in folkloristic literature; see L. Honko, Four Forms of Adaptation of Tradition, *Studia Fennica* 26 (1981), 19–33.

[29] F. Stolz, Die Bäume im Gottesgarten auf dem Libanon, *ZAW* 84 (1972), 141–156; cf. J. Herrmann, *Ezechiel. Übersetzt und erklärt*, KAT, Leipzig 1924, 204–206; Wettengel, *Die Erzählung von den beiden Brüdern*, 107, 113. While Stolz recognised the affinities between the Babylonian and biblical text cited below, many biblical scholars have dismissed the explicit references on various grounds; see, for example, M. Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21–37. A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB, New York 1997, 648. New editions, readings, and references have been published since Stolz's work, therefore, the subject deserves to be revisited.

found in the Babylonian *Gilgamesh Epic*, which describes the gods' dwelling as being concealed in the Cedar Forest:

> They [Gilgamesh and Enkidu] stood marvelling at the forest, observing the height of the cedar (GIŠ*erēnu*), observing the way into the forest … They were gazing at the Cedar Land, the dwelling of the gods, the throne of the goddesses (*māt* GIŠ*erēni mūšab ilī parak* D*irninī*). [30] [On the] surface of the land the cedar was proffering its abundance, sweet was its shade, full of delight (5:1–8).[31]

This SB text originates in the canonical Babylonian version of the *Gilgamesh Epic*, but the tradition relating to the Cedar Forest in the valley as the gods' abode is found in Old Babylonian texts as early as the 18th century BCE. The *Ischali Tablet*, for example, recounts how Gilgamesh descended to the Cedar Forest, where he revealed the gods' mysterious dwelling place: "He went down (*ūrid*) and trampled through the forest, he discovered the secret abode of the Anunnaki (*mūšab Enunnakkī*)."[32] According to the same tablet, the howl produced by *Ḫuwawa*, the Cedar Forest's guard, split the mountains of Lebanon and Sirion (*ša ana rigmišu ultatti<ū>? Sariā u Labnān*). This text thus locates the forest in this region.[33] The canonical version, which describes the companions journeying through Ebla towards Lebanon, locates it at the same site.[34]

Both these motifs – the location of the Lebanese Cedar Forest and its serving as home to the gods – are absent from the Sumerian antecedent. When the Old Babylonian author joined together selected Sumerian poems of *Gilgamesh* into a single unit, he apparently not only replaced the Cedar Forest east of Mesopotamia with the Cedar Forest west of it, but also identified it as the gods' dwelling place. The alteration of the Cedar Forest's location has long been attributed to the Old Babylonian authors' Amorite orientation or the westward campaigns of Sargon and Naram-Sin, kings of Akkad.[35] The tradition that locates it in Lebanon, identifying it as the gods' abode, thus appears to derive from beyond the Euphrates rather than from a local Babylonian source.[36]

Evidence for the identification of the Lebanese Cedar Forest as the gods' abode can also be found in biblical texts – primarily 2 Kings 19 and Ezeki-

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30 Weippert (Der Wald von Lab'u) emends the common reading *šadû* (mountain) of the Sumerogram KUR to *mātu* (land) on the basis of the use of the verb *warādum* to depict Gilgamesh and Enkidu's arrival in the Lebanese Cedar Forest in OB fragments of the *Gilgamesh Epic* (see below), identifying the location in the Lebanese Beqaa in the region of Labwe; (my thanks go to Prof. Nadav Na'aman for bringing this reference to my attention). My transliteration above follows his suggestion.

31 All the quotations from the *Gilgamesh Epic* are taken from A.R. George, *The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic. Introduction, Critical Edition and Cuneiform Texts*, Oxford 2003, with minor changes. Here, pp. 602–603 (Neo-Assyrian version). While the tablet recently discovered in Baghdad and published by George and Al-Rawi provides us with a more elaborate description of the Lebanese Cedar Forest, it does not contribute to our present discussion; see A.R. George and F. Al-Rawi, Back to the Cedar Forest. The Beginning and End of Tablet V of the Standard Babylonian Epic of Gilgameš, *JCS* 66 (2014), 69–90.

32 *Ibid*., 264–265, lines 37'–38'. Cf. the parallel tablet from Baghdad (OB IM): *ibid*., 268–269, lines 17–18: "He went trampling through the forest <of> cedar, he discovered the secret abode of the Anunnaki gods [*mūšab-ilī Enunnakkī*]"). Cf. also the OB Yale tablet: *ibid*., 198–199, line 123.

33 *Ibid*., 262–263, lines 30'–31'. As Psalm 24 evinces, both the location and the expression derive from a West-Semitic context. The parallel OB tablet (Schøyen) refers to Ebla as a station on the companions' journey to the Cedar Forest (*ibid*., 234–235, lines 25f). The unrecognised landmark Hamran, the abode of the Amorites, is also depicted as lying in the Cedar Forest; see A.R. George, *Babylonian Literary Texts in the Schoyen Collection*, CUSAS 10, Bethesda 2009, 29–36.

34 As Weippert (Der Wald von Lab'u) suggests, the fact that the companions travelled through Mount Lebanon rather than settling therein indicates that they were making for the Beqaa. See also J. Klein and K. Abraham, Problems of Geography in the *Gilgameš Epic*. The Journey to the "Cedar Forest," in L. Milano *et al*. (eds.), *Landscapes. Territories, Frontiers and Horizons in the Ancient Near East*, RAI 44, Padua 2000, 3:63–77. Lipiński appealed to these citations in arguing for the sanctity of Mount Hermon; see E. Lipiński, El's Abode. Mythological Traditions related to Mount Hermon and to the Mountains of Armenia, *OLP* 2 (1971), 13–69, here 18–20, 69.

35 See Klein and Abraham, Problems of Geography, 67; cf. M. Weippert, Libanon, *RlA* 6 (1980–1983), 641–650; D.E. Fleming and S.J. Miller, *The Buried Foundation of the* Gilgamesh Epic. *The Akkadian* Huwawa *Narrative*, Leiden 2010, 29–31.

36 See also W.G. Lambert, Interchange of Ideas between Southern Mesopotamia and Syria-Palestine as Seen in Literature, in H.J. Nissen and J. Renger (eds.), *Mesopotamien und seine Nachbarn. Politische und kulturelle Wechselbeziehungen im alten Vorderasien vom 4. bis 1. Jahrtausend v. Chr.*, Berlin 1987, 313–314.

el 31.[37] The latter refers to "a cedar in Lebanon (ארז בלבנון), with beautiful branches and shady thickets, of lofty stature, with its top among leafy trees. Waters nourished it, the deep made it grow tall" (vv. 3–4). The "cedars (ארזים) in the garden of God (בגן אלהים) could not compare with it, cypresses (ברושים) could not match its boughs, and plane trees (ערמנים) could not vie with its branches; no tree in the garden of God was its peer in beauty … all the trees of Eden (כל עצי עדן) envied it in the garden of God" (vv. 8–9). The cedar's great height caused it to vaunt itself: "its heart became proud [lit.: grow taller] because of its height (גבהת בקומה)" (v. 10). God thus cut it down and "all the trees of Eden (כל עצי עדן), the choicest and best of Lebanon (מבחר וטוב לבנון), all that were well watered" descended with it into the netherworld (v. 16).

Here, the Judean prophet adopts a tradition about the Lebanese conifer forest in God's garden, named also Eden, that eventually withers under the shadow of the tall, handsome, proud cedar, symbolising the future of the hubristic Egyptian king. A similar image, using the same terminology, occurs in Ezekiel's prophecy against the king of Tyre. First comparing him with El, the veteran Levantine god (28:2), and Danel, the Levantine sage (28:3), the prophet then likens him to the First Man created in God's garden: "You were in Eden, the garden of God (בעדן גן אלהים היית); every kind of precious stone were your covering … on the day you were created (ביום הבראך)" (v. 13).[38] Rather than trees, the author speaks here of precious stones: "On god's sacred mountain you lived and amidst fiery stones you walked about" (v. 14).[39] Although pure, wise and handsome when created – just like the cedar – the First Man subsequently sullied himself with sin: "You were blameless in your ways from the day that you were created (מיום הבראך), until wrongdoing was found in you … Your heart was proud because of your beauty (גבה לבך ביפיך); you corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendour" (vv. 15–17). God thus drove him out of the Garden: "To the ground I hurled you … you have become a horror and gone forever" (vv. 17–19). According to LXX v. 16, a cherub was involved in his banishment.[40]

2 Kings 19 also associates the Cedar Forest in Lebanon with God's dwelling, allegedly quoting Sennacherib's claim to have reached it: "With my many chariots, it is I who have climbed the highest mountains, the remotest parts of Lebanon (ירכתי לבנון), and have cut down its tallest cedars (קומת ארזיו), its choicest cypresses (מבחור ברשיו). I have reached his farthest lodge (מלון קצה), his densest forest (יער כרמלו)" (v. 23). The designations "his farthest lodge" and "his densest forest" must be understood here as referring to God.[41] The text thus refers to Sennacherib's intention to gain the Cedar Forest, God's lofty dwelling, and cut down its cedars and cypresses.[42]

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[37] Biblical quotations herein follow the NJPS with minor changes.

[38] MT presents the cherub as the central protagonist; see M.D. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, Jerusalem 1961, 1:77; D.I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel. Chapters 25–48*, NICOT, Grand Rapids 1998, 112–115. In LXX, which appears to reflect a better reading, the First Man is the protagonist and the cherub ultimately barred him from the garden (see below). For an additional parallel of Eden and the Garden of YHWH, see Isa 51:3.

[39] The stones referred to in the previous verse ("carnelian, chrysolite, and moonstone, beryl, onyx, and jasper, sapphire, turquoise, and emerald") thus appear to describe God's garden / Eden. Cf. the garden of Siduri in the *Gilgamesh Epic* (9:247–283) and the depiction of Jerusalem in Isa 54:11–12. See Cassuto, *Genesis*, 1:77; Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21–37*, 581–582; Block, *Ezekiel*, 115.

[40] LXX appears to read: "And the cherub brought you out from the midst of the fiery stone" (καὶ ἤγαγέν σε τὸ χερουβ ἐκ μέσου λίθων πυρίνων) in distinction to MT: "And I brought you up, O guardian cherub, from the midst of the fiery stone" (ואַבדך כרוב הסכך מתוך אבני-אש). The description of the cherub in LXX suggests that his role here appears to originate in an aetiological story analogous to Gen 3:24 explaining why he, rather than the First Man, was appointed to guard the garden; see W. Zimmerli, *Ezekiel*, Hermeneia, trans. J.D. Martin, Philadelphia 1983, 2:90–91, and the table below. For more on the cherub as a guard in the Hebrew Bible and Greece (where the cherub is known as γρύψ), see J. Brown, Literary Contexts of the Common Hebrew-Greek Vocabulary, *JSS* 13 (1968), 184–188. For this role as played by *Mischwesen* beasts in the ancient Near East (possibly including the Mesopotamian *kurību*), see J. Börker-Klähn, Grief, *RlA* 3 (1957–1971), 633–639, here 636; A. Green, Mischwesen. B, *RlA* 8 (1993–1997), 246–264, here 256–257.

[41] *Contra* the "lodge of the cedar trees" as erroneously rendered elsewhere. Cf. the reference in the Babylonian *Enūma Eliš* to the city of Babylon, Marduk's dwelling, as the lodge of the gods: "Let us make a shrine of great renown, your chamber will be our resting place (*lū nubattani*) wherein we may repose" (6:51-52); see W.G. Lambert, *Babylonian Creation Myths,* MC 16, Winona Lake 2013, 112–113; A.V. Hurowitz, Babylon in Bethel. A New Look at Jacob's Dream, in S.W. Holloway (ed.), *Orientalism, Assyriology, and the Bible*, Sheffield 2007, 436–438.

[42] For the affinities between this prophecy and royal Assyrian customs, see P. Machinist, Assyria and its Image in the First Isaiah, *JAOS* 103 (1983), 719–737, here 723.

The Babylonian and biblical sources that identify the Lebanese Cedar Forest as God's garden or lodge, i.e. his domicile, explain why the Egyptian account speaks of the gods walking in the Valley of the ʿš-tree with no disguise (9:3f). This is their home.[43]

3. The creation of a woman

The *Tale of the Two Brothers* also recounts that the gods sought to ease Bata's loneliness in the Valley of the ʿš-tree, apparently their abode, by creating – literally "building" (*qd*, classified by the hieroglyph of "man building a wall" [A35]) – a wife for him.[44] Some scholars argue that the Egyptians regarded the Syrian expanse in a romantic or folkloristic light, the latter thus attracting a plethora of fantastic plots. This nonetheless fails to satisfactorily explain where this type of depiction originated.[45]

Within the Egyptian corpus, the creation of Bata's wife most closely corresponds to the account of the formation of Queen Hatshepsut in the temple at Deir al-Bahri (15th century BCE).[46] This relates how Amun, head of the gods, commanded the Potter-god Khnum to create Hatshepsut. It is illustrated by a relief of Khnum forging her (as a male-child) on the wheel, with the goddess Heqet, the bestower of life, at her side. Khnum's presence in other texts with a similar context supports the suggestion that he was responsible for the creation of living creatures.[47] In contrast to Bata's wife, however, Hatshepsut's mother conceived through the god Amun in his human form. Her miraculous birth is thus filtered through the normal human mode of birth.[48] Khnum appears in another account of the supernatural birth of Egyptian kings (pWestcar) – which also involves pregnancy – as well as in several incantations.[49] While all these texts describe a supernatural birth, they are certainly not considered as primeval stories. The notion of pregnancy there is thus appropriate. Despite the similarities the story of Bata's wife exhibits to these tales, Khnum's formation of her occurs via the donation of the gods' seed rather than human pregnancy:

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43 Some Egyptian texts from the 18th Dynasty and onward (mid-2nd millennium BCE) also refer to the region of Lebanon, where the ʿš-tree and many other flora flourished, as 'god's land' (*t3 nṯr*). Other places east of Egypt also bear the same designation, however, it is difficult to determine whether our tradition is linked to the garden of the gods or pertains to something completely different; see J. Cooper, The Geographic and Cosmographic Expression *Ta-nṯr*, *BACE* 22 (2011), 47–66 and the bibliography cited therein.

44 For this idea and the appeal to Gen 2:22, see already J. Skinner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Genesis*, 2nd ed., ICC, Edinburgh 1930, 69, and below.

45 Helck, *Beziehungen Ägyptens zu Vorderasien*, 26–27; K.A. Kitchen, Interrelations of Egypt and Syria, in M. Liverani (ed.), *La Siria nel tardo bronzo*, Orientis antique collection 9, Rome 1969, 88. For the Valley of the ʿš-tree's cosmic nature, see the references in n. 2 above.

46 See E. Naville, *The Temple of Deir El Bahari*, London 1896, 2:14–16, pls. XLVII–LI. For the parallel delineation of Amenhotep III's birth in the temple at Luxor, see Helck, *Urkunden der 18. Dynastie*, 1713–1718; H. Brunner, *Die Geburt des Gottkönigs. Studien zur Überlieferung eines Altägyptischen Mythos*, 2nd ed., Wiesbaden 1986. For the earlier roots and later development of this scene, see A. Oppenheim, The Early Life of Pharaoh. Divine Birth and Adolescence Scenes in the Causeway of Senwosret III at Dahshur, in M. Bárta, F. Coppens, and J. Krejčí (eds.), *Abusir and Saqqara in the Year 2010/1*, Prague 2011, 171–188; H. Altenmüller, Anubis mit der Scheibe im Mythos von der Geburt des Gottkönigs, *SAK* 42 (2013), 15–35; S. Töpfer, The Physical Activity of Parturition in Ancient Egypt. Textual and Epigraphical Sources, *Dynamis* 34 (2014), 317–335.

47 See C. Leitz, ed., *Lexikon der ägyptischen Götter und Götterbezeichnungen*, Leuven 2002, s.v. *ḫnmw*; S. Sauneron, Villes et légendes d'Égypte, *BIFAO* 62 (1964), 33–37 (Khnum as the creator of the animal world); C.H. Gordon, Khnum and El, in S. Israelit-Groll (ed.), *Egyptological Studies*, Scripta Hierosolymitana 28, Jerusalem 1982, 205–208.

48 Like Bata's wife, Hatshepsut's mother is said to be the most beautiful woman on earth. Cf. Hollis, *"Tale of Two Brothers,"* 176 n. 99. For the sacred marriages between gods and human women to produce royal offspring, see E. Blumenthal, *Die biblische Weihnachtsgeschichte und das alte Ägypten*, Munich 1999, 12–31; J. Assmann, Die Zeugung des Sohnes. Bild, Spiel, Erzählung und das Problem des ägyptischen Mythos, in J. Assmann *et al*. (eds.), *Funktionen und Leistungen des Mythos. Drei altorientalische Beispiele*, OBO 48, Göttingen 1982, 13–61.

49 See P.F. Dorman, Creation on the Potter's Wheel at the Eastern Horizon of Heaven, in E. Teeter and J.A. Larson (eds.), *Gold of Praise. Studies on Ancient Egypt in Honor of Edward F. Wente*, Chicago 1999, 83–99, here 96; Simpson, *The Literature of Ancient Egypt*, 21–24 (King Cheops and the Magicians). In this account, while Khnum carries the birthing stone and grants health to those born, he does not appear to be involved in the pregnancy. The goddesses Isis, Nephthys, Meskhenet, and Heqet also make an appearance, the latter two frequently playing a part in birth stories. For the tales of the births of kings, see also Blumenthal, *Die biblische Weihnachtsgeschichte*, 36–41.

"for the seed of every god was in her" (9:8 = 11:5). This depiction has no parallel in Egyptian literature. It is found, however, in West-Asian texts.

Several Mesopotamian traditions exist relating to this form of creation. Apart from creation legends such as *Enki and Ninmah*, the earliest is a 14th century Hurro-Hittite adaptation of a Mesopotamian work that implicates Kumarbi – the ancestor of the Hurrian pantheon, the Sun-god, and the Storm-god, in Gilgamesh's birth.[50] A Neo-Assyrian text recounts the creation of a king in which Anu, Enlil, Nergal, Belet-ili, Nusku and the Great Gods participate.[51] According to Mesopotamian sources and texts that follow them, the gods thus generate a superman without any form of conception – just like the way in which Bata's wife is created. The only account of the creation of a *woman* in ancient West-Asian texts, however, occurs in Genesis. Reflecting its henotheistic outlook, her formation is attributed to a singular god.

As is well known, Genesis 2–3 recounts how God formed the First Woman: "And YHWH God built (ויבן) the rib that he had taken from the man, into a woman and he brought her to the man" (2:22). He does so because "It is not good for man to be alone (לא טוב היות האדם לבדו); I will make him a helper as his companion" (v. 18). Here, the First Man's loneliness fits the context. No other humans exist to keep him company. Although the "constructed" woman assuages his solitariness, she then beguiles him. After they both hear the "voice of God" walking in the Garden in search of them, they ultimately are banished from their birthplace (3:8-19, 23).

According to Genesis 2–3, all these events happened in the Garden of Eden, which Ezekiel (and Isaiah 51:3) also identify as the "God's garden". Ezekiel 28 recounts that the First Man was expelled from Eden, God's garden, due to his hubris. The parallel tradition in Ezekiel 31 states that the Cedar (ארז) was expelled from Eden, God's garden in Lebanon, for precisely the same reason.

Unlike Ezekiel 31, the biblical author of the Garden of Eden story (usually regarded as J) located the site in proximity to the Euphrates and Tigris – the famous rivers of Mesopotamia (2:14) – and the Pishon and Gihon (2:11–13).[52] While numerous scholars posit that the account originated in Mesopotamia, despite the lack of any traces of such a story in Mesopotamian texts, early commentators had already noted that the verses referring to the four rivers interrupt the storyline. Verse 15 resumes the plot sequence, once again relating to God who placed the First Man in the Garden of Eden (cf. v. 8-9a). Hereby, it ties the verses together by means of a *Wiederaufnahme*. Verses 10–14 may thus constitute an independent tradition relating to one site (among several) of the Garden, unrelated to the account given in Genesis 2–3.[53] Like Ezekiel 28, the original location ascribed to the Garden of Eden in Genesis 2–3 is thus unknown.

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[50] See E. Rieken *et al*., Hethiter.net/: CTH 341.III.1 (TX 2009-09-15, TRde 2009-09-18); G. Beckman, Gilgamesh in Hatti, in G. Beckman *et al*. (eds.), *Hittite Studies in Honor of Harry A. Hoffner Jr. on the Occasion of His 65th Birthday*, Winona Lake 2003, 37–57.

[51] See R. Meyer, Ein Mythos von der Erschaffung des Menschen und des Königs, *Orientalia* 56 (1987), 55–68. In the Mesopotamian creation stories – *Enki and Ninmak* and *Enūma Eliš* (cf. also a reference in the *Babylonian Theodicy*) – two or three gods generally participate in the creation of man. For a comparison of some of these with Pandora, see P. Walcot, *Hesiod and the Near East*, Cardiff 1966, 78–79. For a broader discussion, see G. Darshan, *After the Flood: Stories of Origins in the Hebrew Bible and Ancient Mediterranean Literature*, The Biblical Encyclopaedia Library 35, Jerusalem forthcoming, 97–98 (Hebrew).

[52] The precise location in Mesopotamia is disputed, however. Some scholars argue for northern Mesopotamia – the origin of the rivers according to the plain sense of the text; see Skinner, *Genesis*, 62–66; H. Gunkel, *Genesis*, Macon 1997, 8–10. Others locate it where the rivers meet in the Persian Gulf in southern Mesopotamia, also known as the "mouth of the rivers", where many other Mesopotamian legends about the beginning of the world take place; see E.A. Speiser, The Rivers of Paradise, in R. von Kienle *et al*. (eds.), *Festschrift Johannes Friedrich zum 65. Geburtstag am 27. August 1958 gewidmet*, Heidelberg 1959, 473–485. Still others maintain that the author did not seek to situate the garden in any known geographical location; see S.R. Driver, *The Book of Genesis*, WC, London 1904, 59–60. As we shall see below, vv. 10-14 clearly do not form part of the original sequence. This issue is thus irrelevant here. For a further survey, see T. Stordalen, *Echoes of Eden. Genesis 2–3 and Symbolism of the Eden Garden in Biblical Hebrew Literature*, CBET 25, Leuven 2000, 273–286.

[53] Cf. H. Ewald, *Die Lehre der Bibel von Gott, oder, Theologie des Alten und Neuen Bundes*, Leipzig 1874, 3:72 n. 1; K. Budde, *Biblische Urgeschichte (Gen. 1–12, 5)*, Giessen 1883, 82–83; Gunkel, *Genesis*, 26; C. Westermann, *Genesis 1–11. A Commentary*, Minneapolis 1984, 215–216; B.F. Batto, Paradise Reexamined, in K.L. Younger *et al*. (eds.), *The Biblical Canon in Comparative Perspective*, Scripture in Context 4, Ancient Near Eastern Texts and Studies 11, New York 1983, 33–66.

Table 1 Garden of Eden traditions and *The Two Brothers*

	Genesis 2–3	**Ezekiel 28**	**Ezekiel 31**		***The Two Brothers***
The transgressor(s) / the mean	The created man and woman	The created man	The cedar tree		The created woman
The transgression that lead to leaving the scene's site	Eating of the tree of Knowledge, in disregard of YHWH's order	Hubris	Hubris		Walking to the Sea, in disregard of Bata's command
The result	Expulsion from Eden westwards	Expulsion from Eden to the netherworld	Expulsion from Eden to the netherworld		Taken from the valley
The protagonist's countenance	—	Handsome	Handsome		Handsome
Description of the site of the scene	Treed and irrigated by water	Precious stones	Conifer-treed and irrigated by water		Conifer-treed
Cherub's role	Guarding the Tree of Life	Expulsion of the First Man	—		
A tree associated with life and death	Tree of Life	––	––		The conifer tree on which Bata placed his heart
The site's location	— (Another tradition: between the four rivers)	—	Lebanon		Lebanon

Following Umberto Cassuto, it appears that the three biblical traditions discussed above, dealing with Eden/God's garden, are in fact interlinked.[54] In the typical fashion of folkloristic *Märchen*, however, those diverge in each account, according to its genre, transmitter, and audience. The table above illustrates their similar motifs. The proposed equivalents in the Egyptian *Tale of the Two Brothers* are given separately.

The episode in the Valley of the ʿš-tree in the light of the West-Asian Cedar Forest mythologems

In seeking to understand the intersections between the Egyptian, Babylonian and biblical texts relating to the Cedar Forest, we must investigate the issue of influence. The biblical texts evidently did not precede the Babylonian and Egyptian tales. The suggestion that several motifs originated in Babylon – the earliest occurrence of the mythic Cedar Forest tradition – is equally difficult to maintain in light of the general agreement that the Babylonians borrowed the Lebanese Cedar Forest tradition from the West. The idea that the Egyptian account influenced both is also implausible. Not only are its motifs inconsistent with Egyptian beliefs, but they also interrupt the plot sequence on occasion. The most plausible explanation is, therefore, that a Levantine source found its way into these cultures, each integrating it into their literature to a greater or lesser degree.

The basic tradition, according to which the gods abide in the Lebanese Cedar Forest, reached Mesopotamia – the earliest place in which the story is attested and the furthest from its geographical origins.[55] For their part, the biblical authors from the southern Levant collected and preserved many of the earlier regional traditions, adapting them to their own needs. The story of the Garden of Eden provides us with numerous details relating to the creation of the First Man, followed by the creation ("building") of the First Woman to ease his loneliness, and God('s voice) walking in the garden. At the same time, however, its author sought to suppress the Canaanite location of the Garden of Eden, also preferring not to describe the beauty of the beings created. The Judean prophet focused on the creation and comeliness of the First Man rather than the formation of the First Woman,

[54] Cassuto, *Genesis*, 72–83.

[55] Interestingly, Enkidu's creation, childhood, and adolescence in close proximity to the Cedar Forest also forms part of the Old Babylonian adaptation of the story not found in any Sumerian tradition; see T. Jacobsen, *The Treasures of Darkness. A History of Mesopotamian Religion*, New Haven 1976, 210. Whether this indicates the existence of the motif of creation in the Cedar Forest before the 18th century BCE is difficult to determine.

locating Eden / God's garden in the Cedar Forest in Lebanon. All the biblical traditions associated with the Garden culminate with the expulsion of the main protagonists from its idyllic space.

The author of the Egyptian *Tale of the Two Brothers* clearly did not intend to tell the story of the creation of the First Man or Woman. Certain features of this tale, such as the location of the events in the Lebanese Cedar Forest, the gods' walking through the land, and the creation ("building") of a beautiful woman to ease the man's loneliness, nonetheless found their way into his text.

These motifs appear to have reached Egypt during the New Kingdom period, together with several other Levantine mythical ideas, motifs and legends.[56] While some Egyptian compositions were evidently influenced in their entirety by this cultural transition, for example the *Astarte Papyrus*' reworking of the myth of the Storm-god's combat with the Sea,[57] in other cases only partial legends or groups of motifs were integrated into local Egyptian works.[58] The motifs from the "Legend of the Cedar Forest," as we may call the tradition we have discussed herein, fall into the second category.[59]

In conclusion, the preservation of foreign motifs and internal inconsistencies in a virtually independent scene in the Egyptian *Tale of the Two Brothers* has allowed us to trace its parallels and background in West-Asian literature. Hereby, we gained another example of the cultural relations between ancient Near Eastern societies. This in turn enabled us to tentatively reconstruct parts of a Levantine tradition that, either due to the transmission process or the disappearance of the material on which it was based, has not reached our hands directly.

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[56] For the Levantine literary influence upon New Kingdom Egypt, see R. Stadelmann, *Syrisch-Palästinensische Gottheiten in Ägypten*, Leiden 1967; Helck, *Die Beziehungen Ägyptens zu Vorderasien*; Cornelius, *The Iconography of the Canaanite Gods*; Redford, *Egypt, Canaan and Israel*, 231–237; J.F. Quack, *Die Lehren des Ani. Ein neuägyptischer Weisheitstext in seinem kulturellen Umfeld*, OBO 141, Freiburg/Göttingen 1994, 207–212; K. Tazawa, *Syro-Palestinian Deities in New Kingdom Egypt. The Hermeneutics of their Existence*, BAR/IS 1965, Oxford 2009.

[57] P. Collombert and L. Coulon, Les dieux contre la mer. Le début du 'papyrus d'Astarte' (pBN 202), *BIFAO* 100 (2000), 193–242; Ayali-Darshan, The Other Version of the Story of the Storm-god's Combat with the Sea.

[58] Cf. the New Kingdom version of the *Contendings of Horus and Seth* in which Seth, when ultimately presented in a favourable light, is offered "Levantine gifts": the goddesses Anat and Astarte and the status of the Storm-god. Another example is the role attributed to Anat in the historiola of *Papyrus Chester Beatty* VIII vs. 1.5–2.4 (and its parallels) and her description as "the victorious goddess, the woman who acts as a warrior, who wears a skirt like men and a sash like women." As we noted above, the *Tale of the Two Brothers* itself incorporates a motif from the Storm-god's combat with the Sea; see N. Ayali-Darshan, II. Literature: Egyptian and Levantine Belles-Lettres—Links and Influences during the Bronze Age, in P. Creasman and R.H. Wilkinson (eds.), *Pharaoh's Land and Beyond. Ancient Egypt and its Neighbors*, Oxford 2017, 195–205.

[59] As indicated above, the notion that a Levantine tradition influenced the *Tale of the Two Brothers* as a whole is unsupported at the present time; see D.B. Redford, *A Study of the Biblical Story of Joseph (Genesis 37–50)*, VTSup 20, Leiden 1970, 93 n. 3; *contra* M.C. Astour, *Hellenosemitica. An Ethnic and Cultural Study in West Semitic Impact on Mycenean Greece*, Leiden 1965; Wettengel, *Die Erzählung von den beiden Brüdern*; Schneider, Innovation in Literature.