

“Did Egypt Once Worship the One True God?”

Recently I heard somewhere, that there was an early period of time when Egypt worshipped our one true God. The person who said this, said it may have occurred immediately after the Exodus. Can you give me any support or documentation for this idea?

Thanks for your question. Most likely, the person who made this comment was referring to Amenhotep IV (Akhenaton), the “heretic” pharaoh of the Eighteenth Dynasty, who began to rule about 1380 B.C. He moved his capital from Thebes to a city he called Akhetaten (i.e. Tell el-Amarna). G. Herbert Livingston writes, “The new pharaoh replaced the high god Amun of Thebes with Aten (Aton), the sun disk, and replaced his throne name with Akhnaton (Ikhnaton)” (*The Pentateuch in its Cultural Environment*; 40).

Although some scholars refer to Akhenaton as Egypt’s first monotheistic pharaoh, it’s important to understand that his “monotheism” was definitely NOT the same as that of the Hebrews. The god Aton was essentially identified with the physical disk of the sun; the God of the Bible is not to be identified with anything in His creation (see Exodus 20:1-6). Livingston writes, “Aton was purely a nature entity and, curiously, the pharaoh continued to regard himself as a god, too” (119). Thus, Akhenaton did NOT worship the one true God. He was not a biblical monotheist.

However, your source is correct about the time period in which these events occurred. As previously noted, Akhenaton began to reign about 1380 B.C. Although there is some room for scholarly disagreement, the Exodus likely took place around 1446-1436 B.C. Thus, Akhenaton would have become pharaoh shortly after this time.

Almost any book on ancient Egyptian history will mention Akhenaton. I took some of the information above from the following source: G. Herbert Livingston, *The Pentateuch in its Cultural Environment* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1987).

Hope this helps.

Shalom,

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