

Exodus Lesson 2 4-5-6-7 Handout – Which God Did Pharaoh Probably Know

“I do not know the Lord” (Exodus 5:2). Pharaoh knew many gods, but he did not know the One True God. One of his predecessors, Akhenaten, had attempted to install the worship of one god, represented by the solar disc, Aten. The people’s attachment to the old gods was too strong, however, and after Akhenaten’s death polytheism was restored in the country of Egypt.

In the time of Moses a new royal family installed itself in power as the Nineteenth Dynasty. Coming originally from the Delta area, not far from the land of Goshen where the Hebrews were concentrated, this family had a special devotion to the minor god Seti. According to Egyptian mythology, Seti had killed his brother Osiris in battle, sending him to the underworld to reign as lord there. Since he was guilty of the murder of his brother, Seti was not very popular among the Egyptians until the Pharaoh Seti I built a temple to him in Avaris.

In this struggle between Moses and Pharaoh to Pharaoh, the Hebrews are slaves both in this life and in the next, so the God of the Hebrews is a slave god. The desire of the Hebrews for independence represents rebellion on earth but also in heaven. To Pharaoh, the God of Moses is an upstart, as the god Akhenaten was before him. The Moses’ revolution comes on the heels of the failed Akhenaten revolution, and the Egyptian establishment does not want to hear about any changes whether social or religious. Pharaoh does not know the Lord and does not want to know anything about Him.¹

¹ Ponessa, J., & Manhardt, L. W. (2007). [*Moses and the Torah*](#) (pp. 27–28). Emmaus Road Publishing.