

however, recreate the world. Trismegistus also affirms that the world is good, and tells about the various gods ruling the world. The text ends with a description of the judgment of the soul at the hand of a great demon, appointed by God.

Asclepius is probably the most world-affirming of all the hermetic texts. It is also remarkable for its exultation of Egypt and her gods. That such a text was included in a collection of mainly dualistic-“gnostic” writings is surprising, though an explanation may be sought in the fact that it is an initiatory text that professes to give knowledge of an esoteric and symbolic kind.

There are no clear references to the Bible in the tractate. The idea that humans are created partly from matter and partly after the image of the gods (66–67), or that the “inner man” is an image of God (69), may or may not echo the anthropogony of the Bible. The story of the wicked angels who lead humans astray (73) is reminiscent of Gen 6 and 1 En. 6–8.

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Einar Thomassen

See also → Nag Hammadi

Asdot-Pisgah

Asdot-Pisgah (MT *ʿasdot happisgā*) transliterates “the slopes of Pisgah,” designating the watershed down the west side of the Pisgah escarpment, east of where the Jordan enters the Dead Sea and perhaps to some distance southward. Modern versions translate this expression, but older versions sometimes transliterated it. *ʿAsdot* implies a steep drop off of the topography where water courses descend (HALOT 1: 93). Pisgah always occurs with the definite article (perhaps “the fissured place, cleft;” HALOT 3: 947) and seems to indicate a range of scarps rather than a single peak. The “top of Pisgah” (Deut 34: 1, etc.) is generally identified as *Ras es-Siyahah* (Palestine Grid 218.130). “Slopes of Pisgah” describes the farthest extent of Sihon’s kingdom in the Arabah (Deut 4: 49; Josh 12: 3), deemed as territory of Reuben and Gad (Deut 3:17). “Slopes” distinguished this area from the Moabite plateau region above and to the east. In contrast, Josh 10: 40 and 12: 8 designate the corresponding topography to the west of the Jordan valley simply as “the slopes,” differentiated from other regions such as the Arabah and Wilderness. In Josh 13: 20 Asdot-Pisgah describes a territory assigned to Reuben and associated with Beth-Jeshimoth and Beth-Peor. Although context might suggest that it repre-

sents a town name in this verse, probably Asdot-Pisgah was originally a regional term intended to locate Beth-Peor more precisely.

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Richard D. Nelson

Asenath

- I. Hebrew Bible/Old Testament
- II. Pseudepigrapha
- III. Judaism
- IV. Christianity
- V. Islam
- VI. Literature
- VII. Visual Arts
- VIII. Music

I. Hebrew Bible/Old Testament

In the Bible, Asenath (also Aseneth; MT *ʿOsnat*; LXX Ἀσενεθ) is the daughter of Potiphera, priest of On (LXX Ἡλίου πόλεως), i.e., Heliopolis. When Joseph rises to power in Egypt, Pharaoh gives her to Joseph in marriage (Gen 41: 45) and she and Joseph have two children, Manasseh and Ephraim (Gen 41: 50–52; 46: 20). The name Asenath is Egyptian in origin, probably derived from *ns-N(y)t*, “Belonging to (the goddess) Neith.”

II. Pseudepigrapha

Aseneth (Ἀσενέθ) is a protagonist in the pseudepigraphical *Joseph and Aseneth* (*Jos. Asen.*). There she is the beautiful virgin daughter of Pentephres (Πεντεφρης), i.e., Potiphera. Many young men seek to marry her, including the eldest son of Pharaoh. Having rejected previous suitors, Aseneth initially refuses her father’s suggestion of marriage to Joseph. When she sees Joseph, however, she falls in love with him instantly. At first, Joseph refuses to kiss her due to her worship of Egyptian gods. Aseneth is distraught and destroys her idols. After she mourns and fasts for a week, a messenger appears to her. He pronounces her reborn, renames her “City of Refuge” (cf. Num 35: 9–15; Deut 4: 41–43; 19: 1–13; Josh 20), feeds her a piece of honeycomb, and promises her that Joseph will marry her. Pharaoh himself conducts the marriage ceremony and holds a seven-day wedding banquet for them. In the second part of the story Pharaoh’s son enlists Joseph’s half-brothers, Dan, Gad, Naphtali and Asher, to help to kill Pharaoh and Joseph, and to kidnap Aseneth. Benjamin and Joseph’s other brothers foil the plot, Pharaoh’s son dies from his wounds, and his father dies after him. Joseph reigns as king of Egypt for 48 years, and he then gives the crown to Pharaoh’s grandson.

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Atlanta, Ga. 1996) ■ U. B. Fink, *Joseph und Aseneth: Revision des griechischen Textes und Edition der zweiten lateinischen Übersetzung* (FoSub 5; Berlin/New York 2008) ■ E. M. Humphrey, *Joseph and Aseneth* (Sheffield 2000). ■ R. S. Kraemer, *When Aseneth Met Joseph* (New York 1998).

Nyasha Junior

III. Judaism

Manifesting reservations about the marriage of Joseph to the gentile Asenath, the Hellenistic-Jewish story of *Jos. Asen.* shows how the idoltrous Egyptian converted to Judaism before she married Joseph. Rabbinic traditions, however, make her a Jew from birth, a child born of Shechem's rape of Dinah (Gen 34; so e.g., *TPsJ*, Gen 41:45).

When Dinah's brothers learn of Asenath's illegitimate birth, they seek to kill Dinah to avert disgrace to their family (*PRE* 36, 38; *YalqShim* §137). Her grandfather, Jacob, ties around her neck a metal disc inscribed with the divine name, and abandons her. Thereupon, an angel – some sources have Michael, but others Gabriel – brings her to Egypt, where Potiphar's wife raises Asenath (cf. *PRE* 38; Potiphara, the priest of On, is often confused with Potiphar, Pharaoh's officer cf. *Jub* 40:10, *T.Jos.* 18:3). In *Midrash Agada* Gen 41:45 (Buber 1894:97) Jacob puts the amulet around Asenath's neck, and brings her to the walls of Egypt (in *Hadar Zeqenim* 19c to a thornbush, *snh*; hence her name *'snt*), where Potiphar finds her. In *Codex Sachau* Dinah hides behind a thornbush after giving birth to Asenath. An eagle brings the child to the city of On, where Potiphar finds her (cf. Aaron ben Gershon *Abu al-Rabi* on Gen 46:6).

Asenath is also said to have been present when Potiphar's wife tries to seduce Joseph. When the latter accuses him, it is Asenath who testifies under oath before her foster father that Joseph is innocent. For her role in saving Joseph, God promises that she would bear the tribes that Joseph would beget, namely, Ephraim and Manasseh (*YalqShim* §146; cf. illustration in Vienna Genesis, fol. 16v).

Asenath later on proves to Joseph and Jacob that she, in fact, is a Jew by showing her amulet to Joseph (*Hadar Zeqenim*; in Bahya ben Asher on Gen 41:45 Joseph shows it to Jacob). Moreover, in *BerR MS Vatican* on 48:8–9 she is depicted as being half-blind, which to Jacob proves that she is, in fact, his granddaughter, the blindness resulting out of her being exposed in the desert (Aptowitz: 252). According to *PesRab* and *TPsJ* on Gen 48:8–9 (Buttenwieser: 537; Lebram: 159–61) Asenath, being a pious Jew, is also present at Jacob's blessing of the two sons of Joseph in order to prove to Jacob that the sons are born according to the law.

IV. Christianity

The reception of Asenath in Christianity is mainly a history of the transmission and reception of the text of *Jos. Asen.* There are, however, references to

her in some commentaries on Genesis that show knowledge of the rabbinic legends. Thus, e.g., Origen refers to "apocrypha" of the Hebrews which say that it was Asenath who told Potiphar about Joseph's innocence (*Catena Nicephori* on Gen 41:45), and Andrew Willet, frequently referring to rabbinic sources, writes that "Asenath cannot be the daughter of Dina Jacob's daughter, as the Hebrews dream, being an Egyptian woman" (*Hexapla in Genesis* [London 21608] 405). In contrast to the intention of Jewish sources, and seemingly without knowledge of these, Martin Luther makes a point from the fact that Asenath, though not a Jew, but a gentile, nevertheless was chosen to give birth to Ephraim and Manasseh (*In Genesis Enarrationum* ad Gen 41:45).

V. Islam

Asenath is not an important figure in Islamic literature which may be due to the prominence of and interest in the story of *Yusuf and Zulaykha* in Islam. However, in medieval Syria and Andalusia, where Jews, Christians, and Muslims closely interacted, we find some references to her.

There seems to be a confusion of the name of Pharaoh's wife (§28:9; 66:11) with Asenath's Syriac name *Asyat* (*'syrt*), because in some later Islamic sources Pharaoh's wife is called *Āsiya* (Wensinck). And Ibn Ḥazm (994–1064) in his work *Kitāb al-ḥiṣāl fī'l-mīlāl wa'l-aḥwā' wa'l-niḥāl* (*Book of Opinions on Religions, Sects, and Heresies*) polemicized against Jewish claims that Asenath was Dinah's daughter and that an eagle brought her to Potiphar (see Goldziher: 144, 153). According to Aptowitz (253–54 n. 37), this may explain why the 12th-century Jewish author of *Sekhel Tov* emphasizes that Asenath is in fact the daughter of Potiphar, and that Joseph proved to Jacob that marrying her is allowed (Buber 1900: 270, 309).

VI. Literature

As with Asenath in Christianity, most literary references to her are not to the account in Genesis but to *Jos. Asen.*, for the most part inspired by the abridged version given in Vinzenz de Beauvais' *Speculum historiale* from the late 12th or early 13th century, which itself is dependent on Hélinand of Froidmont's *Chronicon* (Burchard 1996: 378–79 n. 85a). Vinzenz' work was translated into New High German as *Histori Assenath* probably in the 16th century, and it became the source of Philipp von Zesen's extend novel, *Assenat* (1670). Von Zesen shows some knowledge of Jewish legends concerning Asenath, as does Anna Katharina Emmerich (1774–1824), who drew on the legends in her visions (Burchard 1996: 404–8).

Other literary receptions of Asenath include a 19th-century poem, *Osenath, Daughter of Potiphara* [Heb.], by Judah Leib Gordon, a drama in five acts

by the German poet Süsskind Raschkow entitled *Joseph and Asenath* (1817; Heb.) and, most recently, Jennifer Kay Stout's novel, *Asenath, Daughter of Egypt* (1997), which, like *Jos. Asen.* and the rabbinic legends but not dependent upon them, imagines Asenath's struggle between her idolatry and her husband's faith in "Jehovah God," and how the Egyptian was finally converted.

VII. Visual Arts

1. Description of Normative Figure of Asenath in the Visual Arts. Asenath is frequently represented as a young and beautiful woman, wearing a long dress or gown, her hair veiled either by a scarf or some headdress. Apart from representations based on *Jos. Asen.*, she is typically depicted as standing or sitting closely behind Joseph or a little further in the background, mostly passively watching the scene.

2. Scriptural Episodes of Asenath in the Visual Arts. Although not an active figure in any one scene of the biblical account, images of Asenath relate to all major events in the life of Joseph in Gen 41–50: the marriage itself, Joseph's rise to power (symbolized by Pharaoh's ring and his chariot of second-in-command given to Joseph), Asenath with Manasseh and Ephraim, Joseph meeting his brothers and his father, Jacob blessing his two grandsons (see → plate 15), and Jacob's and Joseph's burials.

3. Popular Iconographic Motifs of Asenath in the Visual Arts. While the representations of Asenath as an individual character are connected to the reception of *Jos. Asen.*, the majority of representations from late medieval times up to the modern period that follow the biblical narrative depict her in the role of wife and mother, thus completing the image of that couple and their children as a holy (and royal) family. In the high Middle Ages there was a clear focus on depicting the marriage of Joseph and Asenath, Joseph's rise to power, and the couple raising Manasseh and Ephraim. None of these scenes seems to be present in later, i.e., Renaissance, Baroque, and modern art; however, the family motif is merged into depictions of Jacob's blessing of Manasseh and Ephraim. After having disappeared from this scene since early medieval times, Asenath reappears in depictions of that scene in the 16th through 19th centuries.

List of works. *Joseph's Rise to Power and Marriage* (Gen 41:39–45): ■ *Cotton Otho* (?) (5th/6th cent.), London, British Library, MS Cott.Otho. B.VI (fol. 90r). [Deteriorated] ■ *Cotton Claudius* (11th cent.), London, British Library, MS Cott.Claudius B.IV (fol. 60v). [Wedding scene with chariot in the background] ■ *Octateuch Biblioteca Vaticana* (12th cent.), Rome, Biblioteca Vaticana, MS gr.746 (fol. 125r). [Wedding scene with ring given to Joseph, and Joseph – thus appearing twice – riding on the chariot] ■ *Smyrna Octateuch* (12th cent.), Smyrna, Evangelical School, MS A.1 (fol. 53v). [Almost identical with *Octateuch Biblioteca Vati-*

cana] ■ *Millstatt Genesis* (12th/13th cent.), Klagenfurt, Landesmuseum, MS VI.19 (fol. 60v). [Wedding scene, Joseph and Asenath embracing each other]

■ *Manasseh and Ephraim* (Gen 41:50; 46:20): ■ *Pamplona Picture Bible* (12th cent.), Amiens, Bibliothèque de la Ville, MS 108 (fol. 29v). [Asenath leading Manasseh and Ephraim to Joseph] ■ *Millstatt Genesis* (fol. 61r). [Asenath holding Manasseh, Joseph holding Ephraim, both sitting on a bench] ■ *Mosaic, Church of San Marco, Venice* (13th cent.; atrium, bay 8, dome). [Asenath reclining on a bed, with the new born Ephraim held by a midwife, Manasseh, Joseph, and an attendant standing by; see image] ■ *Vienna Genesis* (?) (6th cent.), Vienna, National Library, MS Theol.gr.31 (fol. 16v). [Asenath holding Ephraim, Manasseh sitting next to another women]

■ *Joseph Meeting his Family* (Gen 43:26–29; 44:14–15; 47:1–7): ■ *Ashburnham Pentateuch* (6th/7th cent.), Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS N.Acq.lat.2334 (fols. 44r and 50r). [Asenath's head in the windows of a building in the background watching Joseph and his brothers] ■ *Francesco Granacci* (?) (1477–1543), *Joseph Presents his Father and Brothers to the Pharaoh*.

■ *Jacob's Blessing of Manasseh and Ephraim* (Gen 48:13–16): ■ *Sarcophagus Lid, San Callisto Catacomb, Rome* (4th cent.). [Relief, Asenath occupying a prominent place in the center] ■ *Vienna Genesis* (fol. 23r). ■ *Jacopo Pontormo* (1494–1556), *Joseph in Egypt*. [Upper right zone; Asenath (twice) receiving Manasseh at the stairhead to Jacob's bedroom, and standing in the doorway to that bedroom] ■ *Tobias Stimmer* (1539–1584), *Picture Bible, Jacob Blessing the Sons of Joseph*. [Woodcut; Asenath lifting a cup] ■ *Rembrandt van Rijn* (1606–1669), *Jacob Blessing the Sons of Joseph*. ■ *Mattia Preti* (1613–1699), *Jacob blessing his grandchildren*. ■ *Adeodato Malatesta* (1806–1891), *Jacob blessing Ephraim and Manasseh*.

■ *Burials of Jacob and Joseph* (Gen 50:7–9, 24–26): ■ *Jacob's burial: Vienna Genesis* (?) (fol. 24v). [Asenath appearing in both scenes on that images] ■ *Joseph's burial: Smyrna Octateuch* (fol. 63v).

■ *Other*: ■ *Vienna Genesis* (fol. 16v). [Asenath as a little child, bathing, when Joseph escapes from Potiphar's wife; influenced by Jewish sources, or through Christian reception of these; cf. Origen's *Catena* on Gen 41:45] ■ *Magdalen College* (11th cent.), Oxford, MS gr.3 (fol. 316r). [Four medallions in the outer margin, Asenath (ἡ ἀουβέη) below Sarah, Rebekah, and Rachel (cf. *Jos. Asen.* 1:5), probably used as iconographic models] ■ *Sculpture, Chartres Cathedral, France* (12th cent.; north portal, right door, right jamb). [Asenath standing between Joseph to her left and Jacob to her right]

VIII. Music

Asenath (Azanet, Asenata) is a character in Apostolo Zeno's libretto *Giuseppe* (1722; cantata), and in Pietro Metastasio's libretto *Giuseppe riconosciuto* (1733; opera). Based on Zeno's libretto James Miller later wrote the libretto for Handel's rarely performed oratorio *Joseph and his Brethren* (1744, HWV 59) which is based on Gen 38–45. In it "Asenath, Daughter to the High Priest" (soprano) has even more arias to sing than Joseph. Asenath is the only female character and provides an element of love to the oratorio. None of her scenes is based on the biblical account or the legends of Asenath in Judaism and Christianity.

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Carsten Burfeind

See also → Joseph and Aseneth; → Joseph (Son of Jacob)

Ashan

Listed among the towns in the Shephelah, Ashan (MT *ʿĀšān*) was first given to the tribe of Judah (Josh 15:42), then later to the tribe of Simeon (19:7; 1 Chr 4:32), which was allotted territory within Judah’s (Josh 19:1, 9). A town by a variant name, Bor-Ashan (“Well of Ashan”), is where David sent spoil after defeating the Amalekites (1 Sam 30:30). 1 Chronicles 6:59 [MT 6:44] designates Ashan as one of the Levitical cities from the territories of Judah and Simeon, a tradition preserved in the Septuagint version of Josh 21:16 (Ἀσα in LXX^B).

Eusebius made a questionable distinction between the Ashan in Judah’s territory and Ashan of Simeon. He referred to the former as Ἀσαν and identified it with an unknown village called Beth-Ashan (βηθασάν), some 15 Roman miles west of Jerusalem (*Onom.* 26:4); the latter is rendered as Ἀσάνα (*Onom.* 28:16).

Traditionally, Ashan is identified with Khirbet Asan (Abel: 52), located 8 km northwest of Beer-Sheba, though there is no archaeological support. Aharoni (262), followed by Kallai (386), suggests Tell Bet Mirsim as a better candidate because of its fortifications from the monarchical period.

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Kah-Jin Jeffrey Kuan

See also → Ain: In Judah

Asharelah

One of the four sons of Asaph (MT *Āšarʿelā*, *Yēšarʿelā*; LXX Εφραημ, Ισραηλ) who were set apart to prophesy in the house of YHWH with musical instruments (1 Chr 25:1–2).

Text-critically, scholars proposed to emend the phrase “and Asarelah” (*waʿĀšarʿelā*) to read “and Asarel – these four” (*waʿĀšarʿel ʿarbaʿā ʿellē* cf. BHS; Klein: 473). This specification of the number of children for Asaph matches that of Jeduthun (1 Chr 25:3) and Heman (1 Chr 25:5). However, in the MT, Septuagint, and Targumim, the phrase “these four” is missing (1 Chr 25:2). Furthermore, another variant name retains the similar form “Jesarelah” (*Yēšarʿelā*; 1 Chr 25:14), evidently the same person as “Asarelah” (1 Chr 25:2).

In reception history, the elevated status of these sons of Asaph was highlighted. Rashi thus underscored, “Out of all the Levites [David] separated only the sons of Asaph” (Rosenberg: 152). *Targum* indicates that Asaph prophesied with the Holy Spirit (cf. *Mezudath David*).

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Hyun Chul Paul Kim

Ashbea

→ Beth-Ashbea

Ashbel, Ashbelites

Ashbel (MT *ʿĀšbēl*) is a Benjaminite (Gen 46:21 [LXX Ασβηλ]) listed as the second-born (Num 26:38 [LXX Αουβηρ]; 1 Chr 8:1 [LXX Ασβηλ]) and the eponymous ancestor of the Ashbelites (MT *ʿĀšbēlī*). The meaning of the name remains obscure; Noth suggests the Arabic *ʿasbal* “with long upper lip” (227), while Brown derives the name from *ʿšbʿl* “man of Baal,” which, if correct, may help explain the variant genealogy of Benjamin in 1 Chr 7:6, where Jediael appears in Ashbel’s place.

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Jayoung P. Kang

Ashdod

The site of Tel Ashdod is located in the industrial zone south of the modern city of Ashdod, 4.5 km east of the shoreline (map reference 118.129), near of the Nahal Lachish tributaries. Its ancient port was probably located in the nearby Tel Mor or Ashdod Yam. The identification of the tell as biblical Ashdod is quite certain since the Arab village *Isdud* retained the name.

Texts prior to the Old Testament referring to Ashdod include an Ugaritic text mentioning Ashdodites or ‘adaddy in relation to an Ugaritic merchant named *Šukuna*, and these were probably mer-