The Old Testament records that Pharaoh gave to Joseph Aseneth, the daughter of Potiphera, Priest of On, for his wife (Gen 41:45). How could Joseph—the model of chastity, piety, and statesmanship—marry a foreign Hamitic girl, daughter of an idolatrous priest? Jewish theology and lore found many answers to this intriguing question and expanded some into narratives. Joseph and Aseneth, the longest of these stories, is a full-fledged romance by an anonymous author; it is nearly twice as long as Esther, and a little longer than the Gospel of Mark.

Aseneth is a beautiful virgin of eighteen years and the daughter of Pentephres, priest of Heliopolis and Pharaoh's chief counselor. Many princes, including Pharaoh's firstborn son, ask for her hand in marriage. She despises them all and prefers to live in her ornate penthouse above Pentephres' palace, where she worships countless idols. One day Joseph, touring Egypt to collect corn, announces his visit to her father. Pentephres tells Aseneth he is going to give her to Joseph in marriage. She refuses flatly, only to fall in love with Joseph when she sees him entering her father's house in royal attire. Now it is her time to be repudiated. A Jew who worships God and lives on the bread of life will not kiss a heathen woman who eats food offered to idols. Still Joseph is charitable enough to say a prayer for her conversion, then boards his chariot in order to gather more corn, promising to be back a week later. Utterly shaken, Aseneth destroys her idols, engages in a week of fasting and crying, and repents for both her conceit and idolatry. On the morning of the eighth day, the chief of God's angels comes to see her, declares her reborn, tells her that she is to be a mother city for all who would repent like her, feeds her a piece of honeycomb, which he says is the bread of life, and promises her that Joseph will come to marry her. He does; and the wedding ensues, performed and presided over by Pharaoh himself.

Eight years later, Pharaoh's firstborn son happens to see Aseneth by chance and his old infatuation is revived. He fails to persuade Joseph's brothers, Simeon and Levi, to help him kidnap Aseneth and assume power in Egypt by killing Pharaoh and Joseph. He then tries Dan and Gad and achieves more success. He gives them troops; and the three set up an ambush for Aseneth, who is driving to her vineyard. However, Benjamin, who is sitting beside her in the carriage, wounds Pharaoh's son with a stone and kills his escorts. Levi, being a prophet, divines what is going on and comes running with his brothers—Reuben, Simeon, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulon—to slay Dan and Gad's men. These two attempt to kill Aseneth, but miraculously their swords fall from their hands. Aseneth pardons them and intercedes for them with her in-laws. Three days later Pharaoh's son dies, closely followed by his grief-stricken father. Joseph then reigns over Egypt for forty-eight years.

2 As to the name form, see note on 1:3.
Joseph and Aseneth is extant in sixteen Greek manuscripts, falling into at least four groups, and eight versions translated from the Greek, running to a rough total of seventy manuscripts.1 Abbreviations used herein are as follows:

Group a:
1. O = St. Catherine's Monastery, Mount Sinai, MS Greek 504, 10th cent., Joseph and Aseneth is lost except for the title and the first words in the table of contents.
3. P = Monastery of Konstamonitou, Mount Athos, MS 14, 15th cent.
4. Q = Vatican Library, Vatican City, MS Palatinus Graecus 364, 15th cent., many omissions; used by V. M. Istrin, "Apokrif ob Iosif S i Asenef S," Drevnosti (Trudy Slavjanskoj kommissii Imperatorskago moskovskago archeologičeskago obščestva 2; Moscow, 1898) pp. 146–99.
5. C = Bodleian Library, Oxford, MS Baroccio Greek 148, 15th cent.; used by Bat.
6. R = St. Catherine's Monastery, Mount Sinai, MS Greek 530, 15–16th cent., ends in 5:1, maybe a copy of C.

Group b:
7. E = Monastery of Vatopedi, Mount Athos, MS 600, 15th cent., many omissions.
10. W = St. Catherine's Monastery, Mount Sinai, MS Greek 1976, 17th cent., same interpolations as F.

Group c:
11. H = Greek Orthodox Patriarchate, Jerusalem, MS Panhagios Taphos 73, 17th cent., ends in 16:17y with a new ending down to chapter 21:9 added in modern Greek; this ending is published by Chr. Burchard, "Joseph and Aseneth neugriechisch," NTS 24 (1978) 68–84, see 80–83.
13. K = Ibid., MS Saba 593, finished September 1, 1802, ends as H.

Group d:
14. B = Vatican Library, MS Palatinus Graecus 17, 11th cent.; used by Bat, printed by Istrin.
15. D = Bodleian Library, MS Baroccio Greek 147, 15th cent.; used by Bat.

Critical edition of the d text by M. Philonenko, Joseph et Aséneth: Introduction,

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1 For catalogs and other details see Chr. Burchard, Untersuchungen, pp. 2–17; A.-M. Denis, Introduction, pp. 40–48. No papyri and no quotations in Gk. are on record.
Unexplored:
16. University Library, Wrocław (formerly Breslau), Poland, MS Rehdiger 26, 11th cent., lower script of a palimpsest.

Versions:


4. L2 = Latin 2, circa A.D. 1200. We have five manuscripts falling into two very different groups. One group has only one member; it is University Library, Uppsala, MS C 37, beginning of the 13th cent. (= 436). The other group is headed by Monastery Library, Vorau (Austria), MS 136, 13th cent. (= 435). Unpublished.

5. Slav. = Serbian Slavonic, 15th cent.(?). Two manuscripts with minor variants are known. 1) Belgrad, National Library, MS Slav. 29, early 15th cent. (now lost), was printed by S. Novaković, "Srpsko-slovenski zbornik iz vremena despota Stefana Lazarevića," *Starine* 9 (1877) 1–47, see 27–42 (= 551), and used by Br. 2) Novaković’s text was reprinted with the variants from Bucharest, Library of the Academy of the People’s Republic of Rumania, MS Slav. 306, 15th cent. (= 552) by Chr. Burchard, *Joseph und Aseneth serbisch-kirchenslavisch: Text und Varianten* (Dielheimer Blätter zum Alten Testament. Beiheft 2; Dielheim, 1980); see pp. 43–45 for a list of corrections of Philonenko’s presentation of BD).


7. Rum. = Rumanian, 18th cent.(?). Four manuscripts are known. Rum. shares the interpolations of FW. One manuscript was printed in modernized form by C. Bobulescu, *Istoria frumosului Iosif și a prea frumoasei Asineta: După un manuscris din 1753 (Biblioteca pentru popor 15; Bucharest, 1922). A critical edition by V.-I. Leb is in preparation.

8. Eth. = Ethiopian. Lost save for a number of allusions. Eth. may depend upon an equally lost Arabic version.

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4 See below, nn. 108–10.
The textual history of Joseph and Aseneth is not yet fully understood.  

(1) The book is an author’s work, not a folk tale which has no progenitor. There was an original text. We may be reasonably certain that all textual witnesses known to date go back to a common archetype, which must be older than c. A.D. 500.  

(2) We know that the Greek manuscripts fall into at least four groups, a, b, c, d, that Slav. sides with d, and that the other versions align with b. For ancient translations, Arm. and L2 are full and reliable versions. However, for example, the relationship of 436 and 435& within L2 needs examination. Syr. would make a fair witness, too, were it not for a tendency toward loose or double translation, some abbreviation from the middle of chapter 24 on, and the loss of nearly three chapters. L1, a mere epitome from chapter 25 onward, is guilty of many omissions before that, even more so the Slav. When extant, Slav. is fairly accurate, however. Ngr. is little more than a paraphrase with long stretches of text left out altogether, while others are much inflated. Rum. is a severe condensation. All Greek groups and the versions need closer inspection as to their Vorlage. The miniatures of G, 671, and 661 7 may be of some help here because they reflect a state of textual development, all within the b group, which is older than the manuscripts in which they occur.  

(3) We also know that a is a revision, no later than the tenth century, which meant to improve the biblicized Greek of the text but did not impinge on its substance and order save for a few omissions. Greek manuscript group c, as far as it goes, is an independent and less thorough revision, probably late medieval or early modern, of a text which was closer to b than to the ancestors of a or d.  

(4) Difficulties start with d. It is one third shorter than a. Philonenko feels that d represents the oldest attainable text of Joseph and Aseneth; it was expanded into b, which was revised into c, which in turn was finally revised into a. However, many gaps in d are obvious omissions (see e.g. 19:4; 21:2; 27:10), and many readings are inferior to those in a, b, c. Manuscript group a is also generally closer to d than to b or c, which are supposed to stand between them, and there is nothing to suggest that c, purported father of a, ever existed beyond 16:17a. So d is more likely to be an epitome, no later than the eleventh century, of a fuller text, which was close to the unrevised archetype of a. Abridgment is a natural thing to happen to a text transmitted in writing as any individual manuscript of Joseph and Aseneth will readily demonstrate, and it tends to affect the last chapters, or the last verses of a subsection, more than the first, which is exactly what occurs in d.  

(5) The main problem is b. This group includes four very recent Greek manuscripts and seven versions, all very different in both wording and length, most of them marred by a host of individual shortcomings. How does b, or its parts, relate to the other groups?  

At any rate, the b group houses our oldest witnesses (Arm. Syr.) 9 and is the largest and most widely distributed group; readings offered, or supported, by it (versions included) are very often superior to their competitors on internal grounds. This includes a number of passages preserved by b alone such as 21:10–21.  

(6) It seems possible to reconstruct the archetype of the textual tradition with a fair degree of certainty. 10 Often the witnesses agree literally or to a degree that the general run of the text is unmistakable even if the wording is not. Such passages occur over the whole length of the book, forming a sort of grid which has kept the original outline from becoming indiscernible.

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6 That JosAsen is coupled with a Life of Joseph in all groups of text but c (see below) seems to corroborate the basic unity of the tradition.  


8 In some cases of split tradition b appears to have preserved one part of a clause and a, d, or c the other (see 2:3; 12:2; 16:14; 18:2, 11; 21:9; 22:9, 13; 24:3; 24:17; 25:4, 6). This would suggest that b is indeed a family of its own, with an ancestor which stands at some distance from the original.  

9 The Passion of St. Irene, which depends on JosAsen (see below) also seems to testify to the age of b. The text which it presupposes certainly is neither a nor d (see 15:7).  

10 Contrast the opinion of Philonenko, *Joseph et Asénethe*, pp. 22f. Nevertheless, for all practical purposes Philonenko regards d as the original text.
A new edition of the Greek text is needed; the existing editions of the Greek text, as well as the modern translations, rely on either a or d and leave b, c, and most of the versions practically unmined. A major edition will have to wait until all evidence has been explored fully. A preliminary new text has been established for the present translation and for the German version. The new text is based on fresh collations of all Greek and modern Greek manuscripts (except the Breslau palimpsest) by D. Sänger, and of all Latin manuscripts by H. Krüger. It is also based on Syr. (as edited by Brooks), on Arm. chapters 1–24 (as printed by Yovsép’eanč, supplemented by a collation of 332), on Arm. chapters 25–29 (as edited by Burchard), on Slav. (as printed by Novaković), on Ngr. (671) (as printed by Istrin and corrected by Burchard), and on Rum. (as printed by Bobulescu). The textual history of Joseph and Aseneth as it is known to date would seem to suggest that an eclectic text with a strong leaning toward b is in order. The preliminary text follows b unless a variant reading definitely proves superior. This is generally assumed when a, c, or d have a fuller text than b, unless there is evidence to the contrary. If there is a disagreement among the manuscripts and versions of b, the variant that has more outside support is usually preferred. In a few cases we must rely on conjecture (e.g. in 12:8). The text thus constituted may look more b-like than a final one will. Still it has the advantage of presenting Joseph and Aseneth very close to the form, or type of forms, in which the book was most widely read, and of being, it is hoped, much closer to the original than any other text published so far. A minor edition with a representative critical apparatus is in preparation.

Original language

Most scholars have agreed that Joseph and Aseneth was composed in Greek. The only one to argue at some length against this view was P. Riessler. To him a and d represented two independent translations from the Hebrew. Textual history as reviewed above rules out a double translation; the language all but precludes a single one. Riessler advanced some evidence for mistranslation, but it is inconclusive (see 4:2; 15:7; 16:13). The balance of his argument goes to show biblicized Greek; but it is better to assign this to the stylistic effort of a Greek author (see below). Moreover, a translator would have had little occasion to use words like “all-beautiful” (13:14), “child-loving” (12:8), “immortality,” “incorruptibility” (e.g. 8:5), “(things) being and appearing” or “non-appearing and non-being” (12:2), “incorruptible” (12:15), “sweet (father)” (of God, 12:14f.), “transient” (12:15), “unutterable” (14:2), turns like “it is not fitting” (e.g. 8:5), “in a tyrannical fashion” (23:6), clusters of adjectival attributes (e.g. 10:10), or the passive with “by.” If based on a Semitic original, Joseph and Aseneth would be a reworking, not a translation. Yet no one has so far produced a shred of evidence that Joseph and Aseneth was at all known in ancient Hebrew or Aramaic literature. So the book belongs to what is commonly called “hellenistic Jewish literature” as distinct from Palestinian and Babylonian, although the latter branches are hardly less hellenistic, if often in a different way. Numerous contacts with the literature of the Western diaspora and early Christianity readily bear this out.

Literary character

Title

Ancient custom suggests that Joseph and Aseneth had a title, probably given in full at the end and prefixed in a possibly shorter form at the opening, but none that have come down to us seem to represent it (see before 1:1). It may have been something like “Aseneth,”

11 Burchard, Joseph und Aseneth (JSCHRZ 2.4; Gütersloh, 1983).
conceivably with a term denoting genre before and a word of identification after it, or perhaps "Joseph and Aseneth" as we call the book today. The author's name may or may not have gone with it, but none is preserved.

**Structure**

Joseph and Aseneth falls into two parts, which could almost stand by themselves. Part I (chs. 1–21) is suspended between two allusions to the Story of Joseph (Gen 37–50). Chapter 1:1 echoes Genesis 41:46 to tell that Pharaoh sent Joseph around Egypt to gather up the corn of the seven years of plenty, followed in 1:2 by a remark about Joseph's arrival in Heliopolis. Chapter 21:9 notes the birth of Ephraim and Manasseh in accordance with Genesis 41:50–52. The narrative proper opens with an exposition in 1:3–2:12; it corresponds to the page announcing the cast of characters and the scene of action that we usually see prefixed today to a play or detective story. Part I is rounded off by a hymn in 21:10–21 in which Aseneth recounts what happened to her. This consists of a combination of two different plots: the love story engaging Aseneth and Joseph, in chapters 3–9 and 19–21, and the conversion story, which involves Aseneth and the heavenly man in chapters 10–18, overlapping the love theme in 8f. and 19. Aseneth is the main figure, being almost uninterruptedly on the scene. But she is not in control. Pentephres launches the action, then he loses out gradually, first to the heavenly man and then to Pharaoh, the transitions being operated by Joseph. Otherwise the latter is a passive figure who has his marriage more or less wished upon him. During his bride's cumbersome conversion he is absent collecting grain. Part II (chs. 22–29) opens in 22:1f. with a summary of Genesis 41:53f. and 45:26–46:7; 47:27: Jacob and his kin come to Egypt and settle in Goshen. Joseph and Aseneth go to visit them (ch. 22 is an exposition). What follows is a tale of both abdution and revolution, or attempts to that effect, not simply a case of kidnap. Not incongruously, it ends with a reference to Joseph's rule over Egypt for forty-eight years. The scheme involves Pharaoh's son aided and abetted by Dan and Gad on the one hand, and Levi, Simeon, and Benjamin on the other. Aseneth has a part only in chapters 26–28. Joseph barely appears in 26:1–4, his mind again set on corn.

There is action in the story, but it is not fully developed. Potentially colorful narratives such as the wedding feast in chapter 21 or the military entanglements in chapters 26f. are merely stated. Considerable space is devoted to a sketch of Aseneth's tower and garden, to descriptions of people's appearance and emotions and to scenes of Aseneth dressing, where action is just an excuse for description. The rest consists mostly of dialogues, with some monologues, especially in chapters 11–13.

Stripped of the dialogues, the plot is simple enough. It unfolds with legendary straightforwardness bordering on the naïve (note the effects of a headache in 25:1–4). But it is by and large well constructed. Most of the shortcomings may be explained away on the assumption that Joseph and Aseneth is to be read as a companion to Genesis.

**Integrity**

Some scholars have suspected that the hymn of 21:10–21 is a later insertion, and that chapters 22–29 are an addition. The first half of this suspicion is invalidated by form criticism (see 21:10f.), and Part II is so close to I in both style and thought content that it is not likely to have come from a different hand. Lately T. Holtz argued for Christian interpolations. Such interpolations, or other forms of editing, are not intrinsically improbable, but the evidence is not overwhelming.

**Sources**

If source means what the Gospel of Mark is to Matthew, or Pygmalion to My Fair Lady, a source for Joseph and Aseneth, or part of it, direct or indirect, has not yet appeared. More is gained if we amend the question of sources to include subject matter or themes, which the author may have picked up from tradition, oral or written, and worked into a new story, much as West Side Story is based on Romeo and Juliet and both reflect the

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eternal theme of young love thwarted by old convention, or individual happiness shattered by group rivalry. However, much of what has been cited in this context at best furnishes parallels to isolated motifs: the Egyptian Tale of the Doomed Prince, the Greek tradition concerning beautiful Helen of Troy, the Prayer of Joseph, or Jewish legends making Aseneth the daughter of Dinah (Gen 34). Batiffol, Aptomitzer, and Philonenko attach great importance to a Syriac text of very late attestation narrating how an eagle carried Dinah’s daughter to Egypt and cradled her on Potiphar’s altar. This text they think is a later form of an old Jewish legend from which Joseph and Aseneth was developed, albeit with some dissimulation, because a daughter of Dinah could hardly serve as a proto-proselyte. The pertinent passage runs:

And the wife of this priest (Potiphar) took her (the baby) and brought her a nurse. And they rejoiced with great joy, for they had neither a boy nor a girl. And when the little girl grew up, Potiphar had a splendid dwelling constructed where he allowed her to live, and appointed virgins to serve her. And many chiefs’ sons asked (for) her (in marriage), for she was beautiful to look at; but they did not suit her. And when Joseph came before Pharaoh he made him mount his carriage, and gave him the seal of the kingdom. And the Egyptians escorted him in triumph across all of Egypt, and his fame spread in all regions. And he (Pharaoh) gave him the daughter of the priest, Putiphar, for his wife, and he (Joseph) did not repulse [lit. hate] the daughter of Dina, (his) sister.

There seems to be some contact with Joseph and Aseneth here, but as it is restricted to chapters 1ff., surely the dependence is on the legend’s side.

More helpful is hellenistic romance, especially the erotic variety as represented by the Great Five: Chariton’s Chaereas and Calirrhoë, Xenophon of Ephesus’ Ephesiaca, Longus’ Daphnis and Chloë, Achilles Tatius’ Clitophon and Leucippe, and Heliodorus’ Aethiopica; or by Apuleius’ The Golden Ass and Cupid and Psyche. Much like these stories, Joseph and Aseneth relates a love that is achieved with difficulty only to find itself exposed to dangerous adventures to which a happy end is wrought by the hand of a benign Fate (although adventure which makes up the bulk of the novels is represented by just one episode in JosAsen). In particular, as an utterly conceited heroine who is swept off her feet by a handsome male and then thrown into the blackest despair, from which she disentangles herself by self-abasement and supernatural assistance, Aseneth is a worthy companion of Xenophon’s Habrocomes and Anthia or Apuleius’ Psyche. The historian’s touch which is discernible in Joseph and Aseneth, although in the biblical vein rather than the Greek, does not militate against this suggestion. This is characteristic of the hellenistic novel also, especially of Chariton. As to conversion forming part of a romance, apart from the general

18 Philonenko, Joseph et Aséne, pp. 32–43. See PrJos contained herein.
19 Aptomitzer, HUCA 1 (1924) 243–56.
21 They discern traces of the legend, e.g. in 1:5; 22:9; 23:14.
22 A legend of this type may, however, have influenced the much-debated miniature in the Vienna Genesis, fol. 16v (6th cent. a.d.), which would point to its age; cf. M. D. Levin, “Some Jewish Sources for the Vienna Genesis,” Art Bulletin 54 (1972) 241–44.
23 First noted by Philonenko (Joseph et Aséne, pp. 43–48 and passim) whose main interest, however, is to point out parallels to individual motifs. See further Ch. Burchard, Zeuge, pp. 59–86; S. West, The Classical Quarterly, N.S. 24 (1974) 70–81; R. I. Pervo, SBL 1976 Seminar Papers, pp. 171–81. On Gk. romance generally, see K. Kerényi, Die Griechisch-Orientalische Romanliteratur in religionsgeschichtlicher Beleuchtung (Tübingen, 1927; repr. Darmstadt, 1962); Der antike Roman (Libelli 315; Darmstadt, 1962); M. Braun, History and Romance in Graeco-Oriental Literature (Oxford, 1938); S. Trenkner, The Greek novella in the classical period (Cambridge, 1958); R. Merkelbach, Roman und Mysterium in der Antike (Munich, 1962); B. E. Perry, The Ancient Romances (Sather Classical Lectures 37; Berkeley, Calif., 1967); T. Hägg, Narrative Technique in Ancient Greek Romances (Skrifter utgivna av Svenska Institutet i Athen, Series in 8°, 8; Stockholm, 1971).
24 He seems to give himself the air of a contemporary of the events which are way back. One wonders if the author of JosAsen has the same thing in mind.
Joseph and Aseneth

presence of religion, sometimes with an outright propagandistic drive (Heliodorus), there is Apuleius, Book 11 and (in a way) Cupid and Psyche again.

This is not to postulate literary dependence on either side, but there may be independent adaptation of common material. If the Kerényi-Merkelbach school is right, a myth may be at the bottom of this, but further investigation is needed. It should cover the whole range of ancient romance in the wider sense of the term, which also includes such writings as Ahiqar, Judith, 3 Maccabees, Daniel chapters 1–6, certain passages from Josephus, the Life of Alexander, the Life of Aesop, the Pseudo-Clementines, or the apocryphal Acts of the Apostles, and the Greek novella. Two more possible sources (dealt with later) are the Jewish ritual and the allegorical patterns which, according to some, underlie Joseph and Aseneth at certain points.

Another question is whether models may have suggested or influenced, albeit by contrast, the composition of Joseph and Aseneth without contributing much to its narrative content. A writer who had read Ruth, Judith, Tobit, or Esther would perhaps be more inclined to tackle a figure from Israel’s history, especially a woman, than one who had not. Then there is the Story of Joseph, though not an independent book. Joseph and Aseneth may have been inspired, among other things, by a desire to ensure that Joseph’s wife become the heroine of a story that would be similar to that of her husband. The romances are due for further consideration under this heading as well. Most important, however, is a number of Jewish and Christian texts relating to conversion, especially the ones containing “conversion visions” (TJob 2–5; ApAb 1–11; Acts 9:1–19 par. 22:6–16; 26:12–18) and texts like Dan 4; Lk 7:36–50; Mt 16:16–18. They show, despite the differences they may have among each other and with Joseph and Aseneth, that the conversion section, for all that it may owe to the romantic genre, is constructed along the lines of a pattern, current in hellenistic Judaism, as to how a conversion, particularly of a person who was to be a model, ought to be presented.

We are on safer ground when it comes to ascertaining the origin of details. Many of these can be traced back to the Old Testament, to the early Jewish literature, to oral traditions, and to Jewish traditions found in early Christian writings. The general framework, the characters, and many a detail of the story are of course drawn from Genesis, especially the Story of Joseph. The exception is Pharaoh’s son, unless he is modeled upon Shechem, the son of Hamor (Gen 34, but cf. Ex 11:5). The individual features of Jacob and his sons (see e.g. 4:7; 6:4, 6; 22:7, 11) can be paralleled from other intertestamental writings. Pharaoh’s philo-Semitism recalls the kindly views which Daniel or the Letter of Aristaeas have their respective sovereigns take to Judaism. The conversion section, particularly the angel’s visit, has some important points in common with Judges 13 (retold in LAB 42; cf.

23 For a commentary, see J. G. Griffiths, Apuleius of Madauros: The Isis-Book (Études Préliminaires aux Religions Orientales dans l'Empire Romain 39; Leiden, 1975).

24 See nn. 23 and 81; Zeuge, pp. 81–86.


26 Here the question of contrast comes up. Philonenko (Joseph et Asineth, p. 44) thinks that as a “puritan novel” JosAsen is a pigeon among the cats. But Chariton or Xenophon of Ephesus are not very different, and all novels, although not exactly Victorian in their outlook on sexual matters, take a firm stand on female pudicity and conjugal faithfulness. The triumph of chastity over all temptations that are waged against it is one of the main devices to keep the action going. There is, however, a marked difference between the demure, if not in the least disinterested, attitude although not exactly Victorian in their outlook on sexual matters, take a firm stand on female pudicity and conjugal faithfulness. The triumph of chastity over all temptations that are waged against it is one of the main devices to keep the action going.


29 He remains anonymous, as do all persons (except Joakim of Moab, 1:9) and places in JosAsen which are nameless or not referred to in the Bible. For a different handling cf. TJob and LAB.
also Judg 6:11–24). Benjamin’s bravery is a re-enactment of David slaying Goliath (1Sam 17). The prayers (8:9; 12f.; 17:10; 21:11–21; 27:10), meditations (6:2–8; 11:3–14, 16–18; 17:9), and eulogies (3:3; 8:3; 15:12; 17:6; 19:8; 21:4, 6) could hardly have been composed without knowledge of traditional forms of such devotional texts.  

Whether or not there is a common ancestry for the subject matter, many clichés which are typical, if not exclusive, marks of the hellenistic romance can be found in Joseph and Aseneth. A fine example is 1:3–6, which can be compared with Chariton 1.1.f.:  

Hermocrates, the strategos (chief magistrate) of the Syracusans, the one who defeated the Athenians, had a daughter by the name of Callirhoe, a wonderful specimen of a virgin and the delight of all Sicily. For her beauty was not human but divine, not that of a Nereid or a nymph of the mountains, but of the Virgin Aphrodite herself. The fame of the incredible spectacle penetrated everywhere, and suitors flocked into Syracuse, princes and sons of tyrants, not only from Sicily, but also from Italy and the mainland (or Epirus) and the (non-Greek) nations on the mainland.

A second example, which can be compared to 18:9, is Achilles Tatius 1.4.3: Leucippe’s “mouth was a flower of roses, when the rose begins to open the leaves’ lips.”  

A problem which must yet be investigated is to what extent the realia—such as architecture, landscape, seasons, products, clothing, and hygiene—reflect what the author saw in his day, and how much the dealings of the characters mirror contemporary events. Obviously this also has some bearing on the questions of date and provenance (see below). The romances exhibit a good deal of anachronistic realism in these matters. As to Joseph and Aseneth, one gathers that the author, whose interest in lively detail is limited anyway, owes more to the biblical narrative and related literature than to an interested knowledge of the world in which he lived.

Language and style

If Aseneth’s looks are like Sarah’s (1:5), so is her tongue. All of Joseph and Aseneth is written in a simple Greek koine with a marked Hebrew and/or Aramaic flavor commonly called “Semitic.” It avoids subordinate clauses and conjunctive or absolute participles (see 19:1 for an exception). Most sentences start with “and,” with the verb immediately following. Particles other than “and” are used very sparingly. Redundant possessive and demonstrative pronouns abound. A noun in the genitive is often used as a substitute for an adjectival attribute (e.g. “bride of God” 4:1; “prison of darkness” 4:10; “bread of life” 8:5; “bait of life” 21:21), and in the nominative for an adjectival complement (“fellowship with her is destruction and corruption” 7:5). There is ample evidence of the cognate accusative, usually carrying an attribute, in lieu of an adverb (lit. “to rejoice a great joy” 3:3; “to fear a great fear” 6:1; “to tremble a heavy trembling” 10:1; “to name the name of God” 11:15; “to insult an insult” 23:14; “to pain a pain” 25:3), and of related uses of the associative or instrumental dative (lit. “to weep with great and bitter weeping” 9:2; “to sigh with great sighing” 10:3; “to die with death” 21:8; “to wound with a heavy wound” 27:2). The Greek words prosōpon, “face,” and cheir, “hand,” are employed to form composite prepositions (e.g. 5:2; 27:7). Most of these phenomena, as well as the author’s vocabulary and phraseology generally, can be paralleled from the Septuagint. The author, however, is not simply imitating the Old Testament or some other concrete model. Imitation is at times quite obvious (e.g. at 12:7; 15:7; 17:8; 20:5; 22:7; 27:1–5; 29:2), although literal quotations are few (cf. TJob for contrast). However, basically the same

34 A slight Persian touch is also characteristic. Cf. the satraps in e.g. 1:3, and Aseneth’s garments in e.g. 3:6.
36 He could have done so without discrediting himself. Imitation was a virtue rather than a vice in some areas of ancient literature. Chariton is leaning heavily on the historical prose of Xenophon of Athens. One would like to know to what extent deviation from our LXX text is because of a different form or forms of text. There is no evidence so far for independent knowledge of MT or another Heb. text form.
type of Greek, though with varying admixtures of Semitisms, is found for instance in the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, the Testament of Job, Luke-Acts, and Hermas. There was a living tradition to write on sacred subjects in a biblicized language.

On the other hand this recognition does not explain everything. Occasionally there is a classical simile (8:5) or turn (21:21; 22:6), a quasi-philosophical touch (12:2 beginning), an unexpected metonymy (20:1), a paronomasia (kakon anti kakou, "evil for evil," e.g. 23:9), parechois (peilos polys, "plenty of mud," 10:16; 13:7, cf. 15:3), or chiasmus (e.g. 11:13). There are also words, with or without Septuagint support, that seem to be rare (apokrybe 6:6; barythymein 10:1; brimema 10:15; charopoios 22:7; deleasisma 21:21; eidolomanes 12:9; hypolampas 14:9; katapetasma 10:2; prodromos or -mon 19:2; 4; sitistas 10:13). This side of the author's vocabulary will have to be given further attention before we can reach a definite conclusion regarding his language as a whole.

The narrative evolves at a leisurely pace with plenty of repetition. It is full of recapitulation ("And there was . . . a spring of abundant living water, and below the spring was a big cistern receiving the water of that spring," 2:12), stereotyped auxiliary verbs and turns ("she hurried and," "he stretched out his hand and," "they prostrated themselves before him, face down to the ground, and"), and mechanical epithets ("Pentephres priest of Heliopolis," "Joseph the Powerful One of God"). The various and sundry scenes of Aseneth getting dressed (3:6; 10:10; 14:14f.; 18:5f.) and emotional outbursts (e.g. 4:9; 6:1; 8:8; 9:1f.; 10:1, 3, 15) show that variety of expression is not a concern of the author. Also he has a leaning toward overemphasis. The overall result is a pompous rigidity of style which is stiff to us, but presumably it was more attractive to the author and his readers.

Genre
We can only speculate whether the author intended to write a piece of fiction or a work of history; but we can see the result: a romance in the wider sense of the word.38 Can it be associated with any of the possible subdivisions of this heterogeneous ensemble which "is probably the most formless of all ancient genres?"39 The books of Ruth, Esther, Tobit, and Judith have been put forward as closest literary affinities, with some similarities to Jonah acknowledged.40 These writings form an ill defined group, yet they resemble Joseph and Aseneth in language and religion, and the eminent role both play in life. Female characters dominate, there is marriage, and Jewish-gentile relations are at stake. There is also some similarity in structure (see 12:1; 21:10, 11). But there is more interest in historical shading (Joseph and Aseneth is closer to the Joseph story here), and none of these books makes love's labors a constituent of the plot. This feature, as well as the adventures, is shared by Joseph and Aseneth with the erotic novels.41 But is the element of eroticism and adventure strong enough for Joseph and Aseneth to be considered a specimen of this variety? In Part I love is almost superseded by the conversion theme; in Part II it is barely present. The general background of high treason and fighting is romantic indeed, but the actors are mostly busy discussing what they have in mind or why it must not be done. The naïveté and the lack of historiographical detail, and the brevity of Joseph and Aseneth, distinguish it from the erotic romances. Recently an attempt has been made to sever the Jewish book from them and put it alongside the apocryphal acts, especially Paul and Thecla, as a "religious proselyte romance."42 This attempt seems to emphasize unduly the conversion aspect to the detriment of others; moreover, there is no figure in Joseph and Aseneth resembling an apostle or missionary as portrayed in the Christian Acts. So while this approach has its merits, it does not explain everything. R. I. Pervo43 assumes that, as a specimen of the romantic genre, Joseph and Aseneth is best regarded as a piece of literary syncretism. Pervo

feels that the book updated the older form of the “Sapiental novel” (e.g. Ah, Tob, Dan 1–6) by taking in structural elements and motifs of the erotic variety. He may underestimate the affinities to the literature dealing with conversion, but generally he seems to be on the right track.

Date and provenance

Batiffol introduced Joseph and Aseneth to modern scholarship as a Christian work of the fifth century A.D. from Asia Minor, based on a short Jewish legend of the fourth century. This infelicitous presentation did much to prevent students of the Bible and Judaism from noticing the book. Kautzsch and Charles did not include it. Ironically enough, when a reviewer concluded that Joseph and Aseneth must be a Jewish composition from Jesus’ time or even earlier, Batiffol all but agreed. Every competent scholar has since affirmed that Joseph and Aseneth is Jewish, with perhaps some Christian interpolations; none has put the book much after A.D. 200, and some have placed it as early as the second century B.C. As to the place of origin, the majority of scholars look to Egypt. Those in favor of a Semitic original suggest Palestine; and there is a plea for Syria. However, the date and provenance have never been thoroughly examined.

What we can say with certainty may be summarized in the following way. The book itself is probably first attested toward the end of the fourth century A.D. Peter the Deacon of Monte Cassino writes in his book On the Holy Places (shortly before A.D. 1137), in a passage which he probably culled from the lost beginning of the Pilgrimage of Etheria (c. A.D. 382):

Heliopolis is twelve miles from Babylonia (Cairo). In the center of this city is a large piece of ground on which there is the Temple of the Sun, and there is Petefres’ house. Between Petefres’ house and the Temple is Asennec’s house. The inner wall within the city is rather old and made of stone (surrounding, or connecting?) only the Temple with Asennec’s house and Petefres’ house.

Aseneth’s house is known exclusively from Joseph and Aseneth. People at Heliopolis, a tourist center long before the first Christian pilgrim’s progress (see 1:2), seem to have put their finger on the localities described in Joseph and Aseneth, unless the author made use of some local tradition already extant (in which case, however, one would like to find a reference to the famous obelisk or obelisks in the text). But Joseph and Aseneth must be even earlier than this testimony. A book glorifying the mother of the proselytes ought to have been written before Greek-speaking Judaism ceased to make its impact on the ancient world and gave way to Christianity. On the other hand, Joseph and Aseneth presupposes at least some of the Septuagint, and probably all of it. It is hard to decode this into dates, but we are probably safe to say that the book was written between 100 B.C. and Hadrian’s edict against circumcision, which has to do with the Second Jewish War of A.D. 132–135. If Joseph and Aseneth comes from Egypt, the Jewish revolt under Trajan (c. A.D. 115–117) is the latest possible date. It does appear to have originated in Egypt, since Aseneth, and

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46 L. Duchesne, Bulletin critique 10 (1889) 461–66; see 466; Batiffol, review of M. R. James, Apocrypha Anecdota, vol. 2 (T&S 5:1; Cambridge, 1897) in RB 7 (1898) 302–4; see 303.
47 Brooks, Joseph and Asenath, pp. xvii–xviii.
48 For a survey, see Burchard, Untersuchungen, pp. 133–51; Philonenko, Joseph et Asineth, pp. 99–109.
49 Translated from the autograph as printed in Burchard, Untersuchungen, p. 137; somewhat differently, J. Wilkinson, Egeria’s Travels (London, 1971) p. 204.
not another woman such as Ruth or Rahab (Josh 2), is the heroine of the story.

Other suggestions for dating and locating Joseph and Aseneth are mere speculation. Surely no individual incident such as the conversion of Queen Helena of Adiabene, an elderly lady (died c. A.D. 65), was needed to trigger the composition of Joseph and Aseneth.\(^{52}\) That Egypt figures in the book as an independent country ruled by a philo-Semitic dynasty does not prove that the novel was written under the later Ptolemies before the Romans took over.\(^{53}\) The absence of a reference to proselyte baptism is of little avail since we do not know when the custom began.\(^{54}\) Lexical chronology is also of little help. We may note that words like \(\text{anazdopoiein}\) (8:9; 15:5), \(\text{brimema}\) (10:15), \(\text{eidi\l{}omanes}\) (12:9), \(\text{ekliparein}\) (1:7; 15:7), \(\text{hemithanes}\) (27:3), male \(\text{parthenos}\) (4:7; 8:1), \(\text{proskairos}\) (12:15), \(\text{sitistos}\) (10:13), \(\text{sitodotes}\) (25:5), \(\text{sygkleronomos}\) (24:14) are not attested with certainty until the first century B.C. or even later.\(^{55}\) But Greek lexicography is not advanced enough to enable us to be certain when a word first appeared.\(^{55}\)

An Essene\(^{56}\) or Therapeutic\(^{57}\) origin of Joseph and Aseneth is maintained by some scholars; but Aseneth's way of living, her marriage, and happiness thereafter are hardly in keeping with the quasi-monastic rigorism of these groups.

Philonenko suggests a rural milieu outside Alexandria because he thinks Joseph and Aseneth is less intransigent toward paganism than an Alexandrian like Philo.\(^{58}\) Quite possibly the book represents a more popular type of Jewish culture than does Philo, who among all Jewish writers we know is closest to the hellenistic ideal of a well-bred, well-read, and well-to-do gentleman spending his life in the service of both learning and politics. But this does not necessarily imply the countryside. With villages usually adhering more closely to their traditions than the city dwellers, would a rural community have attracted enough proselytes and sympathizers to make writing about it worthwhile? Would it be interested in the finer points of conversion? Would it provide enough of a reading public for Joseph and Aseneth, supposing, as seems likely, that it was to be read privately and by Jews? (See below.) Private reading in antiquity took both education and money. Jews were by and large less illiterate than other populations, and perhaps more willing to buy books, theirs being a book religion. Nevertheless, one must look for the prospective readers of Joseph and Aseneth in the upper brackets of Jewish society, although perhaps not the top level; would Philo have enjoyed it? We know too little about Judaism in and outside Alexandria\(^{59}\) and not yet enough about Joseph and Aseneth to answer these questions.\(^{60}\)

**Theological importance**\(^{61}\)

By design, the theological importance of a religious book is in its message. Beyond this the modern historian will be interested generally in the theological ideas expressed in the book, particularly in those that are less well documented outside it.

**Message**

Barring heavy generalization, the message of Joseph and Aseneth cannot be rendered by a single concept or phrase. A story of such length and complexity usually has several things to say. But they will cohere if it is as well organized as Joseph and Aseneth.

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52 Against Aptowitzter, *HUCA* 1 (1924) 309.
60 There is no compelling reason to assume that our author was an Egyptian proselyte; contrast Philonenko, *Joseph et Aséneth*, p. 106.
61 More information is available in the footnotes to the passages referred to in this section.
JOSEPH AND ASENEH

In Part I attention is focused on what happens to Aseneth. She represents the virgin, who is proud of her virginity, but, eventually chastised by violent passion, must endure hardships before she is gratified. Yet, since the target of her emotions is Joseph, the son of God, her story gradually assumes a religious complexion. Pride becomes a symbol for pagan enmity against God, and passion the sudden desire to be accepted by him aroused by a meeting with a true follower of God. Consequently love’s labors are continued by a period of self-humiliation leading to conversion. The message of Part I, therefore, is about conversion to Judaism: It means fullness of life, whereas paganism brings death and eternal destruction.

Some scholars have found allegory in the story. Philonenko, for example, detects several allegorical patterns in the narrative. First, Aseneth is molded in the image of the Egyptian goddess Neith, whose name she bears (see 1:5), thus insinuating that the deity is giving in to the Most High God and wants her worshipers to follow her example. Second, there is astrology in the book. Joseph and Aseneth impersonate the Sun and the Moon uniting in a holy wedding, thus witnessing to the importance which Judaism, or parts of it, attached to astrology. Third, there is a mythological pattern of gnostic extraction. Aseneth represents the mythic figure of Wisdom fallen into error, and Joseph is the divine Logos, who is coming to rescue her by uniting himself to her.

This method of allegorizing the document is too complicated to warrant acceptance. As to Neith, the appearance of the Lady of Sais seems to have been so variegated, and many of her attributes so unspecific in the author’s day, that very precise parallels would be needed for Aseneth to be her symbol.62 Joseph and Aseneth, like Greek romance generally, seems to make use of motifs that stem from mythical and astrological contexts. But it remains to be shown that the author did so consciously, and, if he did, that he intended Joseph and Aseneth to be more than human figures entangled in the vicissitudes of human love and conversion. Love is a heavenly thing, after all, and so is conversion, to religious people.

To be sure, the affair between Joseph and Aseneth has a deeper meaning. But it is stated by the text; it is not coded in it. Aseneth, who found her way to God, is also an eternal City of Refuge for all (not just women) who repent in like manner (15:7; 16:16; 19:5), with her seven virgins as pillars to support her (17:6). The tradition of Sion, the City of God, also described under the figure of a woman,63 lies behind this concept. Chapter 15:7a may be a direct reference to the prophecy on Sion, Zech 2:15 LXX (cf. e.g. Isa 62:4-12; Jer 50:5; 4Ezra 9f.; Rev 21). Moreover, Aseneth as the City of Refuge parallels Abraham (Isa 51:14f.; LAB 23:4f.), Peter, the rock on whom the church is built (Mt 16:16-18), the “pillar apostles” (Gal 2:9), perhaps also Sarah and Hagar as exegeted by Paul (Gal 4:21-31).64 This is metonymy, not allegory. For Aseneth, as a City of Refuge, does not mean merely that all proselytes will be safeguarded by God like her. Full protection is offered to all who seek shelter “in” her, by becoming naturalized descendants of her by rallying themselves to the Jewish people of whom she is an ancestor. To be “in” Aseneth, however, is not similar to being “in” Christ. Both concepts are comparable in that salvation depends on association with an historical person, but association means different things in each case. Aseneth did not continue to be present as a person. She does not continue to live “in” the proselytes similar to the way “Christ lives in me” (Gal 2:20).65 Only the promises and

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64 Cf. also Jer 1:18; IQH 3.37; Mt 5:14; Eph 2:20; 1Tim 3:15. Burchard, Untersuchungen, pp. 118–21; C. Kähler, “Zur Form- und Traditionsgeschichte von Matth. XVI. 17–19.,” NTS 23 (1977) 36–58. U. Fischer (Eschatologie und Jenseitservartung im hellenistischen Diaspora-judentum [BZNW 44; Berlin, 1978]) pp. 115–23) thinks that Aseneth bears a touch of heavenly Jerusalem, considering that the heavenly rest of the saved is also described as a walled city (see below). The point, however, is not elaborated. At any event, we should not regard the description of Aseneth as a city as the outcome of a process of de-eschatologization.

65 H. Thyen (Studien zur Sündenvergebung im Neuen Testament und seinen alttestamentlichen und jüdischen Voraussetzungen [FRLANT 96; Göttingen, 1970] pp. 126f.) wrongly assumes that Aseneth is transformed into Metanoia as her heavenly counterpart.
qualities with which she was endowed remain available, like the physical and material heritage that is inherited by a particular family.

A woman portrayed in the role elsewhere occupied by men should not come as a surprise. The Sion tradition, at least when taken up directly, paved the way for this portrayal (cf. also Gal 4:21–31). This portrait may also reflect the fact that more women than men became full proselytes, and that a relatively liberal status was accorded to women in some quarters of Jewish Hellenism.

In Part II Joseph’s brothers are in the foreground, and Aseneth has become one of the family. The message seems to be that true Jews will not allow themselves to be talked into hate and subversion; if attacked, they will be protected by both divine assistance and their own gallantry soothed by clemency. Let it be noted that it is not only moral and physical integrity which is at stake here; it is also the leading position of Jews in society. Both aspects are interrelated, as, for example, in the picture of the wise man in the Testament of Levi 13, who is both prudent and influential, “enthroned with kings, as was Joseph my brother” (vs. 9). Much like the plot, the message of Part II is developed rather independently from I, but there are some foreshadowings (perhaps 16:17–22). Between them the two parts add up to a rather well-balanced whole. Part I defines Judaism in contrast to the world; Part II describes Judaism in the world.

Key Ideas

God has two main characteristics in Joseph and Aseneth. He created and sustains the world by his word (8:9; 12:1f.). He is also the loving father of man, assuring the welfare of those who adhere to him and hating those who worship idols; but always he is prepared to receive in mercy those who repent earnestly (11:7–14, 18; 12:8, 13–15). God is not identified as the Lord of history, the author of the Law or morality, or the recipient of the Temple cult. Exodus, the giving of the Law on Mount Sinai, and the institution of the cult, of course, postdate the setting of the narrative. But the author could have found a way to mention these events if he was interested in them, e.g. by prophecy as the Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs.

The world which God created is a three-story structure animated by his “word which is life for all your creatures” (12:1f.) and holds all elements in obedience. Lowest is “the abyss of the water,” sealed by stones, floating on it like leaves, which carry the earth. On top are the heavens founded on a firmament, which rests on the winds. The earth is man’s dwelling place, but (unlike Acts 17:26) the author is not interested in the subdivisions of continents and seasons. The abyss underneath houses “the big sea monster” which Aseneth is afraid may devour her (12:11). The devil is responsible for this (12:9–11), but it is not specified where he resides. In heaven is God, of course, and the hosts of the angels. Two of these are described individually: Aseneth’s heavenly visitor who is their commander in chief (elsewhere named Michael), and his beautiful sister, Repentance (14:8; 15:7f.). In heaven is a “book of the living” that contains the names of the angels and the saved (15:4). In heaven is also God’s Paradise, with many flowers from which bees make honey, the food for the angels and God’s elect; the honey is manna (16:14; cf. 16:7y–23). For the elect a heavenly place of “rest” is prepared (8:9; 15:7; 22:13). More specifically, this place is in the seventh heaven (if the reading is right); it is described as a walled city founded upon rock (22:13).

Man is dependent upon God for continuous sustenance. Yet of all creatures man has the capacity of ignoring his maker by worshiping other gods. Idolatry rather than erroneous philosophy, transgression of the Law, or plain moral depravity is the main earmark of the godless. God will, of course, sustain only those who recognize him. The Jews alone do; consequently they are endowed with light, truth, life, and immortality. The rest of mankind thrives in darkness and error, and is practically dead. This dualistic view of mankind is not

67 Here, however, wisdom is achieved by observance of the Law.
explained in terms of man’s past, let alone primal developments as can be expressed only in a myth. The pairs of opposites, darkness and light, error and truth, death and life—for all that they may designate in other texts—do not in Joseph and Aseneth denote a dualism of spheres, eons, or opposite reigns of God and Satan; they denote two ways of life. Adherence is by birth, but it may be altered by choice. So there is no doctrine of the Fall or of any redemptive activity of God in history. To know God has always been feasible; unlike Romans 1:18–23, it is not a chance passed over. It is not naturally accomplished, of course; it is a divine gift, which is available to each to whom would seek it. To be sure, Joseph and Aseneth talks about sin (7:4; 11:10f.; 18; 12:5; 15; 13:13; 21:11–21; 23:11) and election (8:9; 16:14; 17:6; cf. 8:11; 21:4). But election is not predestination; it certainly does not obliterate one’s personal responsibility. Sin does not mean a supernatural agent holding humanity in his or her grip, corrupting everyone in the very core of existence (as Paul sees it); sin is the result of personal failure, often ushered in by “ignorance” (6:7; 12:5; 13:13). According to Joseph and Aseneth, sinful acts amount to non-allegiance to God and hostility against his followers.

Divine life is not mediated to man through the Law, through special revelation or mystical experience, or through proclamations loaded with spirit and grounded in a “saving event” (as with Paul); it is obtained through the right use of food, ointment, and by the avoidance of the pagan way of partaking of them. This is the meaning of the much-debated so-called meal formula (8:5; cf. 8:9; 15:5; 16:16; 19:5; 21:13f.; 21). It is difficult to discern the precise meaning of the “blessed bread, cup, and ointment” (see 8:5). Perhaps the expression refers merely to the ordinary Jewish diet; possibly it may refer to some ritual practice such as a cultic meal; some even regard it as a Christian interpolation. At any event, “bread, cup, and ointment,” as enjoyed by Jews, provide life, immortality, and incorruption. That is because the Jewish food is equivalent to the manna from heaven (see above), probably by virtue of “blessing,” i.e. grace said at meals.

So Jews live in close relationship with God, and with angels whose food they share; but they remain apart from non-Jews, with whom they may coexist but must not mingle: no table-fellowship with pagans, no physical intimacy with a pagan woman (chs. 7f.). Relationship with God implies that Jews enjoy all the privileges that come with divine childhood, leading some sort of angelic existence. Practically, as the example of Aseneth shows, that means fullness of life, supernatural beauty, wisdom, comfortable living, and divine protection. These things are embodied in an exemplary, if not exclusive, fashion, in the Patriarchs generally, with particular emphasis, besides Aseneth, on Joseph (4:7; 6:4–6 and passim), Jacob (22:7), and Levi (22:13; 23:8–17; 26:6; 27:6; 28:15–17; 29:3–6). A special mark is the gift of prophecy which Levi has (22:13; 23:8; 26:6). It assures supernatural insight into things divine, such as a person’s heavenly rest, and the ability to read others’ minds (cf. Lk 7:39) and recognize what is going on from a distance rather than to foretell the future. A similar thing is the “inner light” which gives supernatural eyesight to Joseph (6:6).

Such qualities would seem to account for the epithet of “son of God” accorded to Joseph, which is invariably in other people’s mouths, never in the narrative (6:3, 5; 13:13; “his firstborn son” 18:11; 21:4; “like the firstborn son” 23:10). This title has been taken as evidence of Joseph being a figure of the Redeemer. But “sons of God” seems to be used elsewhere as a designation of the saved in general (16:14; 19:8). Aseneth is called “a daughter of the Most High” in a passage where her prototypical role is not at stake (21:4), and Jacob (who does not cease to be Joseph’s father) is designated “a friend of the Most High God” (23:10). So “son of God” assigns to Joseph a peer’s rank; he is superior even to Pharaoh’s firstborn, and that may be all it means. But if the Wisdom of Solomon 2–5,

70 This applies also when the sin of a Jew is envisaged (7:4; 23:11, only occurrence of the root hamart- in Part II).
72 It is highly doubtful whether such features warrant the conclusion that “the highest religious value of the group (sc. that is back of Joseph and Aseneth) seems to have been personal, revelatory experience” (H. C. Kee, “The Socio-Religious Setting and Aims of ‘Joseph and Asenath,’” SBL 1976 Seminar Papers, pp. 183–92; see p. 188).
73 Burchard, Untersuchungen, pp. 115–17.
especially 5, is analogical, "son of God" may also mean that Joseph is an example of the just man in whom God can be recognized.74

Fullness of life does not include living together with other people in a community. The services, festivals, and ordinances (unless 8:5 points to a communal meal) of the synagogue play no role in the author's thought, although he must have been aware of their existence and does not criticize them.

It follows from the above discussion that salvation is a "necessity" appropriate only for non-Jews. It did not have to be wrought by a redeemer (let alone a dying one like Christ); and its conditions were not disclosed at some specific time in history by a special envoy of God, such as the Teacher of Righteousness. That Aseneth is cast in the part of proto-proselyte does not mean that salvation had then been instituted. The publication of Joseph and Aseneth was not intended to announce salvation; it is not a gospel. The chance to be saved has always been present, predicated on God's habitual mercy for penitent polytheists, man's capacity to avail himself of it, and the presence of Judaism in the world.

There is no hint in Joseph and Aseneth that Jewish missionaries or zealous individuals spread the good news of salvation and called for conversion. Joseph does surprisingly little for Aseneth.75 He prays for her conversion, and then leaves. This act is enough for the girl to smash her idols and start castigating herself; but for positive guidance she depends upon what she "heard" about the mercy of the God of the Hebrews (11:10),76 hardly from missionary sermons. Finally she is accepted without further human interference, a fact which is gladly welcomed by Joseph. Surely this is a pattern which conversion often followed.77

Materially, conversion78 is described as the passage from darkness to light, from error to truth, from death to life, in analogy to creation (8:9; 12:1f.; 15:12; 27:10); it is not from sin to righteousness or forgiveness. Forgiveness is hoped and asked for (11:18; 13:13), but nobody tells Aseneth that her sins have been forgiven. Obviously, she has overcome them by spurning her idols, giving away her valuables, and castigating herself for seven days. Conversion is also called re-creation (8:9; 15:5; cf. 16:16; 18:9)79 with no implication of a fall from which one has to be lifted up again nor of dying and rising as professed, for example, by Paul or perhaps, in a very different perspective, by Apuleius.80 Re-creation is the promotion from the deficient, nothing-but-human state naturally possessed by the heathen to the angelic status naturally possessed by the Jews. This has little, if any, moral implications and consequences. There is no word about future obligations, not even religious ones such as daily prayer, or of a new stimulus implanted in the re-created. Ethics are important to the author (see below). But what Judaism offers over non-Jewish existence is privilege, not


75 Apparently less than for Potiphar's wife according to TJos 4:4.


79 Some have sensed an element of "realized eschatology" at this point and others (cf. also n. 64). For this term to be applied properly, the concept of re-creation would have to have been transposed from a context of future eschatology into the present. Paul has done so (e.g. in 2Cor 5:17) but it may be doubted whether the author of JosAsen did the same.

80 R. C. Tannehill, Dying and Rising with Christ (BZNW 32; Berlin, 1967); Griffiths, Isis-Book, pp. 296–301.
obligation. Incidentally, Aseneth’s motivation, which is plainly egotistical, at least in the beginning, is not frowned upon.

Philonenko suggested that the conversion section of Joseph and Aseneth, or part of it, is shaped after some pertinent ritual or rituals, possibly an initiation liturgy designed to present Judaism as a form of mystery religion. The parallels to Lucius’ initiation and his retransformation from donkey to human being (in Apuleius, *Golden Ass*, 11) might seem to be *prima facie* evidence for this view. However, such a ritual would have to be reconstructed from the very text which it is called upon to elucidate. The methodological problem involved is how to translate literary developments back into liturgical procedure, and that is a formidable problem. If there is mystery religion in Joseph and Aseneth, moreover, we ought to be prepared for a measure of deliberate mystification (Apuleius, *Golden Ass*, 11.23.6). Doubtless there were no angels visiting, no bees rising from miraculous honeycombs, and no fiery chariots ascending into heaven. If these features represent some ritual, what could it be? If they are fictional, why not the rest of chapters 14–18 as well?

Ritual, however, or at least accepted custom, nevertheless, may be reflected in Joseph and Aseneth. Entry into Judaism may well have been performed by a period of fasting, praying, meditating, washing, a symbolical changing of clothes (and perhaps of name), and celebrating a festive meal. But corroborative evidence is needed before we can be certain. It is significant that neither circumcision nor proselyte baptism (supposing that it existed already in the author’s day) is mentioned. Since religion in Joseph and Aseneth appears to be private and personal, perhaps we should look more to the area of private custom than to synagogue life for a better understanding of its conception of conversion.

*Ethics* is an important concern of the author, although it is not preparatory to, instrumental in, or a consequence of salvation. He gives, or reports, a number of important rules, beginning with the following: “It does not befit a man who worships God” (on this attribute, see 4:7) to kiss a heathen woman (8:5), to sleep with his fiancée prior to the wedding (21:1), to render evil for evil (23:9; 29:3; cf. 28.5, 14), to injure anyone of his own free will or aid an injurer (23:12), or to crush a fallen enemy to death (29:3). The last three points are the main lesson of Part II. Other standards are less formally stated, such as a general warning against foreign women (7:5) attributed to Jacob, or expressed in the adjectives used to characterize persons like Joseph, who is “a man who worships God, and self-controlled, and a virgin” (4:7) and “meek and merciful and God-fearing” (8:8). More virtues are exemplified by action. Joseph does not eat with non-Jews (7:1) and is concerned with social welfare (4:7; 25:5; 26:3). There is a hint at charity in Aseneth’s repentance (ch. 10) and a display of magnanimity in her treatment of Dan and Gad (ch. 28). Individual bravery is represented by Benjamin (27:1–5) and Joseph’s good brothers (26:6; 27:6). Levi is the incarnation of the man who does not render evil for evil (23:6–17; 28:15–17): His attempt to save the life of Pharaoh’s son (29:3–5) is reminiscent of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10:30–35), even if it is far from disinterested. However, such meekness seems to be in order only toward equals; hostile soldiers are dispatched in large quantities without further ado (27:4–6).

We ought not be surprised, perhaps, that the more popular social virtues—such as almsgiving, hospitality, visiting the sick, or burying the dead—are not evidenced in Joseph and Aseneth, as they are, for example, in Tobit, the Testament of Job, and such sketches of the ideal Jew as the “good man” of TBenj 4. Doubtless they are not absent from the author’s moral code. If he does not mention them, it is because he lets himself be guided by what his story requires, and the story is one of upper-class people (see 3:5) living comfortable lives among their like in a divided society and experiencing upper-class adventures. This observation, however, is noteworthy by itself. The criticism leveled against the rich and mighty, the fundamental concern for the underprivileged, the hope for a just

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world in history or beyond, which characterizes other strands of Jewish tradition and much of early Christianity, is entirely absent from Joseph and Aseneth. Social change is of no concern to the author.

Joseph and Aseneth has no qualms about the practicability of its moral standards. The good characters naturally live up to them, although they may first have to calm their tempers (23:7–9; 28:12–14). The evil characters do not, but experience and tolerance on the part of the good ones teach them.

High morals are not an exclusively Jewish mark. Doubtless, rules that befit one who worships God are best kept by such men, but Joseph and Aseneth does not intimate that Pentephres or Pharaoh fall short of them, whereas some Jews do, at least temporarily. And virginity, for all the symbolic overtones it may carry, had made Aseneth Joseph’s sister long before they first met (7:7–8:1).

We learn little about the source of these ethics. The interdiction against foreign women is traced back to Jacob (7:5), but he is hardly viewed as its author. Morals as befitting God-worshiping men seem to come with the worship of God without further notice.

Eschatology is a matter of individual afterlife in heaven (8:9; 15:7f.; 22:13). Joseph and Aseneth does not envisage an end of the world, let alone one of the type known as “apocalyptic,” with wars raging, stars falling from the sky, a general resurrection, and last judgment, after which the godly live happily in heaven or on a new earth and the wicked go to hell. In Joseph and Aseneth only individual lives come to their natural end followed by heavenly “rest” seemingly without delay (cf. Lk 23:43), if they are animated by the supernatural vitality provided to Jews. They perhaps come to nothing if they are not (but cf. 12:11). Little is said about how a person exists in heaven. The close association of the Jews with the angels suggests some sort of angelic existence (cf. Lk 20:36). This implies that in heaven persons are not mere souls (27:10 notwithstanding) but have a body (cf. 16:16; 18:9). However, we are not told whether the new existence will be acquired by transformation, resurrection, or new creation.

If, by way of conclusion, we ask what Judaism as depicted in Joseph and Aseneth is like, it is easier to say what it is not. It is not like Pharisaism, turning the Law into guidelines for personal piety and minutely regulating the chores of daily life. It is not like Sadduceeism, upholding the Law solely as the Magna Charta of the Temple of Jerusalem and the community gathering around it. It is not like Essenism (or, its diasporic extension, Therapeutism), withdrawing from the world to live in a priestly community by a new interpretation of the Law, revealed in the last days by a teacher sent from God. It is not like Zelotism, attempting to restore a Law-abiding theocracy in Israel by violence and guerrilla tactics. Certainly, the author also was no Philo, trying to show that the Law is the very essence of piety and philanthropy, a storehouse, if interpreted properly, of true philosophical insight barely adumbrated in non-Jewish philosophy and a guide to the union of the soul with God. Certainly the author had no apocalyptic leanings. He may have been an addict of sapiental theology or mysticism or both, elements of which are also alive in Philo in a “philosophized” form. On the whole, Joseph and Aseneth may be more representative of Greek-speaking Judaism than we have previously imagined.

**Purpose**

Joseph and Aseneth removes a rough spot in the Bible and satisfies pious curiosity as to the circumstances of a noted patriarch’s surprise wedding to a non-Jew. Yet the author’s main concern is his message.

Joseph and Aseneth has often been called a missionary tract, a *Missionsschrift*, meaning

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83 This hardly makes them God-fearers; against Aptowitzer, HUCA 1 (1924) 303; Philonenko, Joseph et Aséneth, pp. 51f.
85 But see 12:11; 28:7, 14.
that it was written to promote Jewish mission among non-Jews, or Jews, or both. This is mistaken. Judaism is not depicted as mission-minded in Joseph and Aseneth. Proselytes are welcomed, not sought, and conversion certainly is not an easy affair. Moreover, Joseph and Aseneth is not a beginner's book. The reader is supposed to know Genesis, at least the Joseph story, and to understand allusions to other scriptural passages. Little effort is made to explain Jewish life and customs; the sabbath, circumcision, the interdiction against pork, and standards of levitical purity are not even mentioned. As a specimen of Introducing Judaism, Joseph and Aseneth is remarkably ill-suited. It could, at best, be a book for the advanced pagan reader entreating him to take the final step. But surely he would expect something more tangible than a piece of fiction.

It seems safe to assume that Joseph and Aseneth was composed for Jews, both born and naturalized, including perhaps those "God-fearing" sympathizers who thought and lived Jewish but never crossed the line formally and were seldom pressed to do so. The document reminds not only the Jews of the privileges they have always enjoyed but also the converts of what they, or their forefathers, gained by crossing over to Judaism. Of course, just as in the case of the message, there may be subordinate purposes incidental to the main object. Surely the ethics of the book belong here, especially the interdiction to repay evil by evil and the injunction against non-Jewish women.

**Historical importance**

Joseph and Aseneth greatly enhances our knowledge of Greek-speaking Judaism around the beginning of the present era. Its main importance is in the field of theology, ethics included; but, if handled with prudence, some historical information may also be derived from it. From a literary point of view—like Ezekiel the Tragedian, Philo the Epic Poet, Pseudo-Phocylides, and the Sibylline Oracles—it represents one of the attempts to adapt forms of Greek belles-lettres literature. Perhaps the book will shed some modest light on the history of the Septuagint text. It may also help us understand the growth of the romantic genre. As a Greek Jewish writing, Joseph and Aseneth is part of the background of early Christianity and its literature. A significant number of Christians were recruited from the synagogue, and many elements of New Testament theology and ethics, church management and administration of charity were taken over or adapted from Jewish sources. New Testament parallels to Joseph and Aseneth are certainly not caused by literary influence on either side; these similarities are due to a common Jewish heritage. Naturally Joseph and Aseneth has been used for a fresh interpretation of New Testament passages (e.g. Mt 6:23; 16:16–18; Lk 7:36–50; Jn 6:35, 48; Acts 9:1–19 par.; Rom 4:17; 7:24ff.; 12:17; 1Cor 10:16ff.; 11:24–26 par.; Eph 1:4; 1Th 5:15; Heb 3:7–4:13; 1Pet 3:9; and Rev 14:8ff.). Last but not least, the language of Joseph and Aseneth invites comparison with New Testament Greek.

**Cultural importance**

Joseph and Aseneth is one of the best attested and most widely distributed books included in this collection. The number of copies and versions speaks for itself, especially when we consider that most were made to be read aloud. But its influence extends far beyond this

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87 Perhaps this is not only in the case of JosAsen. Some scholars think that no piece of hellenistic Jewish literature was designed to be read predominantly by non-Jews (e.g. Tcherikover, Eos 48.3 [1957] 169–93).
88 It is presupposed in 9:5; 14:1; cf. 21:8. Both Joseph's and the angel's visits occur on Sundays.
90 A similar problem arises with regard to Acts, and an analogous answer should probably be given.
91 Mixed marriage is thought to be a major, or even the main, issue by Philonenko (Joseph et Asineth, p. 106) and Kee (SBL 1976 Seminar Papers, p. 187).
92 See above, nn. 29, 63, 64, 76, 79, and JosAsen at 4:7, 10; 6:1, 2, 6, 7, 8; 7:1, 4; 8:5, 9; 9:1, 2; 10:2, 11, 13, 16, 17; 11:5, 12; 12:5, 9, 15; 14:1, 6, 9; 15:4ff., 7, 10, 16:14; 19:1, 11; 20:2, 7; 21:8, 16, 21; 23:8, 9; 24:14; 27:3; 29:4, 5.
94 MSS A, B, and O are menologies. See also note before 1:1.
use, as shown by the following remarks, which are by no means exhaustive.\footnote{95} As far as we can see, exegesis and theology took little notice of our romance, unless inclusion in some lists of canonical and apocryphal books is a sign of theological interest.\footnote{96} Joseph and Aseneth was read as a source of inspiration and moral strength, at times for historical information, and indubitably often just for fun.

About the fate of Joseph and Aseneth in Judaism we know nothing, unless the Heliopolis tradition reported by Egeria, supposing that it reflects knowledge of the book, happens to be Jewish. By Egeria’s time, at the latest, Christianity must have appropriated Joseph and Aseneth. The Passion of Irene (5th cent. A.D.? \footnote{97} drew on it, and other saints’ lives show its influence also, probably through Irene.\footnote{98} At some early date Joseph and Aseneth was joined (not merged except perhaps in G) with Pseudo-Ephrem’s Life of Joseph.\footnote{99} The Life of Joseph is coupled with Joseph and Aseneth in CR \footnote{100} (\(= a \)), GFW \footnote{101} \(( = b \)), D \footnote{102} \(( = d \)), and MS Breslau, crossing three of the four Greek groups, and in Arm. and Ngr.\footnote{103} So it must antedate Arm. \((6\text{th}–7\text{th} \text{cent.?}) \). After this, we seem to lose track of Joseph and Aseneth in the Greek church until the tenth century,\footnote{104} the date of MS O. The eleventh century witnessed the appearance of the following: B and perhaps A, the pictorial archetype of the miniature cycles, covering the Life of Joseph and Joseph and Aseneth, in G, 671, and 661,\footnote{105} and the mention by Nikon of Rhoidiou near Antioch, Syria (died after 1088), of Joseph and Aseneth in his \textit{Taktikon}, chapter 13, which is a collection of monks’ rules and letters pertaining to matters of monastic discipline and liturgy. Chapter 13 in the \textit{Taktikon} contains a list of apocrypha based on the famous Canon of 60 Books; but it has an additional “Aseneth” after the “Prayer of Joseph.”\footnote{106} By the intermediary of a Slavonic version, which became something of a classic in the Slavonic churches, the \textit{Taktikon} influenced some old Russian canon lists.\footnote{107} This apparent popularity of Joseph and Aseneth in the eleventh century may have contributed to the translation of L1 and L2 in the West (before A.D. 1200).

A renewed interest makes itself felt beginning with the fourteenth or fifteenth century; perhaps this is a Renaissance phenomenon. Manuscript group c, the interpolations of FW Rum., the peculiar text of G, and Ngr. were probably produced early in this period, which also saw the translation of Slav. and, somewhat later, Rum. Also, Ngr. 1:6 preserves a quotation of uncertain origin and date which seems to reflect our book: ‘‘That is why some poet said in praise of her [i.e. Aseneth], ‘By beauty the sun surpasses the stars, but Aseneth’” (microfilm courtesy of the Library of Congress).

\footnote{95} The vast bulk of Jewish, Christian, and Islamic Joseph literature may hold traces of JosAsen that have gone unheeded so far; for the time being cf. n. 1 and A. von Weilen, \textit{Der ägyptische Joseph im Drama des XVI. Jahrhunderts} (Wien, 1887); H. Näf, \textit{Syrische Josef-Gedichte: Mit Uebersetzung des Gedichts von Narsai und Proben aus Balai und Jaqob von Sarug} (Phil. diss., Zürich; Zürich, 1923); H. Priebsch, \textit{Die Josephsgeschichte in der Weltiliteratur} (Breslau, 1937); H. A. Brongers, \textit{De Jozefsgeschiedenis bij Joden, Christenen en Mohammedanen} (Wageningen, 1962); M. Derpmann, \textit{Die Josephsgeschichte. Auffassung und Darstellung im Mittelalter} (Beihete zum “mittel lateinischen Jahrbuch” 13; Ratingen—Kastellaun—Düsseldorf, 1974); and SCS 5. A matter calling for further inquiry is the purported influence of Joseph and Aseneth on Yussuf and Zuleikha, an Islamic adaptation of Joseph’s adventure with Potiphar’s wife treated repeatedly by authors in various languages, most notably by the famous Persian poets, Firdusi (c. A.D. 940–1020) and Djami (A.D. 1483); see Philonenko, \textit{Joseph et Aséne}, pp. 117–23.


\footnote{98} Or is it genuine (cf. Näf, \textit{Josef-Gedichte}, pp. 10f.?)?


\footnote{100} There are only a few possible exceptions. An anonymous chronicle of the late 9th cent. affirms that ‘‘Joseph ruled over the Egyptian (land) for eighty years, beginning in the first year of plenty which was Joseph’s thirty-second year, in which he is reported [cf. JosAsen 1:2; 3:1 against Gen 41:50] to have married Aseneth, daughter of Pentephres, priest of Heliopolis. This (man) was Osiris’ priest. Osiris the Egyptians call the sun, just like the Greeks call him [the sun] Apollon’’ (J. A. Cramer, \textit{Anecdota Graeca e codd. manuscriptis Bibliothecae Regiae Parisiensis} [Oxford, 1839] vol. 2, p. 175). Then there is the date of a and d. Both seem, perhaps, to be older than c. A.D. 1000.

\footnote{101} Thus Vikan (SBL 1976 Seminar Papers, pp. 196–98) against the earlier suggestion by Pichl and Picht (\textit{Cahiers Archéologiques} 7 [1924] 35–49) argues that the archetype of the G miniatures originated in the 6th cent. in Syria in the neighborhood of the Vienna Genesis.

\footnote{102} See the only extant MS: St. Catherine, Mt. Sinai, MS Greek 441, f. 98\textsuperscript{a}, unpublished (microfilm courtesy of the Library of Congress).

\footnote{103} Which may not therefore be cited as witnesses to the existence of JosAsen Slav.
the girls under [or ‘the rays of?’] the sun.’”

Joseph and Aseneth was copied in Greek so late as A.D. 1802.

Turning to the oriental churches, we find traces of Joseph and Aseneth in Syriac, Armenian, and Ethiopic. In Syriac, in addition to Pseudo-Zacharias and the legend quoted above, there is an entry, “The Book of Asyath, wife of Joseph the Just, son of Jacob,” between the works of Josephus and Tobit in a canon list by the noted theologian Ebed Yeshu, which should be dated shortly before A.D. 1300.105

The area in which Joseph and Aseneth was most successful in the East is the Armenian church. It first appears under the title of “Aseneth’s Prayer” in an “Order of the Holy Scriptures”—ascribed to John Sarkavag (“the Deacon”) of Haghbat (A.D. 1045/55–1129)106—a book list with indications of length, including the New Testament and Old Testament, each with apocrypha, and a number of philosophical and theological books. It was intended as a key to theological education, and possibly as a guide to a model theological library. Since it says in the superscription that the books “were verified” (stugabanecan) by John (which may denote text-critical and editorial activity, a thing for which he was reputed), we may assume that John had a copy of the Armenian Joseph and Aseneth before him. Anyway, it was after this “Order” that the monumental codex of Erevan 1500 (332), one of the most important Armenian manuscripts ever written, was executed in A.D. 1282–83. The “Order” may also have contributed to the fact that Armenian Bibles, which are traditionally interspersed with apocrypha, though not with canonical honors, often feature Joseph and Aseneth, the oldest specimen being the Erznka Bible of A.D. 1269.107 Of the imprints Joseph and Aseneth left in Ethiopic,108 let us quote two that are not easily accessible. Among the hymns (salamdt) contained in the expanded version of the Ethiopian Synaxarion (which dates from the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century) there are two drawn from Joseph and Aseneth:109

Salutation to Joseph, who was called the similitude
Of the chief of the army of God [cf. 14:8; 21:21].
All my bones sing to this wise man, the bearer of a gem,
The storehouse of his riches, saying,
“O Mary, he is thyself.”

Salutation to 'Asnèt, whose splendor is like the sun,
And like the flower of the red rose, which cometh forth
from its leaves [cf. 18:9].
The bees who feed her ascend on the wings of the wind,
And those who wish to inflict a wound in her
Fall down upon the ground, and perish straightway
[cf. 16:20–22].

In a manuscript of the four gospels from A.D. 1720–45 there is a marginal note in Amharic which reads:110

Asanèt is the wife of Joseph. She is an idolater [cf. 2:3]. When she was yearning for Joseph, she entered into seclusion [hermar] and prayed [cf. chs. 9–13], and an

104 Burchard, NTS 24 (1977) 74. A second quotation inserted into 1:6 does not mention Aseneth.
105 Burchard, Untersuchungen, p. 25.
106 Ibid., pp. 32–34. The Order was investigated afresh by M. E. Stone (“Armenian Canon Lists III—The Lists of Mechitar of Ayrivank” (c. 1285 C.E.),” HTR 70 [1977] 289–300). He thinks that the ascription to Sarkavag is sound, but we must not assume for sure that all books listed were extant in Armenian in his day.
107 Armenian Patriarchate, Jerusalem, MS 1925. JosAsen was occasionally illustrated by vignettes showing both persons; for a specimen see M. E. Stone, “Bible, Translations, Armenian,” EncyJud, vol. 4, cols. 861f.; see col. 862.
108 Burchard, Untersuchungen, pp. 39–41. Add the marginal note adduced presently. For a more recent discussion see Select Bibliography.
angel breathed on her mouth [cf. 16:8-11]. After that, a white bee [cf. 16:18] made white honey in her mouth [cf. 16:19], and when she ate it [cf. 16:15], she was purified of her idolatry. So he gave her Joseph [cf. 15:6], and she gave birth to Ephraim and Manasseh [cf. 21:9].

In Europe, L1 had an influence which surpasses even that of Arm. in the East.111 An epitome is extant in three fifteenth-century manuscripts, probably from the continent.112 A Middle English verse translation is preserved in a fifteenth-century manuscript also containing some poetry of John Lydgate (c. 1370-c. 1451) and a Latin treatise by Hoccleve, both in a different hand.113 After line 265, Joseph and Aseneth 8:7–9:4 are lacking. There is a break in the verse pattern, not in the manuscript. So it is not the autograph. The author seems to have lived "not far from Warwickshire, and not long after the death of Chaucer" (A.D. 1400),114 hardly John Lydgate himself. But he is the only English writer of his time, and perhaps the only one of some reputation at all, to remember Aseneth in his poem To Mary the Queene of Heaven,115 fifth stanza (II. 33–40):

O busshe vnbrent, shewed to Moyses,
Judith the secou/nde, pat saued al Israel,
Assenek of Egipt, of beute pereless,
Souereyn Sara of refut cheeff Rachel,
From our Sauacioun salued bi Gabriel,
Reclinatorye throne of kyng Salamoun,
Fro thy seruantes al mescheeff do repelle,
To thy .v. Joies that haue deuocioun.

Lydgate obviously knew Joseph and Aseneth (cf. 1:5), but in which form we cannot be certain.

The man who did most to promote the book was Vincent of Beauvais (c. 1190-c. 1264). He included a condensation of L1, independent of the epitome just mentioned, in his Speculum historiale, 1, 118–24, a world history from creation down to A.D. 1244–53.116 This condensation met with extraordinary success far beyond the wide distribution in Latin, Dutch, French, and German of the Speculum itself.117 It was often separately copied and found its way into numerous other compilations, both handwritten and printed, in Latin, Czech, Dutch, English, French, German, Polish, Russian, and Scandinavian, including Icelandic, down to the eighteenth century.118 In the sixteenth century, Joseph and Aseneth, Part I, was made into a play for Corpus Christi Day.119

In 1670, Philipp von Zesen, the renowned German baroque writer, had his most important novel, Assenat, probably the first one on this subject, printed in Amsterdam.120 He used a

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111 Contrary to a suggestion by Batiffol (Studia Patristica, p. 3), L1 cannot have been produced by the noted Franciscan scholar Robert Grosseteste (before A.D. 1173–1253), who was the author, or rather commissioner, of the Latin T12P (S. H. Thomson, The Writings of Robert Grosseteste: Bishop of Lincoln [Cambridge, 1940] pp. 242f.).
112 Burchard, Untersuchungen, pp. 15, 36.
117 Burchard, Untersuchungen, pp. 41–45.
118 For the influence of this condensation on English, see M. M. Banks, An Alphabet of Tales (Early English Text Society. Original Series 126; London, 1904) vol. 1, pp. 61–64.
119 L. Rouanet, Collection de Autos, Farsas y Coloquios del siglo XVI, i–iv (Bibliotheca Hispanica 5–8; Madrid, 1901). However, the numerous Joseph plays of the 16th cent. take little or no notice of JosAsen.
120 Reprinted with an epilogue by V. Meid (Tübingen, 1967). A Danish version was printed in 1711 and reprinted several times; another one is extant in MS form.
Dutch version of Vincent’s abridgment as one of his sources. Large portions have gone into his text, others are quoted verbatim in the learned footnotes appended to the novel according to a custom of the time. Of the thirty engravings which adorn the volume, several illustrate scenes stemming from Joseph and Aseneth. Zesen apparently thought our romance historical. For this he was reprimanded by his even more famous contemporary J. J. C. Grimmelshausen in his novel _Das wunderbarliche Vogelnest_, Part 1, first published at Montbéliard, France, in 1672. He also insinuates plagiarism. Grimmelshausen had an ax to grind. He had himself published a _Histouri vom Keuschen Joseph in Egypten_, the first of its kind in German, in which he had failed to use Joseph and Aseneth, a fact duly noted by Zesen. Anyway, Grimmelshausen is the first person on record to have voiced doubts as to the historicity of Joseph and Aseneth.

After this period the European reading public gradually lost interest in Joseph and Aseneth. Nineteenth-century scholarship rediscovered it and most of its versions; and owing to two short notes by G. D. Kilpatrick and J. Jeremias in 1952, it has been viewed with growing interest by students of early Judaism and Christianity. But all attempts to revive it as a work of literature seem to be doomed to failure.

By way of appendix, let us note two fields of influence of Joseph and Aseneth that require the hand of the non-theological specialist. The first, and more important one, is iconography. Apart from the miniatures in the manuscripts referred to earlier, Aseneth naturally figures in numerous illustrations of the biblical narrative proper, both in Genesis manuscripts and outside. Influence of Joseph and Aseneth may of course be assumed with certainty only when the pictorial content coincides with the novel against the biblical text. It is less likely when a picture deviates from the Bible without special support in Joseph and Aseneth, as in the case of Jacob blessing the sons of Joseph, which is not narrated in our book. Aseneth is not mentioned in Genesis 48 either, but she is present in many representations of the scene from the fourth century down to Rembrandt’s famous canvas of 1656 (now in Kassel). It remains to be seen whether this, and other Aseneth pictures, have anything to do with Joseph and Aseneth.

Secondly, there is the use of Aseneth as a Christian name, which never seems to have been a very popular one. The name occurs four times in a Greek tax list from after A.D. 716. Armenians have used it since the fifteenth century. Some English occurrences from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries are also known. Since Joseph and Aseneth was so widely distributed in Armenian, it may have furnished motivation to choose the name, but we do not know how well seventeenth-century England was acquainted with the book.

The present translation

The following translation is based on the provisional text referred to above. A major problem was the author’s biblicized style. As it was employed by choice, being neither his everyday mode of speech nor presumably the kind of language he would have used for a non-biblical subject, a translation must somehow preserve it. To this end it seemed advisable

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123 "Aseneth’s story, although I did not see it, I consider a tale of some ancient rabbi who wanted to incite the Jewish lads to virtue and chastity" (100f.).
124 See n. on 8:5.
125 E. G. C. Lucerna, _Asseneth: Eine apokryphe Erzählung aus den Werdezeiten des Christentums_ (Vienna, 1921; also in Serbo-Croatian).
128 H. Acatyan, _Hayoc anjnanunerri bararan_ [Dictionary of Armenian Personal Names] (RSS d’Arménie. Université Molotov à Erivan. Travaux scientifiques 21; Erivan, 1942) vol. 1, p. 221. The evidence is mostly from MS colophons.
129 E. G. Withycombe, _The Oxford Dictionary of English Christian Names_ (Oxford, 1945; 1953) p. 32: "It was occasionally used, like most other Old Testament names, in the 17th C, and there was an Asenath Angel in Shropshire in 1798. The gipsy name Ast(h)ena may be derived from it."
to translate as literally, and consistently, as present-day English grammar will permit, even to the extent of stretching a rule here and there, and to bring out the biblical affinities by following an established translation of the Bible. The present translator was guided by The Jerusalem Bible, unless otherwise required by the principle of literalness as laid down before. If a non-literal rendering is unavoidable, the literal translation is given in a footnote, except for some well-known turns that recur frequently such as “to rejoice with great joy” (lit. “to rejoice a great joy”), “to be filled with great fear” (lit. “to fear a great fear”), and similar instances of the cognate accusative: “to tell you what I have to say” (lit. “to speak to you my words”), “to speak words such as these” (lit. “to speak according to these words”), “forever” (lit. “in the eternity” or “eternities”), “for ever (and) ever” (lit. “in the eternity time,” see 4:8), “for ever and ever” (lit. “in the eternities of the eternities”).

Personal names are spelled as in The Jerusalem Bible, because their original form has not yet been critically established, except that Asenath is “Aseneth,” and Potiphera, “Pentephres” (see 1:3, 5).

Chapters were installed by Batiffol and verses by Riessler, and later by Philonenko. Riessler obviously could not make up his mind between short verses, as in the Bible, and longer paragraphs, as, for example, in Josephus. Working with a provisional text, the present translator did not feel free to adopt a new division, which will, however, eventually be necessary. He followed Riessler, continuing his numbering if new material is added at the end of chapters (11:16–19 [or 15–18]; 21:10–21), using x, y numbers if in the middle (11:1x–y; 15:12x; 16:16x; 16:17x), and altering numbers only if textual criticism cogently demands it (see 6:2; 13:10; 16:17; 16:17y). Philonenko’s numbers are given in parentheses. A fresh division into sections and appropriate headlines have been supplied for this translation.

The text-critical footnotes include the major differences in length between a, b, c, and d, a selection of variants illustrating the diversified nature as well as the basic unity of the textual tradition in the positive text, and some variants bearing intrinsic interest. The presentation is as follows: (a) If a textual problem is mentioned, as a rule, all pertinent variants are cited except for minor deviations, especially such as will not normally show in a translation at all, regarding, for example, the article, synonymous or nearly synonymous prepositions and forms, or the word order, but not, for example, the exchange of synonyms. (b) If more words than the one carrying the footnote letter are concerned, they are given at the head of the note. The variants quoted after this until the first stop are in lieu of exactly that heading. Longer readings are usually abbreviated by ellipsis points between the first and last words (to find the exact length read back from the last word quoted to the first that you come to reading backward). Insertions in parentheses refer only to the one word before the parenthesis unless otherwise stated. (c) Variants are normally given full coverage from ACPQR (=a), EFGW (=b), HJK (=c), BD (=d), Syr., Arm., L1, L2 (if 436 and 435& do not agree they are quoted separately), Slav., Ngr. (671 only), Bat, Phil (both text and translation), Br (including the appendixes), Rie, Eth., Rum., 661 (Ngr.), and Istrin are noted by way of exception only. For the sake of brevity, a or A include Bat, Rie, and Br, d includes Slav. and Phil, unless otherwise stated, and “rest” includes all witnesses normally used for coverage except those quoted individually. (d) The witness or witnesses supporting a reading, if only with minor deviations, are set right after it. If a version or versions are adduced after Greek evidence this implies only that they show no sign of being based on a different Greek text. If a witness deviates in a more than minor fashion, but still supports the reading in a general way, it is set in parentheses. If this should happen to all witnesses supporting a variant, they vary considerably from one another, which usually means that the text generally can be reconstructed but details remain doubtful. The abbreviation “add.” means that a reading is found in addition to the text in the witnesses quoted, “om.” that it is lacking, “gap(s)” that the reading and words before or after it or both are lacking, not necessarily to the same extent in all witnesses adduced.

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JOSEPH AND ASENETH

FIRST PART: ASENETH’S CONVERSION AND MARRIAGE

I. CAST OF CHARACTERS. SCENE OF ACTION

The characters are introduced

1 (1) And it happened in the first year of the seven years of plenty, in the second month, on the fifth of the month: Pharaoh sent out Joseph to drive around the whole land of Egypt.

2 (2) And Joseph came in the fourth month of the first year, on the eighteenth of the month, a satrap of Pharaoh, and this (man) was a chief of the satraps and the noblemen of Pharaoh. And the name of that man (was) Pentephres, priest of Heliopolis.

3 (3) He was gathering the grain of that region like the sand of the sea.

4 (4) And there was a man in that city, a satrap of Pharaoh, and this (man) was a chief of the satraps and the noblemen of Pharaoh. And this man was exceedingly rich and prudent and gentle, and he was a counselor of Pharaoh, because he was understanding beyond all the noblemen of Pharaoh. And the name of that man (was) Pentephres, priest of Heliopolis.

1 a. Modern (Rie, see Intro.). Survey of the titles in Burchard, Untersuchungen, pp. 30–54. “Life and Confessions of the daughter of Pentephres, priest of Heliopolis, and how the all-beautiful Joseph took her for (his) wife” (a d L 1 Ngr. Br., Phil, not Bat Rie); “Discourse (logos) about Ase­neth daughter of Pentephres.” c: “Discourse (logos) chosen from the old book about Ase­neth having become (h. b. omit W) the wife of Joseph the all-beautiful and self-controlled (a. s. omit W)” (Arm. c, 435; Ebed Yeahu, see Intro.); “Story (historia) of Aseneth” (Arm. a, d) 2–456 (436); “Book of Asyath” Anonymous letter in Ps-Zacharias Rhetor, Church History, 1.4; “Aseneth’s Prayer” Sarkavag (see Intro.); “Prayer of Ase­neth” Bat, “Aseneth” Nikon and other canon lists (see Intro.); “Deed(s) of the all-beautiful Joseph and his wife As­eneth” MS Brestau; “Tale of Joseph the Just and of Asyath his wife” Syr. (Syr. subscription. Arm. b, e, cf. also L 2, 445, 455); “Story of Joseph and Aseneth” or similar, Rum. The first mentioned title is old because it crosses a, b, and d, and the next two may be derived from it, but it sounds hagiographical. The title is followed in CPQR FW HKJ BD by “Bless, Lord (or Father),” a stock formula opening the delivery of the text when read aloud. [Biblical and apocryphal references are not placed with statues on them for sun-clocks there (Apion, Geography 17.1.29). Jews thought that Abraham had visited there and taught the Egyptian clergy astrology (Ps-Eup F. 1), that they had fortified the city (Ex 1:11 LXX), and built the local temple (Art F. 2; 3). Apion, History of Egypt, is said by Josephus to have reported that Moses was born in Heliopolis and erected prayer-houses and pillars with statues on them for sun-clocks there (Apion 2.2 §10–11, cf. 12–14). On Leontopolis see Intro. n. 59.

f. Frequent traditional simile, e. g. Gen 41:49.

g. On the following introduction of a man cf. Job 1:1–3; Acts 10:1f.; Xenophon of Ephesus 1.1.1. On 1:3–6 cf. e. g. Chariot 1.1.1f.; Xenophon of Ephesus 1.1.1–3; Apuleius 4.28.1–29.4.

h. See next note.

i. “And . . . Heliopolis” (all) except a, which has “by name (of) P. being priest of H. and” after “city,” Pentephres (Heb. P'bb P'br), LXX Pe­­tephres; etymology in Redford, Study, pp. 228f., cf. Philo, Somn. 1.78 ("worshipper of the mind") occurs in the Bible only at Gen 41:45, 50; 46:20. Like, e. g., Josephus, Ant 2.6.1 §91, and Philo, Jos, 121, JosAsen does not identify Pentephres with Potiphar Gen 37:36, 39:1, whose name is
And he had a daughter, a virgin of eighteen years,(1) (she was) very tall and handsome and beautiful to look at beyond all virgins on the earth. *And this (girl) had nothing similar to the virgins of the Egyptians, but she was in every respect similar to the daughters of the Hebrews; and she was tall as Sarah and handsome as Rebecca and beautiful as Rachel. *(6)

(9) And the name of that virgin was Aseneth. *And the fame of her beauty spread all over that land and to the ends of the inhabited (world). *(7) And all the sons of the noblemen and the sons of the satraps and the sons of all kings, all of them young and powerful,(8) asked for her hand in marriage, *and there was much wrangling among them over Aseneth, *and they made attempts to fight against each other because of her.(9)

(11) And Pharaoh’s firstborn son heard about her and he kept entreating(10) his father to give(11) her to him for (his) wife. And his firstborn son said to Pharaoh, “Father, give me Aseneth, the daughter of Pentephres, the priest of Heliopolis, for (my) wife.” *(12) And Pharaoh, his father, said to him, “Why do you seek a wife (that is) beneath you, and you are king* of the whole land of Egypt? *Behold, is not the daughter of the king of Moab, Joakim,(13) betrothed to you,” and she is a queen and exceedingly beautiful? This (one) take for (your) wife.” *(14)

Aseneth’s tower and the court surrounding Pentephres’ house are described

(2) And Aseneth was despising and scorning every man, and she was boastful and arrogant with everyone. *(1) And no man had ever seen her, because Pentephres had a tower adjoining almost identical in MT and completely in LXX, but many ancient authors, both Jewish and Christian, did (e.g. Jub 40:10; TJos 18:3; rabbinical literature is divided (cf. Aptonwitz, HUCA 1 [1924], 262). It is not clear whether “priest” has the article. Perhaps it should be omitted when followed by “of Heliopolis” (4:3, 7; 21:2, 11) in accordance with LXX, but retained when not (3:2; 12:5). Despite his title, P. is never shown officiating, whereas Aseneth is (2:3).

j. Aseneth’s virginity, not mentioned in the Bible (but, e.g. by Josephus, Ant 2.6.1 §91), plays a great role in JosAsen (e.g. chs. 7f., 11–13), as virginity generally does in the romances. The age of eighteen means that she has been fighting off suitors for several years.

k. A novel’s hero or heroine has to be beautiful (e.g. Xenophon of Ephesus 1.1.3; 1.2.5; 7; 21:2, 11) in a way similar to the two verbs. Note the graphic similarity of the two verbs.

l. Another novelistic feature. For an illustration see e.g. Chariton 1.2.2f.

q. 1:7–9 lays the foundation for 4:11 and chs. 22–29.

r. The verb ekliparein (also (15)?) is found first in Strabo and Dionysius of Halicarnassus.


t. The titles of “king” and “queen” (1:9; 28:2; cf. 10:13; 13:8) in JosAsen are also applied to the crown prince, to viceroys like Joseph (4:7), and related folk.

u. “Moab, Joakim” a, “Moab” E FW (gap following) c Syr. (gap following) Arm. L1 L2, “Joakim” d, paraphrase G, gap Ngr. Is Moab a biblicalised reference to the Nabatean kingdom, c. 100 b.c.–a.D 105/6 (Burchard, Untersuchungen, pp. 144–46)? The name was used down to Christian times. Why does this Moabite (or his daughter?) have a Heb. name?

v. In Jewish law of the time, as in Greek, betrothal (also 21:3, 23:3) was the legally binding step in bringing about a marital union, constituting by and large the formal beginning of a marriage; consummation by the wedding could be, and often was, deferred at the parties’ convenience. See generally R. Taubenschlag, The Law of Greek-Roman Egypt in the Light of the Papyri 332 n.c.–640 A.D. (Warsaw, 1955) p. 114; A. Calderini, “La eggyesis matrimoniale nei romanzieri greci e nei papiri,” Aegyptus 39 (1959) 29–39; B. Cohen, Jewish and Roman Law. A Comparative Study (New York, 1966), vol. 1, pp. 279–347.

2 a. In spite of the general rule, Aseneth’s boastfulness, which is a main motif in chs. 1–21 (4:12; 6:2–8; 7:7f.; 11:6; 12:5; 13:13; 21:12; 16–21), is in fact limited to possible suitors (cf. 8:1). As she lives in seclusion (see vs. 2), it would express
(2) his house, very big and high, and 'on top of this tower was an upper floor including ten (3) chambers. • And the first chamber was big and splendid, paved with purple stones, and its (4) walls were faced with colored and precious stones, and the ceiling of that chamber was of 3 gold. • And within that chamber gods of the Egyptians who were without number were (5) fixed to the walls, (even gods) of gold and silver. • And Aseneth worshiped them all and (6) feared them and performed sacrifices to them every day. • And the second chamber contained (7) Aseneth's ornaments and chests, and there was much gold in it (the chamber) and silver and clothes interwoven with gold and chosen and costly stones and distinguished cloths • (8) and all the ornaments of her virginity. • And the third chamber was Aseneth's storeroom, (9) and a wall was around the court, p • And the court had four iron-plated gates, and (10) very high, built from big square stones. And there were three windows to Aseneth's big chamber where her virginity was being fostered. And the one window, the first, was exceedingly big, looking east toward the court, (12) and the second one was looking south, and the third one was looking north toward the street where people passed by. • And there was a golden bed standing in the chamber, (a bed) that looked toward the window (looking) east, and the bed was laid with gold-woven purple stuff, interwoven with violet, purple, and white. • And in this bed Aseneth slept, alone; (16) And handsome trees of all kinds, (another fairy-tale motif) may mean just that; in JosAsen it goes to underline Pentephres' affluence and his care for his daughter. Obviously she is in charge of the house during her parents' absence (chs. 18–20), just as she will look after Joseph's estate later on (24:15; 26:1–4; see 3:5). She is also Pentephres' heiress (12:15), apparently being his only child after her brother's death (10:8; according to Nu 27:1–11; BB 9:1, Jewish daughters inherit only if their father had no male children living). c. Cf. 1Chr 29:2 LXX; Esth 1:6. d. These would be animal statues, but unlike e.g. WisSol 15:18f. JosAsen makes nothing of it. The gods have names (3:6), but as in Jewish polemic generally are not identified individually. See further esp. 12:9–11. e. Both chamber and walls are mentioned in G Arm. L1 L2 Rum. (and perhaps F in between illegible spots), the chamber alone in APQ Slav. Ngr., the walls in c. Syr. (and perhaps F in between illegible spots); gaps CR EW. f. Conventional, cf. e.g. Ex 20:23; Ps 115:4 (113:12 LXX); WisSol 13:10; Ler 3, 10, 29; Acts 17:29; Rev 19:20; 17:4. g. Cf. 10:12; 11:8f.; 16; 12:5; 13:11; 19:5; 21:13f. Xenophon of Ephesus' Antheia and Heliodorus' Charicleia were also priestesses. Cf. TJob 2:2f.; ApAb 1.3. h. Gold, silver, jewels, and fine clothes is a common formula for mobile wealth (cf. Acts 20:33; Jas 5:2f.). In antiquity clothes were folded away in chests (also 10:8; 14:14; 18:5), never hung up in wardrobes or closets. i. Or "land"; i.e. food stuff as in 4:2. Cf. Isa 1:19; Hos 10:1. j. Cf. Esth 2:9, seven valets Esth 1:10, seven counsellors Ezra 7:14. The wording of the first half of vs. 6 is doubtful. Cf. 17:4. k. The reading "and . . . much"': ACP; destroyed R; gaps Q EG Ngr.; omit rest. Cf. 10:4. l. Lit. "of the (people) passing by" FW c. (Syr.) Arm. L1 L2; omit d; gaps EG Ngr. m. Both text and meaning of the description of the textiles are uncertain (as in 3:6; 5:5; 13:3; 16:18); cf. Ex 26:1, 31, 36; 28:5f., 8, 15; Jdt 10:21; TJob 25:7; Josephus, War 5.5.4 §212. For similar luxury beds, see Esth 1:6; TJob 25:8; 32:4; Philo, Somn. 2.57; Chariton 8.1.14; 8.6.7. Xenophon of Ephesus 1.8.2; Apuleius 2.19.1. East: to facilitate prayer in that direction (on which see 11:1y). n. The reading "except . . . alone"': ACPR d; gaps b Ngr.; omit rest. Cf. 15:14. o. Not on the northern side, unless Aseneth's tower is a distance from the house, cf. 7:10; 11:7; 13:11. p. Indicating careful and costly construction. Cf. ShepHerm Vis 3.2.5. q. The number hardly symbolizes the eighteen stars of Ariës (Philonenko, Joseph et Asenéth, pp. 74f.) or the Eighteen Benedictions (Riessler, Aljü-
II. PENTEPHRES' ATTEMPT TO GIVE ASENEH TO JOSEPH IN MARRIAGE

Joseph's visit to Pentephres is announced

1 (1) And it happened in the first year of the seven years of plenty, in the fourth month, on the eighteenth of the month; Joseph came into the territory of Heliopolis and was gathering the surplus grain of that region. • And when he had come close to that city, Joseph sent twelve men ahead of him to Pentephres the priest, saying, "I will lodge with you because it is the hour of noon and the time of lunch, and the heat of the sun is great, and (I desire) that I may refresh myself under the shadow of your house." And Pentephres heard this, and rejoiced exceedingly with great joy and said, "Blessed (be) the Lord, the God of Joseph, because my lord Joseph thought me worthy to come to us." • And Pentephres called the (steward) of his house and said to him, "Hurry and make my house ready and prepare a great dinner, because Joseph, the Powerful One of God, is coming to us today."

Aseneth dresses up to meet her parents

5 (7) And Aseneth heard that her father and mother had come from the field, which was their inheritance, and rejoiced and said, "I will go and see my father and my mother because they have come from the field which is our inheritance." For it was (the) time of harvest. 6 (9) And Aseneth hurried into the chamber, where her robes lay, dressed in a (white) linen dress and rejoiced and said, "I will go and see my father and my mother because they have come from the field which is our inheritance." For it was (the) time of harvest.

...
robe interwoven with violet and gold, and girded herself (with) a golden girdle and put bracelets on her hands and feet, and put golden buskins about her feet, and around her neck she put valuable ornaments and costly stones which hung around from all sides, and the names of the gods of the Egyptians were engraved everywhere on the bracelets and the stones, and the faces of all the idols were carved on them. And she put a tiara on her head and fastened a diadem around her temples, and covered her head with a veil.

**Pentephres proposes to give Aseneth to Joseph in marriage, but she refuses**

1. **(4)** And she hurried and went down the stairs from the upper floor, and came to her father and mother and greeted them and kissed them. And Pentephres and his wife rejoiced over their daughter Aseneth (with) great joy, because they saw her adorned like a bride of God.

2. **(3)** And they brought out all the good (things) which they had brought from the field which was their inheritance, and gave (them) to their daughter. And Aseneth rejoiced over all the good (things), the fruit, and the grapes, and the dates, and the doves, and the pomegranates, and the figs, because they were all handsome and good to taste.

3. **(5)** And Pentephres said to his daughter Aseneth, "My child." And she said, "Behold, (here) I (am), lord. Let my lord and my father speak what I have to say."

4. **(6/7)** And Aseneth sat between her father and mother. And Pentephres, her father, with his right hand grasped the right hand of his daughter and kissed it and said to her, "My child Aseneth." • And she said, "Behold, (here) I (am), lord. Let my lord and my father speak up." • And Pentephres, her father, said to her, "Joseph the Powerful One of God is coming to us today. And he is chief of the whole land of Egypt, and the king Pharaoh appointed him king of the whole land, and he is giving grain to the whole land, and saving it from the oncoming famine. And Joseph is a man who worships God, and self-controlled, and a virgin like you today, and Joseph is (also) a man powerful in wisdom and experience,

m. See 2:8.

n. Thus Br for anaaxyrides, an ill-defined piece of oriental clothing; "Binden" Rie, "pantalons" Phil; also 18:6. Liddell-Scott only admit "trousers," but those do not go well with "feet" and would leave Aseneth barefooted. The sequence of objects also demands something more in the nature of an accessory.

o. See 2:3.

4 a. Does this expression mean that a god will unite himself to her in the guise of the future king of Egypt (Philonenko, Joseph et Aséneh, p. 141)? A genitive of quality or origin seems to fit the context better, cf. 1Thes 4:16; Rev 15:2. For the vision of a bride clad in white cf. ShepHerm Vision 4.2.1.

b. "Fruit" seems to serve as a heading, cf. 10:13.

c. No positive variants. Riessler (TQ 103 [1922] 2) suggests that Heb. gozdilim ("pigeons") is a mistake for gozdim ("walnuts"); this is a rather remote possibility in view of the context. If tais persikais ("the doves") cannot be explained somehow (cf. Philonenko, Joseph et Aséneh, p. 141), perhaps we might envisage corruption from tais persikais ("the peaches") or tois pistakiois ("the pistachios").


e. Traditional opening of a dialogue; cf. e.g. Tob 2:3 S; 6:11 S; Jub 18:6; more in Berger, Außerstehung, pp. 431f.; n. 19, and on 14:6. It is repeated in vs. 5f.; as the angel in ch. 14, Pentephres addresses Aseneth twice before he launches his speech; cf. 1Sam 3:1-14; Jn 21:15-18.

f. Sus 50 Theod.

g. Lit. "my words" as often. Cf. 4:9.

h. Or "her"; cf. 20:6.

i. Wording of vs. 6 is uncertain. Gen does not say that Joseph is "king" (on the meaning see 1:8), but postbiblical tradition did, or almost did, e.g. Tlev 13:9; Philo, Jos, 120. See further on 29:8f. [In the Histios, Joseph is called "King"; see the contribution in this volume on HisJos by G. T. Zervos.—J.H.C.]


j. Cf. Gen 41:41, 44. The wording of the clause is uncertain. Gen does not say that Joseph is "king" (the oncoming famine cf. Gen 41:41, 44). The wording of vs. 6 is uncertain.

k. Cf. Gen 41:41, 44. The wording of the clause is uncertain. Gen does not say that Joseph is "king" (the oncoming famine cf. Gen 41:41, 44). See further on 29:8f. [In the Histios, Joseph is called "King"; see the contribution in this volume on HisJos by G. T. Zervos.—J.H.C.]


m. Gk. theosebés, also 8:5f.; 21:1; 23:9f., 12; 28:5; 29:3. cf. 8:8; 27:1. JosAsen never uses eusebés. The word theosebés is something like a technical term in JosAsen; it is used to designate the Jews who revere the one and only God and observe appropriate ethical standards (see Intro.).

n. This seems to be the first instance of masculine parthenos before (or beside?) Rev 14:4 (cf. 1Cor 7:25); Burchard, Untersuchungen, p. 110, n. 1. Perhaps this is a Jewish and Christian speciality; Achilles Tatius 5.20.5 wonders if it is admissible. See further 2:1; 7:7; 15:1, 7.

o. I.e. "to date" as in 8:1; 23:2; cf. Acts 22:3.
8 (10) and the spirit of God is upon him, and the grace of the Lord (is) with him. P. "Come, my child, and I will hand you over to him for (his) wife, and you will be a bride to him, and he will be your bridegroom for ever (and) ever." t
9 (11) And when Aseneth heard these words from her father, plenty of red sweat poured over her face, and she became furious with great anger, and looked askance at her father with her eyes, and said, "Why does my lord and my father speak words such as these, to hand me over, like a captive, to a man (who is) an alien, and a fugitive, and (was) sold (as a slave)?" 4 "Is he not the shepherd's son from the land of Canaan, and he himself was caught in the act (when he was) sleeping with his mistress, and his master threw him into the prison of darkness; and Pharaoh brought him out of prison, because he interpreted his dream just like the older women of the Egyptians interpret (dreams)?" 5 "No," but I will be married to the king's firstborn son, because he is king of the whole land of Egypt." t
10 (13) Hearing this, P Pentephres was ashamed to speak further to his daughter Aseneth about Joseph, because she had answered him daringly and with boastfulness and anger.

**Joseph arrives at Pentephres' house**

1 (1) 5 And a young man of Pentephres' servants rushed in and says, "Behold, Joseph is standing before the doors of our court." 2 (standing before the doors of our court). 3 And Aseneth fled from her father's and mother's exile; meaning that he had it coming to him.

p. This is a mosaic of traditional attributes occurring, either alone or in combination, in descriptions of godly men, and most of them also of Joseph: "who worships God" (e.g. Ex 18:21; Job 1:1, 8; 2:23; Tnah 1:10; TAb A 4); "self-controlled" especially in sexual matters (of Joseph, cf. Gen 39; 4Mac 2:2; Tlos 4:1f.; 6; 7; Philo, Jos 40; Josephus, Anti 2.4.3 §48); "wisdom and experience" (e.g. Jdt 11:8; of Joseph, cf. Gen 41:39); "spirit" (e.g. Dan 6:4; Lk 2:25; Acts 6:5; of Joseph, cf. Gen 41:35; Tsim 6:4; Philo, Jos. 11:6); "grace" (e.g. Lk 2:40; Acts 6:8; of Joseph, cf. Tlos 12:3). Such attributes are also used to characterize messianic figures (e.g. PsSol 17:37ff.; Lk 2:52), but there is nothing intrinsically messianic about them.

q. Gk. paradidonai, lit. "to give over," often has a negative ring when used of people (it is what Judas Iscariot does to Jesus), which is more to the point in vs. 9 than here; but cf. Tob 7:13; 10:10 S.

r. Gk. eis ton aîona chronon, lit. "into the eternity time," a septuagintism (no Semitism), e.g. Ex 14:13; Jdt 15:10; PsSol 8:33; 15:13; also 1En 103:4; cf. 3Mac 5:11, never NT. JosAsen is fond of it: also 6:8; 8:9; 12:11; 13:15: 15:6, 7, 9, 12x; 16:14; 17:6; 19:5; 21:3f. For the concept of marriage forever, see Tob 7:12 S.

s. Cf. Lk 22:44; Chariton 4.2.13.

t. The reading "why... over": many variants. The major problem is whether "want(s)" is to be inserted before "to give" and whether the verb (or verbs) is (or are) in the third or second person. Phil adds "so" after "speak" on the sole strength of Slav., maybe because he omitted "words such as these" on the authority of d Slav.

u. Cf. Apuleius 4.31.2 Prisoners of war were often sold as slaves, and slaves' masters could effect a marriage to them. Pentephres had a right to marry his daughter away, but not without sheer injustice to give her to a man thrice dishonored. "Fugitive" may also be rendered "driven into exile"; meaning that he had it coming to him.

v. A sneer; see Gen 46:34. Cf. Mk 6:3 par.

w. The reading "was caught": EFW c Syr. Arm. L2; "was abandoned by him (his father)" (A) P d Rie Br (Philonenko, Joseph et Aseneth, p. 145, comments on the strangeness of this); "from there was brought hither" Slav.; gaps CR Q G Ngr. Cf. Jn 8:4.

x. Cf. Gen 39:20. For the darkness see Tjós 8:5, cf. 2:4; 9:1f. Ancient prisons used to be dark, e.g. Isa 42:7; 49:9; Xenophon of Ephesus 2.6.5; Apuleius 9.21.4; cf. also WisSol 17:2.

y. Whence? The meaning must be deprecatory. If a neutral or favorable comparison were intended, Aseneth could have referred, e.g., to the dream interpreters (among them women) who belonged to the staff of many pagan temples of the time (cf. F. Cumont, L'Egypte des Astrologues [Brussels, 1937] pp. 127–29). The whole vs. is a distortion of elements from Gen 39–41; according to 13:13 (cf. 6:2) people told Aseneth so.

z. Witnesses ACR EF c d L1: "No, my lord father and my sweetest mother, no" P (Q); "I will not do this" W; "No, my father, not to this (one) will I be joined" Syr.; "it will not be so" Arm. (436); "Not so" 435&;. "Anyway, oh my precious father, be silent and do not speak to me such words" Ngr. 671 (a little shorter 661); gap G. Something like "No, my father (cf. PQ Syr. Ngr.), it will not be so (cf. Arm. L2)" may be original; cf. 23:1 and the variant at 20:9.

a2. This outburst of class feeling may be exaggerated, but it is not reprehended as such. "The king's (not Pharaoh's) firstborn son" may be deliberately ambiguous, cf. 18:11; 21:4, 20; 23:10. To be forced down the social ladder is a constant threat in ancient romance, e.g. Chariton, and a person owes it to himself or herself to defend his or her status. Structurally, Aseneth's pride resembles Habrocomes' boastfulness toward Eros (Xenophon of Ephesus 1.1.4–6) and Psyche's attempted murder of her unknown husband (Apuleius 5.1–22.1).

b2. "Hearing this" ACR d (Q Ngr.); "And in longness of spirit [i.e. longanimity] P. was and" Syr.; "and" rest; gap G. The participal form is suspicious.

c2. Witnesses ACR Syr. (omit "his daughter") Slav.; gaps EG Ngr.; omit rest.

d2. Witnesses a c d Syr. Arm. 436; "her father" FW L1; gaps EG 435& Ngr.

5 a. It is taken for granted that Pentephres has a staff of servants to look after his house. Cf. 3:4.
presence, when she heard (them) speak these words about Joseph, and went up into the upper floor and entered her chamber and stood by the large window, the one looking east, in order to see Joseph entering her father’s house.  

1 And Pentephes and his wife and his whole family went out to meet Joseph.  

2 And the gates of the court looking east were opened, and Joseph entered, standing on Pharaoh’s second chariot, and four horses, white as snow, and with golden bridles, were harnessed to it, and the entire chariot was manufactured from pure gold.  

3 And Joseph was dressed in an exquisite white tunic, and the robe which he had thrown around him was purple, made of linen interwoven with gold, and a golden crown (was) on his head, and around the crown were twelve chosen stones, and on top of the twelve stones were twelve golden rays.  

4 And a royal staff was in his left hand, and in his right hand he held outstretched an olive branch, and there was plenty of fruit on it, and in the fruits was a great wealth of oil.  

5 And Joseph entered the court, and the gates of the court were closed, and every man and woman, (if) strange, remained outside the court, because the guards of the gates drew tight and closed the doors, and all the strangers were closed out.  

6 And Pentephes and his wife and his whole family, except their daughter Aseneth, went and prostrated themselves face down to the ground before Joseph. And Joseph descended from his chariot and greeted them with his right hand.  

Aseneth is shattered at the sight of Joseph

1 And Aseneth saw Joseph on his chariot and was strongly cut to the heart, and her soul filled with great fear.

b. See 6:1; 7:2.

c. Some witnesses have “their,” as also in 5:7; 20:6. Some mention the servant staff in addition to, or in lieu of, the family.

d. Also 5:7; 19:2-4; 22:5. This is the proper thing to do when receiving an honored guest; cf. Acts 10:24.

e. Witnesses EFW c L 1 L 2 (cf. 17:8); “sitting” ACP d Arm. (Ngr., also miniatures); “carried upon” Syr.; gap Q G. Joseph would of course sit while en route (cf. Acts 8:28), but he may have stood up for the entry. Nevertheless, “sitting” could be right.

f. Cf. Gen 41:43. See also at 24:19.

g. Also 16:8; 18; 22:7. This is a traditional simile; cf. e.g. Dan 7:9 Theod.; 1En 106:2; Mt 28:3; Rev 1:14.

h. APC (Syr.), gaps Q G 435 & Ngr., omit rest.

i. Lit. “the rope of his wrapping” (peribóte, also “dress”).

j. See 2:8.

k. Joseph is dressed in royal attire. The fact is suggested by Gen 41:42, but the description is more like Esth 8:15. The details of the crown (itself probably in the form of a palm wreath) go beyond this. The twelve stones and rays are characteristic of the crown of the sun god Helios (F. J. Dölger, “Die 12 Apostel als Corona duodecim radiorum und die Zwolffstrahlenkrone des Sonnengottes,” Antike und Christentum [Münster, 1940] vol. 6, pp. 36-51; for similar crowns worn by other heavenly figures cf. e.g. Rev 12:1 and the commentaries thereon; Lucianus, De Syria dea, 32). The author may remember some statue of Helios or generalize his memory of such statues.

This does not mean that Joseph is regarded as a god or that Helios is explained as a deification of Joseph, the way Sarapis was (b. AZ 43a; Firmicus Maternus, De errore profanarum religionum, 13:1-3 etc.). Joseph is not wearing all this of his own right. He is a representative, outwardly of Pharaoh, but really of God, of whom the sun can be a symbol (see 6:9; 11:1y). The number twelve, originally a reference to the zodiac, may have suggested the twelve tribes or patriarchs to the author. See further 6:2.

l. An ensign of office as becomes a viceroy, not mentioned in Gen 41:42. Cf. WisSol 10:14.

m. The reading “in his left ... right hand”: (Syr.) Arm. L 2; gaps Q G. The other MSS mention only the right (or just one) hand, implying either that Joseph held both scepter and olive branch in one hand (cf. Rie Br) or that the scepter was in the form of a branch.

n. A sign of peace, carried e.g. by ambassadors. Perhaps there is also an overtone of fertility. A priestly note (TLev 8:8) is less likely.

o. The reading “and ... a great wealth of oil (lit. “a fatness of much oil”):” (F Syr. Arm. L 1 L 2 Slav. Ngr.); omit ACP W c d; gaps Q E G.

p. The reading “drew tight and”: ACP c (L 1 436); omit FW d Syr.? Arm.; gaps Q E G 435 & Ngr.

q. The reading “and ... out”: D (F Syr. Arm.) L 1 L 2 (Slav.); omit ACP W c B Phil; gaps Q G Ngr. See also 19:3; cf. Apuleius 11.23.5.

r. See 5:3.

6 a. The reading “cut . . . crushed”: E (FW c Syr. Arm.) L 1 L 2; “cut [and suffered add. PQ] in the soul, and her bowels were crushed” a d (Slav.); gap G; doubtful Ngr.

b. Syr. Yovs (not 332) L 2 add another clause expressing distress, but the wording differs widely.

c. Lit. “she feared (a) great fear.” See Intro. This is JosA sen’s way to describe a “stroke of lightning” that has hit, e.g. Habrocomes (Xenophon of Ephesus 1.3.1) or Psyche (Apuleius 5.22.3) in similar situations (cf. also TJos 14:1; Josephus, Ant 2.10.2 §252). Other kinds of unexpected confrontations may be depicted in a similar vein (e.g. Chariton 4.1.9 and frequently). From ch. 6 (or even ch. 5) on down to ch. 13 cf. Xenophon of Ephesus 1.3.1-4.7; Apuleius 5.22-6.5; Acts 9:3-9 par. (Zeuge, 86f.; 88-98; Berger, Auferstehung, pp. 196-98, 210; 556f., n. 378; 557-62, nn. 382-
What shall I do, wretched (that I am)?
Did I not speak saying that Joseph is coming, the shepherd's son from the land of Canaan?
And now, behold, the sun from heaven has come to us on its chariot
and entered our house today,
and shines in it like a light upon the earth.¹
But I, foolish and daring, have despised him and spoken wicked words about him,
and did not know that Joseph is (a) son of God.²
For who among men on earth will generate such beauty,
and what womb of a woman will give birth to such light?³
What a wretched and foolish (girl) I (am),
because I have spoken wicked words about him to my father.
And now, where shall I go and hide from his face⁴
in order that Joseph the son of God does not see me because I have spoken wicked (things) about him?
And where shall I flee and hide,
because every hiding place,⁵ he sees and nothing hidden escapes him,
because of the great light that is inside him?⁶
And now be gracious on me, Lord, God of Joseph,
the Messiah is not often compared to the sun, but not coming as the Messiah will be; he is coming to Sun City at last. Cf. e.g. Sir 50:7; IEn 28:24; 34:21f.; Sir 42:18–20, the sun (e.g. Ps 19:6; Sir 42:16; cf. vss. 2 and 5:5 above), and Wisdom (e.g. WisSol 7:22–8:1), but this does not make Joseph a heavenly being, an incarnation of Wisdom, or a figure of the Messiah. Rather, he is credited with prophetical insights: “To a prophet nothing is unknown, because he has intelligible light in him and shadowless rays” (Philo, Spec Leg. 4:192).

² 597, n. 492).
⁴ The reading “do” (poieōs) E Syr. Arm. Rie; “see” (opsomai) CPQ FW c D (L1) L2 (Slav.) Phil; “follow” (hexsomai) A B Bat Br (“This can hardly be correct,” p. 29, n. 1); gaps G Ngr.
° “Did . . . speak” ACP EFW c d L1 435&; “Because my strange counsellors deceived me who said to me” Syr.; “Did not now my father and mother with despising speak to me and said” Arm.; “Did not some say” 436; “And did not my father say to me that the Powerful (One) of God comes, Joseph, who is powerful according to God’s truth because with God’s power he reigns as King [cf. 4:7]? I said” Ngr.; gaps Q G. Cf. 13:13. See the next note.
• EFW d L1 (436); cf. Syr. Arm. in previous note; omit ACP c 435& Ngr.; gaps Q G.
• The reading “the sun from heaven”: (FW c) D L1 436 (435& Slav. Phil; “like the s.f.h. (he, namely Joseph)” a B Arm. (Ngr.?); “I see (that) the s. of h.” E (Syr.), gap G.
• Aseneth verbalizes 5:5 with a pun: the sun is coming to Sun City at last. Cf. e.g. Sir 50:7; 1En 10:22; 10; 4Ezra 7:97; Tob 31:5; Chariton 5.3.9.
93. The Messiah is not often compared to the sun, but not coming as the Messiah will be; he is coming to Sun City at last. Cf. e.g. Sir 23:19; T Gad 5:7; LAB 25:12; Philo, Quod Deus, 58; Eph 1:18; cf. below 14:9) and scientific (e.g. Plato, Timaeus. 45B-46C; Galenus, De placitis Hippocratis et Platonis, 7.5; Epictetus, Diss., 2.23.3; Philo, see below; not Aristotel!, believed that eyesight depends on rays of light or spirit emitted from, not received by, the eye. Sharp-sightedness requires a large portion of inner light, supernatural vision a supernatural one.
• The whole verse may be an allusion to Zaphenath-paneah (Gen 41:45), interpreted as “finder of hidden (things)” in Josephus, Ant 2.6.1 §91 (cf. Aptomowitz, HUCA 1 [1924] 286). It is also reminiscent of traditional references to God (e.g. Job 28:24; 34:21f.; Sir 42:18–20), the sun (e.g. Ps 19:6; Sir 42:16; cf. vss. 2 and 5:5 above), and Wisdom (e.g. WisSol 7:22–8:1), but this does not make Joseph a heavenly being, an incarnation of Wisdom, or a figure of the Messiah. Rather, he is credited with prophetical insights: “To a prophet nothing is unknown, because he has intelligible light in him and shadowless rays” (Philo, Spec Leg. 4:192).
because I have spoken wicked words against him in ignorance

And now, let my father give me to Joseph for a maidservant and slave, and I will serve him for (ever) and ever.

Joseph is convinced that Aseneth will not molest him and agrees to meet her.

And Joseph entered the house of Pentephres and sat upon the throne. And they washed his feet and set a table before him by itself, because Joseph never ate with the Egyptians, for this was an abomination to him. And looking up with his eyes, Joseph saw Aseneth leaning through (the window). And Joseph said to Pentephres and his whole family, saying, “Who is this woman who is standing in the upper floor by the window? Let her leave this house,” because Joseph was afraid, saying, “This one must not molest me, too.” For all the wives and the daughters of the noblemen and the satraps of the whole land of Egypt used to molest him (wanting) to sleep with him, and all the wives and the daughters of the Egyptians, when they saw Joseph, suffered badly because of his beauty. But Joseph despaired them, and the messengers whom the women sent to him with gold and silver and valuable presents Joseph sent back with threats and insults, because Joseph said, “I will

s. Ignorance (agnosia) separates Aseneth’s wickedness from outright sin; it does not absolve her of responsibility but lets her hope for forgiveness (cf. Acts 10:2; 19:3). The word is also used in an analogous sense for her general status prior to conversion, where the object of ignorance is above all God (12:5; 13:11–13). This is Jewish and Christian usage (e.g. WisSol 14:22; Acts 3:17; 13:27; 17:30; 1Tim 1:13; Aristides, Apology, 17:4).

t. Also 13:15. Aseneth desires almost as little as the prodigal son (Lk 15:19), and like him she will get more. An application of the traditional principle inherent in e.g. Ps 147:6; Prov 3:34 (quoted Jas 5:6; 1Pet 5:5); Mt 23:12; Lk 1:52. Voluntary enslavement of course is also a motif of erotic language.

7 a. Pentephres’ throne as in 20:27. As a satrap he would have one ex officio (cf. TJob 20:4f.). Anyway, the article is there.

b. The reading “they washed”: a W c Syr. (Brooks’ emendation) Arm. L1 L2 Ngr.661; “he washed” F d Syr. (ms.) Ngr.671; “washing (sing.)” E; gap G; cf. next note. Foot washing is a traditional gesture of hospitality, e.g. Gen 18:4; 1Sam 25:41; TAB 3; b. Ket 61a; Lk 7:44; Jn 13:1–17; Vita Aesopi G, 61. It is a service which depends like wives, children, pupils owed to their respective masters (13:15; 20:2–5).

c. Witnesses ACP (c) D Syr. (Brooks’ emendation) L1 L2 Ngr.; “set (sing.)” Q E B Syr. (ms.) Slav. Phil; gaps FGW. Tables like this one would be low affairs, more like trays on legs, often with a disconnecting board, to be set when needed and put away after use; see 15:14; 17:7f. “To set (paratithenai) a table before someone”; also e.g. 1En 89:50; Acts 16:34.

d. Reversal of Gen 43:32. Abstention from heathen food and avoidance of table fellowship between Jews and pagans was one of the main issues of Jewish life in the hellenistic, especially post-Maccabean, period (cf. e.g. Esth 4:17x; Jub 22:16; 3Mac 3:4, 7; SibOr 4:24–30; Acts 10–11; Gal 2:11–14). The reason, as given in JosAsen, is that pagan food has come into contact with idols. Remarkably enough, while it is implied later on that it is polluting (11:9, 16; 12:5), it is never said that Jewish food is pure. So the Levitical law of purity plays no role here, at least not directly. See further 8:5; 20:7.

e. “And . . . (the window)’ a c ‘with his eyes’ omit AC, ‘leaning through’ omit Q; “And Joseph looked at the tower” Syr. (mentioning the leaning through in the next sentence, cf. 1Chr 15:29; Prov 7:6; Song 2:9; Sir 14:23; 21:23. The word may have sexual or mythical overtones or both (W. Fauth, Aphrodite Parakyp­tauza: Untersuchungen zum Erscheinungsbild der vorderasiatischen Dea prospiciens [Akademie der Wissenschaften in Mainz, Abhandlungen der Gei­stes- und sozialwissenschaftlichen Klasse, 1966, no. 6; Wiesbaden, 1967]), but it looks harmless enough here. Joseph’s misgivings are actuated by the behavior of the Egyptian women generally (vs. 3), rather than by Aseneth’s posture in particular. His attitude in chs. 7f. rather resembles Aseneth’s in chs. 2–4, a stroke of poetic justice. The scene in vss. 2–6 is developed from Gen 39:7–10, but not by the author of JosAsen. Jewish and Christian lore has it that all Egyptian women felt like Potiphar’s wife when they saw Joseph on his tour around Egypt, offering him their valuables, and that his resistance was strengthened by the memory or an appearance of his father (Nef, Josef­Gedichte, pp. 73f.; A. Aptowitzer, HUCA 1 [1924] 269f.; e.g. PRE 39). The latter point is already in Juv 39:6; TJos 3:3. For the hero of a romance being the idol of all women see Xenophon 1.5.4.

f. “But . . . them” (FW c Syr.) Arm. (L1) L2; omit a d; gaps EG Ngr. Instead of “but” (W Arm. L2) we may have to read “and” (F Syr. L1).

g. “Threats” (apeilei, sing.) has a tendency to come in a pair with words denoting physical violence (Plato, Protagoras 325D; 4Mac 4:24; Pap. Rylands I 28.117; Chariton 2.8.1; Acts 9:1; ZNW 61 [1970] 163–65). So perhaps “insults” (hybris, also singular) had better be rendered “outrage, injuries.” As in the romances (and elsewhere) righteous indignation has a right to violent expres­sion (see also chs. 23–29). Chaereas barely fails to kick to death his beloved Callirhoe, who is reported to be unfaithful (Chariton 1.4.12); he is acquitted because he acted in good faith. Besides, the messengers would probably be slaves.

h. The reading “because Joseph said”: E Syr. (Arm. L1 L2); “saying” a FW c d; gaps G Ngr.
not sin before (the) Lord God of my father Israel nor in the face of my father Jacob.'

And the face of his father Jacob, Joseph always had before his eyes, and he remembered his father's commandments. For Jacob would say to his son Joseph and all his sons, "My children, guard strongly against associating with a strange woman, for association (with) her is destruction and corruption." Therefore Joseph said, "Let this woman leave this house."

And Pentephres said to him, "Lord, this one whom you have seen standing in the upper floor is not a strange woman, but she is our daughter, a virgin hating every man, and there is not any other man who has ever seen her except you alone today. And if you will, she will come and address you, because our daughter is like a sister to you."

And Aseneth said to her brother, because he, too, is a virgin like you today and hates every strange woman, as you, too, every strange man. And Joseph said by himself, "If she is a virgin hating every man, this (girl) will certainly not molest me." And Joseph said to Pentephres and his whole family, "If she is your daughter and a virgin, let her come, because she is a sister to me, and I love her from today as my sister."

Joseph will not be kissed by Aseneth, but prays for her conversion

And Aseneth's mother went up to the upper floor and brought her and stood her before Joseph. And Pentephres said to his daughter Aseneth, "Greet your brother, because he, too, is a virgin like you today and hates every strange woman, as you, too, every strange man." And Aseneth said to Joseph, "Be of good cheer, my lord, blessed by the Most High Lord." And Joseph said to Aseneth, "May the Lord God who gives life to all (things) bless you." And Joseph rejoiced exceedingly with great joy because Pentephres had said, "She is a virgin hating every man." And Joseph stretched out his right hand and put it on her chest between her two breasts, and her breasts were already standing upright too, is a virgin like you today and hates every strange woman, as you, too, every strange man.

And Aseneth's mother went up to the upper floor and brought her and stood her before her father. And Pentephres said to his daughter Aseneth, "Go up and kiss your brother." And as Aseneth went up to kiss Joseph, Joseph stretched out his right hand and put it on her chest between her two breasts, and her breasts were already standing upright too, is a virgin like you today and hates every strange woman, as you, too, every strange man.

And Pentephres said to his daughter Aseneth, "You shall not be kissed."

And Joseph said to Pentephres and his whole family, "If she is a virgin hating every man, this (girl) will not molest me."

And Joseph rejoiced exceedingly with great joy because Pentephres had said, "She is a virgin hating every man." And Joseph said by himself, "If she is a virgin hating every man, this (girl) will certainly not molest me." And Joseph said to Pentephres and his whole family, "If she is your daughter and a virgin, let her come, because she is a sister to me, and I love her from today as my sister."
Joseph and Aseth

who will bless with his mouth the living God and eat blessed bread of life and drink a blessed cup of immortality and anoint himself with blessed ointment of incorruptibility to kiss a strange woman who will bless with her mouth dead and dumb idols and eat from their table bread of strangulation and drink from their libation a cup of insidiousness and anoint herself with ointment of destruction. But a man who worships God will kiss his mother and the sister (who is born) of his mother and the sister (who is born) of his clan and family and the wife who shares his bed, (all of) who(m) bless with their mouths the living God. Likewise, for a woman who worships God it is not fitting to kiss a strange man, because this is an abomination before the Lord God."

the cup, and the ointment is often called a "meal formula" (also 8:9; 15:5; 16:16; 19:5; 21:13ff., 21), perhaps unusually so. If we go by 8:5, which seems to be its original setting in JosAsen, it is couched in relative clauses, the subject of which is "the man who worships God" (see at 4-7), and the point of the passage is not to institute or justify any meal, but to explain why such a man does not kiss a heathen woman. Also it is not at all clear whether the uction is envisaged as an integral part of a meal. Anyway, it is the right kind of "bread," "cup" and "ointment" that characterizes a Jew, and distinguishes him from the gentile, who uses the wrong kind. The problem is whether this is to be understood in terms of a cultic meal, albeit a daily one as in communities such as the Essenes or the Therapeutae, or in terms of ordinary Jewish self-maintenance. If a sacramental interpretation is preferred we will have to identify JosAsen's meal either with one that we know (Essene: IQS 6.4-6; IQSa 2.17-21; Josephus, War 2.8.5 §129-33, or, rather, Therapeutic: Philo, Vita Cont. 37ff., 69ff.; e.g. Kuhn, "Lord's Supper," The Scrolls and the New Testament, ed. K. Stendahl, 74-77, 261-62) or with one that we seem to know (synagogue meals in mystery style, e.g. Thuyen, Studien, 127ff., cf. Georgi, Gegan, 135ff.; or else we should stipulate a hitherto unknown meal (e.g. Kilpatrick, ExpT 64 [1952-53] 4-8; W. Nauck, Die Tradition und der Charakter des ersten Johannes, [TWNT]; Thümmel, 35-37, 69-71, referring to Christian initiation by uction, baptism, and first eucharist, both orthodox and gnostic, e.g. ActsThom 120-21; GPhil 68,76,98, Philonenko, Joseph et Asineth, pp. 91-93). The heathen counterpart would probably be meals in a temple "at a god's table" (in Aseneth's case equivalent to daily meals, see 10:13); such meals are known to us among other things from the papyri (see the commentaries on 1Cor 10:14-22; cf. also the idea later developed at length by Firmicus Maternus, De errore profanarum religionum, esp. ch. 18, that the pagan mysteries ape the Christian sacraments). If the "formula" is taken to refer to ordinary Jewish eating and anointing (J. Jeremias, "The Last Supper," ExpT 64 [1952-53] 91ff.; Burchard, Untersuchungen, pp. 121-33), we should compare the passages in which human maintenance is summarized by the triad "bread (or other food), wine (or other beverage), oil" (e.g. Ezra 3:7; Ps 23:5; Jdt 10:5; Dan 10:3; IQH 10.24; ApAb 9:7; Terumoth 6:1; Maasseroth 2:1; b. Pes 32a; Epictetus, Dis., 2.23.5; Ps-Heracleites, Letters, 7.5.1). This triad is doubtless related to the similar one "grain, wine, oil" that describes the produce of the land (e.g. Ps 104:14f.; Josephus, War 1.15.6 §299 [plus cattle]; Rev 6:6; TJud 9:8; SibOr 3.243.745; Eup. 2.225f.; Apuleius 9.33.2). The heathen counterpart would then be ordinary meals which were always in contact with food offered to idols one way or the other. Be that as it may, a change of diet is indispensable if a person wants to become Jewish and gain life (see further 7:1). Aseneth is promised bread, cup, and ointment (15:5; cf. 8:9), and receives them, she says (19:5; 21:13ff., 21). But she is actually fed a piece of supernatural honeycomb, i.e. manna (see Intro.), which means—the angel explains—that she has eaten the bread, drunk the cup, and been anointed with the ointment (16:16). This poses a new problem; is it a honey symbol, for example, for the Law or the word of God (cf. e.g. Ps 19:10f.; 119:103; Philo, Fage, 137-39), implying that some it is received this is equivalent to the reception of bread, cup and ointment, whatever they mean (Anandakumara, Gentile Reactions, 66ff.; Delling, JS/ 9 (1978) 54)? Does the honey refer to something real, a "honey communion" connected with, or representing, the cultic meal described by the "formula" (Philonenko, Joseph et Asineth, p. 98)? Is this scene a way of depicting metaphorically what bread, cup, and ointment really are? The latter interpretation, which is preferred here, is applicable whether the meal is a cultic one or not; if it is not cultic we may point to Did 9:3f., doubtless based on a Jewish prayer, as proof for the idea that hellenistic Jews thought of their daily bread as a gift from heaven which provided life and wisdom. The "real formula" may be of some help in interpreting Jn 6, especially vss. 35, 48, and 1Cor 10 (Burchard, Untersuchungen, pp. 130-33; corrected and enlarged in NTS 32 [1986] in press).

j. I.e. probably say grace before and after meals. This was regarded as one of the distinguishing marks of Judaism (e.g. SibOr 4.25ff.; Christian, but with a possible Jewish origin, Aritides, Apology, 15:10). This "blessing" will account for "blessed" below.

k. The only real extant parallel to Jn 6:35, 48.

l. Grace after meals was said over a cup which would hence be called "cup of blessing" (cf. 1Cor 10:16 and commentaries thereon).

m. Also 11:8; 12:5; 13:11. Some witnesses attest the reverse order except in 13:11, where the words occur only in AP c Arm. Lz, the latter two having "dumb and dead." Never LXX or NT, but cf. 3Mac 4:16.

n. For similar turns, see Ps 80:5; Prov 31:27; Isa 30:20; Hos 9:4.

o. Lit. "ambush" as in chs. 24-27. The choice of words in this and the previous instance may be influenced by the obvious fact that pagan food does not cause people to drop dead.

p. The reading "and the sister . . . mother"—AC (Syr. Arm. 435& Slav.; omit PQ EFW) gap following in HK) d L 41 436; gaps G Ngr.
And when Aseneth heard these words of Joseph, she was cut (to the heart) strongly and her eyes were filled with tears. And Joseph saw her, and had mercy on her exceedingly, and was himself cut (to the heart), because Joseph was meek and merciful and fearing God. • And he lifted up his right hand and put it upon her head and said:

Lord God of my father Israel,* the Most High, the Powerful One of Jacob,* who gave life* to all (things) and called (them) from the darkness to the light,* and from the error to the truth,* and from the death to the life;* you, Lord, bless this virgin, and renew her by your spirit,* and form her anew by your hidden hand, and make her alive again* by your life,* and let her eat your bread of life, and drink your cup of blessing, and number her among your people that you have chosen before all (things) came into being, and let her enter your rest which you have prepared for your chosen ones,* and live in your eternal* life for ever (and) ever.

q. The reading “she . . . and”: E (FW c Syr. Arm.) L1 (L2 Ngr.); omit a d; gap G.

r. The reading “and . . . heart”: (EF) W (c Syr. Arm.) L1 (L2); uncertain Ngr.; omit a B Slav. Phil; gaps G D.


u. On Joseph’s prayer cf. Smith, Joseph and Asenath, pp. 107–16; Berger, Kairos 17 (1975) 232–40 (quotes especially ActsPhil 117). The address refers to the creator, which is common enough (12:1f.; 2Kgs 19:15 parallel Isa 37:16; Neh 9:6; Esth 4:17c; 3Mac 2:2–3; PrMan 2f.; 2Bar 21:4f.; 1En 84:2f.; Jub 12:19; Acts 4:24). But the four clauses apply equally well to God’s activity in conversion (see Intro.).


w. The reading “of Jacob”: Syr. Arm. 436 Ngr.; “God”: ACP c; omit Q EW d L1 435&; illegible F; gaps G Run. Cf. MT Gen 49:24 (also LXX); Isa 49:26; 60:16; Ps 132:2. See also 11:9, but the text is uncertain.

x. Gk. zoopoiesas AC FW d Arm. (Ngr.); “gives life to” (zoopoioin) E L1 L2; “made” (poietas) PQ c; uncertain Syr.; gap G. Cf. Neh 9:6; 1Tim 6:13.


z. Cf. 1Clem 59:2; AposCon, 7.39.3.

a. Cf. Lk 15:24; 32; Jn 5:24; Jn 3:14; AposCon, 7.39.3. See also 20:7 and n. y above.


c2. Also 15:5. Gk. anazopoiein was known hitherto only as a Christian word, except perhaps in Tab A 18.

d2. The reading “and form . . . life”: (FW Syr. Arm. L1 436 435&; Phil); “and make (her) alive again by your hand” c; omit a (“and make alive” added after “bless”) Ngr.; gaps EG d (“make alive” and “add. before “bless””). FW have “hand at the top (koryphaia, never LXX or NT)” instead of “hidden [probably kryphaia] hand” (cf. Ex 17:16 LXX).


g2. The reading of a: “heavenly”: Ngr.; gaps G d Syr.; omit rest. Eternal life is frequently mentioned in ancient Jewish and Christian texts (e.g. 2Mac 7:9; Dan 12:2; PsSol 3:12; 1En 40:9; Mt 25:46; Jn 3:5; Rom 5:21).
Aseneth retires in confusion

9 And Aseneth rejoiced exceedingly with great joy over Joseph's blessing, and hurried and went into the upper floor by herself, and fell on her bed exhausted, because in her there was joy and distress and much fear and trembling and continuous sweating as she heard all these words of Joseph, which he had spoken to her in the name of the Most High God. And she wept with great and bitter weeping and repented of her (infatuation with the) gods whom she used to worship, and spurned all the idols, and waited for the evening to come.

Joseph departs after promising to return a week later

And Joseph ate and drank and told his servants, "Harness the horses to the chariots"; for, he said, "I will go away and drive around the whole land." And Pentephres said to Joseph, "Let my lord lodge here today, and tomorrow you will go out (on) your way." And Joseph said, "No, but I will go out today, because this is the day on which God began to make all his creatures, and on the eighth day, when this day returns, I too will return to you and lodge here."

10 And Joseph went away (on) his way and Pentephres and his whole family went away to their estate.

9 a. The reading "and trembling": FW c Syr. Arm. L1 L2; omit a d; gaps EG Ngr. "Fear and trembling" is a biblicism (e.g. Gen 9:2; Ps 55:6; Jdt 2:28; 4Mac 4:10; 1En 13:3; 2En 22:10; 1Clem 12:5, and below) denoting physical terror, rather than awe or reverence. The reading "in great fear and trembling" of 14:10 (cf. Isa 19:16; 1Cor 1:2) and "with much fear and trembling" of 16:13 (which would be the only ancient exact parallel to 2Cor 7:15; Eph 6:5; Phil 2:12 known to date) are secondary (against Philonenko, Joseph et Asineth, p. 178, on 14:10, and Burchard, ZNW 61 (1970) 169, on 16:13). Mingled emotions: Mt 28:8; ShepHerm Vision 5.4; Chariton 1.9.3; 3.4.15; 5.8.2; Xenophon of Ephesus 5.13.4; Achilles Tatius 1.4.5; 5.19.1; Apuleius 11.7.1.

b. The reading "was poured around her" (peri-echythi auten): added D Bat (in broken parentheses) Br Rie Phil (cf. 4:9); gaps EG Ngr.; omit rest. A new verb for "sweat" is in order after "in her," but this could be the very reason why it was inserted. Anyway, the accusative form autin (probably a purely graphic variant) cannot be right. Cf. Apuleius 11.7.1.

c. Metanoia apo as e.g. Jer 8:6; Acts 8:22; 1Clem 8:3; same verb in 15:7, substantive metanoia in 16:14, as the name of an angel in 15:7. Repentance does not denote conversion as a whole, but, rather, mankind's part in it, which is a human accomplishment, not a stroke of grace bestowed upon man (in the NT cf. Luke-Acts, esp. Lk 15). In this instance repentance means no more than breaking away from the idols (cf. Rev 9:20f. and perhaps Heb 6:1); turning to God comes later, in chs. 10–13. For repentance to ripen to conversion takes the intercession of Repentance and God's acceptance (15:7). The background of this concept is probably to be found in the passages which make repentance the prerequisite for God's forgiveness (e.g. PrMan 7.13f.; PsSol 3.8; Sir 17:29; 1En 50:2–4; Jub 41:23–25; TAB B 12:13).

d. The verb prosochthizein is not attested prior to the LXX.

e. Only the twelve men of 3:2 and one chariot have been mentioned before.

f. The reading "for . . . away": (E?) FW (d) Syr. Arm. L1 (L2) Slav.; omit a c; gaps G Ngr.

g. Sunday. Its definition as representing the first day of creation was taken over into Christianity (first in Justin, Apology, 1.67). "Creatures" (kinesis mata) is neuter, but 12:2 suggests that they are alive, meaning either that they are the live beings such as angels (TJob 47:11; created on the first day according to e.g. Jub 2:2) and men (but they were made on the sixth day), or that all of creation is considered animated. See further n. i.

h. Witnesses a c d (Syr.) L1 L2; "seventh" EFW Arm. (but cf. 11:1): "the restful day, or sabbath" Ngr. (see E below); gap G.

i. The reading "when . . . returns": FW c Arm. L1 L2; "when he rested" E; omit a d Syr. 435& Ngr. (but see n. h); gap G. Aseneth repents on a Sunday (see vs. 2), but she must wait a week until God accepts her. This goes to underscore, among other things (see 10:17), the huge distance between her old and new existence. On the symbolism of the eighth day cf. R. Staats, "Ogdoas als ein Symbol für die Auferstehung," VC 26 (1972) 276–352; see 45f.

10 a. Lit. "lot," i.e. a share of land as e.g. in Num 16:14, often in the papyri; see at 3:5. Pentephres and his family seem to stay there until the episode in 20:6.
III. ASENETH'S CONVERSION

A. ASENETH'S REPENTANCE

Aseneth prepares for her repentance in sackcloth and ashes

(2) And Aseneth was left alone with the seven virgins, and she continued to be weighed down and weep until the sun set. And she ate no bread and drank no water. And the night fell, and all (people) in the house slept, and she alone was awake and continued to brood and to weep; and she often struck her breast with (her) hand and kept being filled with great fear and trembling (with) heavy trembling.

(3) And Aseneth rose from her bed and quietly went down the stairs from the upper floor and went to the gateway, and the woman gatekeeper was asleep with her children. And Aseneth hurried and took down from the window the skin (which hung there for a) curtain, and filled it with ashes from the fireplace, and carried it up into the upper floor, and put it on the floor. And she closed the door firmly and slipped the iron bolt across and sighed with great sighing and bitter weeping.

Aseneth’s virgins try to look after her

(4) And the virgin (who was) her foster sister, whom Aseneth loved beyond all the virgins, heard her sighing and hurried and woke up the other six virgins. And they went to Aseneth’s door and found the door closed. And they heard Aseneth’s sighing and weeping and said to her, “What have you, mistress, and why do you feel so sad, and what is it that is bothering you? Open (the door to) us, and we will see what you have.” And Aseneth did not open the door, but said to them from within, “My head is (stricken with) heavy pain, and I am resting in my bed, and I do not have the strength to rise and open (the door to) you, because I have grown weak in all my limbs. But go each of you in your chamber and rest and let me be quiet.” And the virgins went away, each into her chamber.

Aseneth throws her valuables away, idols included, and repents in sackcloth and ashes for seven days

(5) And Aseneth rose and opened the door quietly and went into her second chamber where the chests (containing) her ornaments were, and opened her coffer and took out a black and b. On the following reactions cf. esp. Dan 4:33a-34 LXX; Xenophon of Ephesus 1.3.3-4.1.6; Chariton 2.4.3-5; 3.10.3-4.1.1; Apuleius 7.27.2; more at 11:1x.15.

Also 10:17 (see there); 13:9; cf. Ex 34:28; 15am 30:12; Ezra 10:6; a. The reading “And . . . fell” (all) except a d; gap Ngr.

e. The reading “‘brood and’;” F(G)W (c) Syr. (Arm.) L1 (436); omit a E; gaps d 435& Ngr.

f. The reading “the gateway” (ton pylona): a EFW c d L1; “the millhouse” (ton myloana) Syr. Arm. 436 (435&); gaps G Ngr.

g. The reading “‘the woman gatekeeper’” (he pyloros): EFW L1, “‘the woman gatekeeper’” (accusative, ten pyloron) c, “‘the woman doorkeeper’” (accusative ten thyroron) a d (a c d have “she found . . . sleeping” for “was asleep”), “the woman miller” Syr. (plural) Arm. 436; gaps G 435& Ngr. Women as gatekeepers, in the author’s day, were most likely slaves who lived in a room near the gate or door; cf. e.g. 2Sam 4:6 LXX (followed by Josephus, Ant 7.2.1 §48); TJob 6:5; Jn 18:16f.; Acts 12:3-5; Plautus, Curculio, 1.1.76.

Why the children should be mentioned is not clear, unless to indicate that the woman had retired for the night (Lk 11:7) and was not likely to notice Aseneth’s doings.

h. Lit. “the skin of the curtain” (ten derrin tou katapetasmatoj); cf. 10:14. Gk katapetasma is extremely rare outside Jewish and Christian literature, where it designates one of the veils hanging in the Temple, either directly or figuratively (as in Heb).

i. The reading “‘from the fireplace’” (FW) Arm. 436; gaps G Ngr.; omit rest.

j. The reading “‘her foster sister’” b c (Syr. Arm.) L1 436 (435&); omit a d; gap Ngr. Aseneth has a favorite slave just as Callirhoe (Chariton 1.4.1 etc.) and other ancient ladies. The Beloved Disciple (Jn 1:23, etc.) is barely comparable.

k. Witnesses a G d have this verb and the three following ones in the singular, the rest, if present, have it in the plural.

l. The reading “‘outside standing (singular)’”; added a; gaps d Syr. Ngr.; omit rest; a may be correct, as it corresponds to “from within” of vs. 6.

m. Lit. “look.”

n. Same word as “‘molest’” in 7:2-8.

o. Two questions followed by an imperative: Ps 43:2f.; 5: Lk 24:38f.

p. Similarly 18:4; 25:3. So headache as an excuse (or is it?) was known in antiquity; cf. Apuleius 3.13.1.


r. Lit. “of.”
And after that Aseneth took the skin (full) of ashes and poured it on the floor. 'And she
and the beggars and needy (persons). • And Aseneth took her royal dinner
and sprinkled ashes upon her head." *And she scattered the ashes on
somber tunic. 'And this was her tunic of mourning when her younger* brother died. In this
Aseneth had dressed and mourned for her brother. • And she took her black tunic and carried it
into her chamber and closed the door again firmly and slipped the bolt across.

And Aseneth hurried and put off her linen and gold woven royal robe and dressed in the
black tunic of mourning, and loosened her golden girdle and girded a rope around (her),
and put off the tiara from her head, and the diadem and the bracelets from her hands and
feet, and put everything on the floor. • And she took her chosen robe and the golden girdle
and the headgear and the diadem, and threw everything through the window looking north
to the poor." • And Aseneth hurried and took all her gods that were in her chamber, the
ones of gold and silver who were without number, and ground them to pieces," and threw
all the idols of the Egyptians through the window looking north from her upper floor to
beggars and needy (persons). • And Aseneth took her royal dinner and the fatlings and the
fish and the flesh of the heifer and all the sacrifices of her gods and the vessels of their
wine of libation and threw everything through the window looking north, and gave everything
to the strange dogs. For Aseneth said to herself, "By no means must my dogs eat from my
dinner and from the sacrifice of the idols, but let the strange dogs eat those." *y

And after that Aseneth took the skin (full) of ashes and poured it on the floor. 'And she
took a piece of sackcloth' and girded it around her waist. And she loosened the clasp of
the hair of her head* and sprinkled ashes upon her head. *z And she gathered the ashes on
the floor 'and struck her breast with great and bitter weeping all night with sighing and screaming* until
daybreak.

s. Philonenko (Joseph et Asénelth, p. 163) draws attention to Isis' black cloak (e.g. Apuleius 11.3.7; Griffiths, Isis-Book, 128f.). But Aseneth's tunic is more like the garments worn for repentance or mourning often mentioned in Jewish texts (e.g. Jdt 4:10; 1Mac 2:14; 2Mac 3:19; PssSol 2:21; LAB 30:5; SibOr 5:190), which would of needs be black (Josephus, Life 28 §138). Black was also the color
of mourning in the Greek and Roman tradition (e.g. Chariton 3.4.4), but not in the Egyptian
tradition.

t. Witnesses by Syr. Arm. L1 ("major" 2 MSS 436 435&;; "second" c; "firstborn" a d; gap Ngr.
The brother who is not otherwise known comes up unexpectedly. Philonenko (Joseph et Asénelth, p. 163) refers to Isis' mourning for Osiris, but he is her elder brother. 'Repenting, the younger brother of not sinning' (Philomo, Somn, 1.91) does not help, either.

u. The reading "to the poor" (tois penesin): AP d; gaps Q EW Ngr.; omit rest. The crushed idols
are given "to the beggars and needy persons" (ptochos kai deomenois, vs. 12). The translation
assumes that penes (a man without means who has to work for a living) and ptochos (beggar) are not
synonymous as in other Jewish texts; the idols' remnants are reserved for the lowest social class.
This would be a point in favor of the author's mastery of Gk. (Bammel, "ptochos etc.," TDNT 6, 885-915). On alsmsgiving as a prerequisite to
conversion (cf. Mk 10:21 parallels; Lk 7:5; 19:8; Acts 10:2) see K. Berger, "Almosen für Israel:
Zum historischen Kontext der paulinischen Kollekte," NTS 23 (1977-78) 187-204; cf. also 12:15.

v. The reading "and . . . pieces": AP d (Ngr. in 9:2); gaps Q GW Syr.; omit rest. Also 13:11.

w. "Royal dinner" (also 13:8) seems to serve as a heading for what follows, like "fruit" in 4:2.
"Royal" is an attribute of quality (cf. Apuleius 5.2.4, rather than origin (Dan 1:15). Aseneth is a
queen after all (see on 1:8). Her regular dinner is a sacrificial meal "at the god's table" and vice
versa (11:9; 12:5; 11:13f.; see 8:5).

x. So Br for ta sitista. cf. Mt 22:4. This rare Gk. word is not attested before Mt and Josephus, Antiq 8.2.4 §40. Gk. ta (the) omit Phil.

y. The reading "and gave . . . those": (Fw c Syr. Arm. L1 L2); "and gave everything (panta
omit in apparatus Phil) to the dogs as food (or to the north)" B; "to the dogs (as) food" A (D Slav.
Phil); "to the dogs" Ngr.; "to the poor" P; gap Q; cf. also 13:8. Aseneth's dogs might be watch
dogs (e.g. TJob 9:3: eight hundred for the cattle, two hundred for the palace) or pets (b. Ket 61b:
cf. Mk 7:27 parallel) or both. The "strange dogs" would be stray street roamers—a common plague
in the ancient Near East (e.g. 1Kgs 14:11; Lk 16:21)—which are often cited proverbially. Both
"strange" and "dogs" probably bear antiheathen overtones (cf. Mk 7:27 parallel; Mt 7:6; Did 9:5).
See generally O. Michel, "kjön, kynarion," TDNT 3, 1101-04.

z. Lit. "the skin (derris) as in 10:2 of the sackcloth." Sackcloth is made of animal hair, not
skin. Does derris mean "sheet"?
a2. A gesture of mourning, cf. e.g. Esth 4:17k.
b2. To besprinkle one's own head with ashes, dust, or dirt is a common gesture of mourning, e.g.
d2. The reading "and screaming": FW Arm.
L1 436; omit a c d; gaps EG Syr. 435&; Ngr. Gk. briména is very rare; it is found neither in LXX
nor in NT.
And this way Aseneth did for seven days, and she ate no bread and drank no water in those seven days of her humiliation.

Aseneth's first soliloquy on how to take courage to address God

And on the eighth day, behold, it was dawn and the birds were already singing and her strength had gone. And she rose on her knees and put her hand on the floor and lifted herself up a little from the floor, and (she was) still bowing her head, and the hairs of her head were stretched out (in strands) from the load of ashes. And Aseneth clasped her hands, finger against finger, and shook her head to and fro, and struck her breast continuously with her hands, and laid her head into her lap, and her face was flooded with her tears, and she sighed with great sighing, and pulled her hairs from her head, and sprinkled ashes on her head. And Aseneth was tired and had become discouraged and her strength had gone. And she turned upward to the wall and sat below the window looking east.

What shall I do, miserable (that I am), or where shall I go;
with whom shall I take refuge,\(^1\)
or what\(^a\) shall I speak.\(^a\)

I the virgin and an orphan and desolate and abandoned and hated?\(^b\)

All people have come to hate me,\(^4\) and on top of those\(^c\) my father and my mother, because I, too, have come to hate their gods and have destroyed them, and caused them to be trampled underfoot by men.\(^*\)

And therefore my father and my mother and my whole family have come to hate me and said, "Aseneth is not our daughter because she destroyed our gods."

And all people hate me,\(^1\) because I, too, have (come to) hate every man, and all who asked for my hand in marriage.

And now, in this humiliation of mine, all have (come to) hate me, and gloat over this affliction of mine.\(^c\)

And the Lord the God of the powerful Joseph, the Most High, hates all those who worship idols, because he is a jealous and terrible god toward all those who worship strange gods.

Therefore he has come to hate me, too, because I worshiped dead and dumb\(^d\) idols, and blessed them,

and my mouth is defiled\(^e\) from their sacrifice(s),

and I do not have the boldness to call on the Lord God of Heaven, the Most High, the Mighty One of the powerful Joseph,\(^r\)

But I have heard\(^q\) many saying that the God of the Hebrews\(^b2\) is a true God, and a living God,\(^c2\) and a merciful God, and compassionate and long-suffering and pitiful and gentle,\(^r2\)

and does not count the sin\(^n\) of a humble person,\(^r2\)

nor expose the lawless deeds of an afflicted person at the time of his affliction.

Therefore I will take courage too and turn to him,\(^t\)

and confess all my sins to him,

Arm. L1; "she sold our": 435&; "I gave to destruction their": a c; gaps EG d 436 Ngr.

t. Order of clauses varies widely since beginning of vs. 5.


w. See 8:5.

x. Gk. ephagon FW Syr. Arm. L1 435&; "fled" (ephygon) AP (-ga) c; gaps E d 436 Ngr.

y. (G)FW Arm. L1 435&; "estranged" a c; gaps E d Syr. 436 Ngr.

z. See 8:9 beginning.

a. Unlike Esther (Additions to Esther 14:5), who "heard" the traditions from her early youth. Cf. TJos 12:3; Josephus, Ant 9.2.1 §20. On "Hebrews" see 1:5.

c2. Cf. e.g. TJob 37:2; 1Thes 1:9.

d2. Cf. e.g. Ex 34:6; Ps 86:15.

e2. Cf. e.g. Ps 32:2; TZeb 9:7; 2Cor 5:19.

f2. The reading "and especially of one who sins in ignorance": added a: gaps G d 436 Ngr; omit rest.

g2. The reading "and . . . him": AP Syr. Arm. L1 435&; omit Q EFW c; gaps rest.
and pour out my supplication before him.²

12 Who knows,² (maybe) he will see my humiliation² and have mercy on me. Perhaps he will see this desolation of mine and have compassion on me, or see my orphanage² and protect me, because² he is the father of the orphans, and a protector of the persecuted, and of the afflicted a helper.²

I will take courage and cry to him.

Aseneth’s second soliloquy on how to take courage to pronounce God’s name

15 And² Aseneth rose from the wall where she was sitting and turned to the window looking east and straightened up on her knees and spread her hands out toward heaven. And she was afraid to open her mouth and to name the name of God.² And she turned again away to the wall and sat and struck her head² and her breast with (her) hand often, and said in her heart without opening her mouth:

(What) a wretched (woman) I (am), and an orphan and desolate, my mouth is defiled from the sacrifices of the idols and from the blessings² of the gods of the Egyptians.

And now, in these tears of mine and the ashes strewn around² and the filth of my humiliation, how shall I open my mouth to the Most High, and how name his terrible holy name, (and be sure) that the Lord will not be angry with me, because in (the midst of) my lawless deeds I have called on his holy name?

What shall I now do, wretched (that) I (am)? I will rather take courage and open my mouth to him and invoke his name. And if in fury the Lord strikes me he himself will again heal me; and if he chastises me with his whips,² he himself will look again on me in his mercy; and if he is furious at me in my sins, he will again be reconciled with me and forgive me every sin. So I will take courage to open my mouth to him.

Aseneth’s confession of sin and prayer for acceptance

19 And Aseneth rose again from the wall where she sat and straightened up on her knees²
'and spread her hand eastward and looked with her eyes up toward heaven, and opened her mouth to God, and said:

12 Lord God of the ages, who created all (things) and gave life (to them), who gave breath of life to your whole creation, who made the (things that) are and the (ones that) have an appearance from the non-appearing and non-being, who lifted up the heaven and founded it on a firmament upon the back of the winds, who founded the earth upon the waters, who put big stones on the abyss of the water, and the stones will not be submerged, but they are like oak leaves (floating) on top of the water, and they are living stones and hear your voice, Lord, and keep your commandments which you have commanded to them, and never transgress your ordinances, but are doing your will to the end. For you, Lord, spoke and they were brought to life, because your word, Lord, is life for all your creatures.

With you I take refuge, Lord, and to you I will shout, Lord, to you I will pour out my supplication, to you I will confess my sins, and to you I will reveal my lawless deeds. Spare me, Lord, because I have sinned much before you, I have committed lawlessness and irreverence, and have said wicked and unspeakable (things) before you.

12 a. Witnesses AP Bat Br prefix "Prayer and Confession of Aseneth," B before "and spread" 11:19 (different script). This heading may have originated as a marginal note slipped into the text at various places. Perhaps an ancestor of B was corrected after a MS of the AP type. Content and form of the confession require analysis; cf. Tob 3:2-6, 11-15; Esth 4:17b-h, 1-z; PrMan; Dan 3:24-45; LXX 4:3-4, also Ezra 9.5-15; Neh 9; Dan 9:4-19; 1Bar 1:15-3.8. On the function of prayer as denoting the turn of a predicament, see the above examples and Jdt 9:2-14; in the romances, cf. Xenophon of Ephesus 1.4.4f.; Apuleius 11.2.

b. The reading "the ages": EG d Syr. Arm. 436 (cf. 16:16; 21:21; Tob 13:7; 13:11 BA; Sir 36:17; 1Clem 35:3; 55:6; 61:2); "the just (plural)" A FW c L1 (cf. PrMan 8); "the powers" PQ; "the heavens" 435&; omit Slav., gap Ngr. On some of the following clauses see further 8.9.

c. Cf. e.g. Gen 2:7; Prov 24:12; Acts 17:25.
d. Cf. Gen 1:2 LXX.
e. One of the essentials of Jewish and Christian cosmology, e.g. Gen 1:2 LXX, WisSol 11:25; 2Bar 21:4; 48:8; 2En 24:2; 24:5-261; Philo, Spec Leg, 4 §187; Sommer 1 §76; Rom 4:17; Heb 11:3; ShepHerm Vision 1.1.6; ShepHerm Mandates 1: AposCon 8.12.7.


g. Or "as."
i. The reading "and . . . winds": (FGW c Syr. Arm. L1 L2); omit a E d; gap Ngr.
j. Cf. e.g. Pss 24:2; 136:6; 2En 28:1f.; 2Pet 3:5; ShepHerm Vision 1.3.4.
k. Cf. e.g. 2En 28:1f.; ShepHerm Similitudes 9.3.3; ShepHerm Vision 3.2.4f.; Apowitzter, HUCA 1 (1924) 271f.
l. The Gk. verb bythisesthai appears in LXX only in 2Mac 12:4.
m. Cf. e.g. Jdt 16:14; Sir 16:27f.; 1QS 3.16f.
n. The reading "but they . . . ordinances": (FW Syr. Arm. L1 L2); omit a d; gaps EG c Ngr. See next note.
o. The reading "but are . . . end": a d; gaps c EG Ngr. 435&; omit rest. Perhaps this is the a d variant of the text cited in previous note, rather than part of the original text. Cf. Rev 2:26; ShepHerm Similitudes 9.27.3.
p. Creation by God's word is another basic principle of Jewish and Christian theology, e.g. cf. Jdt 16:14; Pss 33:9; 148:5; WisSol 9:1; Isa 48:13; Jn 1:3, 10; Heb 11:3; 2Pet 3:5; ShepHerm Visions 1.3.4, 3.3.5; IgnatiusEph 15:1. Cf. 16:11.
q. Cf. e.g. Jn 1:4, 12, 50; Jn 1:1f.; cf. 9.5.
r. Cf. e.g. 1Kgs 8:47; Ps 106:6; 1Bar 2:12; Dan 3:29; 9:5 (Theodotion); ApMos 32; 1QS 1.24f.
My mouth is defiled from the sacrifices of the idols and from the tables of the gods of the Egyptians.

I have sinned, Lord, before you I have sinned much in ignorance, and have worshiped dead and dumb idols. And now I am not worthy to open my mouth to you, Lord.

And I, Aseneth, daughter of Pentephees the priest, the virgin and queen, who (was) once proud and arrogant, and prospering in my riches beyond all people, am now an orphan, and desolate, and abandoned by all people. With you I take refuge, Lord, and to you I bring my supplication, and to you I will shout. For (just) as a little child who is afraid flees to his father, and the father, stretching out his hands, snatches him off the ground, and puts his arms around him by his breast, and the child clasps his hands around his father's neck, and regains his breath after his fear, and rests at his father's breast, the father, however, smiles at the confusion of his childish mind, likewise you too, Lord, stretch out your hands upon me as a child-loving father, and snatch me off the earth.

For behold, the wild old lion persecutes me, because he is (the) father of the gods of the Egyptians, and his children are the gods of the idol maniacs. And I have come to hate them, because they are the lion's children, and have thrown all of them from me and destroyed them. And the lion their father furiously persecutes me, for behold, the wild old lion persecutes me, because he is (the) father of the gods of the Egyptians, and his children are the gods of the idol maniacs.

And I, Aseneth, daughter of Pentephees the priest, the virgin and queen, who (was) once proud and arrogant, and prospering in my riches beyond all people, am now an orphan, and desolate, and abandoned by all people. With you I take refuge, Lord, and to you I bring my supplication, and to you I will shout. For (just) as a little child who is afraid flees to his father, and the father, stretching out his hands, snatches him off the ground, and puts his arms around him by his breast, and the child clasps his hands around his father's neck, and regains his breath after his fear, and rests at his father's breast, the father, however, smiles at the confusion of his childish mind, likewise you too, Lord, stretch out your hands upon me as a child-loving father, and snatch me off the earth.

For behold, the wild old lion persecutes me, because he is (the) father of the gods of the Egyptians, and his children are the gods of the idol maniacs. And I have come to hate them, because they are the lion's children, and have thrown all of them from me and destroyed them. And the lion their father furiously persecutes me.
but you, Lord, rescue me from his hands,
and from his mouth deliver me,
lest he carry me off like a lion,
and tear me up
and throw me into the flame of the fire,
and the fire will throw me into the hurricane,
and the hurricane (will) wrap me up in darkness
and throw me out into the deep of the sea,
and the big sea monster who (exists) since eternity will swallow me,
and I will be destroyed for ever (and) ever.

Rescue me, Lord,
before all this comes upon me.
Rescue me, Lord,
the desolate and solitary,
because my father and my mother disowned me and said,
"Aseneth is not our daughter;"
because I have destroyed and ground (to pieces) their gods,
and have come to hate them.
And I am now an orphan and desolate,
and I have no other hope save in you, Lord,
and no other refuge except your mercy, Lord,
because you are the father of the orphans,
and a protector of the persecuted
and a helper of the afflicted.

Have mercy upon me, Lord,
and guard me, a virgin (who is) abandoned and an orphan,
because you, Lord, are a sweet and good and gentle father.
What father is as sweet as you, Lord,
and who (is) as quick in mercy as you, Lord,
and who (is as) long-suffering toward our sins as you, Lord?

For behold, all the gifts of my father Pentephres,
which he gave me as an inheritance,
are transient* and obscure;
but the gifts of your inheritance, Lord, are incorruptible and eternal.

Be mindful, Lord, of my humiliation
and have mercy upon me.

Look at my orphanage
and have compassion on the afflicted.
For behold, I fled from everything
and took refuge in you, Lord, the only friend to men.
Behold, I left behind all the good (things) of the earth
and took refuge in you, Lord,

i2. The reading "like a wolf": F L2; "like a wolf" d; omit Syr. Arm. L1; gaps rest. Also cf. vs. 9.
k2. Is Aseneth afraid to be tossed across the four elements? Anyway, unlike e.g. Rev 19:20, fire is not the end.
m2. The reading "defenceless": Br and Rie, which is possible for operisatos.

n2. Cf. e.g. Ps 91:9; Jdt 9:14; Add. to Esth 4:17 l. t.
o2. The reading "gifts (domata conjectured)" (G) Syr. Arm. 436 Slav.) Rie; "houses" AP d Bat Br; illegible F; omit Q c: gaps EW L1 435& Ngr. See above, n. o2.
p2. See at 2:1; 3:5.
q2. Gk. proskairos is first attested in Dionysius of Halicarnassus. Cf. 2Cor 4:18, also Mt 6:19–21 parallel; 1Pet 1:4; Jas 1:17.
r2. The reading "gifts": (G Syr. Arm. 436 Slav.) Rie; "houses" AP d Bat Br; illegible F; omit Q c: gaps EW L1 435& Ngr. See above, n. o2.
s2. Cf. e.g. 4Ezra 13:54–56; TJob 4:4–11; 18:5–8; Mk 10:17–31 parallel; Heb 10:34. Conversion often meant leaving one’s property or occupation behind, either as a prerequisite or as a practical consequence, and the values to be gained by the new existence were held out in comfort. Cf. K. Berger, Die Gesetzesauslegung Jesu: Ihr historischer Hintergrund im Judentum und im Alten Testament (Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament 40; Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1972) vol. 1, pp. 422–32; see also 10:11.
in this sackcloth and ashes,\(^a\)
naked and an orphan and left all alone.\(^b\)

3 (2) Behold, I put off my linen royal robe, interwoven with violet and gold,\(^c\)
and dressed in a black mourning tunic.

4 (3) Behold, I loosened my golden girdle and threw it off me
and girded a rope and sackcloth around myself.

5 (4) Behold, my tiara and my diadem I threw off my head,
and have sprinkled ashes (upon it).

6 (5) Behold, the floor of my chamber, paved with colored and purple stones,
which once used to be besprinkled with perfumes
and wiped with bright linen cloths,
is now besprinkled with my tears
and was profaned having been powdered with ashes.

7 (6) Behold, my Lord, from my tears and the ashes
much mud has been formed in my chamber,
as on a broad street.\(^d\)

8 (7) Behold, Lord, my royal dinner\(^e\) and the cereals
I gave to the strange\(^f\) dogs.

9 (8) And behold, seven days and seven nights I was fasting
and ate no bread and drank no water,
and my mouth has become dry as a drum,
and my tongue as a horn,
and my lips as a potsherd,\(^g\)
and my face has fallen,\(^h\)
and my eyes are burning in shame\(^i\) from my many tears,
and my entire strength has left (me).\(^j\)

Behold now, all the gods whom I once used to worship in ignorance:
I have now recognized\(^k\) that they were dumb and dead\(^l\) idols,
and I have caused them to be trampled underfoot by men,
and the thieves snatched\(^m\) those that were of silver and gold.\(^n\)

And with you I have taken refuge, O Lord my God.

Yet you, rescue me from my many deeds of ignorance\(^o\)
and pardon me,

because I have sinned against you in ignorance,
being a virgin,
and have fallen in error unwittingly,\(^p\)
and spoken blasphemous (words) against my lord Joseph,

that he is your son,
as people told me
that Joseph is the shepherd’s son from the land of Canaan.

13 a. A Jewish pair not attested in profane Gk.
"In sackcloth and ashes" is on record only at TJos 15:2; Mt 11:21 parallel Lk 10:13.
b. Cf. 1Tim 5:5; 4Mac 16:10.
c. See 2:8.
d. Cf. Micah 7:10; Zech 9:3. "Broad street" means highway (also 24:20). "Mud of the street" is a common phrase, often employed proverbially, e.g. Ps 18:43 = 2Sam 22:43; 1QSb 5.27.
e. See 10:13.
f. F c D Syr. Arm. 436 Slav.; omit a B Phil; gaps rest.
g. Cf. Ps 22:16.
h. Also 18:3, 4, 7. Cf. Gen 4:5f.; 1Sam 1:18; Jdt 6:9; TJos 7:2.
i. Lit. "became (or, were) in shame of inflammation." This clause is very uncertain, but words to this effect were there. "In shame (en aischyny)" is strange in this context; a word expressing physical, rather than mental, discomfort would be more to the point.
j. The reading "and . . . (me)"; (F Syr. Arm. L2); omit a c; gaps rest. Vs. 10 is as follows: "But you, my Lord (God added A), rescue me from the many deeds of ignorance of mine, and pardon me because I, being a virgin and unwitting, have fallen into error" (transposed here from vss. 12b and 13a) AP (Q); omit c Syr. Arm. L2; vss. 10f. omit G; 10–12 omit d; 10–12a omit F; gaps EW L1 Slav. Ngr.
l. See 8:5.
m. Not consonant with 10:12; 11:4, but with a point made in polemics against idols (e.g. Letter 56f.; Aristides, Apology. 3:2).
n. This clause is in AP c Syr. Arm. L1 436; "and have removed them from my face" added Syr. (Arm.); also L2 after "men" ("and . . . gold" omit 435&); gaps rest. It could be part of the text, but the position is awkward.
And I, the miserable one, have come to believe them and fall into error. And I have despised him and spoken wicked (words) about him, and did not know that he is your son.

For who among men will give birth to such beauty and such great wisdom and virtue and power, as (owned by) the all-beautiful Joseph?

14 Lord, I commit him to you, because I love him beyond my (own) soul.

Preserve him in the wisdom of your grace. And you, Lord, commit me to him for a maidservant and slave. And I will make his bed and wash his feet and wait on him and be a slave for him and serve him for ever (and) ever.

B. ASENETH’S ACCEPTANCE

A man descends from heaven, introduces himself as chief of the angels, and orders Aseneth to dress again

14 And when Aseneth had ceased making confession to the Lord, behold, the morning star rose out of heaven in the east. And Aseneth saw it and rejoiced and said, “‘So the Lord God listened to my prayer, because this star rose as a messenger and herald of the light of the great day.”

* And Aseneth kept looking, and behold, close to the morning star, the heaven was torn apart and great and unutterable light appeared. * And Aseneth saw (it) and fell on (her) face on the ashes. * And a man came to her from heaven and stood by Aseneth’s head. * And he called her and said, “Aseneth, Aseneth.”

And she said, “Who is he that calls me, because the door of my chamber is closed, and the tower is high, and how then did he come into my chamber?” * And the man called her a second time.

q. Cf. e.g. Acts 14:23; 20:32; 1Pet 4:19.

r. Cf. Apuleius 5.6.6.

s. Cf. 6:8.


b. Gk. ἄγγελος, which may also mean “angel,” but “messenger” seems to go better with “herald.”

Besides, the star is not identical with the man (vs. 3). On the morning star as a symbol of new light, life, and renovation, cf. 2Pet 1:11; Rev 2:28; R. Staats, “Die Sonntagnachtgottesdienste der christlichen Frühzeit,” ZNW 66 (1975) 242–63, see esp. pp. 255f.

c. The first day of creation which will be the day of reformation (cf. 2Cor 4:6) or just the day of salvation (OdesSol 41:4; cf. dies salutris Apuleius 11.5.4). The Day of Atonement can also be called “The Great Day” (Isa 1:13 LXX; Aristides, Apology, 14:4), but it is on vii–10, not iv–25.

d. “And . . . looking” (b c Arm. L1 L2 Ngr); omit a d; destroyed Syr.; gap Slav.

e. Cf. e.g. Mk 1:10; Shepherd Vision 1.1.4. On the motif generally, see F. Lentzen-Deis, Die Taufe Jesu nach den Synoptikern: Literarkritische und gattungsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen (Frankfurter Theologische Studien 4; Frankfurt am Main, 1970) pp. 99–127.

f. “Light” is a must for heavenly appearances. It emanates from them (as e.g. vs. 9) or directly from heaven (as here). The sky is torn apart and the supernatural light which fills the upper world leaks out (cf. also Acts 9:3 parallel). So the Gk. should not be translated “a light” (Rie, Phil).

g. Also vs. 10. The proper reaction; cf. e.g. Dan 8:17f.; ApAb 10:2; TJob 3:4; Acts 9:4 parallel.

h. The reading “a man” (anthrōpos): a FG L1 436 Phil; “(one) similar to a man” c (Arm.); “a man of light” B; “the man of God” D; “an angel” W; “the angel of the Lord” (435& Ngr); “a bright angel” Slav.; “a voice” E; destroyed Syr. Similar variants occur at each mention of the man below, with “angel” or the like dominating in a E L1 435& Ngr. (Burchard, Untersuchungen, p. 21). Doubless the “man” was promoted to “angel,” rather than vice versa, as 19.5, 9 confirm, where “man” is attested by virtually all witnesses.

i. Also vs. 6. Double address is frequent in Jewish and early Christian literature, e.g. Gen 46:2; TJob 3:1; 24:1; 25:9; Lk 10:41; Acts 9:4; Berger, Auferstehung, p. 436, n. 31. The angel addresses Aseneth twice before beginning to deliver his message. The idea that a heavenly being has to call three times before it can be believed may be back of this (cf. e.g. LAB 53:4; Jn 21:15–18; Acts 10:10–16; Berger, Auferstehung, pp. 158f.; 451–54, nn. 85–93). See also 4:3; 11:3; Mk 14:32–42 parallel.
And she went to the man into her first chamber and stood before him. And the man said to her, “Remove the veil from your head, and for what purpose did you do this? For have been interpreted as being angels appearing in the form of such persons (Aptowitzter, *HUCA* 1 [1924] 278f.; cf. also Acts 9:12) are no parallels to the thought here.

9. The details of the angel’s description are traditional, cf. e.g. Dan 10:6; ApAb 17:12; ApZeph 9:3f.; Mt 28:3; Rev 1:13–16; 10:1.

r. Gk. *hypolampados kaiomenes* A: “from a burning torch (hypo l.k.)” P c omit G d Arm. L1 L2; destroyed Syr.; gaps Q EFW Ngr. Gk. *hypolampas* is rare, and the meaning “torch” is uncertain; but it is apparently required in Acts 20:8 D.

s. Also 23:16; 28:7. This is a traditional exhortation, e.g. 4 Ezra 6:33; LAB 6:9; 20:5; Mk 6:50 parallel.

t. Or “not to be touched, pure,” as in vss. 14, 15.

u. Unusual. The two girdles seem to be a special mark of virginity; according to 3:6 and 18:6 Aseneth wears only one, presumably around her waist. Girdles around (or above?) the breast are mentioned in ApZeph 9:4; Rev 1:13; 15:6 (*BJ* has “waist” in both instances), but they seem to be in lieu of the ordinary ones. Job’s daughters are given multicolored girdles to gird their breasts (*TJob* 46:9), and these seem to be additional, but they convey protection against the devil, eternal life, and miraculous creativity in poetry and music (*TJob* 46–50), and have nothing to do with virginity.

15 a. The reading “and . . . this”: FW c (Arm.)
you are a chaste virgin today, and your head is like that of a young man." * And Aseneth removed the veil from her head.

And the man said to her, "Courage, Aseneth, chaste virgin. Behold, I have heard all the words of your confession and your prayer. * Behold, I have also seen the humiliation and the affliction of the seven days of your want (of food). Behold, from your tears and these ashes, plenty of mud has formed before your face. * Courage, Aseneth, chaste virgin. For behold, your name was written in the book of the living in heaven; in the beginning of the book, as the very first of all, your name was written by my finger, and it will not be erased forever. * Behold, from today, you will be renewed and formed anew and made alive again, and you will eat blessed bread of life, and drink a blessed cup of immortality, and anoint yourself with blessed ointment of incorruptibility. * Courage, Aseneth, chaste virgin. Behold, I have given you today to Joseph for a bride, and he himself will be your bridegroom for ever (and) ever.

"And your name shall no longer be called Aseneth, but your name shall be City of Refuge, because in you many nations will take refuge with the Lord God, the Most High, and under your wings many peoples trusting in the Lord God will be sheltered, and behind your walls will be guarded those who attach themselves to the Most High God in the name of the Lord."

L1 L2; omit a E d; destroyed Syr.; gaps G Ngr.

b. Aseneth is not declared androgynous (against Philonenko, Joseph et Asénèth, p. 181); her head is not declared a bridegroom's. This may signify that virginity gives a certain equality to the sexes (see 7:7), or that in Judaism both sexes are alike before God. It probably does not mean that JosAsen suggests Jewish virgins should go unveiled (as perhaps some Corinthians did, cf. 1 Cor 11:2-16 and the commentaries thereon), because in 18:6 Aseneth puts on a veil again, albeit "like a bride." c. On vss. 2-10 cf. Apuleius 11.5.1-6.6. There is no analogy to Aseneth's role as City of Refuge, but Lucius will become a model to the "unre­ligious" (11.15.4).

d. First person: GFW c Arm. L2; third ("the Lord" or the like): a d L1; destroyed Syr.; gaps E Ngr. Similarly, vs. 3: "I have seen" (GFW c Arm. L2 versus AP L1 E; destroyed Syr.; gaps Q d Ngr.); vs. 4: "was written," first instance (a G d Ngr.; versus W c L2, perhaps E, illegible F; destroyed Syr.); "was written," second instance (W? c Arm. versus L2, illegible F; destroyed Syr.; gaps rest); vs. 6: "I have given" (b c Arm. L1 L2 versus a d Ngr.; destroyed Syr.). In the retrospective 19:5 "I have given" has no variant in the positive text (illegible F; gap in the name as meaning "ruin" (cf. Heb. "calamity") which was known to Jerome and others which could mean "refuge"; but the author may have failed because there is no word resembling 'As*nat which could mean "refuge"; but the author may have been familiar with an etymology of the name as meaning "ruin") (cf. Heb. 'āṣām "calamity") which was known to Jerome and others (Burchard, Untersuchungen, pp. 92-95). The reading "of the living (plu.)" follows EGW c Arm. L1 436; "of life" a d 435& Ngr.; illegible F; destroyed Syr. This book (also vs. 12x; usually "of life") is a sort of heavenly citizens' register, a common Jewish and Christian idea with roots way back in the ancient Near East; cf. e.g. Ex 32:32f.; Ps 87:6; Jb 30:22; 1QM 12.1f.; Lk 10:20; Rev 20:12, 15. See L. Koen, Das himmlische Buch in Antike und Christentum (Theophaneia 8; Bonn, 1952).

h. "For . . . finger": Gk. with full apparatus in Burchard, Untersuchungen, pp. 54f.; "in the beginning . . ." (Arm. L2); omit E Ngr.; destroyed Syr.; gaps a G d L1. i. The reading "renewed (see 8:9) . . . again" AP (436) Phil; "renewed and made anew" c; "renewed and made alive again (omit D W? Ngr.)" FW d Arm. (L1) Ngr.; "renewed" EG; destroyed Syr.; gaps Q 435&. Cf. Gen 2:7. The two last verbs of the triad may be interpreting the first as in 1 Cor 2:3; 4:9; Eph 2:5; 3:6 (Burchard, ZNW 61 [1970], 169).

j. See 15:2.

k. Vss. 7-8: Gk. with full apparatus in Burchard, Untersuchungen, pp. 55-67. This is one of the most badly damaged passages of the book, especially in the second half of vs. 7. Vs. 7a is taken up in the Passion of St. Irene (Burchard, Untersuchungen, p. 135) in a form apparently close to b.

l. Proselytes often took new names, but there is more to the phenomenon here. Aseneth does not choose a name, she is given one from above like others in biblical tradition, in particular those who have a significance for God's people as a whole (e.g. Gen 17:5, 15; 32:29; 41:45; Isa 62:4f.; 1 Bar 5:4; Zech 8:3; Mt 3:16 parallel; Mt 16:18; Berger, Auferstehung, pp. 198: 562-65, nn. 394-405). That she is called a "City" is necessitated by the concept underlying 15:7 (see Intro.). "City of Refuge (polis kataphygês)" may have been suggested by Zech 2:15 LXX (cf. Isa 54:15; Jer 27 [50]:5) as taken up in the following clause. Perhaps a pun was intended; polis sounds much like pollois, the dative plural of polloi "many" (the Vorlage of L1 actually may have read pollois kataphygês), and behind your wings many nations will take refuge with the Lord God, the Most High, and under your wings many peoples trusting in the Lord God will be sheltered, and behind your walls will be guarded those who attach themselves to the Most High God in the name of the Lord."

m. The reading "trust . . . God": (E) Arm. (L1 436); omit a G d 435&; destroyed Syr.; gaps FW c Slav. Ngr.

n. Cf. e.g. Ps 17:8; 61:5; 63:8.

o. Lit. "in your wall." Gk. teichos may also mean "fortress." p. Gk. hoi proskeimenoi to Thêô is a standing epithet of the proselytes; cf. e.g. Isa 56:6.
of Repentance. For Repentance⁹ is in the heavens, an exceedingly beautiful and good
daughter of the Most High. And she herself entreats the Most High God for you at all
times⁸ and for all who repent in the name of the Most High God, because he is (the) father
of Repentance. And she herself is guardian of all virgins,¹ and loves you very much, and
is beseeching the Most High for you at all times⁸ and for all who repent she prepared a
place of rest in the heavens.⁶ And she will renew all who repent, and wait on them herself
for ever (and) ever. *And Repentance is exceedingly beautiful, a virgin pure and laughing*⁷
always, and she is gentle and meek. And, therefore, the Most High Father loves her,⁵ and
all the angels stand in awe of her. And I, too, love her exceedingly, because she is also
my sister.⁴ And because she loves you virgins, I love you, too.

**Aseneth tries to ascertain the heavenly man’s name**

And when the man had finished speaking these words, Aseneth rejoiced exceedingly
with great joy about all these words and fell down at his feet and prostrated himself face
down to the ground before him, and said to him,** ‘Blessed be the Lord your God the Most
High who sent you out to rescue me from the darkness and to bring me up from the
foundations of the abyss,’**² and blessed be your name forever.² *What² is your name, Lord;
tell me in order that I may praise and glorify you for ever (and) ever.”⁴² And the man said
to her, ‘‘Why do you seek this, my name, Aseneth? My name is in the heavens in the book
of the Most High, written by the finger of God in the beginning of the book before all (the
others), because I am chief of the house of the Most High. And all names written in the
book of the Most High are unspeakable, and man is not allowed to pronounce nor hear
them in this world, because those names are exceedingly great and wonderful and laudable.’’

**Aseneth invites the heavenly man to take food. The mysterious honeycomb which is
bread of life**

And Aseneth said, ‘‘If I have found favor in your sight,’² Lord, and will know that you
will do all your words that you have spoken to me, let your maidservant speak before you.’’
And the man said to her, “Speak (up).” And Aseneth stretched out her right hand and put it on his knees and said to him, “I beg you, Lord, sit down a little on this bed, because this bed is pure and undefiled, and a man or woman never sat on it. And I will set a table before you, and bring you bread and you will eat, and bring you from my storeroom old and good wine, the exhalation of which will go up till heaven, and you will drink from it. And after this you will go out (on) your way.” And the man said to her, “Hurry and bring (it) quickly.”

And the man smiled at Aseneth’s understanding, and called her to himself, and stretched out his right hand, and grasped her head and shook her head with his right hand. And Aseneth was afraid of the man’s hand, because sparks shot forth from his hand as from a comb of honey. And Aseneth knew it was a comb of honey, because she did not have a honeycomb in her storeroom.

And Aseneth entered her storeroom and found a honeycomb lying on the table. And the man said, “Proceed and enter your storeroom, and you will find a honeycomb lying upon the table. Pick it up and bring (it) here.” And Aseneth said, “Lord, a honeycomb is not in my storeroom.” And the man said, “Proceed and you will find (one).”

And Aseneth entered her storeroom and found a honeycomb lying on the table. The comb was big and white as snow and full of honey. And that honey was like dew from heaven and its exhalation like breath of life. And Aseneth entered her storeroom and found a honeycomb lying on the table. And the man said, “Bring me also a honeycomb.”

And Aseneth stood still and was distressed, because she did not have a honeycomb in her storeroom. And the man said to her, “Why do you stand still?” And Aseneth said, “I will send a boy to the suburb, because the field which is our inheritance is close, and he will quickly bring you a honeycomb from there, and I will set (it) before you, Lord.” And the man said to her, “Proceed and enter your storeroom, and you will find a honeycomb lying upon the table. Pick it up and bring (it) here.” And Aseneth said, “Lord, a honeycomb is not in my storeroom.” And the man said, “And the man said to her, “Happy are you, because the ineffable heaven and its exhalation like breath of life."

And Aseneth entered her storeroom and found a honeycomb lying on the table. The man said, “How is it that you said that a honeycomb is not in my storeroom? And behold, you have brought a wonderful honeycomb.” And Aseneth was afraid and said, “Lord, I did not have a honeycomb in my storeroom at any time, but you spoke and it came into being. Surely this came out of your mouth, because its exhalation is like breath of your mouth.”

And the man smiled at Aseneth’s understanding, and called her to himself, and stretched out his right hand, and grasped her head and shook her head with his right hand. And Aseneth was afraid of the man’s hand, because sparks shot forth from his hand as from bubbling (melted) iron. And Aseneth looked, gazing with her eyes at the man’s hand. And the man saw (it) and smiled and said, “Happy are you, Aseneth, because the ineffable heaven and its exhalation like breath of life.”

...
mysteries of the Most High have been revealed to you, and happy (are) all who attach themselves to the Lord God in repentance, because they will eat from this comb. For this comb is (full of the) spirit of life. And the bees of the paradise of delight have made this from the dew of the roses of life that are in the paradise of God. And all the angels of God eat of it and all the chosen of God and all the sons of the Most High, because this is a comb of life, and everyone who eats of it will not die for ever (and) ever."

15 (9) And the man stretched out his right hand and broke a small portion off the comb, and he himself ate and what was left he put with his hand into Aseneth's mouth, and said to her, "Eat." And she ate. And the man said to Aseneth, "Behold, you have eaten bread of life, and drunk a cup of immortality, and been anointed with ointment of incorruptibility. Behold, from today your flesh (will) flourish like flowers of life from the ground of the Most High, and your bones will grow strong like the cedars of the paradise of delight of God, and untiring powers will embrace you, and your youth will not see old age, and your beauty will not fail for ever. And you shall be like a walled mother-city of all who take refuge with the name of the Lord God, the king of the ages." And the man stretched out his right hand and touched the comb where he had broken off (a portion), and it was restored and filled up, and at once it became whole as it was in the beginning.

The heavenly man marks the comb with a cross and makes bees, which encircle Aseneth, rise from it

17 (10) And again the man stretched out his right hand and put his (fore)finger on the edge of the comb looking east and drew it over the edge looking west, and the way of his finger became like blood. And he stretched out his hand the second time and put his finger on the edge of the comb looking north and drew it over to the edge looking south, and the way of his finger became like blood. And Aseneth stood at his left (hand) and watched everything that the man was doing.

17y(13) And the man said to the comb, "Come." And bees rose from the cells of that comb, and the cells were innumerable, ten thousand (times) ten thousand and thousands upon

m. The reading "the ineffable mysteries": AP; "the mysteries" Q F 435&; "the hidden (things)" G Syr. Arm.; "the ineffable (things)" E c d 436; gaps W (L1) Ngr. Split tradition except in AP, or is that reading confute? Anyway, "mysteries" should be retained. The revelation concerns the origin of the honeycomb as recognized in vs. 11 and its nature as described presently, rather than God's mysteries in general.

n. LXX translation of "Garden of Eden," e.g. Gen 3:23. It is in the third heaven, according to ApMos 37:5; 3Bar 4:8; 3En 8:1; there are also the manna mills (b. Hag 12b). Manna is "bread of (or from) heaven," e.g. Neh 9:15; Ps 105:40.

o. "The chosen of God" (cf. e.g. Tob 8:15 BA; 1En 39:1; 61:10; 1Tim 5:21) and "the sons of the Most High" (e.g. Ps 89:7; see Intro.) might be angels or the dead just in paradise, both of which are credited with eating manna (Ps 75:25; WisSol 16:20; LAB 19:5; Meyer, TDNT 4, 462-66), or God's children on earth (17:6; 19:8). Maybe JosAsen does not draw a sharp line between angels and men, God's elect residing on earth and in heaven.

p. The reading from "and" to the end of vs. 16x (all); except omit d; gap W.

q. Lit. plural.

r. Gk. bryousis (present tense): AP c Syr. Br Rie; future Arm. (L1) L2; gaps rest. Gk. bryein (never LXX, NT only Jas 3:11) does not seem to occur in the future tense. It can be either transitive (Br Rie) or intransitive (cf. parallel clause about the bones). Comparison of the well-being of persons to flourishing plants is traditional, e.g. Pss 1:3; 92:13-15; Jer 17:8; below 18:9. Flourishing may also symbolize prolific posterity (cf. TSim 6:2; Targum Isa 53:2).

s. Gk. [apo'tex] gês G Syr. Arm. 436; "garden" 435&; "spring (pégês)" AP c; gaps rest. "Ground" (cf. 18:9) makes a good parallelism with "paradise," but "spring" makes sense too.


u. Cf. Apuleius 11.6.5f. The fulfillment of this begins in 18:9.

v. FG are the only Gk. witnesses from here down to vs. 16x end.

w. Or "of which,".

x. Vs. 17 (G d Syr. Arm. L1 435& Br, also Rie, who put vss. 17-17x first half after vs. 23 as vss. 24f. on the strength of BD)], omit F; gaps EW 436 Ngr.; a c have "But the angel whetted the comb" for vss. 17-17x. Br gives an idea how divergent the evidence is. Vs. 17 is the introduction to the following verses, rather than an episode by itself. So the cruciform mark is preparatory to, and perhaps causal of, the appearance of the bees in vs. 17y. See further vs. 23.

y. Gk. hé hodos D (Syr.) L1 (435& Br) Rie Phil; "the appearance (to eidos)" B Arm. Slav.; omit G ("the hand" for "of his finger"); gaps rest. Same situation at the second occurrence of "the way" (G gap too).

z. "And ... come." (FG Syr. Arm. L1 Ngr.); omit d Br; gaps rest. In G and L1 the man's command is addressed to Aseneth.
18 thousands. 22 • And the bees were white as snow, and their wings like purple and like violet and like scarlet (stuff) and like gold-woven linen cloaks, and golden diadems (were) on their heads, and they had sharp stings, and they would not injure anyone. * And all those bees encircled Aseneth from feet to head.

And other bees were great and chosen like their queens, and they rose from the damaged part of the comb and encircled Aseneth's mouth, and made upon her mouth and her lips a comb similar to the comb which was lying before the man. * And all those bees ate of the comb which was on Aseneth's mouth. And the man said to the bees, “Go off to your place.” * And all the bees rose and flew and went away into heaven. * And those who wanted to injure Aseneth fell to the ground and died. And the man stretched out his staff over the dead bees and said to them, “Rise you, too, and go away to your place.” * And the bees who had died rose and went into the court adjoining Aseneth's house and sought shelter on the fruit-bearing trees.

17 And the man said to Aseneth, “‘Have you seen this thing?’” And she said, “Yes, Lord, I have seen all these (things).” * And the man said to her, “So will be all my words which I have spoken to you today.” * And the man for the third time stretched out his right hand, and touched the damaged part of the comb, and at once fire went up from the table and consumed* the comb, but the table it did not injure. * And much fragrance came forth from the burning of the comb, and filled the chamber.

The heavenly man blesses Aseneth's seven virgins

And Aseneth said to the man, “Lord, with me are seven virgins ministering to me, fostered with me from my childhood, born with me in one night, and I love them as my...
And the man said, “Call them.” And Aseneth called the seven virgins and stood them before the man. And the man blessed them and said, “May the Lord God the Most High bless you. And you shall be seven pillars of the City of Refuge, and all the fellow inhabitants of the chosen of that city will rest upon you for ever (and) ever.”

The heavenly man departs

And the man said to Aseneth, “Put this table away.” And Aseneth turned to put the table away, and at once the man went away out of her sight. And Aseneth saw (something) like a chariot of four horses traveling into heaven toward (the) east. And the chariot was like a flame of fire, and the horses like lightning. And the man was standing on that chariot.

And Aseneth said, “(What a) foolish and bold (woman) I (am), because I have spoken with frankness and said that a man came into my chamber from heaven; and I did not know that (a) god came to me. And behold, now he is traveling (back) into heaven to his place.”

And she said in herself, Be gracious, Lord, to your slave, and spare your maidservant, because I have spoken boldly before you all my words in ignorance.

IV. JOSEPH’S AND ASENETH’S MARRIAGE

Joseph’s second visit is announced. Aseneth’s foster-father notices her fallen face

And as Aseneth was still saying these things to herself, behold, a young man from Pentephres’ servant staff rushed in and said, “Behold, Joseph the Powerful One of God is coming to us today. For a forerunner of his is standing at the gates of our court.”

And Aseneth hurried and called her foster-father, the (steward) of her house, and said to him, “Hurry and make the house ready and prepare a good dinner, because Joseph the Powerful One of God is coming to us today.” And her foster-father saw her, and behold, her face had fallen from the affliction and the weeping and the fasting of the seven days, and he was distressed and wept, and he took her right hand and kissed it and said, “What have you, my child, because your face has fallen so (much)?” *And Aseneth said to him, “My head is stricken with heavy pain, and the sleep kept away from my eyes, and therefore my face has fallen.”

*And her foster-father went away and prepared the house and the dinner.

e. The reading “seven . . . Refuge”: (E Syr. Arm.) L1 (prefixes “like”: Batiffol’s edition omits “seven”) 435&; “pillars (seven pillars Rie) of refuge of seven cities” a (Bat marks “pillars of refuge” off as illegible in A); gaps rest. Cf. Prov 9:1; Philo, Quaes Ex, 1.21 on 12:17; Gal 2:9; Rev 3:12; 1Clem 5:2; ShepHerm Vision 3.8.2. See further Intro.

f. Gk. hai synoikoi (fem.), i.e. “women immigrants.”

g. The reading “went away”: (AP EFW d Syr. L1 436); “became invisible” Q G Arm. 435&? Slav. Ngr. (also 661), also the secondary finale of c (Burchard, NTS 24 [1977] 81).


i. “And” to end of vs. 9 (all); except omit d; gap L2.


k. The reading “(a) god”: AP; with article, i.e. “God” Q; “an angel of the Lord” Arm. (L1 435&); ambiguous Syr. (“God from heaven” Brooks’ edition) 436; gaps rest. See also at 22:3.

18 a. Witnesses EFW Syr. Arm. L1 436 (Ngr.)
18 b. “For . . . court” (b Syr. Arm. L1 L2); omit a d Ngr. (?).
18 c. The reading “her foster father . . . house”: FW (Syr. Arm.) 436; “her foster father” Q G Ngr. (adding “or, her grandfather”); “the (steward) of her house” a E d 435&; gap L1. The man who is probably not identical with Pentephres’ steward (3:4) reappears in vss. 3, 5, 7, 11 as “her foster-father” (FGW Syr. Arm. 436 Ngr., if present) or “the (steward) of her house” (a if present; 435&); never again in d: gap L1. E is lacking in vss. 3, 5, 7, but has both titles in vs. 11. Maybe both titles were there each time. “Foster-father (tropheus)” might also be rendered “personal attendant,” but he seems to be more than that (vs. 3).

18 d. “And . . . to “hurried and” in vs. 5 (all); except “And Aseneth” d; gap L1.
18 f. Cf. e.g. Gen 31:40; 1Mac 6:10.
18 g. The reading “and . . . fallen”: (FGW Arm. L2 Ngr.); omit a Syr.; gaps E d L1.
Aseneth dresses as a bride and is transformed to heavenly beauty

(3) And Aseneth remembered the man (from heaven) and his commandment, 'and she hurried and entered her second chamber where the chests (containing) her ornaments were, and opened her big coffer and brought out her first robe, (the one) of wedding, like lightning in appearance, and dressed in it. *And she girded a golden and royal girdle around (herself)

(4) which was (made) of precious stones. And she put golden bracelets on her fingers and on her feet golden buskins, and precious ornaments she put around her neck in which innumerable costly (and) precious stones were fastened, and a golden crown she put on her head, and on that crown, in front on her brow, was a big sapphire stone, and around the big stone were six costly stones. And with a veil she covered her head like a bride, and she took a scepter in her hand.

(5) And Aseneth remembered the words of her foster-father, because he had said to her, "Your face has fallen." And she sighed and was much distressed and said, "Woe is me, the humble, because my face has fallen. Joseph will see me and despise me."

(6) *And she in appearance, and dressed in it. • And she girded a golden and royal girdle around (herself)

(7) And Aseneth remembered the words of her foster-father, because he had said to her, "Everything is prepared as you except omit d; gaps LI Slav.

(8) Unless I wash my face, I would doubtless have ordered a bath. And when Aseneth saw herself in the water, she was amazed at the sight and rejoiced with great joy, and did not wash her face, for she said, "Perhaps I (will) wash off this beauty." And her foster-father came to say to her, "Everything is prepared as you commanded." And when he saw her he was alarmed and stood speechless for a long time, and he was much filled with fear and was trembling for a long time (are) in heaven" Syr.; "hill of (the) heavens" 436; "Man's island" P (cf. preceding clause); "beautiful tower" Arm. (cf. Song 4:4; 7:5); "much-variegated vine" Ps 92:12f.; Ezek 31:8f.); "much-variegated vine" Ps (cf. preceding clause); "beautiful tower" Arm. (cf. Song 4:4; 7:5); "isles of rest of angels that are) in heaven" Syr.; "hillock of (the) heavens" 436; gaps rest. The original text is obscure.

(9) And when Aseneth saw herself in the water, she was amazed at the sight and rejoiced with great joy, and did not wash her face, for she said, "Perhaps I (will) wash off this beauty." And when her foster-father came to say to her, "Everything is prepared as you have commanded." And when he saw her he was alarmed and stood speechless for a long (time), and was filled with great fear and fell at her feet and said, "What is this, my foster-sister?"

h. See 3:6.

i. The reading "in . . . fastened": (FW Syr. Arm. L2 Ngr.); omit AP d; gaps Q E L1 Slav.


k. The reading "like . . . hand": (GFW Syr. Arm. L2); omit AP; gaps Q E L1 Ngr. "bride" is there.

l. The reading "her foster-sister": FW Arm. L2; "her maidservant" AP B Phil (D); "one of the virgins her companions" Syr.; "the virgins" innumerable costly (and) precious stones were fastened, and a golden crown she put on her head, and on that crown, in front on her brow, was a big sapphire stone, and around the big stone were six costly stones. And with a veil she covered her head like a bride, and she took a scepter in her hand.

m. See 2:12. In a more hellenized environment she would doubtless have ordered a bath.

n. The reading "and . . . basin": details uncertain. Some witnesses also mention a bowl (kogche) such as was used for drawing water. It may belong in the text.

o. Does this scene reflect magical practice involving the mirror effect of water in a basin (Philonenko, Joseph et Asineth, p. 193)? Probably not, because the text neither says that Aseneth had anything but washing in mind, nor that she was transformed because she looked into the water. Aseneth's sudden beauty is in partial fulfillment of 16:16. She comes close to being an angelic creature (see 20:6; cf. Acts 6:15; 2Cor 3:18). The description offers many variants. It is reminiscent of the Song of Songs, the influence of which seems to have grown stronger in the MS tradition.

p. Cf. e.g. Mt 17:2; Rev 1:16; 10:1.

q. The reading "and" to the end of vs. 11: (all); except omit d; gaps L1 Slav.

r. The reading "fields of the Most High": FW Syr. (cf. Song 5:13); "furrows even and beautiful" Arm.; "a star of heaven" A; "the stars of the heaven" P; gaps rest.

s. The reading "and . . . blood": (F Syr. Arm. 436); omit AP W; gaps rest. "Son of man" is a Semitism meaning no more (in this instance) than "a man" (cf. e.g. Jdt 8:16; Ps 8:5; Sir 17:30; TJos 2:5). It is in F Syr. 436 only; "parts of a pomegranate" Arm. (cf. Song 4:37).

t. The reading "of life": FW Syr. L2; "flowering" Arm.; "being red" AP Eth. (see Intro.); gaps rest.

u. The reading "coming . . . fight": (Syr. Arm. L2); "which comes forth from its leaves" Eth. (see Intro.); omit AP FW; gaps rest. Cf. Achilles Tatus 1.4.3 (see Intro.).


w. The reading "all-variegated cypress": A (cf. Ps 92:12f.; Ezek 31:8f.); "much-variegated vine" P (cf. preceding clause); "beautiful tower" Arm. (cf. Song 4:4; 7:5); "isles of rest of angels that are in heaven" Syr.; "hillock of (the) heavens" 436; gaps rest. The original text is obscure.

x. The reading "and . . . God": (Syr. Arm. 436); omit AP; gaps rest. On Arm. cf. Song 2:17; 8:14.

y. A common reaction; cf. e.g. Chariton 3.9.2; 4.1.9; 5.3.9; Apuleius 11.14.1.

z. The reading "he was . . . fear": (FW Syr. Arm. L2); "he was much filled with fear and was trembling for a long time" AP; "he was alarmed"
mistress, and what is this great and wonderful beauty? At last the Lord God of heaven has chosen you as a bride for his firstborn son, Joseph?"2

Joseph arrives and acknowledges Aseneth

19 And while they were still speaking this (way) a boy came and said to Aseneth, "Behold, Joseph is standing at the doors of our court." • And Aseneth hurried and went down the stairs from the upper floor with the seven virgins to meet Joseph and stood in the entrance of the house. • And Joseph entered the court and the gates were closed, and all strangers remained outside.

And Aseneth went out of the entrance to meet Joseph, and Joseph saw her and was amazed at her beauty, and said to her, "Who are you? Quickly tell me." • And she said to him, "I am your maidservant Aseneth, and all the idols I have thrown away from me and they were destroyed. And a man came to me from heaven today, and gave me bread of life and I ate, and a cup of blessing and I drank. And he said to me, 'I have given you for a bride to Joseph today, and he himself will be your bridegroom for ever (and) ever.' And he said to me, 'Your name will no longer be called Aseneth, but your name will be called City of Refuge and the Lord God will reign as king over many nations for ever, because in you many nations will take refuge with the Lord God, the Most High.' • And the man said to me, 'I will also go to Joseph and speak into his ears concerning you what I have to say.' • And now, you know, my Lord, whether that man has come to you and spoken to you concerning me."

And Joseph said to Aseneth, "Blessed are you by the Most High God, and blessed (is) your name for ever, because the Lord God founded your walls in the highest, and your walls (are) adamantine walls of life, because the sons of the living God will dwell in your City of Refuge, and the Lord God will reign as king over them for ever and ever. • For this man came to me today and spoke to me words such as these concerning you. And now, come to me, chaste virgin, and why do you stand far away from me?"

And Joseph said to Aseneth, "Blessed are you by the Most High God, and blessed (is) your name for ever, because the Lord God founded your walls in the highest, and your walls (are) adamantine walls of life, because the sons of the living God will dwell in your City of Refuge, and the Lord God will reign as king over them for ever and ever. • For this man came to me today and spoke to me words such as these concerning you. And now, come to me, chaste virgin, and why do you stand far away from me?"

And Joseph stretched out his hands and called Aseneth by a wink of his eyes. And Aseneth also stretched out her hands and ran up to Joseph and fell on his breast. And Joseph put his arms around her, and Aseneth (put hers) around Joseph, and they kissed and gave her spirit of truth. And he kissed her the third time and gave her spirit of wisdom, and he kissed her the second time and gave her spirit of life, and he kissed her the second time and gave her spirit of wisdom, and he kissed her the third time and gave her spirit of truth.\n
G; "he was filled with fear" Q; paraphrastic E; gaps d L1 Ngr. Perhaps the trembling should go into the text on the assumption of split tradition.

a2. Witnesses a G Arm. Ngr.; "virtue" FW Syr. L2; "grace" E; gaps d L1.
b. The reading "his firstborn son, Joseph" is a reconstruction from "his firstborn son" F Syr. L2; "his son Joseph" A; "Joseph" PQ Arm.; "the most beautiful Joseph" G; gaps rest. Doubtful.

19 a. Traditional formula of transition, e.g. 1Sam 17:23; Job 1:16–18; Mt 9:18; Mk 5:35. On ch. 19 cf. Acts 9:10–17; Apuleius 11.22.4–6; 11.23.1,6; 11.27.7–9. Joseph's role is similar to that of Ananias in Acts 9:10–17 and of the head priest of Isis to whom Lucius rushes after having been told in a dream that the day of his initiation had approached, only to find him informed in the same manner. On the motif of double dreams or visions cf. Acts 9:10–12 and the commentaries thereon.
b. "Who?" to end of vs. 9 (all); except "Come to me, chaste virgin, because I was given good news about you from heaven who (masc!) said to me all the (things) about you" d ("from . . . you" omit D); gap Slav. This is a manifest case of condensation in d with a patent seam before "who."• c. See 15:2.
d. Cf. e.g. Pss 10:16 (9:37 LXX); 146:10; WisSol 3:8; Rev 11:15. Cf. also vs. 8.
e. Cf. also 24:2. The image is traditional, e.g. Gen 20:8; Deut 31:28; ShephHerm Vision 3.8.11; 4.3.6. The phrase expresses audibility, rather than furtiveness.
f. Or "blessed (it will be)," i.e. "it will be praised" (Berger, Auferstehung, p. 563, n. 401; cf. Mk 14:9 parallel)? Also 15:12.
g. The reading "in . . . life": (G Syr. Arm. L2); omit AP; gaps rest.
i. On vss. 8f. cf. Apuleius 11.22.4–6.
j. The reading "by . . . eyes": Syr. Arm. L2 (Ngr.); gaps rest. See next note.
k. The reading "and called . . . breath": (b Syr. Arm. L2 Ngr.); omit a D L1 Phil; gaps B Slav.
l. i.e. "they cheered up"; cf. e.g. Gen 45:27; Jb 31:6; 43:24. This verse seems to contain the first indubitable occurrence of anazan besides Lk 15:24 and Rom 7:9.
m. That life, soul, spirit, or the like can be transferred or exchanged (or taken away, for that matter) by a kiss is a very old idea underlying many kinds of human behavior and ritual, and expressed in a host of texts, both religious and profane (e.g. Gen 2:7; Jn 20:22; OdesSol 28:6f.; Xenophon of Ephesus 1.9.6); in the way of ritual, cf. e.g. the "holy kiss" of the early Church 1Cor 16:20, etc., and the Valentinian "Sacrament of the Bridal Chamber" in GPhil; see generally, I. Löw.
And they embraced each other for a long time and interlocked their hands like bonds.  

Aseneth leads Joseph into the house and washes his feet  

1. And Aseneth said to Joseph, "Come, my Lord, and enter our house, because I have prepared our house and made a great dinner."  
2. And she grasped his right hand and led him into her house and seated him on Pentephres' her father's throne. And she brought water to wash his feet.  
3. And Joseph said, "Let one of the virgins come and wash my feet."  
4. And she urged him and washed his feet another (woman) will never wash."  

Pentephres proposes to give a wedding feast, but Joseph prefers Pharaoh  

And her father and mother and his whole family came from the field which was their inheritance. And they saw her sitting with Joseph and dressed in a wedding garment.

And they were amazed at her beauty and rejoiced and gave glory to God who gives life to the dead.  

"like yourself" (cf. Ruth 1:16f.; Tlos 17:7), rather than an illustration of the lovers' "mystical union" (thus Philonenko, Joseph et Asneth, p. 195).

h. The reading "and...wash": (a d); omit F Syr. Arm. L1 L2 436; gaps EGW 435& Ngr. Cf. Jn 13:8.

i. "And Joseph...scribe" (F Syr. Arm. L1 L2 Ngr. Br); gap E; omit rest. Many variants especially in the last clause (omit F L1). The reading "like the fingers (daktyloï)" (Syr. Br, cf. Arm.) might also be "like the reed pens (kalamos)" (436, cf. 435&; Ps 45:2). The first variant is retained on the assumption that copyists are more likely to clarify a biblical allusion than to obscure it.

j. Or "her"; cf. 4:5.

k. See 5:3.

l. They seem to have been there since 10:1.

m. "And they...heavenly beauty" (FGW Syr. Arm. L1 L2 436 Br); omit a E d 435& (Ngr.?).


o. The reading "and rejoiced": a d (Ngr.); gap G; omit rest. Cf. Apuleius 11.13.4.

p. Cf. e.g. 2Mac 7:28f.; Eighteen Benedictions 2 (see C. W. Dugmore, The Influence of the Synagogue upon the Divine Office [Westminster, 1964] pp. 114–27); Jn 5:21; Rom 4:17; Apuleius 11.16.2; O. Hofius, "Eine altjüdische Parallele zu Röm. IV. 17b." NTS 18 (1971–72) 93f. Around the beginning of our era "He who gives life to the dead" had become all but a definition of God in Judaism. Does this mean that Pentephres and his family embraced Judaism too? The next verse seems to confirm this interpretation. Cf. also "to give glory to God" in Mt 5:16; 1Pet 2:12.

q. The reading "and celebrated": Q Arm. (Ngr.); "and celebrating all (of them)" AP; Br connects it with the following sentence; gap 435&; omit rest. "To eat, drink, and celebrate" is a traditional thieves, e.g. 1Kgs 4:20; Tob 7:10; Eccl 8:15;
(6) And Pentephres said to Joseph, "Tomorrow I will call all the noblemen and the satraps of the whole land of Egypt and give a marriage feast for you, and you will take my daughter Aseneth for (your) wife." • And Joseph said, "I will go tomorrow to Pharaoh the king, because he is like a father to me and appointed me chief of the whole land of Egypt, and I will speak about Aseneth into his ears, and he himself will give her to me for (my) wife."

(7) And Pentephres said to him, "Go in peace." "

1 (20:8) 21 And Joseph stayed that day with Pentephres, and he did not sleep with Aseneth, because Joseph said, "It does not befit a man who worships God to sleep with his wife before the wedding."

Pharaoh solemnizes the marriage and gives a wedding feast

2 (21:1) And Joseph rose at daybreak and went away to Pharaoh and said to him, "Give me Aseneth, daughter of Pentephres, priest of Heliopolis, for (my) wife." • And Pharaoh rejoiced with great joy and said to Joseph, "Behold, is not this one betrothed to you since eternity? And she shall be your wife from now on and for ever (and) ever."

(2) And Pharaoh sent and called Pentephres, and he came and brought Aseneth, and stood her before Pharaoh. • And Pharaoh saw her and was amazed at her beauty and said, "May the Lord, the God of Joseph bless you, child, and let this beauty of yours remain for ever and Aseneth and put golden crowns on their heads which had been in his house from the beginning and of old. And Pharaoh set Aseneth at Joseph's right side, and put his hands on their heads, and his right hand was on Aseneth's head. • And Pharaoh said, "May the Lord God the Most High bless you and multiply you and magnify and glorify you forever."

(4) • And Pharaoh took Joseph and Aseneth and put golden crowns on their heads which had been in his house from the and Aseneth, because he is the firstborn son of God. And you shall be called a daughter of the Most High and a bride of Joseph from now on and for ever."

(5) • And Pharaoh took Joseph and Aseneth and put golden crowns on their heads which had been in his house from the . And Pharaoh set Aseneth at Joseph's right side, and put his hands on their heads, and his right hand was on Aseneth's head. • And Pharaoh said, "May the Lord God the Most High bless you and multiply you and magnify and glorify you forever."

(7) And Pharaoh turned them around toward each other face to face and brought them mouth to mouth and joined them by their lips, and they kissed each other.
8 (6) And after this Pharaoh gave a marriage feast and a great dinner and a big banquet for seven days. And he called together all the chiefs of the land of Egypt and all the kings of the nations and proclaimed to the whole land of Egypt, saying, “Every man who does (any) work during the seven days of Joseph’s and Aseneth’s wedding shall surely die.”

9 (8) And it happened after this, Joseph went in to Aseneth, and Aseneth conceived from

V. ASENETH’S PSALM

10 And then Aseneth began to confess to the Lord God and gave thanks, praying, for all the good (things) of which she was deemed worthy by the Lord:

11 I have sinned, Lord, I have sinned, before you I have sinned much.

I Aseneth, daughter of Pentephres, priest of Heliopolis, who is an overseer of everything.
I have sinned, Lord, I have sinned; before you I have sinned much. I was prospering in my father’s house, and was a boastful and arrogant virgin.

I have sinned, Lord, I have sinned; before you I have sinned much. And I have worshiped strange gods who were without number, and eaten bread from their sacrifices.

I have sinned, Lord, I have sinned; before you I have sinned much. Bread of strangulation I have eaten, and a cup of insidiousness I have drunk from the table of death.

I have sinned, Lord, I have sinned; before you I have sinned much. And I did not know the Lord the God of Heaven, and I did not trust in the Most High God of life.

I have sinned, Lord, I have sinned; before you I have sinned much. For I trusted in the richness of my glory and in my beauty, and I was boastful and arrogant.

I have sinned, Lord, I have sinned; before you I have sinned much. And I despised every man on earth, and there was no one who achieved something before me.

I have sinned, Lord, I have sinned; before you I have sinned much. And I had come to hate all who had asked my hand in marriage, and despised them and scorned them.

I have sinned, Lord, I have sinned; before you I have sinned much. And I spoke bold (words) in vanity and said, “There is no prince on earth who may loosen the girdle of my virginity.”

I have sinned, Lord, I have sinned; before you I have sinned much. But will be the bride of the great king’s firstborn son.

I have sinned, Lord, I have sinned; before you I have sinned much, until Joseph the Powerful One of God came. He pulled me down from my dominating position and made me humble after my arrogance, and by his beauty he caught me, and by his wisdom he grasped me like a fish on a hook, and by his spirit, as by bait of life, he ensnared me.
and by his power he confirmed me, and brought me to the God of the ages and to the chief of the house of the Most High, and gave me to eat bread of life, and to drink a cup of wisdom, and I became his bride for ever and ever.

SECOND PART: PHARAOH'S SON ATTEMPTS TO KIDNAP ASENETH AND RISE TO POWER IN EGYPT

I. JOSEPH'S AND ASENETH'S VISIT TO JACOB

Aseneth meets Jacob

And it happened after this: The seven years of plenty passed and the seven years of famine began to come. And Jacob heard about Joseph his son, and Israel went to Egypt with his whole family, in the second year of the famine, in the second month, on the twenty-first of the month, and dwelt in the land of Goshen.

And Aseneth said to Joseph, "I will go and see your father, because your father Israel is like a father to me and (a) god." And Joseph said to her, "You shall go with me and see my father." And Joseph and Aseneth went to the land of Goshen to Jacob. And Joseph's brothers met them and prostrated themselves face down to the ground before them.

And they went in to Jacob. And Israel was sitting on his bed, and he was an old man in comfortable old age.

And Aseneth saw him and was amazed at his beauty, because Jacob was exceedingly beautiful to look at, and his old age (was) like the youth of a handsome (young) man, and his head was all white as snow, and the hairs of his head were all exceedingly close and thick like (those) of an Ethiopian, and his beard (was) white reaching down to his breast, and his eyes (were) flashing and darting (flashes of) lightning, and his sinews and his shoulders and his arms were like (those) of an angel, and his thighs and his calves and his feet like (those) of a giant. And Jacob was like a man who had wrestled with God. And Aseneth saw him and was amazed, and prostrated herself before him face down to the ground. And Jacob said to Joseph, "Is this my daughter-in-law, your wife? Blessed she will be by the Most High God." And Jacob called her to himself and blessed her and kissed her. And Aseneth stretched out her hands and grasped Jacob's neck and hung herself.

the Isis procession Apuleius noticed hunters, fowlers with lime-sticks, and fishermen with fishing rods and hooks, but it is unlikely that they are symbolic figures (Griffiths, *Isis-Book*, p. 177). The Devil is compared to a fisherman catching different fish with different sorts of bait in the gnostic Authentikos Logos, pp. 29f.

22 a. Jub 45:1 says it was on the 1st day of the 4th month, a Wednesday according to its calendar. See 1:2.

b. Gen 41:53f.; 45:26-46:7; 47:27. The historical Goshen may have been in the northern part of the county of Helipopolis and adjoining regions farther north (Uphill, *JNES* 27 [1968] 291-316 and 28 [1969] 15-39. See also n. e to 1:2), but we do not know where the author thought it was.

c. Note the naive way in which the action starts again. Some words about the whereabouts and situation of the characters known from the first part of the book, which closed some eight years earlier, would certainly be welcome.

d. The reading "like . . . god": AP(Q); "my father"; d; "like (a) god to me" FW (Syr. Arm.) L1 436; gaps EG Ngr. "God" (which must be original even if "father" is not) either means a person of utmost authority (cf. Ex 4:16; Philo, Vit Mos. 1.158; Jn 20:28 is only a formal parallel) or an angelic, godlike being as described in vs. 7; cf. 17:9.

e. The reading "And" to "himself" in vs. 9: (all) except omit d; gap Ngr.

f. Lit. "in fat old age." Classical, not LXX.

g. He has gotten what Aseneth was promised in 16:16 and accorded in 18:9.

h. The reading "like (those) of an Ethiopian": Syr.; "like (those) of an Indian man" Arm. (Aithiops may also mean one of the dark aborigines of India); "his teeth however like (those) of an Ethiopian (Gen 49:12?)" 436; omit a; gaps rest. In our terms "Ethiopian" should be Nubian or Sudane.

i. Gk. charopoioi is very rare; cf. Gen 42:19 BA.

on her father's neck just like someone hangs on to his father's neck when he returns from fighting into his house, and she kissed him. And after this they ate and drank. And Joseph and Aseneth went (back) to their house.

Simeon and Levi see Joseph and Aseneth home

And Simeon and Levi, Joseph's brethren, the sons of Leah, alone escorted them; but the sons of Zilpah and Bilhah, Leah's and Rachel's maidservants, did not escort them, because they envied (them) and were hostile against them. And Levi was on Aseneth's right (side) and Joseph on (her) left. And Aseneth grasped Levi's hand. And Aseneth loved Levi exceedingly beyond all of Joseph's brethren, because he was one who attached himself to the Lord, and he was a prudent man and a prophet of the Most High and sharp-sighted with his eyes, and he used to see letters written in heaven by the finger of God and he knew the unspeakable (mysteries) of the Most High God and revealed them to Aseneth in secret, because he himself, Levi, would love Aseneth very much, and see her place of rest in the highest, and her walls like adamantine eternal walls, and her foundations founded upon a rock of the seventh heaven.

II. THE PLOT OF PHARAOH'S SON AGAINST ASENETH AND JOSEPH

Pharaoh's son fails to persuade Simeon and Levi to help him

And it happened while Joseph and Aseneth were passing by, Pharaoh's firstborn son saw them from the wall. And he saw Aseneth and was cut to the heart, and (for some time) he was heavily indignant and felt sick because of her beauty. And he said, "Thus it shall not be." And Pharaoh's son sent messengers and called to him Simeon and Levi. And the men came to him and stood before him. And Pharaoh's firstborn son said to them, "I know today that you are powerful men beyond all men on the earth, and by these right (hands) of yours the city of the Shechemites has been overthrown, and by these two swords of yours thirty thousand fighting men were cut down. And behold, today I will take you as companions for myself, and give you plenty of gold and silver, and servants and maids

k. Ok. trachilos is distinct from previous auchin, which is the hind part of the neck. Traditional phrase, e.g. Gen 45:15; 46:29: 50:1; 3Mac 5:49; TAb B 6:2.

l. The reading "just . . . him" has been reconstructed on the assumption of split tradition from "just . . . house" (Syr. Arm. 436) and "and . . . him" a (E) d; omit both phrases FW; gaps G L1 Ngr.

m. Tradition, none directly from the Joseph story, is reflected in this verse. The relationship between Simeon and Levi may go back to Gen 34:25-31; 49:5-7, although they are severely censured there, whereas Levi is a thoroughly positive figure in JosAsen (see Intro.) as in ancient Jewish lore generally, and Simeon could be, were it not for his temper (see 23:7). Hostility of Dan, Gad, Naphtali, and Asser, the sons of Zilpah and Bilhah (Gen 30:1-13), against their brothers, especially Joseph, probably was developed on the basis of certain features of Gen 37 and is likewise evidenced in contemporary literature (e.g. TGad 1; Aptowitzter, HUCA 1 [1924] 284f.).

n. Perhaps we should shift the beginning of vs. 13 to the next clause.

o. Those grammatae would be writings such as the Book of the Living (15:4, 12x) or the heavenly tablets read by Jacob (Jub 32:21; Prilos Fragment B), Asser (TAss 5:4), or Enosh (1Esn 103:2; 106:19; cf. further TLevi 5:4; TAss 2:10), rather than letters inscribed in the sky.

p. The reading "by the finger of God": Syr. 436 (cf. 15:4, 12x); omit a d; gaps rest.

q. The reading "and . . . God": G (Syr.) Arm. 436 "read instead of "know"); "and read them" a d; gaps rest. Perhaps a case of split tradition which ought to be reconstructed as "and read . . . and he knew . . ."

r. Cf. Isa 66:1 LXX(7). On the "rest" see Intro.

s. The reading "and her walls . . . heaven": (Syr. Arm. [332 "third," Vous "second" heaven] 436); omit a d; gaps b L1 Ngr.

23 a. The reading "when they were going away to Jacob (absolute genitive)"; added A(PQ); gap Ngr.; omit rest.


c. The reading "and was . . . sick"; (all); except "he became mad about her" AP(Q) d. Cf. 6:1; 7:3.

d. "And . . . be" (all); except omit a G d; gap Ngr. See also 4:11.

e. See 4:7.


g. "And . . . myself" (a b Syr. Arm. 436); "And behold I will take you for my assistance today" B; "But I ask you for my assistance; hurry D (L1); gaps Slav. Ngr. Phil adopts both D and the majority reading (following F). "Companions" denotes members of Pharaoh's son's retinue (see also vs. 4), not just "pals."
And Simeon and Levi drew their swords from their sheaths and said, "Behold, have you drawn your swords and shown them to Pharaoh's son with rage, and there was not the slightest expression of fear in his face. And Levi said to Pharaoh's son with frankness, 'And now, come assist me, and we will make war on Joseph your brother, and I will kill him with my sword, and have Aseneth for (my) wife, and you will be to me brothers and faithful friends.'

However, do this thing. But if you are too cowardly to do this thing, and despise my purpose, behold, my sword is prepared against you.'

And while he was saying this, he exposed his sword and showed it to them.

But when the men, Simeon and Levi, heard these words, they were exceedingly cut (to the heart), because Pharaoh's son had spoken to them in a tyrannical fashion. And Simeon was a daring and bold man, and he intended to lay his hand on the handle of his sword and draw it from its sheath and strike Pharaoh's son, because he had spoken defiant things to them. And Levi saw the intention of his heart, because Levi was a prophet, and he was sharp-sighted with (both) his mind and his eyes, and he used to read what is written in the heart of men.

And Levi trod with his foot (on) Simeon's right foot and pressed it and (thus) signaled him to cease from his wrath. And Levi said to Simeon quietly, 'Why are you furious with anger with this man? And we are men who worship God, and it does not befit us to repay evil for evil.'

And Levi said to Pharaoh's son with frankness, his face cheerful, 'And now, listen to my words. It does not befit a man who worships God to injure anyone in any way. And if anyone wants to injure a man who worships God, that (first-mentioned) man who worships God does not succor him (the injurer), because a sword is not in his hands. And you at least guard against speaking injurious words such as these? And we are men who worship God, and our father is a friend of the Most High God, and Joseph our brother is like the firstborn son of God. And how could we do this wicked thing, and sin before our God and before our father Israel? And before our brother Joseph?' And now, listen to my words. It does not befit a man who worships God to injure anyone in any way. And if anyone wants to injure a man who worships God, that (first-mentioned) man who worships God does not succor him (the injurer), because a sword is not in his hands. And you at least guard against speaking injurious words such as these. But if you insist on this wicked purpose of yours, behold, our swords are drawn in our right hands before you.'

And Simeon and Levi drew their swords from their sheaths and said, 'Behold, have you important ethical principles held up in JosAsen. The only exact parallels are Rom 12:17; 1Thes 5:15; 1Pet 3:9 and later on ApSedr 7:7; Letter of Polycarpus, 2.2. See further Intro.

Esther keeps up a cheerful face in spite of a fearful heart (Esth 5:1b).

The reading "does our Lord": AP EFW Syr. Arm. L1 436; "do you, my lord" (Q) gap. Gnr. Cf. Gen 44:7 LXX.

Witnesses a FW 436; "near and beloved" Syr.; "beloved" Arm. (as in following clause, where d also has it instead of "son"); "slave" d; "puer" ("child" or "servant") L1; "guest" Slav.; gaps EG Ngr. The title "friend of God" is here drawn from Jewish tradition, which applied it above all to Abraham, but Egyptian and Greek tradition (e.g. Epicetus, Diss., 2.17.29; the Stoic) have it too (G. Stählin, "philos etc.,") TDNT 9, 146–71.

Lit. "word (réma)," also vs 5 and 24:14. A biblicism; cf. e.g. Gen 18:25. See also 17:1.

Witnesses AP Syr. L1 436; "Jacob" GW Arm.; omit F; gaps rest.


q. The reading "and he was . . . men": (G Syr. Arm. 436); "and he saw in advance all the (things) to come" (B) D Phil; omit AP EF; gaps rest. For this description of a prophet see e.g. Lk 7:39, also Mk 2:8 parallel; Jn 2:25.

r. The reading "with anger": E Syr. ? Arm. (436); omit a G d; gaps rest. "To be furious with anger (thymousaiti orgé)" is prevalent in LXX, e.g. Gen 39:19.

s. Also 29:3, cf. 28.5, 14, one of the most important ethical principles held up in JosAsen. The only exact parallels are Rom 12:17; 1Thes 5:15; 1Pet 3:9 and later on ApSedr 7:7; Letter of Polycarpus, 2.2. See further Intro.
seen these swords? With these two swords the Lord God punished the insult of the Shechemites (by) which they insulted the sons of Israel, because of our sister Dinah whom Shechem the son of Hamor had defiled." *And the son of Pharaoh saw their swords drawn and was exceedingly afraid and trembled over his whole body, because their swords were flashing forth (something) like a flame of fire, and the eyes of Pharaoh’s son darkened, and he fell on his face on the ground beneath their feet. *And Levi stretched out his right hand and grasped him and said to him, “Rise and do not be afraid. Only guard against speaking any longer a wicked word about our brother Joseph.” *And Simeon and Levi went away from the presence of Pharaoh’s son.

Pharaoh’s son enlists the help of Dan and Gad, Naphtali and Asher. They set up an ambush for Aseneth

1 And the son of Pharaoh was full of fear and distress, because he was afraid of Joseph’s brothers, Simeon and Levi, and he was still weighed down by Aseneth’s beauty and distressed with great overwhelming distress. *And his servants said to him into the ear, saying, “Behold, the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah, Leah’s and Rachel’s maidservants, Jacob’s wives, are hostile to Joseph and Aseneth and envy them. And these will be in your power according to your will.” *And Pharaoh’s son sent messengers and called them to himself. And they came to him at the first hour of the night and stood before him. And Pharaoh’s son said to them, “I have a word (to say) to you, because you are powerful men.” *And Dan and Gad, the elder brothers, said to him, “Let our lord say to his servants what he wants (to say), and your servants will listen, and we will do according to your will.” *And Pharaoh’s son rejoiced exceedingly with great joy and said to his servants, “Withdraw from me a little, because I have a confidential word (to say) to these men.”

And they all withdrew.

And Pharaoh’s son lied to them and said, “Behold, blessing and death (are set) before your face. Take now rather the blessing and not the death, because you are powerful men and will not die like women, but be brave and avenge yourself on your enemies. *For I heard Joseph your brother saying to Pharaoh my father concerning you, ‘Children of my father’s maidservants are Dan and Gad and Naphtali and Asher, and they are not my brothers. And I will wait for my father’s death and (then) I will blot them out from the earth and all their offspring lest they share the inheritance with us, because they are children of maidservants.’ *And these (men) have sold me to the Ishmaelites, and I will repay them according to the whole insult of theirs which they committed against me wickedly. Only let my father die (first).” *And Pharaoh, my father, commended him and said to him, ‘Well you have spoken, child. Then, take from me men (who are) powerful in fighting and go out to meet them in accordance with what they did to you. And I will be a helper to you.’ ”

And when the men heard the words of Pharaoh’s son, they were exceedingly troubled...
and distressed and said to Pharaoh’s son, “We beg you, lord, help us.” * And Pharaoh’s son said to them, “I will be a helper to you if you hear my words.” * And the men said, “Behold, we are your servants before you.” Give us orders, and we will do according to your will.” * And Pharaoh’s son said to them, “I will kill my father Pharaoh this night, because Pharaoh my father is like a father to Joseph and said to him (that he would) help him against you. And you kill Joseph. And I will take Aseneth for a wife for myself, and you will be brothers to me and fellow heirs of all my (things). However, do this thing.” * And Dan and Gad said to him, “We are your servants today, and will do everything that you have ordered us. And we have heard Joseph saying to Aseneth today, ‘Go tomorrow to the field (which is) our inheritance, because it is the hour of the vintage.’ And he gave (as an escort to be) with her six hundred men powerful in fighting and fifty forerunners. * And now, listen to us, and we will speak to our lord.” * And they spoke to him all their secret words (and said), “Give us men for war.” * And Pharaoh’s son gave to the four brothers five hundred men each, and them he appointed their chiefs and commanders.

And Dan and Gad said to him, “We are your servants today, and will do everything that you have ordered us. We will go by night and set up an ambush in the wadi, and hide in the thicket of the reeds. And you, take with you fifty bowmen on horses, and go far ahead of us.” And Aseneth will come and fall into our hands. And we will cut down the men who are with her. And Aseneth will flee ahead with her carriage and fall into your hands, and you will do to her as your soul desires. And after that we will kill Joseph as he is distressed over Aseneth, and his children we will kill before his eyes.” * And Pharaoh’s son rejoiced when he heard these words. And he sent them out and two thousand fighting men with them.

And they came to the wadi and hid in the thicket of the reeds. (And) they split into four detachments. And there were sitting across the wadi, on the forward section as it were, on this side of the road and the other five hundred men each; likewise on this side of the wadi the rest were waiting, and they, too, were sitting in the thicket of the reeds, on this side of the road and the other five hundred men each. And between them the road (was) wide and spacious.
Pharaoh's son fails to kill his father and takes up his position in the ambush

1 (1) 25 And Pharaoh's son rose in that night and went to the chamber of his father in order to kill his father with a sword. And his father's guards prevented him from going in to his father and said to him, "What are your orders, lord?" 2 (2) And Pharaoh's son said to them, "I want to see my father, because I am going out to harvest (the vintage of) my newly-planted vineyard." But the guards said to him, "Your father suffers from a headache and lay awake all night, and now he is resting a little. And he said to us, 'Let no one come close to me, not even my firstborn son.'" 3 (3) And when he heard this, Pharaoh's son went away hurriedly and took with him fifty mounted bowmen and went away at their head, just as Dan and Gad had spoken to him.

Naphtali and Asher, bitten by remorse, fail to refrain Dan and Gad

5 (5) And the younger brothers, Naphtali and Asher, spoke to their older brothers, Dan and Gad, saying, "Why do you once again act wickedly against our father Israel and against our brother Joseph? And him the Lord is guarding like an apple of the eye. Behold, have you not sold him once, and now he is king of the whole land of Egypt and savior and grain giver? And now again, if you should attempt to act wickedly against him, he will cry to the Most High, and he will send fire from heaven, and it will consume you, and the angels of God will fight for him against you." And their older brothers, Dan and Gad, were angry at them and said, "But shall we die like women?" That would be absurd. And they went out to meet Joseph and Aseneth.

III. ASENETH FALLS INTO THE AMBUSH AND IS RESCUED

BY JOSEPH'S BROTHERS

Aseneth is caught in the ambush and Levi alarms his brothers

1 (1) 26 And Aseneth rose at daybreak and said to Joseph, "I will go, just like you have said, to the field (which is) our inheritance. And my soul is anxious, because you are parting..."
And Aseneth was fleeing ahead, and behold, Pharaoh’s son and fifty horsemen with him met her. And Aseneth saw him and was afraid and troubled very much, and her whole body trembled. And she called on the name of the Lord her God.

Benjamin wounds Pharaoh’s son and kills his troops with stones

And Benjamin sat at Aseneth’s left (hand) in her carriage. And Benjamin was a boy of eighteen years, big and strong and powerful, and there was unspeakable beauty on him, and strength like (that of) a lion cub, and he feared the Lord exceedingly. *And Benjamin leapt down from the carriage and took a round stone from the wadi and filled his hand and hurled (the stone) at Pharaoh’s son and struck his left temple and wounded him with a heavy wound. *And Pharaoh’s son fell down from his horse on the ground, being half dead. *And Benjamin leapt and went up upon the rock, and said to Aseneth’s charioteer,

**Give me stones from the wadi.** *And he gave him fifty stones. And Benjamin hurled them on their arms, and they took their spears in their right hands, and pursued after Aseneth in rapid course.

b. A adds “rejoicing (masculine) completely, (by) nothing or “no one”) being frightened (protomen)”; PQ add “rejoicing (feminine) no word doing (protomen)”; gaps EG LI Slav. Ngr.; omit rest.


d. Cf. e.g. Ps 120:7; Jud 12:29; 31:24; 1QS 2.3.

e. Gk. stiotostia, in LXX only Gen 42:19, 33, no equivalent in MT. Also cf. vs. 4.

f. Witnesses FW Arm. LI (436); “grain” AP d Syr.?; omit E Slav.; gaps Q G Ngr.

g. Cf. Gen 6:11. If this vs. in Gen is alluded to we should perhaps translate, “... surely not grow corrupt in the Lord’s sight.” Cf. further Gen 41:36; 47:13.

h. The reading “those ... amputa”: b (“for them” added) G Arm. 436 (LI) Slav. (added “for her”); “the men” Syr.; “those around Pharaoh’s son” APQ d (against 24:19); gap Ngr.

i. Lit. “in mouth of sword,” the well-known biblical phrase, e.g. Gen 34:26; Jdt 2:27; Sir 28:18; Lk 21:24.

j. Cf. Mk 2:8; see Intro.

k. The reading “the son ... he”: (a d); cf. “And as Levi and Benjamin saw (singular)” Ngr. (but context is garbled); omit rest including Slav.

l. As often, kindynos means “predicament,” rather than “risk.”

m. The reading “the sons of Leah”: E Syr. Arm. 436 Ngr.; “the sons of Israel” (FGW); omit rest.

n. Lit. “meets (apantai).”

27 a. He appears unexpectedly. ISam 17, especially vss. 48–51, have inspired the following verses and 29:2. This explains why Benjamin is a “boy” despite his eighteen years (on those cf. 1:4 and also TL evi 12:5).

b. “And ... carriage” (EF G W (“right”) for “left” E G Arm. (436); “And Benjamin was sitting with her (w. h. omit Slav.) on the carriage at (the) right (side)” (“at ... side” omit d only) (a d); “Benjamin however with her was in the carriage” Syr.; “Benjamin however (just as he was on Aseneth’s carriage with her)” L1; “Sat however also near her in her right part Benjamin the son of Jacob or rather the brother of Joseph” Ngr.

c. Cf. Gen 49:9 (Judah). Benjamin’s description varies considerably. Maybe more can be made of the evidence.

d. The expression appears to mean that he “gripped the stone firmly.” Cf. 2Kgs 9:24, lit. “And Jehu filled his hand with the bow.”

e. Witnesses A EF Syr. Arm. (436); “great and heavy” G Slav. Phil; “great” Ngr.; gaps d L1.


g. See vs. 5. Perhaps we should prefix “fifty.”
the fifty stones and killed the fifty men who were with the son of Pharaoh. And all the stones penetrated their temples.

**Levi and his brothers kill the troops of Dan and Gad**

6 (6) And the sons of Leah, Ruben and Simeon, Levi and Judah, Issachar and Zebulun, pursued after the men who had been lying in ambush for Aseneth and fell upon them unawares and cut them all down; and the six men killed two thousand.

**Dan and Gad, Naphtali and Asher try to kill Aseneth, but their swords turn to ashes**

7 (7) And their brothers, the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah, fled from their presence and said, "We have been destroyed by our brothers, and Pharaoh's son has died by the hand of Benjamin the boy, and all (who were) with him have been destroyed by the one hand of the boy Benjamin. *And now,* come, let us kill Aseneth and Benjamin and flee into this thicket of reeds." *And they came toward Aseneth holding their swords drawn, full of blood.*

8 And Aseneth saw them and was exceedingly afraid and said:

"Lord my God, who made me alive again and rescued me from the idols and the corruption of death, who said to me, "Your soul will live for ever," rescue me from the hands of these wicked men.

9 And the Lord God heard Aseneth's voice, and at once their swords fell from their hands on the ground and were reduced to ashes.

**The wicked brothers give up and ask Aseneth to intercede for them with Levi and his brothers**

10 And Aseneth said to them, "Courage, and do not be afraid of your brothers, because

h. In a G d the number of stones and men, if present, is fifty (G d have it also in vs. 4); in EFW Syr. Arm. Ngr. it is forty-eight; in 436 forty-nine; Slav. has fifty in vs. 4, forty-eight in vs. 5; gap L1. Fifty is consonant with 24:19; 25:4; 26:7. Maybe Dan and Gad have been deducted erroneously to make forty-eight.


j. The variants are too numerous to list here.

k. "And now" b d Syr. (436 Slav.); "and now they say" (or "said") Arm.; "Anyway therefore (omit Q) the (omit A) left behind (plural) said": a Bat ("the" omit "left... said" in square brackets; omit Br Rie); gaps L1 Ngr.


m. The reading "and rescued . . . death": AP(Q): "out of death" b Syr. Arm. 436 Slav. Phil: gaps d L1 Ngr. The a reading has been adopted on the principle of lector longior (see Intro.) and because "rescued" makes a good parallelism with "rescue," but the evidence is poor. Cf. Rom 7:24.

n. The mention of an afterlife of the "soul" does not by itself prove that JosAsen believes in its immortality (against Philonenko, Joseph et Asé


b. The reading "and . . . Joseph": a B (D) Phil; gaps L1 Ngr.; omit rest.

c. Cf. e.g. Ps 62:12; Prov 24:12; Sir 35:24; Rom 2:6; 2Cor 11:15.

d. Vss. 5f. (a B; vs. 5 in square brackets Bat, omit Br); omit d B (but in vs. 7 D Phil have "not repaying evil for evil" for "fearing . . . man," a vestige of the a B reading?) Syr. Arm. 436 Slav. Br Phil; gaps L1 Ngr. Vs. 5 will have to be taken as a self-correction ("And yet we know . . .") to make sense after vs. 4.
the men who worship God and fearing God and respecting every man. But go into this thicket of reeds, until I appease them concerning you and make their anger cease, because you acted in great boldness against them. Courage now, and do not be afraid. Besides, the Lord will judge between me and you. And Dan and Gad and their brothers fled into the thicket of reeds.

Aseneth appeases Simeon and his brothers

And behold, the sons of Leah came running like three-year-old stags against them. And Aseneth descended from the carriage (that gave) her shelter and gave them her right hand with tears, and they, falling (down), prostrated themselves on the ground before her, and wept in a loud voice; and they were seeking their brothers, the sons of their father's maidservants, in order to do away with them. And Aseneth said to them, "I beg you, spare your brothers and do not do them evil for evil, because the Lord protected me against them, and shattered their swords, and they melted on the ground like wax from the presence of fire. And this is enough for them that the Lord fights against them for us. And you, spare them because they are your brothers and your father Israel's blood."

And Simeon said to her, "Why does our mistress speak good (things) on behalf of her enemies? No, but let us cut them down with our swords, because they (were) first (to) plan evil (things) against us and against our father Israel and against our brother Joseph, this already twice, and against you, our mistress and queen, today." And Aseneth stretched out her right hand and touched Simeon's beard and kissed him and said, "By no means, brother, will you do evil for evil to your neighbor. To the Lord will you give the right to punish the insult (done) by them. And they are your brothers and your fathers, Israel's line, and they fled far from your presence. Anyway, grant them pardon."

And Levi went up to her and kissed her right hand and perceived that she wanted to save the men from their brother's anger so that they would not kill them. And they were nearby in the thicket of reeds. And Levi their brother perceived it and did not declare it to his brothers. For he was afraid that in their anger they might cut them down.

Levi tries to save the life of Pharaoh's son

And Pharaoh's son rose from the ground and sat up and spat blood from his mouth, because the blood from his temple ran down over his mouth. And Benjamin ran up to him and took his sword and drew it from its sheath, because Benjamin did not have a sword on his thigh, and set about to strike the breast of Pharaoh's son. And Levi ran up to him and grasped his hand and said, "By no means, brother, will you do this deed, because we are men who worship God, and it does not befit a man who worships God to repay evil for evil nor to trample underfoot a fallen (man) nor to oppress his enemy till death. And now, put your sword back into its place, and come, help me, and we will heal him of his wound; and if he lives, he will be our friend after this, and his father Pharaoh will be like our father."
And Levi raised Pharaoh’s son from the ground and washed the blood off his face and tied a bandage to his wound, and put him upon his horse, and conducted him to his father Pharaoh, and described to him all these things. And Pharaoh rose from his throne and prostrated himself before Levi on the ground and blessed him.

IV. THE END

And on the third day Pharaoh’s son died from the wound (caused by the impact) of the stone of Benjamin, the boy. And Pharaoh mourned exceedingly for his firstborn son, and from the mourning he fell ill; and Pharaoh died at a hundred and nine years, and left his diadem to Joseph. And Joseph reigned as king in Egypt for forty-eight years, and after this he gave the diadem to Pharaoh’s younger offspring, who was at the breast when Pharaoh died. And Joseph was like a father to Pharaoh’s younger son in the land of Egypt all the days of his life.


D. (All), except “they d.” G L1 Ngr. Phil (no footnote); gaps E Slav.

e. The reading “and blessed him”: a B Arm.; “and he lifted up his son from the ground” 436; “Pharaoh however was grateful to them that they had not killed him” vs. 6 L1; omit FG D Syr. Phil; gaps EW Slav. Ngr.

f. Arm. ends here.

g. The reading “a hundred and nine”: A E d: “99” GW L1; “199” F; “190” Ngr.; “170” PQ; “177” Syr.; “160” 436, uncertain Slav. If the number 109 is correct; Pharaoh died one year before the ideal age of 110 years, which Joseph reached (Gen 50:26).

h. Similar figures in Jewish lore; cf. Aptowitzter, HUCA 1 (1924) 286.

i. The reading “all . . . life”: Syr.; “until his death glorifying and lauding God” a (B); omit EG D L1 436 Phil; W stopped after vs. 9 “years,” F at some point after “offspring in Egypt” (illegible); Arm. after vs. 7 “died,” Slav. after vs. 9 “son,” Ngr. after vs. 9 “years”; “celebrating with the all beautiful Aseneth, this all beautiful Joseph” added 671; “Joseph however made with Aseneth two sons, Manasse and Ephraim [cf. 21:9], and saw children of his children” added 661. The text is doubtful; a might be given preference on the strength of Tob 14:15f.; Tab B 14:7, but perhaps we should break off after “of Egypt.” Most witnesses add some historical remarks from Gen or Ex, an admonition, a note of completion, giving the title of the book, a doxology, a colophon, or a combination of such items; a adds Gen 50:22b-26 LXX, which is a remark about Aseneth’s death and burial, and a doxology.