**This is how we met**

**The story of the Egyptian Empire** began around 3150 BCE. Pharaoh **Narmer** united the tribes of Egypt into one kingdom, and for some 3500 years the Egyptian empire experienced periods of **prosperity and decline** under the dynasties of multiple **pharaohs**.

The Egyptians had a **strong** **connection** with Canaan that began with trade relations around 3500 BCE and lasted until the start of a depression in Egypt (circa 2200 BCE). Egypt's **weakness** on the one hand, and the strengthening of the Canaanite cities on the other, spurred Egypt’s **fear** of the Canaanites, and incited the writings of execration texts **-** **curses** against Canaanite cities - upon bowls and figurines that would then be shattered in a **magical ceremony**. The Egyptians' fear was justified: Around 1700 BCE, the Nile delta was **conquered** by **Canaanites** who settled there and established a kingdom. These Canaanites (**Hyksos** in Greek), who were considered pharaohs, renewed their trade relations with Canaan.

After approximately 150 years of rule in northern Egypt, Pharaoh Ahmose **expelled** the Hyksos and **invaded Canaan**. This invasion began when the Egyptian empire reached its peak and lasted for about 400 years. Canaan then became part of the Egyptian empire, and **governors and military corps** settled the country.

Egypt's interest in Canaan stemmed from several motivating factors: **preventing** the Canaanites from taking over northern Egypt, the desire to **create a barrier** between the northern empires of Canaan (the Mitanni, the Hittite) and Egypt, and the desire to **exploit** Canaan's economy– agricultural produce and commerce.

Around 1200 BCE, **changes** took place in the Middle East that led to the **collapse** and weakening of empires in the area. Many cities in Canaan were destroyed and Egypt was weakened but continued to maintain most of its strongholds in Canaan until the time of Ramses VI (1130 BCE).

Even after **Egypt withdrew** from Canaan, the pharaohs tried to intervene in its internal affairs. The most famous of all was Pharaoh Shishak, who tried to form an alliance with King **Jeroboam** (the kingdom of Israel) against King **Rehoboam** (the kingdom of Judah).

Finally, Shishak embarked on a military campaign (925 BCE), the main purpose of which was to regain control of the country's trade routes, yet despite his numerous victories he was unable to regain control of Canaan.

**Egyptian Society**

From **trade settlements** in the third millennium BCE to **garrison stations** from the middle to the end of the second millennium, most of the Egyptians who lived in Canaan were merchants, soldiers, officials and governors.

The Egyptians who lived in Canaan were incorporated into the **hierarchy** of Egyptian society at large. This society consisted of a single ruler - a **Pharaoh** - who ruled over all of Egypt. Directly under him were governors, officials and commanders, and hence the Egyptians in Canaan were also **under** **his command**.

The Egyptians **lived** in outposts and strongholds between and within the Canaanite settlements, and apparently also **married** Canaanite women. These circumstances led to extensive cultural influences and reciprocity between the **two peoples**. However, the Egyptians saw themselves as the **crown of creation** and the peoples around them as their inferiors: The Canaanite kings addressed the Pharaoh as **slaves to their master**, and foreigners who lived in Egypt were considered a disturbance to the proper order.

Nevertheless, there is evidence of Canaanites who served in the **Egyptian government** apparatus, and the exchange of gifts between the Pharaohs and the Canaanite kings served as an accepted diplomatic strategy.

**Law and Order**

The Egyptian Empire instituted **administrative mechanisms** in Canaan designed to strengthen **control** of the kings of Canaanite cities and ensure the **flow of taxes** to Egypt. The taxes included mainly **agricultural produce**, **cattle**, **and forced laborers**. The Canaanite rulers were also required to equip the Pharaoh's troops on their way to suppressing rebellions. **Pharaoh Thutmose III** established this form of administration in Canaan after the suppression of a centralized rebellion of the Canaanite kings.

Canaan was divided into three **districts**: Gaza, Koumidi (Lebanon) and Sumor (Syria). **Strongholds and administrative centers** inhabited by Egyptian governors were built along roads, near ports, and within the Canaanite cities themselves. In the strongholds were large warehouses that collected taxes and provided for the needs of the Pharaoh's people who passed through Canaan.

To ensure the **loyalty** of the Canaanite kings, their sons were taken to be educated in the Egyptian court, where they were held as **hostages**, and when they returned to reign in their cities they remained loyal to Pharaoh.

In a **state archive** that was discovered in the city of al-Amarna in Egypt, about 150 documents were found from southern Canaan, sent **from Canaan's kings to the Pharaoh**. The documents indicate that the Pharaoh was called upon to impose order in rogue cities and to solve problems among the Canaanite city rulers. Nevertheless, the rulers conducted their internal affairs independently, so long as they maintained **loyalty** and sent their **taxes to Egypt**.

**The Economy**

Amid the consolidation of the Egyptian kingdom at the end of the fourth millennium BCE, the Egyptians established a **system** that regulated **trade** between Canaan and Egypt. Egypt's **commerce** was **state-run** in nature, and Egyptian commercial stations in Canaan (such as Ein ha-Besor, Tel Erani and Azor) were established to regulate the import of olive oil, wine and copper to the **Egyptian elite**.

The **goods** were transported on donkeys and moved along the coastal road that also passed along the **Sinai coast** - part of the Ways of Horus. Around 3000 BCE, with the development of **sailing** that led to the transport of trees from Jabal (Lebanon), the trade was diverted to northern Canaan and these stations were abandoned. The conquest of the Nile Delta (around 1700 BCE) by the Hyksos (Canaanites) led to renewed trade with Canaanite **port cities**, such as Ashkelon and Jaffa. The Egyptian strongholds that were intended to control Canaan were built near the main **commercial routes** (Tel Mor, Afek, Beit Shean, and Jaffa), enabling safe passage for merchants on land and sea.

For 400 years agricultural produce and wood from Canaan, copper from Cyprus, silver from Assyria, and tin from Afghanistan via Canaan were **transported** to the **Pharaoh's warehouses** in Egypt. Pottery from Greece, Cyprus and Anatolia, as well as cosmetics, also passed through Egyptian strongholds in the country's ports. In exchange, Egypt **exported** **luxuries** such as gold, ornamental items from faience, serpentine, granite, alabaster, ivory, jewelry, perfumes, and ointments.

Egypt's interest in Canaan also included the **copper mines** in Timna. From the end of the fourteenth century BCE until the middle of the twelfth century BCE, desert nomads operated the copper mines under Egyptian supervision and sent copper to Egypt.

The **collapse** of the regional **powers** led to a sharp decline in the volume of trade around the Mediterranean Sea. Despite this, the pharaohs tried to maintain strongholds on the commercial routes in Canaan until they retreated back to Egypt at the end of the twelfth century BCE.

**The Good Life**

The Egyptian governors in Canaan lived in **mansions** and were served by servants and slaves. As the sons of the great and wealthy empire, they punctiliously decorated their homes and made use of the **luxury objects** and comforts to which they became accustomed.

Although they lived amid a Canaanite population, most of the objects found in their homes were imported from Egypt. When they could not import, the Egyptians trained local craftsmen to make Egyptian-style objects. The Egyptians were meticulous in **perfuming** themselves and in wearing makeup. They played familiar games from home, and in addition to wine they drank their favorite **beer** from Egypt.

**Fortified cities and fierce warriors**

A **succession of strongholds** served the administrative and military headquarters in Canaan. After the conquest of Thutmose III, the Egyptian outposts were expanded to Ashdod (Tel Mor), Jaffa, Afek, Lachish, and Beit Shean. The strongholds were built within the Canaanite cities and along the commercial routes within a day's walking distance, and served as rest stops for soldiers and merchants and for collection of **taxes**. The strongholds themselves were not surrounded by a wall, apparently because of Egypt's strong control of the area.

At the **military base**, a **garrison** was set up to establish order on the roads and to deal with nomadic tribes that harassed merchants and cities. During periods of **rebellion** by the kings of Canaan, or of tribes that the garrison could not handle, Egyptian **troops** were sent to suppress the rebellion.

One of the greatest revolts took place in the days of Pharaoh Thutmose III. The **king of Kadesh** initiated the formation of a **pact** among Canaanite **cities** in Megiddo against Egypt. In a battle that took place in Megiddo, **Thutmose** crushed his opponents. In the record of his victory, the Pharaoh mentions a list of cities he has won as well as cities that equipped his army along its way.

The **Egyptian army** consisted of infantry and chariots. The **chariot**, as well as the sickle sword, was first introduced to Egypt by the Canaanites (the Hyksos). The Egyptians brought in **mercenaries**, such as the **Philistines** and **Nubians**, who specialized in unique methods of warfare. The common weapons were the sickle sword, the bow, and the ax, and the defense consisted of a leather shield and armor of scales.

**Great Gods**

The Egyptian religion, like the those of neighboring peoples, was characterized by a **multiplicity of gods**. Canaanites and Egyptians were exposed to one another's deities: During the Canaanites' (Hyksos) settlement and rule in northern Egypt they adopted the Egyptian god **Seth** - representative of the foreign peoples - and identified him with **Ba'al**. The Egyptian goddess **Hathor**, who embodies all aspects of womanhood, was also admired in Canaan and identified with **Ba'alat**. Talismans of the ancient god **Bes**, the protector of children, were found in many sites.

But the Egyptians were actually more inclined to **adopt** the Canaanite **gods**, a trend reinforced by their conquest of Canaan. The Egyptians built temples for the Canaanite gods, and the pharaohs adopted their names for themselves. For example, Tutankhamun called himself “Beloved of **Horon**” and Ramses II adopted the title of one who “pours his terror onto the foreign lands like **Ba'al**.” Unlike the Canaanites who adopted the **female aspect** of Hathor, the Egyptians tended to adopt the **belligerent aspect** of the Canaanite gods, who appeared holding weapons ready to protect Pharaoh.

Following the withdrawal of the Egyptian empire from Canaan, the Canaanite gods **fell out of favor** and disappeared from the written records. Seth, who was the beloved god of Ramses II, was banished and became the enemy of the gods. Out of all the Egyptian and Canaanite gods and goddesses, the god Aten rose to prominence around 1400 BCE. Pharaoh Akhenaten instituted **religious reform** and turned the god of Aten - the wheel of the sun - into a **single God**. Following his death, the religious reforms were annulled.

**Back at Home**

The Egyptians' dwellings in Canaan were similar in their plans and building traditions to the **houses** in Egypt. Most of the houses were built without stone foundations, out of large, unbaked mud bricks. The **governors' houses** were square, their entrance built in one corner of the house with a threshold, mezuzahs, and a stone lintel. The houses also had an inner courtyard surrounded by rooms, and was sometimes covered. The building usually had a second floor.

The Egyptian-style **household items** found in the buildings indicate that the Egyptians preferred to adhere to their own way of life. In their homes, Canaanite vessels were found that apparently belonged to workers from among the local population, or to **Canaanite women** to whom they were married.

**Fashion**

Most Egyptians wore **white linen**. The nobility wore **dresses** and pleated **skirts**, with the men donning skirts and the women long dresses. **Jewelry** was a significant part of an Egyptian's appearance and testified to his status and faith. Necklaces and chokers were made of beads and pendants. These reflected the Egyptian cultural and spiritual world and **protected** **and strengthened** those who wore them. The Egyptians used to **shave** their faces and wear **wigs**, often decorated with wreaths.

The pharaohs used to wear a headdress called a **nemes crown**. The form and colors of the nemes attested to the pharaoh's status and role. In addition to their clothing, the Egyptians used to line their eyes with **kohl** that outlined the eye and eyelashes. This custom, which began around 4000 BCE, was used to beautify and **protect** **the eye** from the glare of the desert.

**The importance of Health**

**The Egyptian doctors** stood out from their peers in the neighboring cultures. Like their neighbors, the Egyptians used **spells** as one means of healing, but medicine as a whole was not a ritual matter, and the healers were not priests. In an institution called 'House of Life,' doctors learned **anatomy** and healing methods from papyri, some of which were written as early as 3400 BCE. The papyrus texts were based on a medical practice of **diagnosis**, trial, and observation. This **practice** would become the foundation of Western medicine as developed by the Greek Hippocrates.

The doctors also dealt with **specialties** such as eyes, teeth, surgery, and embalming, and used a variety of treatment methods: dressing with anti-inflammatory creams, administering pain medication, surgery, fusion of fractures, treatment of mental illnesses, and even alleviating the agony of dying.

The Egyptians also used **preventive medicine**, such as eating garlic and onions, applying kohl against eye infections, and contraception. As defense against **dark forces** and devils was part of the healing and prevention process, the Egyptians used **talismans** to protect their owners and fight the forces of darkness.

**Rest in Peace**

The worldview of **life and death** among the Egyptians was very complex. Throughout one's life and death, a person had **three souls**: *ba* - the essence of the person; *ka* - the animal force; and *akh*, the union of *ba* and *ka* in the **next world**. In order to ensure immortality after death, a variety of ceremonies and measures were taken to unite the *ka* and the *ba*.

**Embalming the body** and burial in coffins was done to enable the **resurrection of the body**. The Egyptians believed that the *ka* was fortified by food, and that the dead receiving a food offering would be given the strength to live and contain the soul of the *ka*. **Burial stelae** along with a **table for offerings** were placed in the temples and at the front of the tombs to ensure eternal supply from the gods.

In order to reach the world of eternity, the dead had to make a **dangerous journey** in the next world, at the end of which her or his heart was weighed against a feather that symbolizes the goddess of justice and truth – *maat*. In order to overcome the dangers of the journey, the dead person was equipped with **spells** and amulets. Sometimes the dead were buried with a figurine of *ushabti* whose job it was to serve, or to perform manual labor, if the dead person was called to do them in the next world.

In Israel, human-like **coffins** were found without mummies. Human-like coffins are characteristic of Egyptian culture, but it is possible that the Canaanite elite imitated the style of burial of their rulers.

No **burial estates** characteristic of the Egyptian elite were excavated in Israel. It is reasonable to assume that the Egyptians who died in Canaan were buried in tombs dug into the ground, or that their bodies were brought to Egypt.