

PHARAOH 2020

Raamses picked at his dirty, fraying swag, the result of too many years' anxiety over keeping his power intact. His once bright gold *pschent*, his double crown, had turned a faded shade of filthy yellow, and the acronym emblazoned on it – four letters, M- E- G- A - was now starting to chip off. M- E- G- A, “Make Egypt Glorious Again,” the faltering Pharaoh's once-brash, wildly popular, populist campaign slogan, was quickly being consigned to the garbage heap of the Egyptian public's attention: well...at least half the public. The other half, Raamses' loyal royal base, had long ago been convinced by him that he was their persecuted savior, for whom they should be ready to kill if necessary.

Those same Egyptians, all Egyptians in fact, were rapidly dying from the devastation of successive plagues – pandemics, the boring scientists with their stupid facts called them. But Raamses sat on his hands and let them die, all the while ranting to his base that he would take out the opposition, God and Moses, in the upcoming election.

But God and Moses, the power duo, were kicking in his head at the polls as he found himself – a putative Egyptian deity– now flailing his arms and babbling pathetically about how they were involved in a massive conspiracy to defraud the

public. He and only he, Pharaoh Raamses, had uncovered the ruse and would fight for the rights of the common man on the streets of Memphis, Pithom and Raamses, the town he had named for himself. Half of Egypt, sick, dying and exhausted, spat at him. The other half, sick, dying and exhausted, kept propping him up as their last chance to return to a golden age of power, just like in the good old days.

Ah, for the good old days -*his* good old days - when he was what those damn Israelites called *melekh hadash*, the new king. He had just completed developing a hundred new luxury pyramids, all of which he had financed in a lurid pyramid scheme. It had gone under the radar of the officials just long enough to allow him - a political neophyte whose handlers and whores had big dreams of royalty – to run successfully for national office. The ultimate elitist, Raamses figured out pretty quickly that if you target an outsider as the elite robber baron class you could get angry, marginalized Egyptians to believe in you and do whatever you told them.

That target was the Israelites.

Egypt's political and cultural life around that time had become a Blue Nile-White Nile divide. Blue Nilers were the more urbane progressive Egyptians in the big

cities. They loved people like the Israelites, sometimes with a creepy kind of performative fawning, that helped them to reassure themselves that they were truly loving people, but they mostly had the genuine best interests of all of Egypt in mind. White Nilers lived on the farms, nursing conservative suspicions of people who didn't look and talk like "real" Egyptians. The foul undercurrent of some of their political waters was a rather unpleasant White Nile supremacism. They feared the onslaught of the hordes massed at Egypt's gates in Goshen province, hordes with names like Judah, Joseph, and Jacob. When *they* talked about making Egypt glorious again, many of them meant a glory whitened of all ethnic stains.

Raamses' first big rally after winning office was held at Imhotep's Columns, where a throng of MEGA swag wearing loyalists wildly cheered him on as he spewed and rambled.

"Now, I don't wanna say too openly what the real problem in today's Egypt is. You just never know when some Blue Nile libtard reporter will misquote you, and then you'll have to answer to the PC Police!"

(Derisive laughter from the crowd.)

“But folks, parts of this great nation have just gotten too CROWDED, dangerously crowded with other folks who want to grab the little that we have!

(The crowd boos.)

“So lemme ask you, folks. What should I do with all those crooked Goshen grandstanders crowding us good people out?”

“Lock ‘em up! Lock ‘em up! Lock ‘em up!”

And lock them up he did, through decades of forced labor and human rights violations, none of which got even a peep of protest from the ruling White Nile politicians: they rationalized it all, but beneath all that was their one real rationale for doing nothing to stop Raamses:

You didn’t mess with a god, especially one whom the people loved.

They sure did love him...and they were happy to support his hate campaign, especially since it made them happy to beat down people lower in Egypt than they were.

They sure did love him...and *he* hated them, but he adored their blind, butt-kissing, adulatory shrieks of praise, roaring their approval of him, calling his name...Pharaoh, Raamses, Pharaoh, Raamses, Pharaoh, Raamses...”

“Pharaoh...Raameses...sir? The Goshen Secretary of State is outside as you requested. Are you ready to speak with him?” His advisors were calling to him, pulling him from his reverie of manic, fragile self-love back into his ugly reality that he still refused to concede.

“Yes, of course,” Raamses hoarsely barked, as he pulled himself close to the window of his palace bedroom.

Goshen was a weird, often toxic mix of Israelites and native old boy’s club Egyptians, Blue Nilers and White Nilers, black skinned Nubians and white skinned folks. As the Blue Nile royal campaign team steamrolled through the towns, farms and cities, they won a significant majority of the populace desperate for a new Egyptian politics of compassion and accountability. For the first time in decades, Goshen - a White Nile bastion turned Blue and multicultural - threw its support behind the Blue Nile team. It was time for healing.

But the only healing Raamses was pursuing was the one spelled with two ee’s. Besotted with manic rage, he kept pumping out the tired conspiratorial myth that his royal office had been stolen from him.

“You know, folks,” he rasped irately to the faithful at his latest rally, “What is it that we actually won?”

“GOSHEN!” the crowd irately rasped back.

Yes, he would bring Goshen and its political operatives to heel: they would do a recount, a fraud investigation...something to prove that he won in Goshen, to show that he was still the chief.

The Goshen secretary of state stood below Raamses’ window in the lovely sitting garden.

“Mr. Secretary, good to see you. Now, let me get to the point,” Raamses growled.

“I won in Goshen and I need for you to do me a favor: I need you to call the election for me. The fraud was everywhere in this contest, so find me 11,000 votes and let’s get this done!”

“Pharaoh Raamses, sir. We have no credible evidence of fraud. Goshen goes to God and Moses. I’m sorry, sir.”

“Mr. Secretary, this could mean trouble for you...legal trouble or worse, if you can’t help me out,” an agitated Raamses began to shout at him.” “I don’t want to have to call out all of my first-born elite guard to restore order!”

“Sir, you wouldn’t be able to do that anyway. All of those first-born front line soldiers are dead. They died in the last plague pandemic. Did you not know that, sir?”

It was over, but Raamses, the narcissistic bowl of paranoid jelly, would never accept the fact that even a god didn't mess with God.

The newly freed Israelites prepared to stream out of Egypt, barely paying attention to their devastated Egyptian friends of the new order who begged them to stay and help to build the new Egypt.

"Look," one old man said to his neighbor, "We don't belong here anymore. And besides, you can rebuild Egypt yourselves. Someone quite so horrible as Raamses could never happen again. Trust me on that. I've seen it all. Good luck."

On the eve of the Exodus, some boys were playing in a field when they stumbled over a large stone with writing all over it. They lugged it to the middle of their street, near that same old man, their tribal elder, who was known to be able to read. As boys (and the happily well off) will do, they forgot about it.

Poring over the stone, the old man, who had indeed seen enough to last ten lifetimes, grimaced as he gradually deciphered the letters and words:

"That which has been will be in the future.

That which has occurred will occur again.

There is nothing new under the sun."

He shuddered at the warning and went back to packing for freedom.