

Christian Bible References to the School of “On”, esoterically “Annu”

A. From Swift Platinum Easton’s Topical Bible :

“**On**: light; the sun, (Gen. 41:45, 50), the great seat of sun-worship, called also **Bethshemesh** (Jer. 43:13) and **Aven** (Ezek. 30:17), stood on the east bank of the Nile, a few miles north of Memphis, and near Cairo, in the north-east. The Vulgate and the LXX. Versions have “**Heliopolis**” (“city of the sun”) instead of **On** in Genesis and of **Aven** in Ezekiel.

The “city of destruction” Isaiah speaks of (Isaiah 19:18, marg. “of Heres;” Heb. *Ir-ha-heres*, which some MSS. (manuscripts) read *Ir-ha-heres*, i.e., “city of the sun”) may be the name given to **On**, the prophecy being that the time will come when that city which was known as the “city of the sun-god” shall become the “city of destruction” of the sun-god, i.e., when idolatry shall cease, and the worship of the true God be established.

In ancient times this city was full of **obelisks** dedicated to the sun. Of these only one now remains standing. “**Cleopatra’s Needle**” was one of those which stood in this city in front of the **Temple of Tum**, i.e., “the sun.” It is now erected on the Thames Embankment, London.

“It was at **On** that **Joseph** wooed and won the dark-skinned **Asenath**, the daughter of the high priest of its great temple.” This was a noted university town, and here **Moses** gained his acquaintance with “all the wisdom of the Egyptians.”

B. From Naves’ Topical Bible:

“**On**: Capital of Lower Egypt (also known as Heliopolis or Annu of the North) (Genesis 41: 45, 46: 20).”

C. From the Bible, King James’ Version:

Genesis 41: 45 “And **Pharaoh** called **Joseph’s** name Zaphnathpaaneah; and he gave him to wife **Asenath** the daughter of **Potipherah priest of On**. And **Joseph** went out over all the land of Egypt.”

Genesis 41:50 “And unto **Joseph** were born two sons before the years of famine came, which **Asenath** the daughter of **Potipherah priest of On** bare unto him.”

Genesis 46: 20 “And unto **Joseph** in the land of Egypt were born **Manasseh** and **Ephraim**, which **Asenath** the daughter of **Potipherah priest of On** bare unto him.”

Acts of the Apostles 7:22 “And **Moses** was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds.”

D. From Swift Platinum Easton’s Topical Bible :

Moses “at length became ‘learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians’ (Acts 7:22). Egypt had then two chief seats of learning, or universities, at one of which, probably that of Heliopolis (On), his education was completed.” (emphasis added)

Heliopolis (Greek), Egyptian *lunu*, or *Onu* (“**Pillar City**”), biblical *On* one of the most ancient Egyptian cities, and the seat of worship of the sun god, [Re](#). It was the capital of the 15th nome of Lower Egypt, but Heliopolis was important as a religious rather than a political centre. Its great temple of Re was second in size only to that of Amon at Thebes, and its priesthood wielded great influence, particularly during the 5th dynasty, when the worship of Re became the state cult. In the New Kingdom, the temple of Re-Horakhte became the repository of royal records.

Little remains today of this great city. The sole surviving monument is the [obelisk](#) of Sesostris I, the oldest obelisk in existence. Of the pair of obelisks erected by Thutmose III, now known as Cleopatra's Needles, one stands on the Thames embankment in London and the other in Central Park, New York City.



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Heliopolis, Egypt's Iunu

By Marie Parsons

One of the three major cities of ancient Egypt, after [Thebes](#) and [Memphis](#), Heliopolis, "city of the sun" in Greek, was situated in the area of Tell Hisn on the northwestern outskirts of modern [Cairo](#). The ancient Egyptian name was Iunu, or *iwnw*, meaning pillar. Today it is largely covered by the suburbs of [Cairo](#) at el-Matariya and Tell Hisn. It is not situated on the bank of the [Nile](#), but lay inland, to the west of the river, and was connected thereto by an ancient canal.

Heliopolis, or On in Coptic, was the capital of the 13th Lower Egyptian nome. By the time of the [Old Kingdom](#), the city was a center of astronomy as reflected in the title of its high priest, *wr-m3w*, "Chief of Observers" or "Greatest of Seers. This title was held by [Imhotep](#) during the 3rd [Dynasty](#) reign of [King Djoser Netjerikhet](#), and dates earlier to the reign of [Khasekhemwy](#) in the [2nd Dynasty](#).

Iunu/Heliopolis also had a reputation for learning and theological speculation, which it retained into [Graeco-Roman](#) times. Much of that learning centered on the role of the sun in creation, and maintenance of the world and in the persons of the gods [Atum](#) and [Re-Horakhty](#), whose temples must have graced the city.

One of the earliest, richest, and most influential of theological traditions, centered in Iunu, was summarized in the concept of the Ennead, the group of nine gods that embodied the creative source and chief forces of the universe (though this number was not always nine; at some times it was as few as five, and other times as many as twenty or more; and often, the traditional Ennead includes a tenth god, Horus the Elder). By the beginning of the Old Kingdom that system had been formulated into a coherent philosophy, and it dominated Egyptian thought for the next three thousand years. Creation was viewed as an evolutionary process. However, it was recorded in typical Egyptian metaphors of birth rather than in abstract scientific or philosophical terminology.

The Egyptians were aware that there had been a time when nothing was in existence, no sky, no earth, no humanity; the gods had not yet been born, nor had death yet existed (ref Pyramid Text Utterance 571, sect 1466). A source of creation was necessary in this nothingness. To the Egyptians, creation was an act of generation. Since they had an annual act of generation close to them in the [Inundation of the Nile](#), they thought of the ultimate source of all created being as being the "primeval waters." Out of those waters, the god Atum arose.

Pyramid Text Utterance 600 records this theology:

Atum-Kheprer, you have come to be high on the hill, you have arisen on the Benben stone in the mansion of the Benu-bird in Heliopolis, you spat out [Shu](#), you expectorated [Tefnut](#), and you put your two arms around them as the arms of a ka-symbol, so that your ka might be in them. ... O great Ennead which is in Heliopolis—Atum, Shu, Tefnut, [Geb](#), [Nut](#), [Osiris](#), [Isis](#), [Set](#), [Nephthys](#)---children of Atum, extend his heart to his child, the king, in your name of Nine Bows.



Benu Bird

The [benu-bird](#), or heron, figured prominently in paintings and reliefs throughout Dynastic history, as seen in the example of a bird in the solar [barque](#) from the tomb of Irynefer, Thebes, or in the example of the bird perched on a capstone from the Papyrus of Nakht, [18-19th Dynasty](#).

Although Iunu/Heliopolis was such a significant part of Egyptian life throughout the Dynastic period and into the [Roman period](#), nothing today remains of what must have been this important city and its cult center of the sun-god [Re](#). The form and size of the site's religious structures and even the main temple of the sun god are thus unknown, but it is possible that



the solar temples of the [5th dynasty](#), of which we have evidence at Abu Ghurob and [Abusir](#), were modeled at least to some extent on the Heliopolitan sun temple, with its central feature of the obelisk.

Little is known about the city itself. The remains of mud-brick walls in the area of Tell Hisn suggest a vast enclosure estimated at 3,600 by 1,558 feet, and recent excavations have found signs of what may be a number of separate temples or parts of one great temple of New Kingdom date. Its principal feature was a temple devoted to Atum and [Re-Horakhty](#), the precise location and shape of which is uncertain. Today the only standing monument is a large red granite obelisk, dedicated by [Senusret I](#) but dating back only to the [12th dynasty](#). Earlier structures include the Third dynasty fragmentary shrine of [Djoser](#), of which only fragments now survive. Two of these fragments bear the name

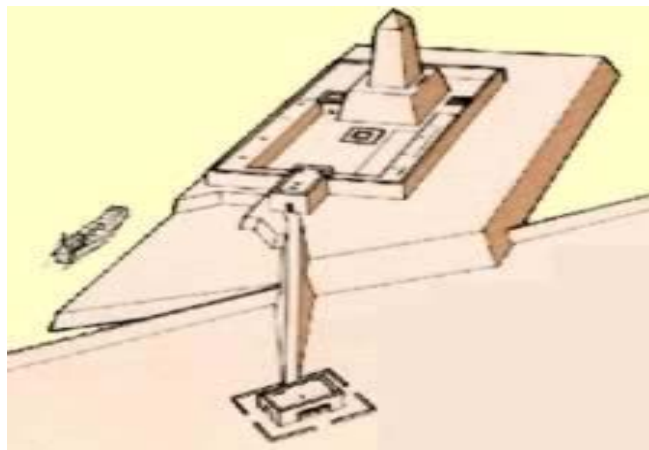
of Netjerikhet, and another shows the king seated with the ladies of his family gathered at his feet.



Other fragments indicate that the scenes may be connected with the celebration of a [Sed-festival](#) and/or with the Ennead worshipped there. Each of the nine traditional gods was probably shown, as in the fragment that depicts the god [Geb](#) shown in human form, and the god [Shu](#) was attested to have been included in a shrine therein.

Other structures also included part of a [6th dynasty](#) obelisk of [Teti](#). Several Old Kingdom tombs of high priests dated to the [6th Dynasty](#) have been found southeast of Senwosret's obelisk, near the southeast corner of the enclosure.

A stela of [Tuthmosis III](#) from the [18th Dynasty](#) commemorates a wall that encloses the solar temple. Excavations have revealed some Ramesside construction – several temples and a cemetery for the [Mnevis bulls](#) discovered northeast of the obelisk and dated to the Ramesside period. The bulls were worshipped as manifestations of the sun-god.



Though the sun-temple itself has never been located, the sun-temples built in the [5th Dynasty](#) were probably modeled upon it. Only two of the six sun-temples that were built have been found to date. One such [temple](#) was built by [Niuserre](#) at [Abu Ghurob](#). It was erected on an artificial mound faced on all four sides with an enclosing wall of limestone. A long causeway topped by a covered corridor led up to the terrace from a large pavilion on the eastern edge of the desert. At its upper end, a gateway opened on to a paved court, 330 feet long and 250 feet broad.

The most recognizable feature is a rectangular podium, with sides sloping inwards and open to the sun, built of limestone on a platform of granite. It was probably intended to represent the primordial mound of sand at the Heliopolis temple. Atop the podium stood a squat obelisk, the sacred symbol of the sun-god, which was also built of limestone blocks. The obelisk was probably topped by a representation of the *bmbn*-stone, a

cone-shaped sacred capstone representing the primordial mound which had arisen above the primeval waters at the moment of creation. There have been examples of such capstones found, one belonging to the pyramid of [Amenemhet I](#). It was coated in electrum, in order to catch and gleam with the rays of the sun itself out in the open-air court.

To the east of the obelisk lay a huge alabaster altar, built of one large circular block surrounded by four blocks, one on each side, each of these in the shape of the hieroglyph, *hetep*, meaning "offering". Near the entrance to the base of the obelisk was a small chapel, with two basins on both sides of its door and two granite stelae. The walls of the chamber were decorated with reliefs showing foundation-ceremonial and feasts in the temple.

Donation lists from the time of [Ramesses III](#) indicate that the temple at Heliopolis were second only to those of [Amun](#) at Thebes. After the Ramesside era, the fortunes of Heliopolis began to decline. The city was largely destroyed during the Persian invasion of 525 BCE and 343 BCE, although enough of its structures and reputation remained to attract tourists in [Graeco/Roman](#) times. When Strabo visited the site in the late first century BCE, he found it partly abandoned, and by the first century ACE, most of the statuary and obelisks had been removed to [Alexandria](#) and Rome. The remaining structures then served as a quarry for the building of medieval Cairo.

See also:

- [The Area of Ancient Heliopolis Today](#)
- [An update on Heliopolis Today](#)

Sources:

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