



## An Edition and Translation of The Icelandic *Book of Joseph and Aseneth*\*

RICHARD COLE

University of Notre Dame, Department of English, 356 O'Shaughnessy Hall, Notre Dame, IN 46556-5639, USA

### Abstract

The existence of the Icelandic *Book of Joseph and Aseneth* was first brought to scholarly attention in M.R. James's introduction to Batiffol's Latin edition of 1889. Since then commentators have continued to include the Icelandic tradition in lists of translated versions (often by the shelfmark provided by M.R. James, BL Add MS 11068). However, until now the *Aseneth* contained in BL Add MS 11068 has remained unedited. This article provides an annotated edition and translation which presents the Icelandic *Aseneth* in comparison with the exemplar from which it was translated, namely Hans Mogensen's Danish version of 1580. Most importantly, the Icelandic translator, Árni Halldórsson (1630–1687), made an original contribution to the tradition, authoring a unique account of the death of Aseneth from grief.

\* I would like to thank Alik-Anastasia Arkomani, Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, Philip Lavender, and Þórdís Edda Jóhannesdóttir for their advice in solving some of the more illegible moments in the BL Add MS 11068. Hugh Atkinson provided a great deal of guidance when I was first acclimatizing to P.S.S.'s hand in the prologue, and had other time commitments permitted we should have liked to complete this project collaboratively. Philip Lavender was generous both with supplying copies of rare materials from the Den Arnarnagñæanske Samling's *håndbibliotek*, and with his knowledge of Early Modern Icelandic scribal culture. The bulk of the transcription was undertaken during the summer of 2016, thanks to an opportunity for a prolonged research stay in London made possible by the Department of Homeland Security. Any shortcomings are my own.

**Keywords:** *Book of Joseph and Aseneth*, Iceland, Icelandic, Denmark, Danish, Early Modern Period, chapbooks, manuscript culture.

### Introduction

The existence of an unedited Icelandic *Book of Joseph Aseneth* has long been known to *Aseneth* scholars.<sup>1</sup> It is usually mentioned as a curiosity in surveys of the breadth of the *Aseneth* tradition, where it constitutes the furthest northern and furthest western translation of the tale. In fact, there are at least four Icelandic *Aseneth* traditions. The first is the Old Norse *Aseneth*. There is no tradition of this version existing as an independent text (indeed, as shall be seen, each Icelandic *Aseneth* has usually been transmitted ‘in partnership’ with another work). Rather, it exists as part of an Old Norse biblical compilation known as *Stjórn*, a work of complicated textual history but which for our purposes can be dated to the middle of the fourteenth century.<sup>2</sup> *Stjórn* (specifically *Stjórn I*) contains large sections of Vincent of Beauvais’s *Speculum Historiale* (c. 1250s), and it therefore reproduces Vincent’s version of *Aseneth*.<sup>3</sup> The Old Norse tradition of *Aseneth* is Old Norse literature in the truest sense, because the translation was originally carried out in Norway before being transmitted to Iceland. It is generally not included in synopses of the medieval *Aseneth* versions, but it is found in the notes of M.R. James,<sup>4</sup>

1. M.R. James, ‘Le livre de la prière d’Aseneth’, in P. Batiffol (ed.), *Studia Patristicae.*, fasc. 1 (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1889), pp. 1-2; E.W. Brooks, *Joseph and Aseneth: The Confession and Prayer of Asenath, Daughter of Pentephres the Priest* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1918), p. vii; Christopher Burchard, *Gesammelte Studien zu Joseph und Aseneth* (ed. Carstein Burfeind; Leiden: Brill, 1996), p. 398; Edith M. Humphrey, *Joseph and Aseneth* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), pp. 13-14; Randall D. Chestnutt, *From Death to Life: Conversion in Joseph and Aseneth* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), pp. 20-21.

2. An excellent summary of the debate surrounding the three constituent parts of *Stjórn* (labelled *Stjórn I*, *Stjórn II*, *Stjórn III*) is found in Kristen Wolf, ‘Brandr Jónsson and *Stjórn*’, *Scandinavian Studies* 62.2 (1990), pp. 163-88.

3. The Old Norse text can be found in Reidar Astås (ed.), *Stjórn*, vol. 1 (Oslo: Riksarkivet, 2009), pp. 310-19, 339-47.

4. Lorenzo DiTommaso, ‘Pseudepigrapha Notes II: 3. The Contribution of the Manuscript Catalogues of M.R. James’, *JSP* 18.2 (2008), pp. 83-160 (126).

and it must be the ‘Norwegian’ translation listed by Christoph Burchard.<sup>5</sup> 14 *Stjórn* manuscripts survive, suggesting that the text was relatively well-known in the Old Norse world. However, although *Stjórn*—and therefore *Aseneth*—continued to be copied by Icelandic scribes during the Early Modern period (e.g. AM 617 4to, from c. 1550–1600, or Lbs 33 fol., from c. 1765) there is no evidence of influence from the Old Norse *Aseneth* on the subsequent Icelandic versions. As appears to have been the case with the legend of the Wandering Jew, the introduction of Danish printed chapbooks to Iceland from the sixteenth century onwards seems to have largely ‘reset’ native traditions of biblical folklore.<sup>6</sup> Just as the Ahasuerus known to Old Norse literary culture was superseded by the Ahasuerus known from Danish chapbooks, so too was the Old Norse *Aseneth* tradition set aside, and begun afresh with new translations from Danish.

Scribal culture in Iceland proved to be tenacious, and through to the early twentieth-century printed exemplars arriving from abroad were often copied out by hand, circulated, and re-copied via a mode of literary production that will be instantly recognizable to a philologist of Antiquity or the Middle Ages. The three post-medieval Icelandic *Aseneth* traditions therefore derive from three separate introductions of a Danish chapbook to Iceland (although the Danish exemplars were different editions of the same text in each case).<sup>7</sup> Just as *Aseneth*’s first arrival in Iceland was in the company of the *Speculum Historiale*, her next three arrivals were alongside *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*. In the course of the sixteenth century printed chapbooks of the *Testaments* began to proliferate in various European vernaculars, and the texts usually concluded with an iteration of the *Aseneth* story. One such combined *Testaments–Aseneth* was translated from German

5. Burchard, *Gesammelte Studien*, p. 398. See also, by the same author, *Untersuchungen zu Joseph und Aseneth. Überlieferung-Ortbestimmung* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1965), p. 42.

6. Richard Cole, ‘When Did the Wandering Jew Head North?’, *Scandinavian Studies* 87.2 (2015), esp. pp. 230-32.

7. All of the following information on the Icelandic traditions is drawn from a thorough and illuminating study by Marianne Overgaard, ‘De islandske oversættelser af De tolv patriarkers Jacobs sønners testamenter og af Josefs og Assenaths historie’, *Opuscula* 9 (1991), pp. 201-99.

into Danish by the priest, Hans Mogensen (d. 1595) in the year 1580.<sup>8</sup> The first modern editors of the Danish *Aseneth* were cautious on the question of from which German edition it was that Mogensen worked. Two possible candidates were noted but neither positively confirmed. A High German manuscript is found in Det Kongelige Bibliothek in Copenhagen from 1664, but which appears to be a reprint of a version 1544.<sup>9</sup> A Low German version is found in Sjællands Stiftsbibliothek in Roskilde, dated to 1543.<sup>10</sup> The most recent editor of both the Danish and Icelandic *Testaments*, Marianne Overgaard, finds that the best match with Mogensen's translation is a German version from 1564, published in Frankfurt.<sup>11</sup>

For the non-specialist in Scandinavian matters, it may at first seem surprising that the Icelandic *Aseneth* is from Mogensen's Danish—why not Latin or German, both languages generally seen elsewhere in Europe as in command of more cultural capital? Having been settled predominantly from Norway and the British Isles during the course of the ninth and tenth-centuries, Iceland entered into union with the Norwegian crown in 1262. On the extinction of the Norwegian royal line in 1380, Iceland, Norway, and Norway's remaining colonial possessions were inherited by the Danish queen, Margarete Valdemarsdatter (r. 1387–1412). The Reformation arrived relatively late in Iceland, not being complete until 1550, when the Catholic Jón Arason, Bishop of Hólar, was executed. The Reformation led to increasing Danish influence in the Icelandic church, and from 1602 to 1787 Iceland was subjected to a formal trade monopoly with Denmark, resulting in a period of Danish cultural hegemony. Icelandic literature continued to be composed, but any learned gentleman and all churchmen would have had a command of Danish—not least as Icelandic students had to travel to Copenhagen to study for their theology degrees.

8. J.P. Jacobsen and R. Paulli, 'Introduction', to J.P. Jacobsen and R. Paulli (eds.), *Danske Folkebøger fra 16. og 17. århundrede* (Copenhagen: Gyldendalske Boghandel, 1915), pp. viii-xv.

9. Jacobsen and Paulli, 'Introduction', pp. x-xi.

10. Jacobsen and Paulli, 'Introduction', p. xi.

11. Overgaard, 'Testamenter', pp. 214-17.

It was just such an Icelandic theology student in Copenhagen who was responsible for the first translation of Mogensen's *Testaments–Aseneth* into Icelandic. Árni Halldórsson of Hruni (d. 1687) was born in southwest Iceland in 1630. Between 1655 and 1657 he was in Copenhagen, studying his *attestats*, a now redundant Danish qualification which was required in order to be able to preach in the kingdom of Denmark (which at that time, of course, included Iceland). According to a colophon in the manuscript Lbs 1226 4to, Árni undertook his translation at the behest of one Gísli Bjarnason of Skarð (d. 1676). As Overgaard points out, this means the Icelandic *Aseneth* must have been composed between 1657 and 1676, while Árni was back in Iceland, having acquired competence in Danish, and while Gísli was still alive.<sup>12</sup> Árni may well have acquired his copy of the Danish text in Copenhagen, but this is not necessarily the case, as Danish traders appear to have supplied the Icelandic readership with chapbooks on a regular basis.<sup>13</sup> In 1661 Árni took up a position as a priest at Skálholt, the episcopal see. However, by 1662 he had returned home to Hruni following a scandal where Árni's brother, Daði Halldórsson, had impregnated the bishop's daughter, Ragnheiður Brynjólfsdóttir.<sup>14</sup> Judging from the surviving correspondence, Árni's relationship with the bishop does not appear to have suffered. The bishop in question was Brynjólfur Sveinsson (d. 1675), an immensely learned man who had a keen interest in Iceland's literary inheritance from Old Norse. Brynjólfur had been the owner of an important Old Norse manuscript, the *Codex Regius*, which is by far our best source for the mythological poems now designated the *Poetic Edda*. Brynjólfur donated the manuscript to King Frederik III (r. 1648–1670) in 1662, meaning Árni would just about have had the opportunity to see it for himself—although we cannot know whether he actually did.

12. Overgaard, 'Testamenter', pp. 219-20.

13. Overgaard, 'Testamenter', p. 207.

14. Guðmundur Kamban, 'Daði Halldórsson og Ragnheiður Brynjólfsdóttir', *Skírnir* 103 (1929), pp. 36-83. The case was dramatic, compared by Guðmundur to that of Abelard and Héloïse. Daði had been engaged by Ragnheiður's father as her teacher. After rumours of an affair, both parties swore oaths that Ragnheiður was still a virgin. Nonetheless, some months later a child was born. Ragnheiður was just 19 years old when Daði became her tutor. She was 21 when the child was born, and died during an epidemic before she was 22.

This context is demonstrative of the literary environment in which Árni's *Aseneth* was produced, with copies of Old Norse texts surviving alongside incoming translations from Danish. Árni tends very much more towards the modern than the archaic: the language of his *Aseneth* is markedly Dano-Icelandic, and his sources were wholly Danish. If he knew of the *Aseneth* in *Stjórn*, his translation shows no signs of it. However, as shall be seen, a handful of archaisms survive in his text. For example, where the Danish original has *oc Hunger nu offuerfalt*,<sup>15</sup> 'and now hunger attacked', Árni employs a distinctly Old Norse-looking alliterative tautology: *pä kom hungred og hallæred*, 'then came hunger and hardship [lit. famine]'. Of Árni's personal life and character, we know very little. A later biographer notes that he struggled with a lameness of the limbs that meant he remained seated while preaching, and that he had to be carried from the altar to the pulpit while officiating at services.<sup>16</sup> The condition was presumably degenerative, as it seems unlikely that he would have been able to study abroad in Copenhagen if the illness had been so severe in his youth.

On the whole, Árni's translation closely adheres to Mogensen's Danish. One important exception is that he provides an account of *Aseneth*'s death, apparently of his own devising. As far as I am aware, this addition is unique among western translations of the pseud-epigrapha. The account is quite moving, with Joseph asking his wife to turn away from him for a moment before he dies. One wonders if Árni had in mind his own experience of attending a deathbed, as medical practitioners today sometimes recommend that loved ones leaving the room will hasten somebody's final passing (the rationale being that the dying can otherwise be minded to 'hang on', not wanting to depart from those they love). We are in the realm of the deeply speculative here, of course, but as an officiating priest Árni would presumably have witnessed more final moments than most. Turning from biographical speculation to literary critique, it should also be noted that Árni's supplement offers a refreshing redress to the focus on Joseph seen in the chapbook tradition. Medieval accounts do not describe *Aseneth*'s death because the ritual performed on her by

15. Jacobsen and Paulli (eds.), *Danske Folkebøger*, p. 17.

16. Overgaard, 'Testamenter', p. 220.

the Archangel Michael has given her eternal life. Early Modern accounts seem to perpetuate the same lack but for a different reason: towards the end of the story, they lose interest in Aseneth altogether in favour of Joseph. Árni therefore provides a more balanced narrative.

### Manuscripts Used

Overgaard divides the Icelandic tradition into three groups, A, B, and C, each the result of an independent translation from Danish.<sup>17</sup> The A group probably derives from the Danish edition of 1626, and was first translated by Árni Halldórsson between 1657 and 1676. The B group derives from the Danish edition of 1580, and dates from c. 1700. The C group derives from the Danish edition of 1601. It is of uncertain dating. One manuscript, ÍB 866 8vo (1734-41), features a colophon claiming that the first C translation was undertaken in 1617, which as Overgaard acknowledges is feasible but unprovable.

The principal manuscript used in the present edition is the oldest surviving witness to the A group, BL Add MS 11068. This is also the Icelandic *Aseneth* most commonly referred to by its shelfmark among scholars of the pseudepigrapha. It is today found in the British Library, being one of the 189 Icelandic manuscripts sold to the British Museum by the Icelandic polymath Finn Magnussen in 1837 (the British Museum's manuscript holdings were subsequently transferred to the British Library in 1973).<sup>18</sup> The copy was made in western Iceland at the farmstead of Arnastapi in 1745 by one 'P.S.S.', whom Overgaard convincingly identifies as the poet, Þorbjörn Salómonsson (b. 1705, dates otherwise unknown).<sup>19</sup> A later second hand, one 'H.G.S.' has occasionally affixed patches over the manuscript and written his own text over the top, sometimes complying with the Danish original, sometimes his own words. He also makes an annotation at one point. As to the identity of H.G.S., nothing may be said with certainty, particularly as the patches present a small sample size for palaeographical comparison. One suspects Hjalmar Guðmundsson

17. Overgaard, 'Testamenter', pp. 236, 245, 249.

18. *List of Additions to the Manuscripts in the British Museum in the years MDCCCXXXVI—MDCCCXL* (London: The Trustees of the British Museum, 1847), pp. 26-45.

19. Overgaard, 'Testamenter', p. 255.

(b. 1779–d. 1861). He was a priest and scribe, so a likely person to cite Luther, as H.G.S. does, and he was raised at Hítardalur in the county of Mýrasýsla, about a day's ride from Arnastapi.

The language of *Aseneth* is best described as Dano-Icelandic, the inflectional system being identical with that of modern Icelandic, but the vocabulary exhibiting strong Danish influence. Many of the words used by Árni are in fact foreign to modern Icelandic, where linguistic purism has recommended that older, West Norse forms take precedence, e.g. Dano-Icelandic *befalning* vs. modern Icelandic *skipan* (although some Dano-Icelandic forms survive in colloquial speech). To a limited extent, Árni's vocabulary superficially reminds one of Faroese, a West Norse language where Danish influence went further than in Icelandic and reactionary linguistic purism was not as successful. In texts such as Árni's *Aseneth* we are perhaps granted a vision of what Icelandic might have looked like had the purists never arisen.

Porbjörn's hand is a form of *Kurrentschrift* which often makes no clear distinction between 'e', 'n', 'r' and 'u', and in his phonology no minimal pair is constituted between 'i' and 'y', even in diphthongs (a common trait in Early Modern Icelandic). Slanted and often obscured by blotches of water damage, the script is not always as legible as one might like. Despite being written by hand, the text is arranged on the page as though it were a printed chapbook. The manuscript otherwise contains an Icelandic translation of the *Testaments*. As Overgaard has already edited the Icelandic *Testaments*,<sup>20</sup> but not the preface to the work nor *Aseneth*, I present here the Icelandic preface to BL Add MS 11068 and its *Aseneth*. BL Add MS 11068 is frequently damaged, and where necessary I have cited another manuscript from the same tradition, Lbs 1226 4to. I have generally followed the principles used by Overgaard in her edition, silently expanding manuscript abbreviations, and levelling the occasionally random capitalization. I admit that I go much further than Overgaard did in redistributing punctuation in order to make for a more readable text.<sup>21</sup> When comparing with the original Danish, I cite Jacobsen and Paulli's edition by page number. However, Jacobsen and Paulli did not edit the preface, so in that case I cite an original Danish incunabulum (Hielmstjerne 84 8vo) by its leaf.

20. Overgaard, 'Testamenter', pp. 263-99.

21. Overgaard, 'Testamenter', pp. 260-61.



**Icelandic Text:**

[2r] Formæle bookarennar, huornenn þesse tölf forfedra testamente eru first fúnden, og hvoriyr lærafadur ur þau settu first af griskunna ä latinskt tungumäl.

J längann týma hafa þeßer hluter, göde lesare, hulder leiged, ad hvorki vorer, nie þeir gömlu ütleggiarar, kunnú þä ad finna, ollu þeßú gidinganna heipt og hatúr ä vörum, og opinberum späðöme um Christum, sem all vyda finnast i þeßum bæklýnge. Enn þä þeir griske sem med allre kostgiæfne uppleitudú allar fornar bækur og legendúr, hafa því lýka med ódrúm, þeßa funded, og settú hana sydan med allre ästundan af hebreskú ä griskt tungumäl, þä hefur aftur þeßa bæklýnger under stöl stüngest, so hana hafa aúngver fúnded, mest vegna þeß ad engenn hefur so lærdur fundist i þeim stad ä þeim týma, hvorki i grisku nie latínú, ad þeße bök ütlegde. Og allt til þeß, ad Albertus Sä Annar,<sup>22</sup> sem kallader<sup>23</sup> var Grosetius biskup i Lincolen.<sup>24</sup> Hann spurdest firer þeßare bök og so var hönúm hier úmm gieted, ad hann sende framm i Grickland<sup>25</sup> hana upp ad leita. Mest keñde hann þar til þeirra vitneß burder, sem i þeßare bok värer og augliöser finnast úm Christum. Liet so þeßa bök üt leggja af þeim lærdum mónnum sem i bädum tungúmälunum forfarner voru anno 1242. Hier til hiälpade einn griskur madúr, ad nafne Meistari Nicolaus, skolameistare til Datchet,<sup>26</sup>

22. Hans Mogensen's print version in Danish, which was the model for Árni Halldórsson's Icelandic, differs here, still being confused but in a different manner: *Indtil Roberti / den andens tid / som kalledis Grossetestus / oc vaar Bisp til Loncolin* (Hielmstjerne 84 8vo, 4r), 'Until the time of Robert II, who was called Grosseteste, and was bishop of Lincoln'. *Hinn annar*, not *sá annar*, is the usual way to denote 'the second' in modern Icelandic.

23. Read: kalladur

24. Regrettably, in the interests of readability I have had to distribute punctuation here to create a sentence without a verb. Non-grammaticality, lack of punctuation, and occasional nonsense are sadly hallmarks of the chapbook tradition.

25. There is no object of *sende framm* in the Icelandic, so we do not know exactly who was being sent forth. Hielmstjerne 84 8vo gives *flittige Speydere* (4r), 'diligent scouts'.

26. Matthew Paris does not mention the Greek's affiliation with Datchet (a small village in Berkshire, close to the border with Surrey and not far from Windsor). The tradition does appear to be accurate. In Grosseteste's own *Rotuli* we read: *Magister Nicolaus Grecus, subdiaconus, presentatus per Abbatem et conventum de Sancto Albano ecclesiam de Datchet*, 'Master Nicolaus the Greek, subdeacon, was presented

og äböte til Heilags Albanī Klausturs,<sup>27</sup> uppa þad ad þeße<sup>28</sup> spädómur um Christum augliös yrde, óllum villumónnum og christelegrar kyrkiu övinum til skammar, en gude og Jesú til lofs og dýrdar eylyflega. Amen.

[29r] Hier Efter Fylger *Assenaths Historia*.

Funden i gömlum bókum, sem leinge hafa huldar leiged, og undrstöl stungner, med ägiætum leindardómum, lyflegum ad lesa, og huggunarsómum.

Assenaths Historia.

Hvornenn Joseph var selldur og af fängelssenu leistur, og um hans giptung. Listug historia, um leindardöma Christi og hans brúdar.

Joseph var fæddur ä sýns fódurs 90<sup>sta</sup> äre, enn syns afa äre <210>.<sup>29</sup> Þá lided var frá heimsins upphafa 2090 ä. Josep var 16 vetra þa hann geimde hiórdena brodrum synum, þa fiell hann i þeirra hatur og ófúnd, bæda vegna þeß kiærleika og huorium hans fader elskade hann framar hinnum, og so vegna draúmenn sem hann framtalde synum brædrúm, sem dröu med valde áf honum sinn kiöl sem hann var i klæddur, þa hann var eitt sinn af þeirra fader sendur til þeirra, og kóstudu hönnum i

by the abbot and convent of St. Albans to the church of Datchet'. Robert Grosseteste, *Rotuli Roberti Grosseteste* (ed. F.N. Davis; London: The Canterbury and York Society, 1913), p. 354. Exactly how this detail found its way into the chapbook tradition is not clear. It is mentioned by John Ernest (né Johannes Ernst) Grabe in the preface to his edition of the *12 Testaments*, included in his *Spicilegium* of 1698, but this does not account for the fact that Hans Mogensen had described Nicolaus as *Rector til Datchet* a century earlier (4v). See John Ernest Grabe, Preface to *Testamenta XII. Patriarchum*, as cited in: *Codex Pseudepigraphus Veteris Testamenti*, vol. 1.1 (ed. Johann Albert Fabricius; Hamburg/Leipzig: Christian Liebezeit, 1713) pp. 496-518.

27. In the Danish, Master Nicolaus is not himself the abbot of St. Albans, but rather his *Clericus eller Secreterer* (4r). This prologue is taken nearly verbatim from an excerpt of Matthew Paris's *Chronica Majora* (1259), and there Nicolaus is described as: *Nicholao Græco, clerico abbatis Sancti Albani*, 'Nicholaos the Greek, a cleric of the abbot of St. Albans'. See: Matthew Paris. *Chronica Majora*, vol. 4 (ed. Henry Richards Luard; London: Longman & Co., 1877), pp. 232-33.

28. A redundant, now illegible letter has been neatly crossed out here.

29. Lbs 1226 4to, 189r.

grófunna. Efttur Juda rädum dröu þeir hann aftur þadan, og selldi hann Ismaelitum. Komú sydan til syns faders <sorg bitner><sup>30</sup> og sógdu hann være dauder. J þann týma jnngieck Juda til Thamar sinar sonar konnú, og gat vid henni Pheris og Sera, og sem hün ätte ad straffast liet hann sig i liösa, og afsakade hana, því hann hafdi ei viliad gefa henne sinn son Selam, en hun hafde veked of üng eckia. Enn Madianiter, sem og kólludust Jsmaelitar, selldú Josep i Egiftalande Potiphar, sem var sä efste hófedingi yfer Pharaonis riddaraskap enda sem adrar meina<sup>31</sup> slotsherra yfer hans þianisstúm og kockumm og þad mä vel vera truanlegt, því soddan<sup>32</sup> menn seú i mikille vyrdyngú hjia mórgum þjödúm. Hann ättu bæda konú og börn, og hans dottúr Josep eignast [29v] <Snemma Potephar<sup>33</sup> keifte Josep, mest vegna sýns vänleika og kurteise. Potephar upp reiste til biskups, kalladur til Heliopholes, og vard so i kiænnemansskapnum miklu ägiætari enn hvor adra i hófudmansstiettenne>. <sup>34</sup> Josep var i miklum vyrdyngum [þa hann dvelst]<sup>35</sup> i Egíptaland, og vard keiftur af Potiphar.<sup>36</sup> Enn vegna þeß

30. Ibid. at 189v.

31. Danicism, from Danish *at mene*, cognate to English ‘to mean’. In Icelandic before the period of Danish influence *at meina* meant ‘to poison’ or ‘to harm’, with the verb becoming a homograph thereafter.

32. Danicism, from Danish *sádan*, which persists into modern colloquial Icelandic despite purist policies.

33. The scribe appears to have first written *þe* (presumably beginning to write *þeir*) before realizing his mistake and neatly crossing out the top ascender of the ‘þ’ with two parallel horizontal strokes, thus resulting in an inelegant but legible contraction for *þhötephar*.

34. Lbs 1226, 189v.

35. The manuscript is scuffed here. I have read *þa hann dvelst* but I freely admit that the few, faded legible strokes would doubtless permit alternative interpretations.

36. Here, the later Lbs 2294 4to has a more complete rendering of the original Danish: *Hann var ei af Kónsins herbergisveinum, því ad þeir vóru geldtir þegar barnúngir. En Hebreskir segja ad Pótíphar hafí keypt Jóseph þá hann fékk ad sjá hann, helst þess vegna ad hann var dáfridr maðr. Hins og annars ad herran var ómattigr og um gekkst med Kvennfólk, eins og hinir sem geldtir vóru. Nú sem þeir Egíptsku sáu ad hann var ordin ómattigr og kunní ei ávóxt færa, kom þeim saman ad gjöra hann ad Biskupi og skikkudu hann til Heliópólem. Þótti hann þá lángtum heidarlegri i Prestdæminu en hann hafdi áður verid i höfðingsstéttinni* (108v-109r), ‘He was not one of the king’s courtiers, because they were castrated while young children. But the Hebrews say that Potiphar had bought Joseph as soon as he saw him, mostly because he was a very handsome man. Moreover, the lord was weak and consorted with women, like the eunuchs did. Now when the Egyptians realized that he

hann elskade stóðuglega trú og hreinlýfe, vard hann klagadur, og sýðan lagdur í fangilse, þar utlagde hann draümanna<sup>37</sup>, og vard after hans utleggýngu. Vard syðan ütledur efter Pharaonis befallnyngu,<sup>38</sup> og firer hann hafdur ad ütleggja kongsins draúma.

Hvornenn Joseph vard upphafenn og komst til stiörnar.

Joseph var 30 ára, þá hann kom fyrer Pharaonem, og ütlagde hans draúma, og var syðan skickadur einvallds <hertoga yfir><sup>39</sup> allt landed. Þá hafda Jacob 121 ár. Þá gaf Pharao hönur til eigenn kuinnu Assenath Potiphars döttúr, sem var ein jómfrú. Med henne gat hann

had become weak and could not yield fruit, they agreed to make him bishop and allotted Heliopolis to him. He then seemed far more esteemed in the priesthood than he had been before at the rank of ruler.’ In the original Danish it is marginally clearer that Potiphar’s supposed effeminacy is a somehow a consequence of his purchase of Joseph, rather than a pre-existing condition: *Saa tilige / de Egyptier saae / at hand vaar wformuendis / oc ingen fruct kunde giøre / gjorde de hannem / som de haffde forseet / til Bisp i Heliopolis* (p. 5), ‘So what’s more, when the Egyptians saw that he was unfortunate, and could bear no fruit, they made him whom they had noticed the bishop of Heliopolis’. The attribution of the story to Hebrew tradition is largely correct (Icelandic *Hebreskir segja* from Danish *de Hebreer sige*). In the Talmud, *Genesis Rabbah* 86.3 tells the story that God castrated Potiphar because he had purchased Joseph with amorous intent. For more on the tradition of the eunuch Potiphar, see Ross Shepard Kraemer, *When Aseneth Met Joseph: A Late Antique Tale of the Biblical Patriarch and His Egyptian Wife, Reconsidered* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 314-15. Hans Mogensen presumably did not find out this trivia for himself, as there is no evidence that he was a Hebraist (for all we know he may well have tinkered with technical Hebraism like many other early Protestants, but this prospect is both unknowable and a very long leap away from being able to read the Talmud). It seems likely that the detail was already present in the German source text. In the pseudepigraphical *Aseneth*, Potiphar is certainly not a villainous character—indeed he is instrumental in the match between his daughter and Joseph—and so in this particular context the proposition that he was castrated for attempting to use Joseph for sex seems far-fetched. This may explain why Árni elides the passage in his translation from the Danish to the Icelandic.

37. Lbs 1226 4to has the more grammatically correct (though not overly graceful) *draumana* (109r). *Draumanna* is the genitive plural and therefore unwarranted.

38. Another Danicism: *befalning*, ‘recommendation’.

39. Lbs 2294 has *höfðingja* (109r). In BL Add MS 11068 the manuscript is damaged. Lbs 1226 has a contraction: *rá* (189v), presumably being *herra*, but in the British Library manuscript a ‘t’ or similar ascender is clearly discernible.

tvo syne, Manases og Ephraim.<sup>40</sup> Um þetta bil var Namphis sä stadur uppbigdur af Apis Arguiner kongi,<sup>41</sup> því svo heiter það hier ad i grenslum<sup>42</sup> vid Egiftaland. Ä því första ära i þeim 7 frjöfösum ärinna i Egiftalande, üt sende Pharao Josep korn ad safna, og jnnflitia i öllu Egiftaland. Og hann kom i landhälfur Heliopolis, þar sem Potiphar var einvaldz första, og sä ädsta yfer Pharaonis rädi og ridderum. Hann atti eina dottur, sem hiet Assenat, sü frydasta af öllum jungfrüm, og ad

40. A surplus ‘y’ has been struck through at the end of ‘Ephraim’.

41. Erudite but muddled: the cult of the Egyptian god Apis was indeed historically rooted in the Memphis region of Egypt. However, the *Arguiner* must be a corrupted reference to the Argives, i.e. the men of the Ancient Greek kingdom of Argos, who themselves had a king by the name of Apis. The Egyptian god was becoming conflated with the Greek king already during the Middle Ages and Renaissance. Boccaccio does so in his *Genealogia Deorum Gentilium* (c. 1360), and that work went on to enjoy great popularity in the early days of print, when the chapbook *Aseneth* was taking shape in various European languages. See Giovanni Boccaccio, *Genealogy of the Pagan Gods* (ed. and trans. Jon Solomon; The I Tatti Renaissance Library, 46; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), p. 197. Eusebius in his *Chronicon* (*Παντοδαμή ιστορία*, c. 325) was the first to make Apis a contemporary of Joseph; see Eusebius, *Eusebii Chronicorum*. Vol. 1 (ed. Alfred Schoene and Heinrich Petermann; Berlin: Weidmann, 1875), col. 177.

42. This whole passage is badly confused in relation to the original Danish: *Midler tid bygde Apis de Arguiners Konning Memphim den Stad vdi Egypten. Vdi det første aff de siu fructsommelige Aar udsende Pharao Joseph Korn at samle oc oplegge. Oc hand kom i Heliopolis Grentze huor Potiphar vaar en Landførste* (pp. 6-7), ‘At that time Apis, the king of the Arguines, built Memphis, that city in Egypt. In the first of the seven plenteous years [lit. fruitful years] Pharaoh sent Joseph out to collect and store corn. And he arrived at the borders of Heliopolis, where Potiphar was a governor.’ It seems that Árni may have suffered from eye-skip when translating from the Danish exemplar, jumping from the introduction of King Apis, at first missing the arrival of Joseph, and going straight to *Grentze*. Realizing his mistake, he went back, found the seven plenteous years clause, and reproduced it immediately afterwards. None of this explains the *þvi svo heiter það hier ad i grenslum* passage, which makes little sense. *Grenslum* (nominative singular \**grensla*?) presents a particular problem. It is obviously inspired by Danish *Grentze* (modern Danish *grænse*), though one would expect straightforward Dano-Icelandic *grensa* as the obvious translation. Sigfús Blöndal lists the verb *uppgrensla* as meaning in Danish *udforske*, *udfinde* ‘to research, to find out’: Sigfús Blöndal, *Íslensk—dönsk orðabók* (Reykjavík: Verslun Þórarins B. Þorlákssonar, 1920–24), p. 890. Swedish has the verb *gränslal grensla*, meaning ‘to put’ or ‘to ride’, though whether \**grensla* was understood to have anything to do with ‘a day’s ride’ is purely conjectural. The scribe of Lbs 1226 appears to have struggled with the word too, writing *girnd*, ‘desire, lust’, where the initial ‘i’ has been made by scribbling out an underlying letter (perhaps an ‘r’ as in *grenslum*).

óllu látæde lyk þeim hebresku statz mejune.<sup>43</sup> Enn hún var stór, sier göd og drambsóm, og for smædi alla monnum. Því liet Potiphar gióra hiá syne hús ein stórann forþrydiligan sal med tölf smá húsom og her bergium.<sup>44</sup> Þad firsta var stort og prydelegt, lagt gölfad med marmara steina, veggerner ütsmickadur med gimsteinum, og pilárar af gulle, þar sem vorú þeir egiftsku afgudar, hvoria Assenat tilbad og offradi daglega. I ódrú her berga var hennar skart og büníngúr geimdar, gull, silfur, geimsteinar, lindar og kiediúr.<sup>45</sup> [30r] <Þridia herberged geimde landsens bestu dýr gripe, jurter og liliur. Þar uar><sup>46</sup> hennar <bænahús j þeim hinu sómu herbergiumm.><sup>47</sup> Vorú jfer mäta frýðar jömfrur sem Assenat þiönudú, og eingenn mätte med inngängast. J Assenats herberge sialfrar vorú þrýr gluggar, einn til austurs, annar til sudurs, þridia til nordurs. Med gilltri sæng af gulla og selfra, tileldúd med üt spraingdum ýnnislega litum fiólldum, og sparlóku<sup>48</sup> af purpura og gull-stickium. I þeirri sæng svaf Assenat alleina, og eingenn hafdi þar komed nie satt sig ä hennar sæng. Og Assenat var stór sem Sara, fryd sem Rebecca, enn eigannlig og síd sem Rachel

Hvornenn Josep straffadi Assenath firer afgudadyrkan.

Josep sende ord til Potiphars, ad hann villdi koma til hans til gesta. Potiphar vard gladur vid, og sagda sinne dóttur ad Josep sa sterke gud kiæme til syni, og villdi hann gifta honum hana. Henne lykada þad stórilla, og kvadst óngumn fänga giftast vilia, helldur köngs syne. Og er þaü voru þetta ad tala, kom einn til þeirra og sagdi ad Josep være kominn. Assenat hliöp þa uppí sitt herberge. Enn Josep kom, sitiande i

43. A Dano-Icelandic peculiarity, from Danish *stat*, ‘state’, and Icelandic *meýja*, ‘maiden’: *státsmeýja*. The original Danish has *de Hebraiske Døtter* (p. 7), ‘the Hebrew daughters’.

44. An alliterative tautology that goes back to Old Norse *hús ok herbergi*, also found in Late Medieval and Early Modern Danish as *Hus oc Herberge*.

45. There is divergence from the Danish here: *Vdi det andet Mag vaar Assenaths smykke / Gud / sølff / ædle stene oc Tapeter eller Drætter* (p. 7), ‘In the other chamber was Aseneth’s jewellery, gold, silver, gemstones and tapestries or fine fabrics’. It is plausible that *Kiediúr* (apparently a Danicism for ‘chains’) originates as a misreading for *\*klæði* or a similar Dano-Icelandic attempt to represent *Drætter*.

46. BL Add MS 11068 is damaged here. Reading from Lbs 1226 4to (190r).

47. Ibid.

48. Lbs 1226 4to, 190r: *sparlokenn*, meaning unclear. Árni deviates from the Danish here.

Pharaonis vagnne sem var af ýdil gulle,<sup>49</sup> og geingu firer förer huyter hestar, en taumarner<sup>50</sup> forgilltar. Josep var klæddur huytu kyrtla med flugiels<sup>51</sup> käpu ofura med gulle, med gull-koronu, og utan ä kransenum tölf gimsteinar, med könglegra spyrú á sinni hendi, og oliu kuistú upp af med ävexti. Potiphar og hans kuinna til badú Jösef, sem hann gieck i gardinn med þeim, og var so port med aftur lokad. Þa sä Assenat Josep og ydradest fra orda sinn hün hafdi talad, og sagdi: ‘sölen af himina er i synum vagne til vor komen, alldrei viðá eg ad Josep uære gudz sonur og ei viðá eg huornenn einn mader kunne soddan mann ad gieta eda nockur kuinna soddan liös ad fæda!’. [30v] <[190v] Joseph gieck inn i Potephars hús og þau þuddu hans fætur og hann spurde: ‘huada kuinna stod y vindauganu yfer þynnum sal? Láttu henna ofan koma’, þuj hann ottadest ad hun munde sitia um hann sem adur fleiri hofdu giort med uerslegum verkumm.<sup>52</sup> Photephar sagdi það uæri syn dotter> sem all[drei] hafdi nockurn mann þydst, og forsmäde alla. ‘En uilier þu hun kom[e], þá skal eg läta sækia hana’. Josep þeinkte:<sup>53</sup> ‘first hun forsmäer alla þá skeiter hun ecke helldur um mig’, og sagde til hennar fóders: ‘Er ydar dötter soddan ein jömfrú þá elska eg hana sem eigin kónu’ [.]. Hennar möder hliöp strax upp, og leidde hana til Joseps, og hün sagde: ‘bleßadur siertú af þeim allra hädsta’, sem Josep sagde: ‘Gud velsigne þig sem lifande giörer alla hlúta’, óg fader hennar skipadi henne ad kiða Jösef, og sem hün villdi það gióra, veik Josep henne frä sier og sagde: ‘eige sæmelegt ad sa mader sem heidrade Gud med synum vórum skule kiða þá sem til bidur <med><sup>54</sup> synne munní dauf og daud skürgod, etur af þeirra brauda, dreckur af þeirra bikórum, og smýr sig med þeirra vidsmiöre’.

49. A pure Danicism: *Men Joseph kom siddendis i Pharaonis Vogn / Hand vaar aff idel Guld* (p. 9).

50. I.e. *Tømmer*, ‘bits’ (equestrian).

51. I.e. *Fløyels*, ‘velour’.

52. In the *Aseneth* tradition as a whole, narrators tend to be bashfully silent over whether ‘their’ Potiphar is identical with Potipherah, priest of On, in Gen. 41.45. If the two are indeed the same, then Joseph’s mother-in-law-to-be would be the very same lustful woman who was responsible for his false imprisonment. Joseph’s anxiety at seeing a woman observing him furtively from a distance may be imputed to this troubling episode in his past, as well as his famously fraught fraternal relations.

53. An obvious Danicism, from *tænkte*, *at tænke*, ‘thought, to think’.

54. Lbs 1226 has *med* (191v). BL Add MS 11068 is cut off, though *ēg* (i.e. *eng-*, perhaps *engin?*) is clearly legible, if inappropriate in this context.

## Assenaths ydran.

Þá Assenat herde<sup>55</sup> Joseps ord, sorgade hun, og Josep lagda syn hendur ä hennar briöst og bleðadi hana, því hann aumkadeð firer henne. Hün gladdest vid af kiærleika til Joseps. Lagdast sydan uppä sængena, og giörda ydran firer syna afgude, og kastade þeim oll eins fra sier. Enn Josep eit og drack og var gladúr, og sem hann villda reisa<sup>56</sup> bad Photiphar hann ad dvelia þar enn nü einn dag. Enn Josep lofada sig þängad aftúr efter 8 daga. Assenat tök uppä sig sorgar klodnad,<sup>57</sup> lukte dyrnar og griet, kastade üt óllum afgudum af vindaugunúm<sup>58</sup> sinnum til, lagdast ä jörde, og griet sänlega i 7 daga hvorn efter annann.

## Eingilsens huggan vid Assenath.

A þeim 8<sup>de</sup> deige, mióg snemma umm morgúnenn, sä Assenat üt úm vindaugad hiä morgun stiörnuna himinenn opinn og hün skialfdest og fiell framm ä syna äsiönu, og einn mader kom til hennar og sagde: ‘Assenat’. Hün af hrædslú giegnde aungvú. Hann kallade aftur: ‘Assenat, Assenat’. Hun svarade: ‘siä, herra, hier er eg. Seg mer hvor þü ert’. [31v] <Hann svarade: ‘eg er gudz her, kaera hofdingi. Stattu upp so eg meigi tala [med]<sup>59</sup> þig’. Hün stöd upp og sä ad madrenn er likur><sup>60</sup> Josep búnad <med><sup>61</sup> kyrtil, koronu, og konglega spyru. Enn

55. A Danicism, from archaic Danish *hørde*, ‘heard’, e.g. Christiern Pedersen’s rendering of Gen. 3.8: *oc der de hørde Guds Herrens røst*. The correct modern Icelandic would be *heyrði* from *að heyra*, while the modern Danish would be *hørte* from *at høre*.

56. In the sense of ‘to travel’ this is a Danicism from *at rejse*, though in this case it is not the form found in the Danish source text: *Thi Joseph drog bort* (p. 12), ‘For Joseph went away’.

57. The Icelandic *Aseneth* here omits a dubious tradition found in the Danish: *...Assenath tog en sort Kiortel paa / som vaar hendis Sørge Klædning / der hendis yngste Broder døde* (p. 12), ‘...Aseneth put on a black tunic, which was her mourning dress when her youngest brother died’.

58. The scribe has apparently attempted to turn the first ‘u’ of the inflection into an ‘a’, *vindauganum*. However, the original *-unum* is the correct paradigmatic ending so is preferred here.

59. Lbs 1226 4to, 191v, has *ú* (*út* ?), which must be erroneous as we would expect *með* here (or *til*, if the accusative case of the following *þig* did not rule it out). BL Add Ms 11068 is missing the top quarter of 31v.

60. Lbs 1226 4to (191v).



hans andlit var sem elldyng, augun sem solargeislar, häred sem liös. Eingillenn reiste hana upp huggade hana, og sagdi: ‘tak burt þitt sorgarklædi og bellte og duftud af þynú hófde. Þvo þig vel i lifanda vatnn, og tak upp þýna prýde, so vil eg tala vid þig’. Og hun stöd upp skindilega, tók sitt skart og kom so til eingilsens.

Enn hann sagde: ‘tak þú klæded af þínu hófde, því þú ert jomfrú, og þitt nafn er i bök þeira lifendú [stendur?]’<sup>62</sup> skrifad, og skal ei útsliettast ad eilyfu, og ä þeßum deige ertu endurnýud, og skallt eta það bleßada braud, og drecka öforgeingelegann dryck, og smyriast med heilógu vidsmióra. Siä, i dag gief eg þier Josep til brüdgúma, því þýn ydran er kominn fyrer drottenn’.

#### Um Assenaths og eingilsins mälyd og hunangs kókuna.

Assenat hiellt i hans kyrtil og sagdi: ‘hafa eg funded nad fyrer þynnum augum, þä set þig litla stund ä þeßa sæng ä hvorre eingenn hefur enn þä fyrr seted, so vil eg setia bord fyrer þig’. Og eingillenn sagde: ‘ber hängad fliött’, og hün sette fyrer hann bord, sætt ögn og jurtur, og eingillenn sagde: ‘sæk þú mer eina hunängs kóku’. Enn hün vard sorgende af því hun hafdi [31r] uöngua, og eingillenn sagde: ‘<fardu ynn i þitt matar hüs og muntu finna hünangs kóku><sup>63</sup> ä einum diska’, og <er> hün kom <þängad fann hün eina hünangs kóku ä einumm diske [huyt]’<sup>64</sup> sem sniö af besta hünange. Hün smackade miög sætt. Assnat sagde: ‘eg hafde oungva hunäng kóku og sem þinn bleßade muner sagde> so er það skied’, og eingillinn gladdast af h[enna]r mikla vysdöme og sagde: ‘sæl ertu sem burt kastad hefur öllum skürgodum, og trüer ä þann lifanda Gud, og aller sem til hans koma med reittra ydran skulú eta af þeßu braude, sem Paradisar fuglar<sup>65</sup> gióra af þeim rosum sem þar vaxa. Af þeßú braude eta einglar guds’.

61. Patch of severe abrasion in BL Add Ms 11068, present in Lbs 1226 4to (191v).

62. Redundant and agrammatical, missing in Lbs 1226 4to. The contraction is *ftē*, where the hand makes little distinction between initial ‘ft’ and uppercase ‘J’.

63. Damaged in BL Add MS 11068. Reading taken from Lbs 1226 4to (192r).

64. Missing in the MS but present in the Danish: *Oc hun fant en Kage huid som Sne* (p. 15).

65. In the Danish, as in all other traditions, they are bees: *Paradises Bier* (p. 15). The *Aseneth* in *Stjórn* calls them *býflugur af guðs paradiso* (I, p. 316), ‘bees from

Hann braut sundur kókuna og át eitt sticke. Það<sup>66</sup> annat gaf hann Assenatz og sagde: ‘þü etur lyfsens braud og ertu smúrd med því heilaga vidsmiöre, og uppfrä þeðum dége ertu giórd lifande’, og hann hrærde vid kokuna sem hann hafede<sup>67</sup> sundur broted, og hün vard heil sem hün var ädur

J annad sinn kom hann vid kókúna med því fremsta af fyngrenum, og það sem hans fingur snerte, vard ad blödi. Þad sa Assenat og sagde: ‘siä til kokúnnar!’. Þä komú þar margar flúger ütäf, hvytar sem sniör, vængerner sem flugurr med mislitum farva, og flugu allt um kryng Assenat og giórdu eina húnangs kóku i hennar höndúm, og ätu þær af. Og eingillenn sagde til þeira: ‘fliügied burt ä ydar stade’, og þær flügú burt til austurs. J þridia sinn ährærdi eingillenn kókuna, þä gieck elldur upp af bordum og upp brende kókúna, sä þä ei veist ä bordenú, og sä brenne reikur var sætur.

God’s Paradise’. The later Icelandic decision to replace the bees with birds may be explained by the paucity of hymenoptera in Iceland. It is an island of very poor biodiversity, particularly when it comes to arthropods. Before the twentieth century, there was no apiculture whatsoever, as well as no ants and only a few solitary wasps of the sort that do not build large colonies. In 1752, seven years after the BL Add MS 11068 was completed, Niels Horrebow published his *Tilforladelige efterretninger om Island*, which is the original source of the line: *Slanger er der ikke udi Island*, famously rendered into English as the stark statement ‘There are no snakes in Iceland’ or ‘No snakes of any kind are to be met with throughout the whole island’. Niels Horrebow. *Tilforladelige efterretninger om Island* (Copenhagen: [Unknown Publisher], 1752), p. 240. Immediately following the famously brief chapter on snakes, Horrebow further remarks: *Intet land paa Jorden er mindre foruroeligt af Insecter, og saadant slags Uten en Island* (ibid.), ‘No country on earth is less troubled by insects and that sort of thing than Iceland’. A similar translation strategy occurs in the Old Icelandic *Physiologus* of the twelfth century, where ants in the Latin original are exchanged for *kleggjar* ‘horseflies’, the former being unknown in Iceland at the time. *The Icelandic Physiologus* (ed. Halldór Hermannsson; *Islandica* 27; Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1938), p. 17.

66. One of the only two ‘ð’s in BL Add MS 11068. Some top-looped ‘d’s appear to be ‘ð’s on first inspection, but when examined under magnification it is revealed that they are actually ‘d’s where the pen has only very lightly grazed the paper at the top of the ascending loop.

67. Read: hafde

Um bleðninga yfer þeim síó jomfrúm hiä Assenath.

[32r] <Assnat sagde til eingelsens: ‘herra eg hefe mejar, uær<sup>68</sup> erumm allar fæddar a einum deige og allar hofum> vered til samans uppa[gadar], <eg bid þig ad bleða þær lyka sem mig’, og sem þær komu bleðade hann þær allar ad þær> yrde <sem sjó pýlärar i drottens hüse og><sup>69</sup> eingillenn bad Assenat ad burt taka borded og hann hvarf so frá þeira augúm.

Og sem Assenat undrade þetta, kom Josep gängande i forgardinum, þä hliöp Assnat til hans, og sagdi hönúm allt sem vid hafde bored, og heilsade hönúm.

Annars dags beidde Josep Pharao ad gifta sier Asenath og hann gaf hönúm hana til eigenn kvinnú, og hieilt hans bruðkaup i samfellda síó daga, og sette gull koronum ä hans hófud. Josep ätte tvo sina, Mananse og<sup>70</sup> Ephraim, ädur hallæred kom i Egiftaland.

<[H.G.S:] B[lessadur] Doctor Marteinn Lútherus seirr ad Josep væri 30<sup>in</sup> ära þegar hann var upphafinn j Egiftalandi af Commesor Kongi sem annars nefndest og Pharao a Norrænu,<sup>71</sup> þottad skiede anno Munde: 2238, enn ad lidnum tveimur hördu áronum Kom Jacob hans fader nidur til Egiftalands med sitt fólk ad tölú 70 sálir þottad fólk Jsraelytar fiolgudu a 225 árum 600,000 mans, enn 2255 andadest Jacob sem og kalladist Jsrael. Enn 2309 andadist Josep enn eftir hanns daga biriadist þræl dómur Jsraelytanna. [32v] Og<sup>72</sup> um þeða tjma var so þungt hallæred j Egiftalande allstadar ad Josep reiste alt Egifta land til handa Faraona, nema pres[t]anna jarda gódz þvj kóngurin valdi ecki draga til syn þeirra gódz heldur liet hann þä nióta als afgialdr. Enn sa kóngur sem þrælliéde Jsraelytana kalladist og Farao

68. An unusually archaic form of the first person plural pronoun.

69. Readings in parentheses all taken from Lbs 1226 4to (192r) as BL Add MS 11068 is severely damaged here. Though the text of Lbs 1226 and the British Library manuscript most likely were to the same effect in this passage, the wording was not identical. BL Add MS 11068 clearly has *til samans* while Lbs 1226 4to has *aidsamann*

70. Dittography in MS.

71. This is not Luther’s deduction, but is instead from Gen. 41.46: ‘And Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh king of Egypt’.

72. Distinctive ampersand, more akin to a majuscule ‘B’.

enn ødru nafni Ramesis. Hann liet upp biggia staden Ramesis<sup>73</sup> af tígulsteine<sup>74</sup>

Þá Jósep hafde nú i þeim <7 friofsomer arum><sup>75</sup> safnad korne i ollu Egiftalandi, þá kom hungred og hallæred<sup>76</sup> hiá óllum þiöðum. Efter draumannautleggingú þá uppá liet Jósep allar korn hlódu<r> og sellde Egifteskum af landsens ävexte. Og<sup>77</sup> þá komu einenn hans brædur, og hann þekte þá, enn þeir þektú hann eige, firr enn Beniamin kom, og hann auglyste sig firer þeim med grätande tärum og <miukum> ordum og skeinkingúm,<sup>78</sup> skipade so lyka ad hans fader skillde koma.

S[o] þá drö Jsrael i Egiftaland med 66 säler, so hans hiske med Jóseps hiske var allz 70. Þá var Jacob 130 ära gamall, þá Josep leidde hann firer Pharaonem, og kongurenn gaf hoñum landed [33r] <Gosen<sup>79</sup> ad büa ij ä odruhällæres [ár]<sup>80</sup> j odriumm mänade ä 22 deige sama mánadar. Sä><sup>81</sup> Asenat Jakob og undradr ho[num?].

73. Presumably a reference to the city now referred to as Pi-Ramesses, mentioned in Exod. 1.11: ‘Therefore they did set over them taskmasters to afflict them with their burdens. And they built for Pharaoh treasure cities, Pithom and Raamses.’

74. This text is added by a different hand (who later signs as ‘H.G.S.’ on 34r) on two patches, one on 32r and one on 32v. Interestingly, the patches do not appear to censor the text in relation to the Danish model: the story before the patch continues seamlessly after the patch, i.e. if we imagine that the patches are blank, the text would still be identical with the unpatched text in Lbs 1226 4to. The top of 32v is badly damaged, and the traces of a few, illegible words are visible before the paper falls away. The paper of BL Add MS 11068 is not of high quality, and it could well be that the areas later covered by H.G.S.’s patches were too tattered or abraded to be of use for writing on by the first scribe (P.S.S., Þorbjörn Salómonsson).

75. Lbs 1226 4to (192v)

76. The use of tautology—especially alliterative tautology—is a stylistic feature in Icelandic which harks back to the Old Norse period. Here, it is a pleasing enrichment of the Danish: *oc Hunger nu offuerfalt* (p. 17), ‘and now hunger attacked’.

77. Ampersand, near identical to that denoted above.

78. A Dano-Icelandic term from Danish *at skænke*, nowadays confined to the sense of ‘to pour (a drink)’ but historically also used in the sense of ‘to do someone an honour’, ‘to give, apportion’. Here it translates *Foræring* in Mogensen’s original (p. 18), i.e. ‘honour, gift, present’, all of which are viable alternative translations for *skeinkingúm*.

79. Gen. 45.10: ‘And thou shalt dwell in the land of Goshen, and thou shalt be near unto me, thou, and thy children, and thy children’s children, and thy flocks, and thy herds, and all that thou hast’.

80. Supplied by the present editor, not found in the MS.

81. Lbs 1226 4to (192v).

[Hann]<sup>82</sup> var sterkur og [Har]eistúr so gamall mader, hans hofed var hvýtt sem sniör, hans skegg näde ofan ä brिंगü. Hans augu voru skær, hans hendur og fætur sem ä ünga alldre, og Jacob bleßade þeim bæde, med kiærleiks kose, og efter mälytd för Josep og Assenat heim i sitt hüis, og Simon og Levi med þeim.

### Um eitt upplaup.

Þä Pharaoinis sonur sä nú Assenat gängande i süns fódurs garde, upptendradest hann af gyrnd til hennar og bad Levi, Gad, og Simeon ad drepa Josep so hann feinge helldur Assenat til eiginn kvinnu. Lofade þeim miklu gulle og silfra, enn þeir hlyddú hönüm ecke. Þä forlaug<sup>83</sup> Pharaonis sonur Josep firer synumm brædurnum Dan og Gad, sem vorú fædder af Iacobs embätt, og sagde sig heirt hafa Josep seigia vid sinn fódúr Pharao ad han efter Jacobs dauda villde eideleggja<sup>84</sup> þä, so ad þeir skylldu ei erfa med hans brædrüm, því þeir væré emmbättarsynir, og þar med hefdú þeir sellt hann Jsmaelitung, og hann ofer taladi þä so þeir skylldu myrda Josep, so lofode hann þeim lyka ad hann skyllde myrda sinn föder, hvorer Josep hlyddi sem föder. Þä hann villde nú um nætyur týma myrda sinn fadur Pharao, villde ecke vakten firer kongsens dyrüm leifa hönüm jnngóngü, og sogdü hans fader hefde hofedverk og [33v] svæfe, han hefde <bannad eingenn og enn><sup>85</sup> hans eigenn sonur skillde <þar innganga>.<sup>86</sup> Þä fieck Pharaonis sonúr halft hundred mans med bryniad lid, og gieck þangad um Simon<sup>87</sup> [!] og Gad vorú komner med margt <ut burd lid>. Um þann veg ättu lyka þä ad reisa Josep og Assenat og sem þau þar komú med 700 mans, [!]<sup>88</sup> vorú þeir aller slegner utan einn komest undan til Simeon og Levi enn Assenat flýde i synum vagn, og med henne Benjamin. Þä Simon og Levi vißu huad um var ad vera, töku þeir alla þä sem hiä þeim vorú, og söktu efter hinum og slögu þä i hel.

82. Supplied by the present editor, not found in the MS.

83. Danicism: *beløig* (p. 19), i.e. Modern Danish *belyve* 'to slander'.

84. Danicism: *ødelægge*, 'to destroy, lit. to lay waste'.

85. Lbs 1226 4to (193r)

86. Ibid.

87. Read: Dan.

88. Lbs 1226 4to is also erroneous here, having the genitive plural, *manna* (193r). One would expect the dative plural *mönnum* or accusative plural, *menn*.

Enn Dan og Gad fludú og foldú þickvúm reir sem þar var, og voru þar uskadan þetta ýfer stöd.

### Um Pharaonis dauda og afgang.

A tölfta áre Joseps herra dæmis, dö Pharao, sem<sup>89</sup> Josep þiönadu, hver hann sette til herra ýfer landed. Hon[um] Pharao lyka kalladest Comessor, sem Nephrim<sup>90</sup> seger. Hans [vig]<sup>91</sup> er geted i *Assenats Historiu* sem efter filger.

89. Dittography.

90. A confusion has entered the chapbook tradition here. In the retelling of the *Book of Aseneth* included in Vincent of Beauvais's *Speculum Historiale* (c. 1250) Pharaoh's death is introduced with the aside: *quem Comestor altero nomine dicit appellatum Nefrem* (vol. 4, p. 44), 'whom Comestor called by another name, Nefrem'. This tradition accordingly appears in the Old Norse compilation of the *Speculum Historiale*, namely *Stjórn I: þann seger commestor oðru nafni kallaðan hafa uerit nefrem* (vol. 1, p. 341, cf. p. 370). Vincent's citation of Comestor is correct, thus his *Historia Scholastica*: *Ab illo enim sub quo fuit Ioseph, qui proprio nomine dictus est Nephres, 'Under this [Pharaoh] was Joseph, who by his proper name is called Nephres'. Petrus Comestor, Historia Scholastica* [ed. J.P. Migne] in *Patrologia Latina* 198 (1855), col. 1141. It appears to have been fairly widely known in the Middle Ages, e.g. John of Fordun in his *Chronica gentis Scotorum* (1380s): *Porro in. xvii. dynastia regnaverunt Pharaones, quorum unus sublimavit Ioseph, quem commestor Nephrem vocat* 'Furthermore in the 17<sup>th</sup> dynasty ruled the Pharaohs, one of whom promoted Joseph, whom Comestor calls Nephrem'. John of Fordun, *Chronica Gentis Scotorum* (ed. William F. Skene; *Historians of Scotland*, 1; Edinburgh: Edmonston and Douglas, 1871), p. 10. The name is also known in Ranulf of Higden's *Polychronicon* (1360s), here in the Middle English translation by John Trevisa (1387): 'Pharao, vnder wom Ioseph was, heet Nephres by his owne propre name'. *Polychronicon Ranulphi Higden Monachi Cestrensis*, vol. 2 (ed. Churchill Babington; London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1869), p. 317. Comestor did briefly discuss Aseneth in his *Historia scholastica*. There, he correctly notes that Jewish tradition holds Aseneth to be a daughter resulting from the rape of Dinah—thereby rendering the pseudepigraphic tradition superfluous because Aseneth would not have been a heathen, legally speaking, in the first place; see Esra Shereshevsky, 'Hebrew Traditions in Peter Comestor's *Historia scholastica*. I. Genesis', *Jewish Quarterly Review* 59.4 (1969), p. 285. By the age of early print Comestor and Nefrem had been swapped, with 'Comessor' as the name of Pharaoh and 'Nefrem' as the source (as in the Danish at p. 21). Unaware of its history in scholastic exegesis, one suspects that the name 'Nefrem' must have had a vaguely oriental quality to Early Modern ears. The word faintly—and purely accidentally—recalls נֶפִילִים *Nefilim* from Gen. 6.4. The reliability in biblical matters which has been attached to Semitic or Greek sources

Efter þetta stryd og upphlaup sem nú sagt var, var Assenat i synnum vagne og Benjamin hiä henne, þar hann sä ad Pharaonis sonür sokte after henne, og villde taka hana med vallde. Greip han einn stein fleigde honum vinstra meigenn ä hans hnacka, so hann rotadest, og dö ad mestü, og fiell af hestinum. J þesum svifum sä Benjamin, hver ad var fryskur og ä hræddur, hvar ad komu þeitande Simon og Levi, og villdu drepa þeira brædur Dan og Gad, sem vorü med kongz syne, enn hann stillte þeira reide. Og þeir töku Pharaonis son hälfdaudann, þvodü hans sär og bundu ein, færdu hann sydan synum födur, og sogdü frä hid sanna. Pharao þackade þeim ad þeir dräpu hann ei olldungis. Enn hann dö þö af því säre innan þridia dags, og <34r> [H.G.S.:] skommu þar eftir dö farao af hiartans sorg vegna sýns sonar þá han var 98 ára, og befalade Josep rýkir stiörnüne, þij hans yngri sonur var a brioste, og Josep stiornade egipta lande y 48 ár, sydan af henti<sup>92</sup> hann þad kóngsins sini med corónuni, og kalladest a medann þes únga herra fader. Enn Josep þienti<sup>93</sup> synum kóngi med allra digd og hollestu og giorde alt landid honum under giefid med korn solunne.

[P.S.S.:] Þegar Jacob hafde lifad 148 ár, sä han sin tyma komen, kallade Josep til sýn, og tök eid af hónum, ad hann liete grafa sig hiä Abraham, bleðade so hann og Assenat og þeira tuo syna med kroslegdnnü hondum, gaf Josep so fyrer utan skefti<sup>94</sup> Sichim,<sup>95</sup> sydan

(even imaginary ones) is a staple of western Orientalism, and can be plainly observed in the *formáli* to *Assenaths Historia*.

91. The reading *víg* supplied here is not wholly satisfactory. The initial ‘v’ might perhaps be read as an ‘m’, and there is no evidence of a long descender on any of the characters in the word: an absence which might result from the scuff but might have always been there. *Morð* would be a sound palaeographical solution, but it seems unlikely that Árni or a later scribe would have found it appropriate to describe the death as a ‘murder’.

92. Dittography, *sydan af henti* written twice.

93. Danicism from *tjente* ‘served’, cf. Icelandic *þjóna*, used elsewhere by the other scribe.

94. Dano-Icelandic from a peculiar Danish legal term, *skifte*. Hans Mogensen has *gaff hannem ocsaa / uden skiffte / den Marck Sichem* (p. 23), ‘He also gave him the territory [lit. “field”] of Sichem without *skifte*’. There is no precise equivalent for *skifte* in Anglophone law, but ‘probate’ will be close enough for our purposes.

95. That is, biblical Shechem, which according to Josh. 24.32 is the final resting place of Joseph: ‘And the bones of Joseph, which the children of Israel brought up out of Egypt, buried they in Shechem, in a parcel of ground which Jacob bought of the

samankallade hann óll syn bórn, og bleðade þáú. Sagde þeim so fyrer allt sem efter ä skede ä þeira dógüm efter bókstafinum. Enn opinberlega sagde hann þeim af bádum tilkomum Christi i hollded og til dómsens, üt riette so syna fætur og andadest. En hans bórn fluttu han til Canaans og grófu hann i þeim tvófallda haller<sup>96</sup> til Hebron.

#### Um Joseps dauda og afgang.

Josep ä synum dógüm tök eyd af synnum brædrum, ad þeir burt flitte med sier hans bein þa þeir fare af Egifta lande, og skommu þar efter dö hann, og var lagdur i eina kistu, þä hann var 110 ära, ä hans firstadóms 80 ära, efter Abrahams fæding 331 är, og Iudas einn var ei færður af Egiftalande, þä hann andadest. En aller adrer [35v] hans brædur voru <grafner i><sup>97</sup> Hebron j kistu. En Assen[at] þa hun <sa Joseph ordenn siúkan kom hun>,<sup>98</sup> og var hiä honum, og griet särlega [og hann] bleðade Assenat og hennar tuo sonu, og efter þ[ad] mintest han þrátt vid Assenat, og sagde þáú yrde <ad skilia><sup>99</sup> fyrst litla stúnd, svo munde þau med gleda aftur finnast. Og sem hün var sig sorgande bad hann hana ein stund burtú ad ganga frá sier, og [sem] hun þad

sons of Hamor the father of Shechem for an hundred pieces of silver: and it became the inheritance of the children of Joseph.'

96. A difficult reading and potentially diagnostic feature. The hand seldom distinguishes clearly between lower case 'e', 'n', and sometimes 'a'. One might also read *heller* (i.e. modern Icelandic *hellir* 'caves, holes'), which would better describe the Caves of the Patriarchs (cf. Gen. 23.17-20) and, as will shortly be explained, would correspond to one of the Danish traditions. However, this reading is grammatically unacceptable, as *hellir* should be plural and in the accusative case, i.e. *i þeim tvöfalda hella*. The distinction is important because the 1580 and 1601 Danish editions have the correct *Hule*, 'hole'. The 1615 edition has the incorrect *Huile*, 'rest', and the 1626 edition has the even more wayward *Hiule*, 'wheels'. (In sound modern Danish there is no orthographic difference between singular *hjul* and plural *hjul*, but the *Hiule* form is found in older texts, e.g. Ezek. 10.9 in Christiern Pedersen's Bible: *Og jeg saae, og see, der vare fire Hjule hos Cheribum, hos enhver Cherub et Hjul; og Hjulenens skikkelse var som en Turkous-steens Farve*.) We have already seen that BL Add Ms 11068 (or more properly its lost Icelandic exemplar) is most likely dependent on the 1626 Danish version. It seems that either the BL Add Ms 11068 scribe or Árni Halldórsson himself was unconvinced by the typographical error, and relied upon his own judgment and ingenuity. See Overgaard, 'De islandske oversættelser', p. 217.

97. Lbs 1226 4to (194r)

98. Ibid.

99. Ibid.



giorde, andadest hann. Enn fäm dógum<sup>100</sup> efter andadest lyka Assenat, mest af sorg, þui [ad] engin madur matte til hennar koma, ür þui Josep var daúdur.

Ender ä forfedranna æfesógum.

Endad ad Arnarstapa  
J 25 octobris Anno 1745  
af Þ.S.S.

[H.G.S.:] Allir Jacobs sinir voru grafnir til Hebron j Canan nema Júda<sup>101</sup>

H.G.S.

### English Translation:

The Preface to the Book, of How these Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs<sup>102</sup> were first found, and how a scholar first translated them from the Greek to the Latin language.

For a long time these things, good reader, have lain hidden, so that nobody was aware of how to find them—not even those exegetes of old—all because of the spite and hatred of the Jews towards us, and [towards] the prophecy about Christ which is widely found in this little book. And as those Greeks, who with all industry sought out all ancient books and legends, have found this one along with others, and then with all diligence translated it from Hebrew to the Greek language, then this little book was again concealed, so that nobody discovered it—mostly because nobody learned enough found them in that place at that time, neither in Greek nor Latin,<sup>103</sup> so that this book might be interpreted. And so it was until Albertus The Second, who

100. Here a word beginning with ‘þ’ has been deliberately erased by abrasion.

101. H.G.S. was, it seems, unable to resist having the last word.

102. Lit. ‘forefathers’.

103. I.e. learned enough in Greek or Latin. Icelandic, like other Scandinavian languages, uses one preposition to denote a phrase being in a language (*Segðu það á íslensku*, ‘say it in Icelandic’; *sig det på dansk*, ‘say it in Danish’) and another to denote expertise in a language as a field of knowledge (*ég er kennari í íslensku*, ‘I am a teacher of [lit. in] Icelandic’; *jeg er lærer i dansk*, ‘I am a teacher of Danish’).

was called Grosetius, the bishop of Lincoln. He inquired after this book and then it was told to him, that he should send off to Greece to look for it. Mostly he knew of those testimonies which were in this book and the revelations to be found about Christ. He then had this book interpreted by those learned men who were experienced in both languages in the year 1242. To this end a Greek helped, by the name of Master Nicolaus, a schoolmaster in Datchet and abbot of the Monastery of St. Albans, so that this prophecy about Christ should be brought to light to the shame of all heretics and enemies of the Christian church, and to the praise and glory of God and Jesus forever. Amen.

Hereafter Follows *Assenaths Historia*.

Found in ancient books, which long have lain hidden and concealed, with wonderful<sup>104</sup> mystery, lively and interesting to read.

Joseph was born in his father's 90th year, and in the 210th year of his grandfather. 2090 years had then passed since the beginning of the world. Joseph was 16 years old when he looked after the herd for his brothers, then he fell into their hatred and jealousy, both because of the love [of his father] and how his father loved him above the others, and also because of the dream which he recounted to his brothers, when by force they tore off his coat which he was then wearing when he was sent to them by their father, and they cast him in the grave. At the advice of Judah they then dragged him up again and sold him to Ismaelites. Then, to his father's bitter grief, they came and said that he was dead. At that time, Judah approached Tamar, the wife of his son, and begot with her Perez and Zerah, and when she was to be punished he relented, and forgave her, because he had not wanted to give [in marriage] his son, Selah, and she had seemed too young to be a widow. And the Midianites, as the Ismaelites were also called, sold Joseph in Egypt to Potiphar, who was the highest chieftain over Pharaoh's knights, even though others consider him to be a baron over his [Pharaoh's] servants and cooks, and that may well be plausible, because such men are held in great honour in many nations. He had

104. The word here is *ágiætum* (*ágætur*), which has drifted semantically from 'excellent' in Old Norse to 'acceptable, fine' in modern Icelandic. Here we are clearly at the earlier stage of the evolution.

both a wife and children, and his daughter was married to Joseph. Potiphar bought Joseph at once, and so became much more excellent in the priesthood than he had in the secular realm. Joseph was held in great honour when he lived in Egypt, and was bought by Potiphar. But because he staunchly loved the faith and purity he was accused and then put in prison. There, he interpreted dreams, and things turned out according to his interpretation. Then he was released according to Pharaoh's recommendation, and because he had to interpret the dreams of the king.

#### How Joseph was established and brought to power.

Joseph was 30 years old when he came before Pharaoh and interpreted his dreams, and he was then made a sovereign duke over the country. Jacob then was 121 years old. Then Pharaoh gave him in marriage Aseneth, daughter of Potiphar, who was a virgin. With her he begot two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. At that time the city of Namphis was constructed by Apis, king of the Arguines, which is why it is called that up to the present day in the borderlands with Egypt.<sup>105</sup> In the first year of the seven plenteous years Pharaoh sent Joseph out to collect and gather in grain in all of Egypt. And he arrived in the region of Heliopolis, where Potiphar was a sovereign prince, and the highest among Pharaoh's council and knights. He had a daughter who was called Aseneth, the most beautiful of all virgins, and in all ways mannered like the Hebrew princesses. But she was proud, selfish and arrogant, and belittled all men.<sup>106</sup> Therefore Potiphar had a large, splendid hall made next to his house, with twelve little houses and buildings. The first was large and splendid, the floor laid with marble, the walls decorated with jewels, and pillars of gold, which is where the Egyptian idols were to whom Aseneth prayed and sacrifice every day. In the second room her dress and clothes were kept, [together with] gold, silver, gemstones, belts and necklaces. The third room contained the most valuable treasures of the country, herbs and lilies. Her chapel was there in the same room. There were incredibly beautiful virgins who served Aseneth, and nobody could accompany them

105. A deeply problematic passage. See the footnote in my edition of the Icelandic.

106. Alternatively, 'everyone', but a mainstay of the *Aseneth* story is her rejection of all male suitors until Joseph.

in. In Aseneth's own room there were three windows, one to the east, the second to the south, the third to the north. With a gilded bed of gold and silver, draped with a mass of many bursting colours, and studded with pieces of purple and gold. In that bed only Aseneth slept, and nobody had come there nor sat down on her bed. And Aseneth was proud as Sarah, beautiful as Rebecca, and proper and courteous as Rachel.

#### How Joseph punished Aseneth for idolatry.

Joseph sent word to Potiphar that he would come to stay with him. Potiphar was pleased with this sin, and told his daughter that Joseph, the strength of God, would be coming to him, and he wished to marry her to him. She liked that rather little, and said that she would not be married with a prisoner, but rather the son of a king. And as they were discussing this, somebody came up to them and said that Joseph had arrived. Aseneth then ran up to her chamber. And Joseph came, sitting in Pharaoh's chariot which was made of pure gold, and four white horses went before him with gilded bits. Joseph was clad in a white tunic with a velour cape trimmed in gold, with a gold crown, and twelve gemstones rimmed his crown, with a royal sceptre in his hand, and an olive branch with fruit upon it. Potiphar and his wife invited Joseph in, as he went in to the courtyard with them, and then the gate was closed after him. Then Aseneth saw Joseph and regretted her words which she had spoken, and said: 'the sun from heaven has come to us in his chariot. I never knew that Joseph was the son of God and I didn't know how a man could beget such a man, or how a woman could give birth to such light!' Joseph went into Potiphar's house and they washed his feet and he asked: 'Who was that woman who stood in the window above your hall? Have her come down', because he was afraid that she would set about him with evil deeds and many had done in the past. Potiphar said that it was his daughter, with whom no man had ever slept,<sup>107</sup> and who belittled everybody. 'But if you would like her to come down, then I shall have her sent for.' Joseph thought:

107. This biblical usage of the reflexive verb *at þýða* in Icelandic (usually meaning 'to interpret', 'to mean') is akin to the biblical usage of 'to know' in English; see, e.g., Guðbrandur Þorláksson's Icelandic Bible of 1584, Gen. 24.16: [*Rebecca*] *var miög væn Þýka og frýd og enn þa Jungfru so einginn mann hafdi enn þa þýdst hana.*

‘Well, if she belittles everybody then she won’t very much care for me’, and said to her father: ‘If your daughter is such a virgin then I will love her as a wife’. Her mother ran straight up and led her to Joseph, and she said: ‘May you be blessed by Him The Highest of All’, while Joseph said ‘May God bless you, who makes all things living’, and her father pressed her to kiss Joseph, and when she went to do that Joseph turned her aside and said: ‘It is not seemly that the man who honours God with his mouth should kiss her, who prays with her mouth to a deaf and dumb idol, eats of their bread, drinks from their cups, and anoints herself with their oil’.

#### Aseneth’s repentance.

When Aseneth heard Joseph’s words she was aggrieved, and Joseph laid his hands on her breast and blessed her, because he felt sorry for her. She rejoiced in love for Joseph. Then she lay in bed and made repentance for her idolatry, and threw them all away. And Joseph ate and drank and was happy, and when he wished to leave Potiphar asked him to stay there for just one more day. But Joseph promised to return after eight days. Aseneth put on mourning clothes, shut the doors and cried, and threw all her idols out her window too, lay on the floor, and wept earnestly for seven days one after the other.

#### The angel’s comfort to Aseneth.

On the eighth day, very early in the morning, Aseneth saw out of her window that the heavens had opened by the morning star, and she shook and fell forward on her face, and a man came to her and said: ‘Aseneth’. From fear she said nothing in return. He called again: ‘Aseneth, Aseneth’. She replied: ‘Look, Lord, here I am. Tell me who you are.’ He replied: ‘I am the army of God, [my] dear ruler. Stand up so that I may speak with you.’ She stood up and saw that the man was dressed like Joseph, with a tunic, a crown, and a royal sceptre. And his face was like a flash of lightning, eyes like sunbeams, hair like light. The angel raised her up and comforted her, and said: ‘Take away your clothes of mourning, and your belt and the ashes from your brow. Wash yourself well in the living water, and take up your adornments, then I will speak with you.’ And she quickly stood up, put on her dress, and then came to the angel.

And he said: 'Take the cloth from your head, because you are a virgin, and your name is written in the book of the living, and shall not be crossed out for eternity, and on this day you are renewed, and you shall eat of the blessed bread, and drink of the incorruptible drink, and be anointed with holy oil. Lo, today I give you Joseph as a bridegroom, because your repentance has come before the Lord.'

Concerning Aseneth and the Angel's Meal, and the Honey Cake.

Aseneth seized his tunic and said: 'If I have found grace in your eyes then sit a little while on this bed on which no man had sat before you, then I will set a table for you'. And the angel said: 'Bring it here quickly', and she set the table before him with sweet tidbits and herbs, and the angel said: 'Find for me a honey cake'. But she became aggrieved because she had none, and the angel said: 'Go into your larder and you will find a honey cake on a dish', and when she came there she found a honey cake on a dish, white as snow, made from the best honey. It tasted very sweet. Aseneth said: 'I had no honey cake, and when your blessed mouth said, so it happened', and the angel was pleased by her great intelligence and said: 'Blessed are you, who has thrown away all idols, and believes in the living God, and all those who come to him with righteous repentance shall eat of this bread, which the Birds of Paradise make from the roses which grow there. God's angels eat of this bread.'

He broke apart the cake and ate a piece. The other he gave to Aseneth and said: 'You eat the bread of life and you are anointed with the holy oil, and from this day onwards you have been made living', and he touched the cake which he had broken apart, and it became whole again as it was before.

For a second time he touched the cake with his forefinger, and there where his finger touched came out blood. Aseneth saw this and said: 'Look at the cake!' Then many flies came out, white as snow, wings as like those of flies with various colours, and they flew all around Aseneth and made a honey cake in her hands, and they ate thereof. And the angel said to them: 'Fly away to your place', and they flew away to the east. For a third time the angel touched the cake, then fire came up from the table and incinerated the cake, so that there was nothing on the table, and the smoke from the burning was sweet.

## Concerning the blessing over Aseneth's seven virgins.

Aseneth said to the angel: 'Lord, I have [some] maidens, we were all born on the same day and we have all been raised together, I ask you to bless them like me', and when they came he blessed them all so that they became like seven pillars in the house of the Lord, and the angel asked Aseneth to take away the table and then disappeared from their sight.

And as Aseneth was amazed at that, Joseph came walking into the courtyard, then Aseneth ran up to him and told him everything which had happened, and greeted him.

The next day Joseph asked Pharaoh to marry Aseneth and he gave her to him as a wife, and he held his wedding for seven continuous days, and he put a gold crown upon his head. Joseph had two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, before the famine came to Egypt.

[H.G.S.:] Blessed Doctor Martin Luther says that Joseph was in his 30th year when he was established in Egypt by King Commesor, who is otherwise known as 'Pharao' [*sic*] in Norse. That happened in the year of the world 2238 and after two hard years Jacob, his father, came down to Egypt with his people, numbering 70 souls, although the Israelite people expanded over 225 years to 600,000, and [in the year] 2255 Jacob, who was also called Israel, died. And Joseph died [in the year] 2309 and after his days began the slavery of the Israelites. And in this time there was such a heavy famine all over Egypt that Joseph took possession of all Egypt on behalf of Pharaoh, except the property of the priests because the king did not wish to appropriate their holdings, rather he used them wholly for taxation. And the king who enslaved the Israelites was also called Pharaoh, also known as Ramesis. He had the city of Ramesis made in terracotta.

[H.G.S.:] When Joseph had collected grain in all Egypt for those seven plenteous years, the famine and want came upon all nations. According to the interpretation of the dream Joseph had all the grain stored and sold to the Egyptians from the fruits of the land. And one day his brothers came, and he recognised them, but they did not recognize him until Benjamin came, and he announced himself before them with weeping tears and tender words and toasts, then he also arranged that his father should come.

So then Israel entered Egypt with 66 souls, so that his tribe together with Joseph's tribe was 70 altogether. Jacob was 130 years old then, when Joseph led him before Pharaoh, and the king gave him the country of Goshen in which to dwell in the year of the second famine in the second month on the 22nd day of the same month. Aseneth saw Jacob and was amazed at him. He was strong and tall for such an old man, his head was white as snow, his beard reached down to the chest. His eyes were bright, his hands and feet as of a young age, and Jacob blessed them both, with a kiss of love, and after a meal Joseph and Aseneth went home to their house, and Simon and Levi with them.

#### Concerning a tumult.

When Pharaoh's son now saw Aseneth walking in his father's courtyard, he was inflamed with desire for her and asked Levi, Gad, and Simon to kill Joseph so could take Aseneth as a wife instead. He promised them much gold and silver, but they did not obey him.

Then Pharaoh's son slandered Joseph before his brothers Dan and Gad, who were born from Jacob's slave girl, and said he had himself heard Joseph say to Pharaoh, his father, that after Jacob's death he would destroy them, so that they would not inherit together with his brothers, because they were sons of a slave, and also they had sold him to the Ismaelites, and he convinced them that they should murder Joseph. Then he promised them that he would also murder his father, whom Joseph obeyed as a father.

When he wished at night time to murder his father, Pharaoh, the guard before the king's door would not grant him entry. And [they] said his father had a headache and he was sleeping, he had ordered that no-one, even his own son, should come in. Then Pharaoh's son got together a half hundred men with an armoured troop and went out to where Simon [!] and Gad had arrived with a greatly armed troop. Joseph and Aseneth also had to travel on that path, and when they came there with 700 men they were all slain except one who escaped to Simon and Levi while Aseneth fled in her chariot, and Benjamin with her. When Simon and Levi realised what was happening they took everybody who was with them and went after them and killed them all. But Dan and Gad fled and hid in a thicket of rushes which was there, and they were in there while this happened.



## Concerning the death of Pharaoh and what followed.

In the twelfth year of Joseph's lordship, Pharaoh died, whom Joseph served, who made him a lord over the country. That Pharaoh was also called Comessor, as Nephrem says. His death is reported in *The Story of Aseneth* which follows.

After the battle and tumult which was just mentioned, Aseneth was in her chariot and Benjamin was beside her, when he saw that Pharaoh's son was coming after her, and wished to take her by force. He picked up a stone and flung it to the left at his neck so he was struck unconscious, and he very nearly died, and fell off his horse. At that moment Benjamin, who was lively and worried, saw that Simon and Levy came rushing up, and they wished to kill their brothers, Dan and Gad, who were with the king's son, but he calmed their anger. And they took Pharaoh's son, half-dead, washed and bound his wounds, then brought him before his father and told the truth. Pharaoh thanked them for not totally killing him. But he died of the wound within three days, and [H. G. S.:] shortly after that Pharaoh died from grief of the heart because of his son, when he was 98 years old, and commanded that Joseph take power, because his younger son was still at the breast, and Joseph ruled Egypt for 48 years, then he passed it on to the king's son together with the crown, and in the meantime he was called this young lord's father. And Joseph served his king with total honour and devotion and made all the land under him gifted with grain stores.

[P. S. S.:] When Jacob had lived 148 years he saw that his time had come, called Joseph to him, and received an oath from him that he would have him buried next to Abraham, then he blessed him and Aseneth and their two sons with crossed arms, then gave Sichim to Joseph without probate, then called together all his children and blessed them. Then he told them all the things which would happen afterwards in their days according to the letter. And apparently he told them of both the coming of Christ in the flesh and at Judgment day, then he stretched out his legs and died. And his children took him to Canaan and buried him in the twin halls of Hebron.<sup>108</sup>

108. I.e. the Cave of the Patriarchs, the double tombs of Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca, and Jacob and Leah.

## Concerning Joseph's death and what followed.

In his days Joseph received an oath from his brothers that they should take with them his bones when they left Egypt, and shortly thereafter he died, and was put in a chest, when he was 110 years old, in the 80th year of his principedom, 331 years after the birth of Abraham, and Judah alone was not brought out of Egypt when he died. But all his brothers were buried in Hebron in coffins. And Aseneth, when she saw that Joseph had become sick, came and was next to him, and wept grievously, and he blessed Aseneth and her two sons, and after that he kissed her resolutely,<sup>109</sup> and said that they had to part first for a little while, then they would find each other again with joy. And as she was grieving he asked her to go away from him for a moment, and when she did that he died. And a few days later Aseneth died too, mostly from grief, when no man could approach her because Joseph was dead.

Here end the lifestories of the patriarchs.

Finished at Arnarstapi  
On the 25th October *Anno* 1745  
by P.S.S.

[H.G.S.:] All of Jacob's sons were buried in Hebron in Canaan except Judah.

109. This being an archaic use of the verb form *minntist við*, particularly indicating a kiss of welcome or parting.