

Romancing the Horse

The Egyptian Arabian and the Land of Israel



text by: Tzvia Idan @ All Rights Reserved
 photos by: M.Cohen, S. Nissim, R. Van Lent, S. Yegar

The Israelite imagination has been particularly infatuated with Egyptian horses since ancient times and we modern Israelis seem no less obsessed with Egyptian Arabians today. Although its more or less 3,000 years since King Solomon compared his beloved to "...a mare of the chariots of Pharaoh", his eloquent words still touch a strong chord because wherever one finds horse lovers and horses in our country one finds the straight Egyptian. In fact, in recent years, a few Israeli-bred straight Egyptian horses have even found their way back to Egypt.

Why do Egyptian horses hold such special magic and appeal for Israeli breeders? Is it simply the result of modern marketing ploys, or are there deeper reasons? I pose this question because, like many of my Israeli colleagues, my personal passion for Egyptian horses seems to (in my own mind at least) equal that of King Solomon. As a result I have given the matter much serious thought, and done a respectable amount of research.

Connecting with our Pasts

Most of us Israelis -- which include Jews, Bedouin, Circassians, and Arabs -- strongly identify themselves as the descendants of one ancient people or another whose pasts are strongly rooted in this land. I believe that the universal appeal of the Egyptian Arabian in every one of our ethnic communities is a result of our strong, often unconscious connection and collective fascination with local and regional history. Here in Israel there is no escaping the past; one can hardly take a step without running into either a Biblical reference or an authenticated archaeological site -- one which generally dates back at least a few thousand, if not several thousands of years.

From our farm alone one can easily view the entire Jezreel Valley, Mount Tabor, Mount Megiddo, Mount Carmel, Nazareth, and the hills of Samaria with just one single turn of the head. Every horse breeder in Israel, no matter where, finds himself in a similar situation. The most familiar stories of the Bible actually took place in what was, and still remains, a very small but volatile geographical area, explaining why our ancient past is always 'in our face' no matter which direction we turn.



AL AYAD
(Moheeb x Al Mamunah)
(S. Yegar)



Ariela mares - Dead Sea
(R. Van Lent)

I include myself among those who consider the Old Testament to be a sort of personal history book, and where, since early on, horses were viewed through a cultural and religious prism unique in its time. As a breeder of Egyptian horses, it especially intrigues me that the first time horses are mentioned in the Bible it is in reference to Egypt. Indeed, one finds one prophet or another specifically warning the 'future kings' of Israel, not to return to Egypt in order to acquire horses throughout the Old Testament. The reasoning behind this is not difficult to understand -- it is a pragmatic reflection of the core religious belief that the Children of Israel have no need to trust in the strength of horses or chariots (the physical realm) as long as they trust in the God of Israel (the spiritual realm). The dramatic drowning of Pharaoh's chariots and horsemen in the Red Sea described in the Book of Exodus serves as the perfect imagery of this core belief, as do the prophet Isaiah's eloquent words: "...Now Egypt is man, and not God; and their horses flesh, and not spirit."

Be that as it may, King Solomon defied this strong tradition in a big way. He imported thousands of Egyptian horses and

chariots throughout his reign, eventually positioning himself as the main source of warhorses for the entire region. It is instructive that in the Old Testament it is always Egypt that is mentioned in connection with the finest war horses and chariots. Since Solomon received yearly tributes of horseflesh from several different sources, his single-minded purchase of legions of Egyptian horses supports a belief that still resonates today -- that even in Biblical times Egyptian-bred horses were the best that money could buy and Solomon could hardly have been able to afford to be without them and keep the peace.

Archaeological Evidence

Here in Israel many actual sites where ancient Egyptians fought against Canaanites, Assyrians, and others have been identified and extensively excavated and can be visited today. One of the most famous of these is Megiddo, located practically in my own backyard. Megiddo is sited at what has been a strategic crossroads since the dawn of Near Eastern civilization, and by building a walled city and stationing

Al Hambra

(Salaa El Dine x 228 Ibn Galal I)

(M.Cohen)



Atiq Adara

(Al Ayad x Alhambra B)

(M. Cohen)



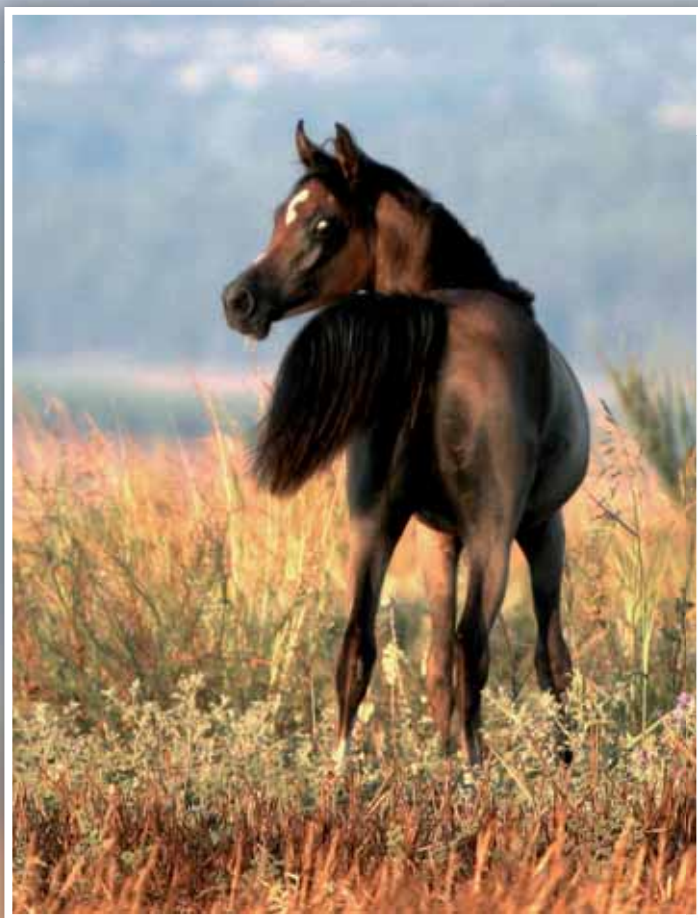
warriors and war horses there King Solomon was simply following the wise tradition of earlier Canaanite and Egyptian rulers who wrestled for control over the main road connecting Egypt with the rest of the Fertile Crescent.

About five hundred years before Solomon, that is, about 3,500 years ago, the Egyptian Pharaoh Thutmoses III defeated a coalition of several armies at Megiddo in a battle whose details were then chronicled for all times on the walls at the Karnak Temple. Known as the 'Battle of Megiddo', this was the earliest recorded battle in the entire history of humankind. The numbers of enemy prisoners taken alive, hands amputated [from the enemy dead], and the exact number of the enemy's horses and chariots carried back as plunder are all listed on the Temple walls. The captured horses included "... 2,041 mares, 191 fillies, six stallions and [?] colts . . .", and the very presence of young colts and fillies stand as proof that local horse breeding was well-established in the Jezreel Valley by the 15th Century BC. Imagining that our horses graze on the same land upon which similar horses grazed 3,500 ago is almost too wonderful to fathom.

From these Karnak inscriptions and other archaeological evidence a pattern can be discerned -- one which shows that there was horse trafficking between Egypt and ancient Canaan in both directions over many centuries, throughout what we today call the 'Biblical period', although eventually, Egyptian-bred horses became the most prized in the region.

For example, in Egypt proper, ancient friezes uncovered in two separate royal tombs, dating back to hundreds of years before Solomon's time, depict people identified as Canaanites delivering horses of striking Arabian type to Pharaoh as a form of tribute. There is also an ancient letter dating from approximately 1450 BC found at the site of ancient Taanach, just a few kilometers southeast of Megiddo, where an Egyptian official reminds the King of Taanach not to forget to pay his tribute. It reads: "Send me your charioteers and horses, presents for me, and send all your prisoners. Send them tomorrow to Megiddo."

And finally, a hoard of hundreds of ancient ivory reliefs was unearthed many years ago at Megiddo; a few of these famous



Imperial Im Tiarah
(Ansata Imperial x Imperial Mistery)
(R. Van Lent)

Atiq Sofhadereh
(Nader Al Jamal x Atiq Sofsof)
(M. Cohen)



'Megiddo Ivories' depict Arab-style horses drawing Canaanite-style chariots. One shows naked male prisoners walking before Canaanite-style chariots, where they are being presented before a king on a Canaanite-styled throne. The captives are obviously circumcised and their hair and beard styles are typical of the Hebrews of this era, making it a very provocative find indeed.

The Introduction of the Horse

Scholars have long agreed that it was the mysterious people known as the Hyksos, (in Old Egyptian Hyksos means 'Shepherd Kings') who first introduced the horse and chariot into Egypt. Their exact origins are still disputed, yet many believe that they originated from the area around ancient Ashqelon, on the Mediterranean shores and not far from Gaza, the 'gateway' to Egypt's Sinai Peninsula. It is interesting that nearby, at Tel Al Ajjul [Beit Eglaim], several graves dating back thousands of years were uncovered in which men and horses were buried together. This is strong evidence of an early horse culture in Canaan, whether Hyksos or other. In

addition, archaeologists have identified the remains of domesticated horses both at Arad and Shiqmim (Nahal Tillal) that can be precisely dated to the third and fourth millennium BC respectively; this evidence shows that domesticated horses could be found in Canaan much earlier than previously thought. Interestingly enough, the earliest similar horse finds in Egypt date from significantly later; back to approximately 1700 BC, and these show physical attributes that we recognize as Arabian.

Although this may sound like it is leading up to the circular argument about 'the chicken or the egg' concerning the origins of the Arabian horse, the point is that, wherever their origins, once the sophisticated Egyptians acquired them, Egypt's superior science and extremely high level of development resulted in their eventually breeding the finest Arabian horse prototype of ancient times. Little wonder that the Bible reflects this, and that even today, Israelis first think of Egypt when we think of Arabian horses!

Atiq Halian

(MD El Sperado x Hila B)

(M.Cohen)



Latifah AA

(Al Maraam x Imperial Kalatifa)

(S. Nissim)

Fact or Fiction?

For those who believe that the Old Testament is merely fiction or baseless folklore, I offer the following historical 'nuggets'. The physical remains of the ancient stables at Megiddo have been identified by archaeologists as belonging to the period of the notorious King Ahab, who ruled some one hundred years following Solomon. The fact that Ahab was an actual historic figure has been proven beyond a reasonable doubt by the famous Kurkh Stele, a stone memorial built in honor of the Assyrian King Shalmaneser which describes his military campaign in the area back in 853 BC. The stele was uncovered in what is today modern Turkey and includes a reference to the armies of the Israelite King Ahab, which formed part of the opposing coalition army. According to this monument, Ahab's contribution was 10,000 warriors and 2,000 chariots. Although historians may still quibble that these numbers seem unreasonably high, the Assyrian stele acts as independent verification that an historic King Ahab really did exist, and lends support to what the Bible describes as Ahab's many military alliances. I should also mention that

the colorful Jehu, mentioned in the Bible as both a fearless chariot driver and as the Israelite king who overthrew Ahab has, thanks once again to the ancient Assyrians, been transformed into an authentic historical figure as well -- because back in 841 BC King Shalmaneser wrote in his royal annals that he "...received the tribute of the Tyrians and Sidonians and of Jehu the son of Omri."

Not so Very Long Ago

Having given the reader much food for thought, I will now let the Biblical period rest in peace. (Amen!) However, I cannot resist mentioning that not very far from our farm, Egyptian horses once again played a role in who would rule the entire region -- and the world -- just a 'short' 750 years ago. On September 3, 1260 Egyptian horses proved their mettle at the Battle of 'Ain Jalut (Arabic for 'Goliath's Spring') near the foot of the Gilboa Mountains. At this site the Egyptian Mamelukes fought and decisively defeated the Mongols, effectively stopping their advancement into Egypt and spelling the end of what had been a vast empire. Although prior to this



Insha Shah Latifa
(Ansata Selman x Naffada)
(S. Nissim)

Laheeb
(Imperial Imdal x AK Latifa)
(S. Nissim)



Lutfina AA
(Nader Al Jamal x Latifah AA)
(S. Nissim)



battle the Mongol leaders had advised the Egyptians to surrender; warning that "...our horses are swift, our arrows sharp, our swords like thunderbolts, our hearts as hard as the mountains, and our soldiers as numerous as the sand...", when the dust finally settled the Mongols proved no match for the fierce Mamelukes and their spirited mounts.

Although I've left out Napoleon's even more recent battles at Acre and Mount Tabor and a few other 'tidbits', taking the long historical view, is it really so surprising that Egyptian Arabians have once again 'defeated' the people of Israel? Or, at the very least, totally conquered our hearts?

Maar Bilahh

(El Halimaar x Bint Nabilahh)

(R. Van Lent)



Rihahna

(Baahir x Nil Nour)

(R. Van Lent)

Saniyyah RCA

(Mishaal HP x My Shooting Star)

(S. Yegar)

2010 ISRAELI EGYPTIAN EVENT
13 November 2010 - Kibbutz Magal

Judges:

Dr. Manfred Neubacher - Austria

Mrs. Cristina Valdes - Spain

Mrs. Claudia Darius - Germany

2010 STRAIGHT EGYPTIAN CHAMPIONS
at the
ISRAELI EGYPTIAN EVENT



SE Gold Medal Filly Foal Champion:
BASMAH AA (Laheeb x Al Baraqaí AA)



SE Bronze Medal Filly Foal Champion:
ALMA GB (Alma GB (Nader Al Jamal x Zarka)



SE Gold Medal Champion Colt Foal:
PRINCE BASHAAR EKH (Prince Raam x EA Mayssa)



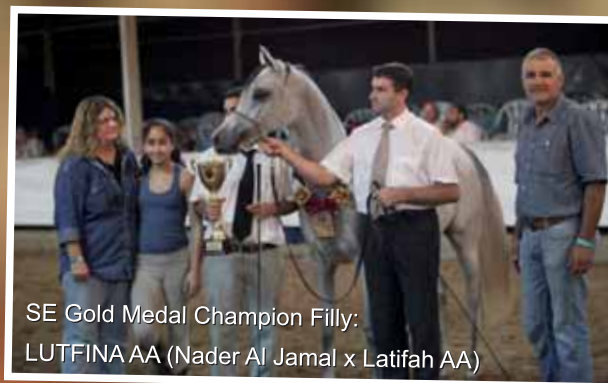
Silver Medal SE Filly Foal
ARABELLA DL
(Mouadaar BKV x Asra Najuba)



SE Silver Medal Champion Colt Foal:
SET SL (Nader Al Jamal x Setala)



SE Bronze Medal Champion Colt Foal:
SALAAM EL DAAR
(Mouadaar BKV x Shai Diva SMF)



SE Gold Medal Champion Filly:
LUTFINA AA (Nader Al Jamal x Latifah AA)



SE Gold Medal Champion Filly:
LUTFINA AA (Nader Al Jamal x Latifah AA)



SE Gold Medal Champion Filly:
LUTFINA AA (Nader Al Jamal x Latifah AA)



SE Bronze Medal Champion Filly:
DIBAJ (Shabab Jamal x Nilus)



SE Silver Medal Champion Filly:
LAYYANAH AA (Al Bilal x Luiba)



SE Bronze Medal Champion Filly:
DIBAJ (Shabab Jamal x Nilus)



SE Silver Medal Champion Filly:
LAYYANAH AA (Al Bilal x Luiba)



SE Gold Medal Champion Colt:
AMIR AL JAMAL (Nader Al Jamal x Atiq Altega)



SE Gold Medal Champion Colt:
AMIR AL JAMAL (Nader Al Jamal x Atiq Altega)



SE Gold Medal Champion Colt:
AMIR AL JAMAL



SE Silver Medal Champion Colt:
AL SAKAB AL HAIYAL (Tabari x Fancy Gambler)



SE Bronze Medal Champion Colt:
ASFUR (Simeon Sharav x Aliha)



SE Silver Medal Champion Colt:
AL SAKAB AL HAIYAL (Tabari x Fancy Gambler)



SE Silver Medal Champion Mare:
LOUBANA (Laheeb x Bint Karima)



SE Bronze Medal Champion Colt:
ASFUR (Simeon Sharav x Aliha)



SE Silver Medal Champion Mare:
LOUBANA (Laheeb x Bint Karima)



SE Silver Medal Champion Mare:
LOUBANA (Laheeb x Bint Karima)



SE Gold Medal Champion Mare:
ZENA AL BURQA (AI Manar x KZ Ruya)



SE Gold Medal Champion Mare:
ZENA AL BURQA (AI Manar x KZ Ruya)



SE Bronze Medal Champion Mare:
GALILEE K DARIA (HF Darius x Mashari)



SE Gold Medal Champion Mare:
ZENA AL BURQA (AI Manar x KZ Ruya)



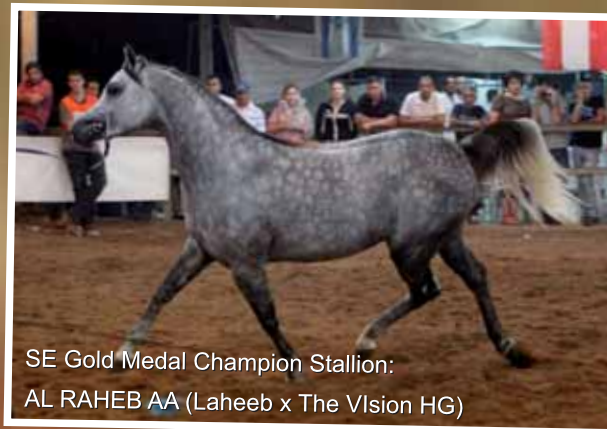
SE Gold Medal Champion Stallion:
AL RAHEB AA (Laheeb x The VIsion HG)



SE Bronze Medal Champion Mare:
GALILEE K DARIA (HF Darius x Mashari)



SE Gold Medal Champion Stallion:
AL RAHEB AA (Laheeb x The VIsion HG)



SE Gold Medal Champion Stallion:
AL RAHEB AA (Laheeb x The VIsion HG)

SE Silver Medal Champion Stallion:
NADER AL JAMAL (Ansata Sinan x Savannah CC)



SE Bronze Medal Champion Stallion:
IMPERIAL BAASEEL
(Imperial Baarez x Imperial Sakamah)



Al Ashkar
(The Verdict HG x Ebony Majiida)
2nd Place 2009 Straight Egyptian Colts



SE Silver Medal Champion Stallion:
NADER AL JAMAL
(Ansata Sinan x Savannah CC)



MH Baader
(Sinjabi x Blue Bint Zarlula)
2nd Place Older Straight Egyptian Stallions



Kwestura El Fawaz
(Al Raheb AA x Mashalla)
2nd Place 2009 Straight Egyptian Fillies



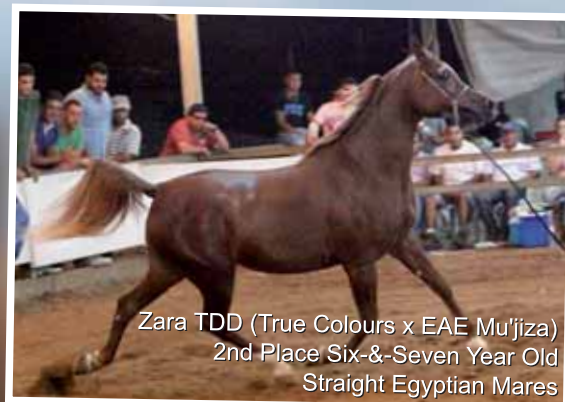
L Ibtihaj
(Al Lahab x Isah)
1st Place 2008 Straight Egyptian Fillies



L Ibtihaj
(Al Lahab x Isah)
1st Place 2008
Straight Egyptian Fillies



Nilus (PH Sham x Setala)
1st Place Older Straight Egyptian Mares



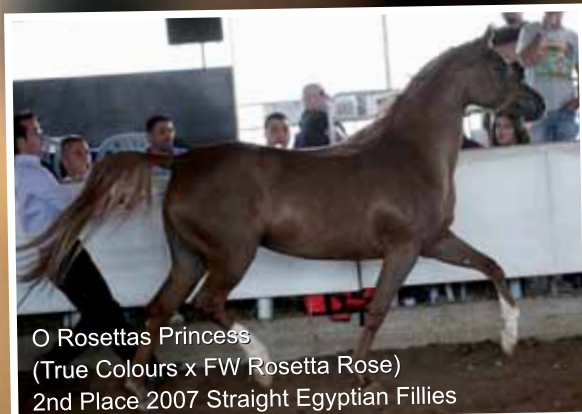
Zara TDD (True Colours x EAE Mu'jiza)
2nd Place Six-&-Seven Year Old
Straight Egyptian Mares



Nilus (PH Sham x Setala)
1st Place Older Straight Egyptian Mares



Moundaar BKV
(Nader Al Jamal x Barakis Whisper)
2nd Place 2008 Straight Egyptian Colts



O Rosettas Princess
(True Colours x FW Rosetta Rose)
2nd Place 2007 Straight Egyptian Fillies



AA Al Kareem Shah
(Al Maraam x FS Kaluah)
2nd Place 2007 Straight Egyptian Colts

2010 EGYPTIAN-SIRED CHAMPIONS at the ISRAELI EGYPTIAN EVENT



Gold Medal Champion Filly Foal:
DALIYAH AA (Nader Al Jamal x Dafina AA)



Gold Medal Champion Filly Foal:
DALIYAH AA (Nader Al Jamal x Dafina AA)



Gold Medal Champion Filly:
DONYA (Nader Al Jamal x Aroussa)



Silver Medal Champion Filly Foal:
SA AL JAZIRA (Nader Al Jamal x April Mehagalil)



Silver Medal Champion Filly:
SA AL ZAHARA
(Nader Al Jamal x Al Duqa AA)



Gold Medal Champion Mare:
DAFINA AA (Al Bilal x Dumka)



Silver Medal Champion Mare:
EL KHANSA (Sinjabi x Atlanta)



Bronze Medal Champion Mare
M.A. Nouna Bt. Sharook
(Wahaad x Sharook)

A Few Captured Moments from the Israeli Egyptian Event

Gold and Silver Medal SE Champions of the show



Judges tent



Judges

