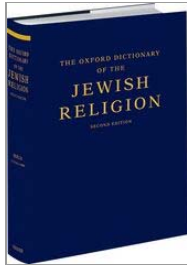


Oxford Reference



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PHARAOH

(Heb. *par'oh*), Egyptian word meaning literally “great house,” referring to the palace of the king, which in time came to designate the king himself. Various pharaohs are mentioned in the Bible. Though in the earlier books of *Genesis* and *Exodus* their personal names are not given, in the later historical sources of *Kings* and *Jeremiah*, the individual pharaohs’ names are generally recorded. Most scholars agree that the pharaoh who enslaved the Israelites (*Ex.* 1.8–11) is Ramses II (c.1279–1212), whose inscriptions mention the use of ‘Apiru (see HEBREWS) slaves for building projects. His name endures in the name of one of the stone cities, Ramses, built by the Israelites (*Ex.* 1.11). The pharaoh under whom Joseph served would thus be a predecessor of this monarch, but he cannot be identified with any confidence. Ramses II’s son and successor, Merneptah (c.1212–1202), left an inscription from his fifth year that mentions Israel as a people for the first time in an extrabiblical source. Many scholars relate this reference to the period after the Israelites had entered Canaan. Solomon married the daughter of a pharaoh (*1 Kgs.* 3.1), usually identified as Siamun (c.978–959). Other pharaohs mentioned in the Bible include Shishak (*1 Kgs.* 14.25), Necho (*2 Kgs.* 23.29–34), and Hophra (*Jer.* 44.30), all well-known figures from Egyptian sources.

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–GARY A. RENDSBURG

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