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Egypt and the Exodus

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THE STORY OF THE ISRAELITES IN AND OUT OF EGYPT may be divided into three main sections: the migration to Egypt, also called the Eisodus; the slavery in Egypt; and the Exodus from Egypt.[1]

THE MIGRATION TO EGYPT

The Beni Hasan Tomb Painting

For much of ancient Egyptian history, Semitic-speaking peoples from the Sinai and the Levant immigrated to Egypt and settled in the eastern Delta.[2] Numerous documents (one crucial one to be cited and analyzed below) speak to this point, though, in line with the saying that "a picture is worth a thousand words," pride of place still belongs to the famous Beni Hasan tomb painting (see images on the next page). The artwork appears on the north wall of Tomb 3 at Beni Hasan (c. 165 mi south of Cairo), dated to year 5 of the reign of Sesostris II, that is, 1895 B.C.E., during the 12th Dynasty of the Middle Kingdom.[3] The painting depicts a group of people, identified as ʿAmu of Shu—the former a generic term for Asiatics, the latter presumably a specific location unknown to us. It is not impossible, however, that the generic

word *ʿꜣmw* (ʿAmu) is the Semitic word *ʿam(m)*, "people," attested especially in Hebrew and Aramaic.[4]

THE PROCESSION OF ASIATICS from the third register (from the top) of the north wall in the tomb of Khnumhotep at Beni Hasan, Egypt.

ASIATICS IN DETAIL. Two segments of the third register of the north wall in the tomb of Khnumhotep at Beni Hasan. The arrivals present themselves to the Egyptian desert authorities under the mayor and overseer Khnumhotep, hence the presence of this visual representation in the deceased's tomb.

The image, from the tomb of Khnumhotep II, mayor of the town of Menat-Khufu and overseer of the Eastern Desert, portrays a caravan of Canaanites arriving as immigrants. They signal peaceful intentions, as expressed especially by the man playing the lyre. They carry weapons typical of the Levantine Middle Bronze Age (bow, quiver, spears, duckbill axe) and therefore are free people. In stark contrast to their status, however, the inscription above their heads classifies them as bound prisoners, which is the way that the Egyptians traditionally saw foreigners. Most significantly, the group arrives as an extended family unit, even if only fifteen individuals (eight men, four women, and three children) are depicted. Directly above the first two

individuals (i.e., the ones on the right), the Egyptian hieroglyphics record that 37 ʿAmu (people) arrived (see image below), suggesting something akin to a large family unit.

These ʿAmu people have a mushroom-shaped coiffure, typical for Middle Bronze Age Asiatics, they wear colorful dresses, and they have relatively fair skin. As they traverse the desert, they wear sandals, and the women and a boy even wear shoes of leather, while the Egyptians are depicted as barefooted. Only the chief of the caravan and his deputy have taken off the sandals as a sign of respect as they enter the space of the Egyptian dignitary. The men are bearded, per the Asiatic custom, in contrast to the clean-shaven Egyptian men seen elsewhere on this tomb painting and indeed throughout ancient Egyptian art. The newcomers bring as presents for the Egyptians the highly coveted galena (*koḥl*) from the Red Sea shore, used as mascara for the eyes, and tamed desert animals, such as an ibex and a dorcas gazelle. Bellows mounted on the donkeys signify that they may be migrant smiths offering their services to the Egyptians, besides their possible ability in handling weapons as future soldiers.

CAPTIONED ASIATICS. The "caption" in the scene depicting the procession of Asiatics in the tomb of Khnumhotep at Beni Hasan (see figs. 1 & 2) reads: —Amu 37. The classifiers in the inscription include a throwstick for the category of foreign people, and a bound captive in contrast to the representation of the group which carries weapons freely.

The event or process portrayed here is far too early to have any direct relationship with the arrival of the Israelites in Egypt (which occurred centuries later), but various aspects of the painting evoke the biblical story, nonetheless.

In sum, in the minds of many scholars, the Beni Hasan tomb painting permits us to see not the Israelites *per se* but what the Israelites may have looked like when they too arrived in Egypt centuries later.

LEARN MORE

The Anastasi Papyri Collection

The collection known as the Anastasi Papyri is a group of nine hieratic papyri, dated to the Ramesside period, sold by the great collector Giovanni Anastasi to the British Museum in 1839.* These documents are collections of model letters and scribal exercises, assembled onto individual longer papyrus scrolls, which in turn served in the training of scribes. No one doubts, however, that the texts describe real life events, of the type that scribes in the Egyptian governmental bureaucracy would write on a regular basis. It seems, that, inter alia, original letters were used as exemplars to train apprentice scribes for their future tasks (see especially P.Anastasi VI). As far as one can tell, the papyri were found in Memphis or Saqqara, but as we shall see, many of the events described took place in the general region of the Eastern Delta.

The papyri were published in facsimile edition soon after their purchase, within the series *Select Papyri in the Hieratic Character from the Collections of the British Museum* (London: W. Nicol, 1841—1860), under the supervision of Samuel Birch. Half a century later, the longest of the texts, P.Anastasi I, the so-called Satirical Letter, was presented afresh, in hieroglyphic transcription and English translation, by Alan H. Gardiner, *Egyptian Hieratic Texts* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1911).**

Several decades further on, the definitive edition of Anastasi Papyri (nos. II through VI) was published in hieroglyphic transcription: Alan H. Gardiner, *Late-Egyptian Miscellanies*, Bibliotheca Aegyptiaca 7 (Brussels: Fondation égyptologique Reine Élisabeth, 1937). And then Gardiner's student Ricardo Caminos produced an English translation of the documents: *Late-Egyptian Miscellanies*, Brown Egyptological Studies I (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1954).

One of the documents not published by Gardiner was P.Anastasi VIII, which fortunately received a fine edition by Sarah I. Groll, "The Egyptian Background of the Exodus and the Crossing of the Reed Sea: A New Reading of Papyrus Anastasi VIII," in Irene Shirun-Grumach, ed., *Jerusalem Studies in Egyptology*, Ägypten und Altes Testament 40 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1998), 173–92.

Two additional papyri, which appear to be part of the same original collection, were sold to the Rijksmuseum van Oudheden (Leiden), and thus are

*For the general outline of Giovanni Anastasi's remarkable life, see Warren R. Dawson, "Anastasi, Sallier, and Harris and Their Papyri," *JEA* 35 (1949), 158–66, esp. 158–60.

** For the most up-to-date detailed study of this text, see Hans-Werner Fischer-Elfert, *Die satirische Streitschrift des Papyrus Anastasi I: Übersetzung und Kommentar*, Ägyptologische Abhandlungen 44 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1986).

referred to as P.Leiden 348 and P.Leiden 349.

Finally, note that all of these texts are also to be found in the monumental achievements of K.A. Kitchen, *Ramesside Inscriptions: Historical and Biographical*, 8 vols. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1969–1990); K.A. Kitchen, *Ramesside Inscriptions Translated and Annotated: Translations*, 7 vols. (Oxford: Blackwell; Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 1993–2014); and K.A. Kitchen and Benedict G. Davies, *Ramesside Inscriptions Translated and Annotated: Notes and Comments*, 4 vols. (to date) (Oxford: Blackwell; Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 1993–2014).

Taken as a whole, the Anastasi Papyri are exceedingly important for the subject under consideration here. As we proceed, accordingly, the reader will note our repeated references to these documents, with striking parallels to the Eisodus, the Exodus, and more. —M.B. AND G.A.R.

The Joseph Story

The story of the Israelites' arrival in Egypt is narrated in Genesis 37–50, with the focus on the family of Jacob the patriarch (see chap. 1), and with special attention to his son Joseph. Through a series of both random and fortuitous events, Joseph rose to a position comparable to that of vizier, second in command to the Pharaoh (Genesis 41). In reaching this station, Joseph was thoroughly acculturated to Egyptian society: he shaved (Genesis 41:14); he was dressed as an Egyptian nobleman, with fine linen, a signet ring, and a gold chain about his neck (Genesis 41:42); he gained an Egyptian name, Zaphenath-paneah (Genesis 41:45), which translates to "the god has spoken, the one of life"; and he married the daughter of an Egyptian priest to the sun-god Ra located in On = Heliopolis (Genesis 41:45).

Joseph's acculturation to Egyptian society is seen also at the end of his life story, indeed, in the final verse of the Book of Genesis: Joseph dies at the age of 110 years (Genesis 50:26), the ideal lifespan in Egyptian literature;[5] and then he is embalmed and placed in a coffin (per the Egyptian practice of mummification).[6]

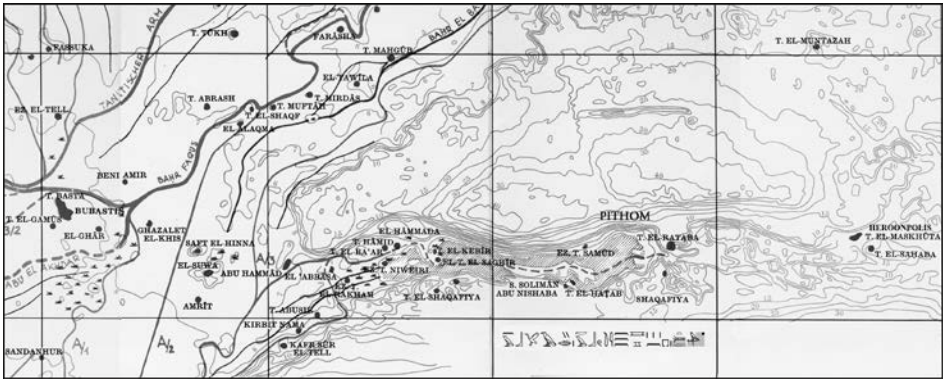
Thus, Joseph was in a position of power to assist his family members when they journeyed to Egypt in search of grain, in order to sustain themselves during one of the periodic droughts and resultant grain shortages that can strike the land of Canaan. Obviously, we strip the story of much of its pathos here (see esp. Genesis 44:18–45:15), but the basic outline remains.

The Report of a Frontier Official (P.Anastasi VI)

An exceedingly close parallel to the biblical Eisodus occurs in P.Anastasi VI: 4.11–5.5, dated to the reign of Seti II (r. 1214–1208 B.C.E.).[7] The document is an official letter from a frontier official to his superior, in which we read the following:

> Another message to my lord: We have finished admitting the Shasu tribes of Edom at the fortress of Merneptah Hotep-hir-ma'at, l.p.h., which is in Tjeku, to the lakes of Per-Atum of Merneptah Hotep-hir-ma'at, which are in Tjeku, to keep them alive and to keep their flocks alive, through the great *k3* ("spirit") of Pharaoh, l.p.h., the good sun in every land, in year 8, epagomenal day [Birth-of] Seth.[8]

Edom, of course, refers to the country to the south of what is later Israel, in the mountainous region spanning modern-day southern Israel and southern Jordan (i.e., on both sides of the Aravah valley). The term Shasu is the Egyptian word for nomads, Bedouin, pastoralists, and the like.[9] Most scholars argue, quite cogently, that P.Anastasi VI provides an exceedingly close parallel to the biblical story. In both accounts, a group of people from the general region of Edom traverses the Sinai, with their flocks, in order to sustain themselves. In both cases, the Egyptians permit the émigrés to settle in fringe zones of the eastern Delta. More specifically, in both instances, the newcomers are resident in the region of Per-Atum, that is, Pithom in Exodus 1:11 (see map below).



THE WADI TUMILAT, most likely the land of Goshen, with the Lake of Pithom.

In addition, P.Anastasi VI mentions Tjeku, to be identified with the Wadi Tumilat, presumably the place named Succoth in the Bible. While this toponym is not mentioned in the Eisodus account, it is mentioned in the Exodus account (Exodus 12:37; 13:20; Numbers 33:5–6). The word itself, Hebrew *sukkot*, means "booths built of foliage," of the type still seen today in the general area (see image below). The fact that the Egyptians called the Wadi Tumilat by this name indicates the extent to which Semitic-speaking peoples had settled the region, living, it appears, in these make-shift dwellings.

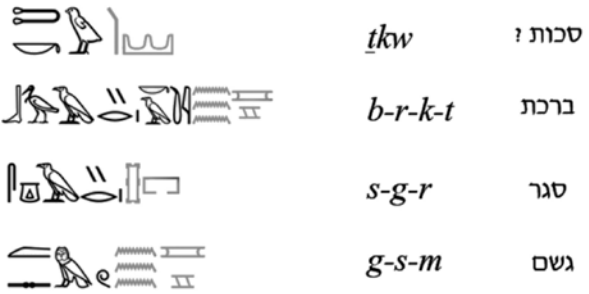
HUTS CONSTRUCTED FROM REEDS, daubed with mud, photographed in 2004 several kilometers north of Tell el-Borg in the eastern Nile Delta.

While not directly related to the present enterprise, we also note that the word for "lakes" in the afore-cited report by the frontier official is not the native Egyptian word for such bodies of water, but rather the Semitic word *brkt* (cf. Hebrew *bereka*; Arabic *birka*) rendered into hieroglyphics.[10] As with the word "booths" above, the use of this Semitic word for "lakes" in P.Anastasi VI points to a sizable Semitic presence in the eastern Delta and the Wadi Tumilat.

There are still other Semitic words associated with places in the Wadi Tumilat region to be found in Ramesside-period texts. Below we shall have occasion to discuss P.Anastasi V, in which occurs the expression *sgr n Ṯkw* "the enclosure of Tjeku," with the former word equaling Semitic *seger*, "enclosure, fortified compound."[11] Finally, we call attention here to the geophysical or geographical term *gsm*, which appears in P.Anastasi IV, line 1b:2, in connection with a lake that makes waves.[12] Sarah Groll tentatively identified the name *gsm* with the biblical toponym Goshen (Genesis 45:10; Exodus 8:18, etc.). Given

the textual mention of a lake and the proven existence in antiquity of a large lake (11 miles long) in the western half of the Wadi Tumilat, we suggest the Wadi Tumilat as the location of the biblical Goshen.[13]

The cumulative linguistic evidence of these Semitic words and toponyms in the Wadi Tumilat region, used even by Egyptian scribes (see image below), argues for the presence of a Semitic-speaking population in the area during the Ramesside period. All of this, in turn, speaks very strongly for locating the land of Goshen in this frontier region of Egypt.[14]



SEMITIC TOPONYMS from the Ramesside-era inscriptions relating to the Wadi Tumilat, with classifiers highlighted here in gray.

The Shasu of Edom: Proto-Israelites?

In light of these points, we repeat the statement made above: most scholars consider P.Anastasi VI to be an exceedingly close parallel to the biblical story. While we concur with this overall appraisal, we also would like to propose a core question: could the reference to the Shasu of Edom in this text refer not to the Edomites *per se* but rather the early Israelites? Now, most scholars would date the Eisodus before the reign of Seti II (r. 1214–1208 B.C.E.), but in light of the chronology proposed herein (see below), one may consider P.Anastasi VI to refer to a segment of the Israelites. The argument goes as follows.

First, as we learn from the Bible, the terms Se'ir and Edom are essentially synonymous (see Genesis 32:4; 36:8–9; 36:21; Numbers 24:18; Judges 5:4; Ezekiel 35:15): the former is used for the geographical region, while the latter is used for the people who inhabit the land.

Secondly, Egyptian topographical lists from Soleb and 'Amarah (both in Nubia), dated to the New Kingdom period, collocate regions known as *t3 šȝsw ya-h-wa*, "the land of the Shasu of Yahweh," and *t3*

šȝśw śa-ʿ-r-ir, "the land of the Shasu of Seʿir."[15] The former, of course, is the name of the God of Israel, though in the present instance it is more likely to be understood as a toponym. As an aside, we note that either the divine name existed first, from which the toponym was derived; or the toponym existed first, from which the divine name was derived.[16]

Thirdly, the Bible identifies the homeland of Yahweh as Edom/Seʿir (Deuteronomy 33:2; Judges 5:4) or more generally with Sinai (Deuteronomy 33:2; Psalms 68:9) and Teman (meaning "southland," in Hebrew) (Habakkuk 3:3).

Finally, the closeness of Edom and Israel is reflected in the foundational stories of the Bible through the twin-ness of the respective progenitors, Esau and Jacob. By contrast, other neighbors (Moab, Ammon, Aram, etc.) are more distantly related.

All of this is to say: quite possibly the Shasu of Edom mentioned in P.Anastasi VI are not Edomites *per se*, for there is a good possibility that they were early Israelites or at least a closely related group of people. From the eyes of the Egyptians, the two peoples may not have been distinguishable.[17] Alternatively, we may posit that the "gene pool" of people in the region of the far southern Levant had not quite been settled yet, with Edomites, Israelites, Midianites, Kenites, and the like all intermingled and interconnected. These groups—all to be considered Shasu nomads—repeatedly traversed the Sinai and settled in the eastern Delta and Wadi Tumilat in periods of drought, apparently welcomed by the Egyptians either for altruistic reasons (to keep them alive) and/or as a potential labor force to be exploited (see below). As such, P.Anastasi VI may reflect the period when the ethnogenesis of Israel was in progress, not quite finalized, and hence the Egyptian scribe referred to the people as Shasu of Edom. On the famous mention of Israel as a people in the Merneptah Stele, see our analysis of this passage further below.

Regardless of whether the Shasu of Edom arriving in Per-Atum, as mentioned in P.Anastasi VI, were Edomites or Israelites, the basic picture is confirmed: Semites from the general region of the southern Levant would traverse the Sinai and would be allowed to enter Egypt, including "through the great *kȝ* ("spirit") of Pharaoh" (i.e., with his blessing), per the report of the frontier official.

The key phrase "to keep them alive and to keep their flocks

alive" used by the scribe of P.Anastasi VI may be situated in a larger historical and geographic context, spanning the period of Ramesses II, Merneptah, Seti II (during whose reigns the Anastasi Papyri are dated), and their successors. As we know from other evidence—both textual and archaeological—the latter half of the 13th century B.C.E. was characterized by a general shortage of grain, doubtless brought on by climate-change issues, which in fact contributed greatly to the decline of Late Bronze Age civilization throughout the Eastern Mediterranean (including the Aegean).[18]

Two Hittite texts are especially germane. In one, Queen Puduḫepa (c. 1240 B.C.E.) writes to Ramesses II, "I have no grain in my lands." In another, from approximately the same date, we learn of a Hittite mission to Egypt to obtain wheat and barley and to arrange for its transport back to Ḫatti.[19] From a few decades later, Merneptah declaims the following on the great inscription on the walls of the Karnak Temple: "I caused grain to be taken in ships, to keep alive that land of Ḫatti."[20]

Finally, scientific analysis of pollen counts derived from core drilling in the Sea of Galilee indicates that the driest period throughout the span of thousands of years occurred during the years 1250–1100 B.C.E.[21] The biblical account of the Israelites traveling to Egypt in search of grain either should be situated in this historical context and/or constitutes a clear memory of these conditions.

In addition, soon after the arrival of the Shasu of Edom as recorded in P.Anastasi VI, we learn about Bay, a powerful vizier/chancellor of Near Eastern origin, who served under both Seti II (r. 1214–1208) and Siptah (r. 1206–1198). Bay's name appears on various monuments throughout Egypt, including on a statue in the Bull Cemetery of On (i.e., Heliopolis).[22] This singular figure even received the unprecedented privilege of having his tomb in the royal cemetery in the Valley of the Kings (KV 13), on the west bank of the Nile opposite Thebes.

Notwithstanding some differences between the career of Bay and the career of Joseph, the former could be seen as a model for the latter as recorded in the Bible. One key difference is that Bay was executed by Siptah,[23] even though the vizier/chancellor had helped this pharaoh gain the throne. This incident may have been forgotten in the Israelite tradition, and/or an echo thereof may appear in the famous description of the Pharaoh "who knew not Joseph" (Exodus 1:8). Regardless,

the similarities are striking, from the general notion of a high-ranking vizier of Western Asiatic origin to the specific connection to the city of On (see Genesis 41:45). We would not claim that chancellor Bay was Joseph, but someone like him may have served as the model for the portrayal of Joseph in the Bible.[24]

THE SLAVERY IN EGYPT

Corvée Labor

According to the biblical tradition, at some point after their arrival in Egypt, the Israelite population was reduced to slavery, or better, corvée labor (see Exodus 1:13–14).

When we use the word "slavery," especially within an American context, one thinks of individual humans owning other individual humans. Such existed in ancient Egypt,[25] but the so-called slavery of the Bible is better identified as corvée labor. In a corvée system, a workforce is organized for specific projects from among the available people, which could include both locals and foreigners. One may wish to call this system "state slavery," as the workforce was beholden to the state. Note further that the Hebrew word *ʿebed* means "slave, servant, worker, laborer, etc.,"[26] without the distinctions available in English, so that "corvée laborer" is the most probable connotation within the context of the Exodus narrative.

The Egyptians used the corvée system for large construction projects, and such is implied in the Bible as well. The system involved foremen to organize the workforce, their Egyptian taskmasters, and the quota of work to be done each day or each week.[27] See especially Exodus 5:14–15, with the reference to the Israelite foremen, who on the one hand supervise the Israelite workers, and who on the other hand must answer to the Egyptian taskmasters and ultimately to Pharaoh.

Pithom and Ra'amses

According to the biblical tradition, the main work was associated with building projects in the cities of Pithom (i.e., Per-Atum)[28] and Ra'amses (see Exodus 1:11).[29] Are we able to identify the precise location of these two cities beyond the general region of the eastern Delta? The answer

is yes, and now with great confidence. After decades of debate,[30] the consensus now is to identify Pithom with Tell er-Retaba[31] (see image below) and Ra'amses[32] with Qantir/Tell ed-Dab'a.[33]

SLAYING OF A SHASU NOMAD. On a limestone relief from the left pylon of the temple of Atum at Tell er-Retaba, Wadi Tumilat. Ramesses II is killing an Asiatic man with a mace and is receiving the sickle sword from the god Atum. The short kilt and the bandaged upper body suggest the man is a Shasu nomad. (For the Shasu dress, see Walter Wreszinski, *Atlas zur altägyptischen Kulturgeschichte*, vol. 2 (Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs, 1923), pls. 34 and 39.) The missing prototypical cap or turban of the Shasu could be explained by the iconic representation of the king, grabbing his foe at a curl of his hair. This relief proves that the temple of Atum, hence, Pi-Atum (biblical Pithom), was situated at Tell er-Retaba in the Wadi Tumilat—one of the two major infiltration tracks for the Shasu, the other one being along the Way of Horus (to the north, closer to the Mediterranean coast).

We also should note tha Qantir/Pi-Ramesse was abandoned c. 1100 B.C.E., when the easternmost branch of the Nile silted up, so that Ra'amses no longer could serve as a harbor. In its stead, a new city arose, Tanis, 14 miles to the north. Remarkably, the religious architecture of Tanis was constructed largely of stones transported from Qantir/Pi-Ramesse rather than from newly quarried stones. This will explain why scholars in the past were misled and therefore identified Tanis with the city of Ra'amses mentioned in Exodus 1:11. At the time of the Israelite presence in Egypt, the city of Ra'amses was clearly located at Qantir.

That said, the geographical shift has a resonance in the Bible. Some centuries later, when the author of Psalm 78 wrote a poetic account of the experience in Egypt, he referred to the area where Yahweh performed miracles for his people as "the fields of Zoan" (78:12, 43). The form Zoan, Heb. *ṣo'an*, is the exact equivalent of Egyptian *ḏ'n.t* (Tanis). Remarkably, the original location of Ra'amses was forgotten; the city simply had "moved" to Tanis![34]

As to the specific task of the Israelite laborers, we have considerable evidence for brickmaking in ancient Egypt, especially during the 19th Dynasty (1301–1198 B.C.E.).[35] P.Anastasi III (verso) 1.2–3.3, dated to the reign of Merneptah (r. 1224–1214 B.C.E.), includes a ledger of sorts recording various building works, including the making of bricks.[36] P.Anastasi IV 12.6 = P. Anastasi V 3.1, dated to the time of Seti II (r. 1214–1208 B.C.E.), includes the complaint, "there are no men to mould bricks, and there is no straw in the district,"[37] calling to mind Exodus 5:16. Unfortunately, though, we are given no location for these brickmaking tasks.

We also may assume an increase in brick production in the Wadi Tumilat during the reign of Ramesses III, who constructed both the big fortress at Tell er-Retaba and the smaller one at Kom Qulzoum near Suez.[38] This activity certainly resulted in recruiting workmen from the local population who were, to a large extent, immigrants from the southern Levant, such as the Shasu of Edom in P.Anastasi VI. This is precisely the latter part of the assumed period of the sojourn of the (proto-)Israelites in Egypt (see further below).

The most detailed and elaborate record of brickmaking is the Louvre Leather Roll, dated to year 5 of Ramesses II, with various entries listed by a taskmaster. A sample entry reads: "Yupa son of Urhiya, (target) 2,000 bricks: 660 arrived, 410 arrived, 560 arrived / total 1,630 / deficit 370."[39]

In addition, we possess a short notice about construction work specifically at Pi-Ramesse, to wit, P.Leiden 348 (verso), 6.6–7, dated to the reign of Ramesses II (r. 1290–1224). The relevant section includes the following bureaucratic order: "Issue grain to the men of the army and (to) the ʿApiru who are drawing stone for the great pylon of the [...] of Ramesses."[40] Practically the same sentence occurs in P.Leiden 349, 14–15: "Issue grain to the men of the army and (to) the ʿApiru who

are drawing stone (?) ..." In the former text, we cannot be certain that the project is underway in Pi-Ramesse, especially with the broken text just before the royal name, but such seems likely. In the latter text, we have even less information, due to the damaged papyrus.

The ʿApiru referred to in this construction project have been the subject of widespread discussion. The term appears in Egyptian texts throughout the second millennium B.C.E., though with a special concentration of references during the New Kingdom;[41] and it also appears in Babylonian cuneiform texts, as Ḫabiru. Scholars of the past sought to connect the ʿApiru/Ḫabiru to the term "Hebrews" (Heb. *ʿibrim*). While some ultimate connection cannot be discarded, given the range of dates and places recorded for the ʿApiru/Ḫabiru, it is clear that not all these people can be Hebrews in any way, shape, or form. In fact, the term ʿApiru/Ḫabiru is not to be seen as an ethnic designation at all, but rather refers to people living on the social margins. The wide range of Egyptian and Babylonian texts refer to them as marauders, mercenaries, militiamen, and the like (always in some inferior status), plus, as we have seen above, they were enlisted in state service.[42]

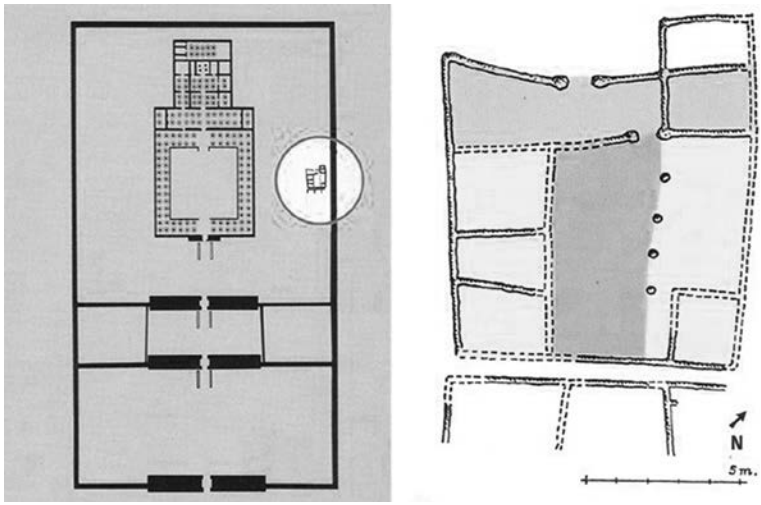
So, while we should resist the temptation to identify the ʿApiru busy at work in P.Leiden 348 with the Hebrews/Israelites—note also that the former are working with stone, while the latter manufactured bricks—we nonetheless gain some insight into how the Egyptians employed the socially marginal in their seemingly incessant construction projects, especially during the 19th Dynasty.[43]

Four-Room Houses at Medinet Habu

One additional piece of possible evidence for (proto-)Israelites in Egypt is worth citing here, even though it brings us to a totally different part of the country. We refer here to the presence of two four-room houses—one fully excavated, the other partially excavated—in Medinet Habu on the west bank of the Nile opposite Thebes (modern-day Luxor). These houses were found by an archaeological team of the University of Chicago during the 1930s,[44] though their significance was not appreciated until decades later.[45] The two relatively poorly constructed houses in wattle and daub served as shelters for workmen who were given the task to dismantle the temple of

Aya and Horemheb (end of 18th Dynasty) in order to obtain building material for the nearby temple of Ramesses IV (r. 1164–1156).

As the four-room house is considered by many scholars to be a vital cultural marker of the Israelites,[46] one is surprised to find four-room houses as far south as Medinet Habu. Such discoveries in the eastern Delta would not be surprising, given the evidence for the presence of Semites from greater Canaan in the region—but in Upper Egypt? And yet, upon further investigation, we may propose such Semites, perhaps specifically Israelites, in the area of Thebes as well, along the following lines.



FOUR-ROOM HOUSE AT MEDINET HABU. Left: floor plan of the temple of Aya and Horemheb, with the circle indicating the location of the four-room houses. Right: floor plan of the four-room houses, one fully excavated, one partially excavated.

The building activity of Ramesses IV must have been initiated early in his short reign (r. 1164–1156). We must look, therefore, at the military activity of his predecessor, Ramesses III (r. 1195–1164). Most famously, this pharaoh defeated the Sea Peoples coalition led by the Philistines and their allies (see further below), but he also defeated the Shasu of Seʿir in a separate encounter. P.Harris I includes the following report (col. 76, lines 9–11):[47]

> I destroyed (the people) of Seʿir among the Shasu tribes; I razed their tents.[48] Their people, their property, and their

> cattle as well, without number, I pinioned and carried away in captivity, as the tribute of Egypt. I gave them to the Ennead of the gods, as slaves for their houses (i.e., temples).

The key point here is that the defeated Shasu of Seʿir were taken captive and were given to the temples as slaves. No doubt they were put to work in the ever-ongoing construction projects. Based on what we wrote above regarding the Shasu of Edom mentioned in P.Anastasi VI, including the fact that Edom and Seʿir are virtually interchangeable designations, we propose here the possibility or probability that amongst the Shasu of Seʿir mentioned in P.Harris I may have been the Israelites or proto-Israelites.

All of this would explain the presence of four-room houses within or adjacent to the temple compound at Medinet Habu under construction during the reign of Ramesses IV. Two further points are noteworthy: First, P.Harris I does not refer to the Philistine and other Sea Peoples captives in the service of the temples, rather they were taken to strongholds and made to serve in the Egyptian army; second, the Philistines did not use the four-room house layout as their domiciles.[49]

To our mind, accordingly, the builders of the four-room houses in Medinet Habu originated from a population that shared the same cultural background as the early Israelites, whose ethnogenesis may not have been finalized by this time but certainly was under way.

Summary Statement

Summing up the evidence of the eastern Delta and Western Thebes, we conclude that early Israelites most likely were in Egypt during the late Ramesside period. The largest group were pastoralists at the edge of Egypt in the Wadi Tumilat, presumably the area that the Bible refers to as Goshen (Genesis 45:10). Another group may have lived relatively nearby, in the "land of Ra'amses" (Genesis 47:11), that is, most likely the land around the royal residence in Pi-Ramesse.[50] In time, these settled groups were conscripted for corvée labor works, especially when larger building projects, such as the one at Tell er-Retaba in Wadi Tumilat, demanded a substantial increase of workforce.

LEARN MORE

The Song of the Sea: Israel's Earliest Memory

Like the patriarchal stories of Genesis, the events of Israel's Exodus from Egypt are extremely difficult to locate in history. But as historian and biblical scholar Baruch Halpern argues in the pages of *BAR* ("Eyewitness Testimony," September/October 2003), close examination of the biblical text reveals that a small but extremely significant portion of the Exodus story—the defeat of Pharaoh's army in the waters of the Red Sea—may have actually been composed within living memory of the event itself.

Immediately following the long narrative account of the miraculous parting and crossing of the Red Sea (Exodus 14), the Bible reports that Moses leads the Israelites in a victory hymn celebrating Yahweh's crushing defeat of Pharaoh's army (Exodus 15:1–18). The hymn, often called the Song of the Sea, is thought to be one of the oldest pieces of Hebrew poetry preserved in the Bible. As Halpern explains, such passages are marked by certain linguistic and grammatical features that clearly distinguish them from later Hebrew texts composed during the period of the Israelite monarchy or the Exilic period. In the case of the Song of the Sea, these textual considerations, and the historical and cultural context presented in the hymn, suggest that it was first composed between 1125 and 1000 B.C.E., perhaps only a generation or two after the miraculous defeat of the Egyptians had occurred. –HERSHEL SHANKS

The rebuilding of palaces and the construction of temples in Pi-Ramesse continued throughout the 19th and the 20th Dynasties, and these projects could be achieved only by additional workmen. Others were captives, used as temple slaves in construction projects. As we have only the evidence of the four-room houses at Medinet Habu for our target group, which we suspect to be proto-Israelites, apparently some among them were transported to Upper Egypt as well.

The Bible remembers only the former group, whose experiences formed the core of the Israelite mnemohistory.[51] Obviously, the evidence from ancient Egypt is scant, at best. If the Shasu pastoralists mentioned in P.Anastasi VI were Israelites, presumably they joined earlier immigrants of the same stock who already were present in the land, perhaps going back to the time of Ramesses II (r. 1290–1224) or even earlier. It would be quite remarkable if our single piece of evidence (i.e., P.Anastasi VI) testifies to the earliest of these people to arrive in

Egypt. The preservation and/or discovery of documentary evidence from the ancient world is always random. Regardless, it was the experience of the Israelites in Pithom and Ra'amses that formed the core narrative of the Bible.

The Merneptah Stele

Into the above mix we also must add the Merneptah Stele, which contains the only direct reference to Israel in all of ancient Egypt documentation, and the oldest reference to Israel in all of the ancient Near East. In fact, since the Merneptah Stele dates to year 5 of this pharaoh's reign, which equates to c. 1220, and since the earliest biblical texts (Exodus 15; Judges 5, etc.) date to c. 1100,[52] the mention of "Israel" in the Merneptah Stele is the earliest record of this people.

The Merneptah Stele is a monumental inscription, about 10 feet high, found by Sir W. M. Flinders Petrie in 1896 at the mortuary temple of Merneptah on the west bank of the Nile opposite Luxor/Thebes.[53] The main part of the text details Merneptah's war against the Libyans to the west. Near the end of the inscription, however, the scribe turns his attention to Merneptah's campaign in the other direction, toward Canaan to the northeast. The relevant lines read as follows:[54]

> All the rulers are prostrate, saying: "peace,"[55]
> not one among the Nine Bows dares raise his head.
> Plundered is Tehenu (Libya), Ḫatti is at peace,
> carried off is Canaan with every evil.
> Brought away is Ashkelon, taken is Gezer,
> Yeno'am is reduced to non-existence;
> Israel is laid waste, having no seed,
> Ḫurru is become widowed because of Nile-land.
> All lands together are (now) at peace,
> and everyone who roamed about has been subdued,
> by the king of Upper and Lower Egypt, Baienre Meriamun,
> Son of Re, Memeptah, given life like Re daily.

Israel is mentioned here within a series of places associated with the land of Canaan, but there is one crucial difference: All of the toponyms in the inscription occur with the foreign-land classifier: . Israel,

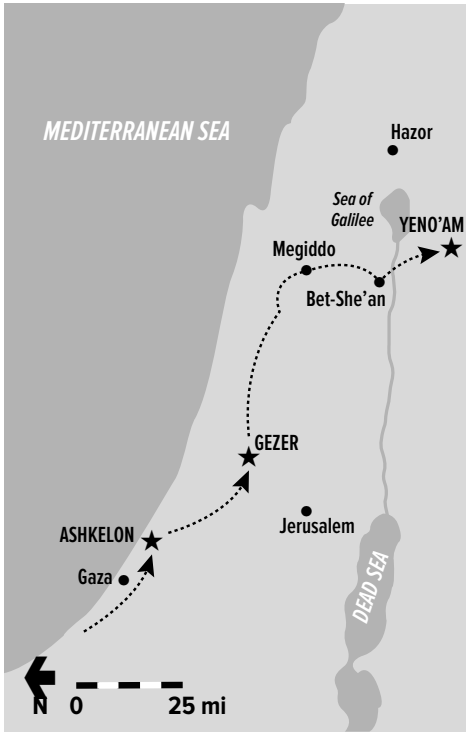
by contrast, appears with the people classifier: . In the eyes of the scribe, Canaan, Ashkelon, Gezer, Yenoʿam, and Ḫurru were places that one could locate on the map. Israel, however, was not a foreign land but rather a recognizable people, presumably without a land.

Most scholars argue that the people-classifier signifies the people of Israel not yet settled, presumably somewhere in the Transjordan. This assumption is based on the geography reflected in the inscription, which proceeds from southwest to northeast, with Ashkelon on the Mediterranean coast, Gezer inland, and Yenoʿam to the east of the Sea of Galilee (though its precise location is not known) (see map on page 37).[56] By extension, Israel would be located in the northern Transjordan, that is, the land of Bashan, to use the biblical designation (Numbers 21:33; 32:33).

Alternatively, with somewhat less regard to the geographical argument just presented, other scholars suggest that the inscription may refer to early Israelite elements present in the central hill country.[57] A relevant passage may occur in P.Anastasi I (the so-called Satirical Letter), col. 23, line 7, which refers to Shasu lurking in the area (lit. "hiding under the bushes").[58]

Most scholars continue the argument as follows: if "Israel" in the Merneptah Stele refers to the people somewhere in the general region of Canaan (either Transjordan or Cisjordan), then the Exodus (however it is envisioned) must have occurred earlier than 1220 B.C.E., either within the first few years of Merneptah's reign or during the long reign of his father and predecessor, Ramesses II. According to this view, the reference to Israel as "a people without a land" evokes the latter portions of the Wandering period (described in the latter half of the Book of Numbers, with rehearsal in Deuteronomy 2–3), and/or the earliest arrival of the Israelites in either Transjordan or Cisjordan. The Exodus would then have occurred prior to this date.

To our mind, however, dating the Exodus prior to 1220 B.C.E. is too early. We shall return to this issue below: for the nonce, let us simply recall that the reigns of Ramesses II and Merneptah propel Egypt to the height of its imperial power. It is therefore difficult to imagine the Exodus (however it is conceived) occurring during this period of firm pharaonic control.



THE ROUTE OF MERNEPTAH'S ARMY in Canaan and the conquered cities (marked by stars) mentioned in the Merneptah Stele.

We would rather propose that "Israel" in the Merneptah Stele refers to Israelite elements that remained in the general region of Canaan and never took part in the Eisodus and residency in Egypt. Moreover, we would not wish to attempt to pinpoint this "Israel" on the map—in the land of Bashan, for example. As argued above, Israel developed out of the general Shasu population. It is hard to imagine that the totality thereof immigrated to Egypt. No doubt certain elements remained on the desert fringe in the southern Levant or were to be found in the rural mountainous areas, and most likely these are the people encountered by Merneptah's army.

In fact, one such component may be the tribe of Asher, which may be referred to in P.Anastasi I, col. 23, line 6 (*ʾsr*), in the region of Megiddo—precisely where one would expect to find this group, according to the geographical information provided in the Bible.[59] In fact, this passage occurs immediately before the mention of the Shasu "hiding under the bushes." Now, it is true that this region places us in the western Galilee, far from the desert fringe, though one should keep in mind that the sedentarization of nomads and semi-nomads often brings them to the sown not immediately adjacent to their original steppe land and desert fringe.[60]

One also may wish to postulate that such groups of semi-nomads, who later became part of early Israel, were present in the rural areas

between the fortified settlements in Canaan already during the Late Bronze Age.[61] Although originally different pastoralist groups were involved, the ethnogenesis of Israel was perhaps finalized only by the political process which led to the United Monarchy and brought together diverse tribes. These tribes may have been related to each other in some fashion, but they had not yet coalesced into the ethnos or entity called later by the term Israel.[62]

History is always more complicated than the simple narrative. The Bible narrates its tale, but it constitutes only the main tale, the one most told and retold, the one most remembered amongst others—until it became *the* narrative of the people of Israel.

Egyptian Motifs in the Book of Exodus

The goal of the present volume keeps us focused on the history of the period, and thus our attention remains on the historical evidence (textual, archaeological, etc.). It is worth noting, however, that the biblical account as just described, is fully conversant with themes and motifs present in Egyptian magical and literary texts, including the following: the baby in the bulrushes (Exodus 2:3); the staff that turns into a reptile, whether snake (Exodus 4:3) or crocodile (Exodus 7:10); the elevation of Moses to the level of deity (Exodus 4:16, 7:1); the water of the Nile turning into blood (Exodus 7:19); the plague of darkness (Exodus 10:15); the killing of the first-born (Exodus 12:29); the splitting of the sea (Exodus 14:21); death by drowning (Exodus 14:28; 15:4); and more.[63]

These literary echoes indicate that the Israelite author (and presumably the educated portion of his audience) were well acquainted with Egyptian culture and religion.[64] This does not necessarily guarantee the historicity of the account recorded in Exodus 1–15, but it is a noteworthy observation nonetheless.

THE EXODUS

Epic Traditions in the Book of Exodus

At some point in time, the Israelites resident in Egypt were able to leave, traverse the Sinai region, travel through Transjordan, and settle

in the central hill country of the land of Canaan (for this last stage, see chap. 3). The biblical account is filled with epic traditions: the episode commences with the ritual act of the sacrificing of lambs (Exodus 12:21–28); all Israel leaves as a collective unit at a single moment; the number of adult males in the group is given as 600,000 (both Exodus 12:37); and the narrative even takes time to mention the baking of bread for the journey (Exodus 12:39).

Such an account is to be compared to the Ugaritic Epic of Kirta, in which all of these elements are present. When Kirta, the legendary king of Canaanite lore, departs on a military expedition against Edom, the epic poem includes the following scenes: Kirta sacrifices a lamb to commence the proceedings, he prepares bread for the journey, and an enormous army of 3,000,000 men goes forth.[65] But beneath this epic treatment, one may plausibly infer a historical kernel.

P.Anastasi V—Another Report of a Frontier Official

We have noted the constant flow of Semites into Egypt (see esp. P.Anastasi VI); just as likely there was a flow of Semites out of Egypt, even if we have less evidence for such travels and migrations.[66]

One such text, even if it does not allow for the ethnic or national identification of the individuals leaving Egypt, is another report of a frontier official, included in P.Anastasi V, dated to the reign of Seti II (r. 1214–1208), once again with reference to Tjeku. In this well-known text, two slaves have escaped Egypt into the desert. The relevant section reads as follows:[67]

> Another matter, to wit: I was sent forth from the broad halls of the palace, life, prosperity, health, in the 3rd month of the 3rd season, day 9, at evening time, following after two slaves. Now when I reached the enclosure of Tjeku on the 3rd month of the 3rd season, day 10, they told me that to the south they were saying that they [i.e. the slaves] had passed by on the 3rd month of the 3rd season, day 10. When I reached the fortress, they told me that the scout (?) had come from the desert stating that they had passed the walled place north of Migdol of Seti Merneptah, life, prosperity, health, beloved like Seth. When my letter reaches you, write to me about all that has happened to them.

> Who found their tracks? Which watch found their tracks? What people are after them? Write to me about all that has happened to them and how many people you sent out after them.

Once more there are parallels between an Egyptian document and the biblical account. Regardless of the manner in which the Torah presents Israel's history, it is noteworthy that the account includes an Egyptian force sent to pursue escaped slaves (see Exodus 14: 5–9). The above document informs us that this was perfectly natural, in fact, even when only two slaves escaped.

Moreover, the route of the two escaped slaves is significant. The two sites mentioned are Tjeku and Migdol. The former, as we saw above, is equivalent to the Hebrew term *sukkot*, that is, Succoth in English Bible translations, the very site mentioned as the Israelites' point of departure (Exodus 12:37; 13:20). Migdol is also mentioned in the biblical account (Exodus 14:2), even if we cannot locate the site precisely. Note further that the term is simply a variant pronunciation of the common Hebrew noun *migdal*, "tower" (as in the Tower of Babel story in Genesis 11).[68] Most likely, Migdol refers to one of the fortresses in the chain of such sites constructed by the Egyptian administration to supervise the eastern approaches to Egypt,[69] memory of which was kept alive by the Israelites as a component of the Exodus tradition.

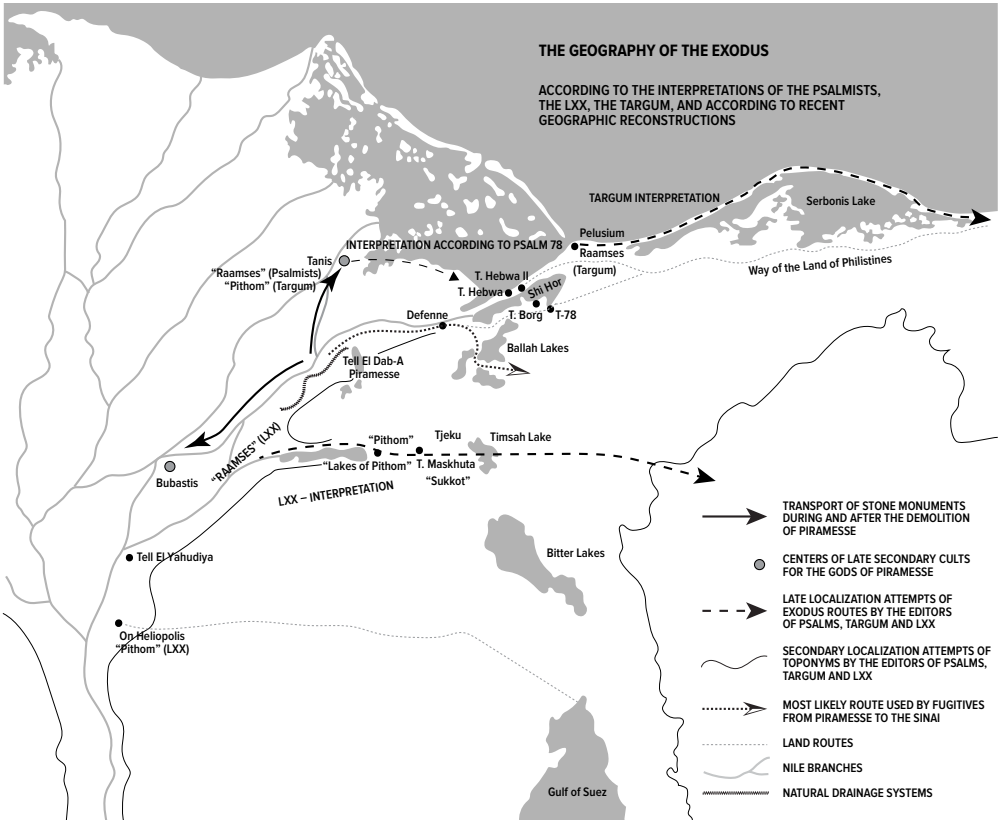
Of all the toponyms in the general area of the eastern Delta and the Wadi Tumilat, it is rather striking that both the Book of Exodus and P.Anastasi V should mention both Succoth and Migdol in connection with escaping slaves. The evidence strongly suggests that the Israelites were using a route well traveled by fugitive slaves, somewhat akin to the "underground railroad" of American history.

The Sea of Reeds

According to the biblical account, the Exodus route brought the Israelites to the *yam suf*, "Sea of Reeds" (Exodus 13:18),[70] a term which appears commonly in Egyptian texts in the form *p3 ṯwf*[71] and is most likely to be identified with the region of Lake Ballaḥ and its marshlands.[72] Once again, the epic tradition takes command, as the Bible narrates the miraculous splitting of the sea and the drowning of the Egyptians. In addition, the account evokes Egyptian motifs: for in

Egyptian lore, magicians were able to part the waters; in Egyptian religion, death by drowning was considered a noble death.

The splitting of waters occurs in two literary texts.[73] The first is the Demotic tale "Setne Khamwas and Na-nefer-ka-ptaḥ," known as "Setne I," set during the reign of Ramesses II, though composed in the Ptolemaic period (P.Cairo 30646). It contains the following line about the great magician Na-nefer-ka-ptaḥ, "He cast sand before him, and a gap formed in the river."[74]



CITIES OF RA'MSES AND PITHOM, AND RECONSTRUCTIONS OF EXODUS ROUTES IN THE COURSE OF TIME. The most likely route leads from Pi-Ramesse through the Ballah Lakes.

More famously, in The Boating Party story of Pharaoh Snefru, the third of the five tales collected in P.Westcar (P.Berlin 3033), set during the reign of Khufu (4th Dynasty), though composed in the

13th Dynasty or the Second Intermediate Period,[75] the great magician Djadja-em-ankh performs as follows:[76]

> He placed one side of the lake's water upon the other; and he found the pendant lying on a shard. He brought it and gave it to its owner. Now the water that had been twelve cubits deep across (lit. "on its back") had become twenty-four cubits when it was turned back. Then he said his say of magic and returned the waters of the lake to their place.

The drowning motif appears especially in New Kingdom texts and artwork (see image on next page for an example),[77] though it receives the clearest exposition in the words of Herodotus, *Histories*, book 2, section 90:[78]

> When anyone, be he Egyptian or stranger, is known to have been carried off by a crocodile or drowned by the river itself, such an one must by all means be embalmed and tended as fairly as may be and buried in a sacred coffin by the townsmen of the place where he is cast up; nor may any of his kinsfolk or his friends touch him, but his body is deemed something more than human, and is handled and buried by the priests of the Nile themselves.

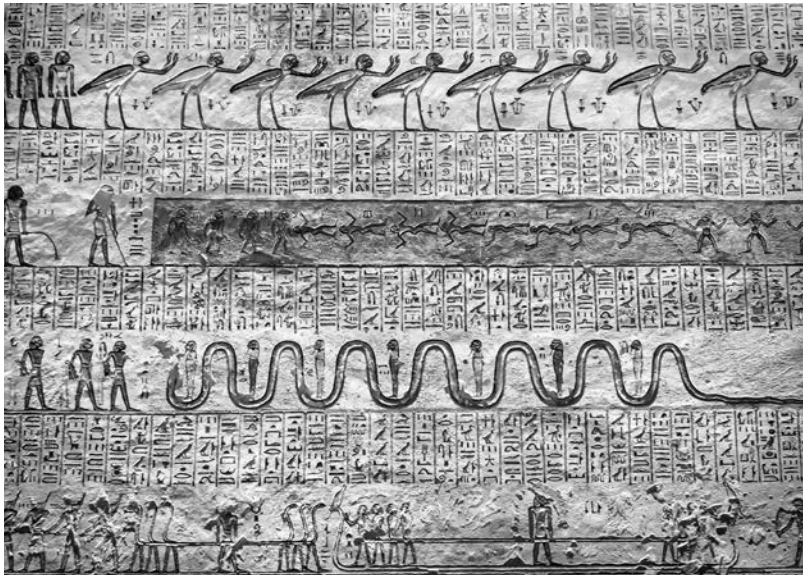
From the evidence presented here, one gains the impression that the biblical author wishes to assert the following: okay, Egyptians, you think that magicians can part waters, and you think that death by drowning is a noble demise—we'll arrange it for you! And with that event, narrated in prose in Exodus 14 and recounted in poetry in Exodus 15, the departure of the Israelites from Egypt was complete. Never, from this point onward, through the end of the Torah, would the Israelites encounter the Egyptians again.

The Date of the Exodus

The next question to ask, one which continues to exercise scholars, is the following: assuming some historicity to the biblical account, when did the Exodus possibly occur? The dominant opinion in biblical scholarship is that the Exodus occurred sometime during the 13th century B.C.E. The single piece of evidence most commonly cited is the

Merneptah Stele, which most scholars interpret to mean that Israel already had departed Egypt by the year c. 1220 B.C.E. (see above). As we have suggested, however, this understanding of the inscription is by no means the only possible one.

First, during the 13th century B.C.E., Egypt was at the height of its power: the long reign of Ramesses II (r. 1290–1224) and that of his son and successor, Merneptah (r. 1224–1214), were characterized by great stability, military victories over Nubia and Libya, massive construction projects, and in particular control over the land of Canaan. However one conceives of the Exodus, the period of these two 19th Dynasty pharaohs seems to be the least likely time for the events of the Bible to unfold.



A SCENE FROM AMDUAT 10TH HOUR depicted on the right wall of Corridor G in the tomb of Ramesses VI (KV-9), featuring the drowned ones (second register from the top).

Secondly, as we shall see in the next chapter, the Israelites do not emerge in the land of Canaan until sometime later in the 12th century B.C.E. Moreover, Egyptian control over the land of Canaan not only continued into this time period but even increased considerably. Egyptian officials were stationed at Gaza and Deir el-Balaḥ in

the southern coastal plain; at Lachish, Tell eš-Šariʿa (perhaps Ziklag), Tell el-Farʿah (south), and perhaps Bet Shemesh in the southern inland territory; and at Megiddo and (most prominently) Bet Sheʾan in the north.[79] In addition, Egyptian mining in the Timna Valley continued throughout the 19th Dynasty and into the reign of Ramesses VI in the 20th Dynasty (perhaps with a brief interruption during the transition between the two dynasties).[80]

And yet, according to the Bible, once the Israelites departed from the Sea of Reeds, they never again encountered Egyptians, including in the books of Numbers, Joshua, and Judges. Had the Israelites left Egypt at some point in the 13th century (per the standard approach), with an arrival in the land of Canaan sometime thereafter, it is hard to imagine that they would not have encountered Egyptian troops somewhere along the way. Various peoples are encountered—Midianites, Amalekites, Edomites, Moabites, Ammonites, and Canaanites—but not Egyptians.[81]

Let us look more closely at one particular city, Lachish in the territory of Judah. The excavations at the site reveal that Stratum VI, dated to the 12th century, was still governed by the Egyptians. This is confirmed by two finds: a heavy bronze city gate fitting bearing the name of Ramesses III (r. 1195–1164) and a scarab bearing the name of Ramesses IV (r. 1164–1156).[82] Stratum VI then was totally destroyed by fire, in c. 1150, and the site was abandoned for about two centuries.[83]

While the archaeological data do not (and typically cannot) inform us *who* was responsible for the destruction, the geography, chronology, and the account in Joshua 10:31–32 make the Israelites a prime candidate.[84] It is true that Joshua 10 does not mention the burning of Lachish by the Israelites, but the text reports that Joshua besieged the city, conquered it, and slaughtered the population (see v. 32 esp.). The archaeological record revealed a severe destruction with bodies still buried in the ruins.[85] If there is any historical validity to the biblical account, the Israelite attack on Lachish could not have occurred until *after* the Egyptian presence at the city had receded, c. 1150 B.C.E.

In short, the picture that emerges from the archaeological record compels us to focus on the late 12th century for the emergence of Israel in the land of Canaan, and by extension the early or mid-12th century for the Exodus from Egypt.

Exodus Scenario 1: The Turmoil at the End of the 19th Dynasty

One ideal historical scenario for the Exodus would be during the major turmoil that characterizes the transition between the end of the 19th Dynasty (1198 B.C.E.) and the rise of Sethnakht (r. 1198–1195), a general, a usurper, and the founder of the 20th Dynasty. The prime sources are the Elephantine Stele, erected by Sethnakht, and P.Harris I, concerning events during the reign of Sethnakht and his son Ramesses III (r. 1195–1164).

The chaos during the year c. 1198 B.C.E. is described succinctly in the Elephantine Stele: "this land had been in confusion, because (?) the Nile-land has lapsed into forgetting God."[86] The full account is not totally clear, but the text does mention how the enemies of Sethnakht tried to win Western Asiatic people (*sṯtyw*) over to their side with silver and gold, though eventually said people needed to flee and leave the payment behind. Now, it is true that in the Bible the Israelites leave Egypt with silver and gold (Exodus 3:22; 11:2; 12:35), and so the plot-lines do not align. But one wonders if the Bible does not incorporate an echo of the feature described in the Elephantine Stele.

The relevant section of P.Harris I describes the chaos that precedes the establishment of the 20th Dynasty as follows:[87]

> The land of Egypt was cast aside, with every man in his (own standard of) right.[88] They had no chief spokesman for many years. ... The land of Egypt was officials and mayors,[89] one slaying his fellow, both exalted and lowly. Other times came afterwards in empty years. Irsu the Ḫurru was with them, he made himself prince. He set the entire land as tributary before him. One joined his companion that their property might be plundered. They treated the gods like the people, and no offerings were presented in the temples.

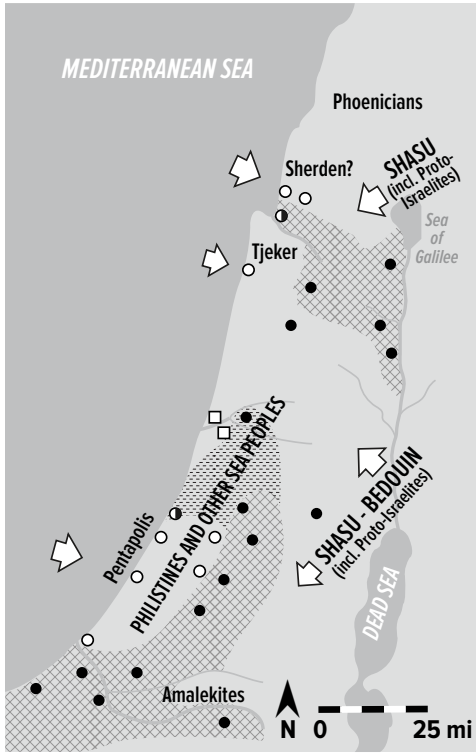
Attention is drawn to Irsu,[90] described as a Ḫurru, that is, someone from the Levant, who gained control over Egypt for a brief period, until Sethnakht was able to establish himself as pharaoh and the founder of the 20th Dynasty. Unfortunately, this is our only reference to the intriguing figure of Irsu, but the events surrounding his brief career could serve as the backdrop for the Exodus.[91]

Exodus Scenario 2: The Sea Peoples Invasion During the Reign of Ramesses III

A second possible historical scenario occurs during the reign of the son and successor to Sethnakht, namely, Ramesses III (r. 1195–1164). This pharaoh was engaged in warfare at both the western and eastern boundaries of the country, with the biggest threat stemming from the invasion of the Sea Peoples, dated to year 8 of his reign, hence, c. 1188 B.C.E. As the Medinet Habu inscriptions and the P.Harris I text testify,[92] the attack by the Sea Peoples, led by the Philistines and their allies, once again threw Egypt into great turmoil.

The texts imply that the action took place at the mouth of the easternmost branch of the Nile River in the northeastern Delta region and perhaps along the Sinai coast, with the Sea Peoples both attacking by sea via ships and traveling over land on ox-drawn carts carrying women and children.[93] Although Egypt emerged victorious, so that the Sea Peoples returned to the coast of Canaan (Philistines in the southern coast plain, Tjeker at Dor, etc.), the invasion attempt inflicted great damages upon Egypt. These events eventually would weaken the country to the point that the Egyptian army and administration would need to withdraw from the land of Canaan around 1150 B.C.E., as described above (see also map on p. 46). This invasion attempt prompted Ramesses III to rebuild the fortress at Tell er-Retaba and to construct small fortresses at strategic points such as the one at Kom el-Qulzoum near Suez (as noted above).[94] This activity certainly caused recruitment of and strong stress on the population in these border regions.

We see these events as a propitious time for the Israelites to have departed from Egypt. A further clue is provided by Exodus 13:17: "And it was, when Pharaoh sent-forth the people, and God did not lead them by way of the land of the Philistines, though it was closer, for God said, 'Lest the people reconsider when they see war and return to Egypt'." If we take this verse at face value, it tells us that at the very time the Israelites may have left Egypt there was military conflict along the coastal route, referred to here as the "way of the land of the Philistines." Or more generally, the Israelites may have left Egypt after the Sea Peoples invasion, under whatever circumstances, and still sought to avoid the array of forts and movements of armies along the "way of the land of the Philistines."



THE EGYPTIAN PROVINCE of Canaan after the Sea Peoples incursion during the reign of Ramesses III.

It also may be possible to incorporate Amos 9:7 into this discussion. The verse reads as follows: "Did I not bring Israel up from the land of Egypt, and the Philistines from Caphtor, and Aram from Qir?" Might this verse imply that all three movements were more or less coeval with one another? Unfortunately, since we do not know where Qir is located,[95] and thus cannot say more about Aramean origins, including when the Aramean migration may have occurred, the question cannot be answered. Yet the posited contemporaneity of the named movements is suggestive. To be sure, the Philistines' migration from Caphtor (i.e., Crete specifically or the Aegean more generally) and the Israelite settlement in Canaan were more or less contemporary with one another.

In sum, the background of the Exodus is to be found in either of the two scenarios presented here, relatively early in the 12th century B.C.E., during the reigns of the first two pharaohs of the 20th Dynasty. In such case, the mention of "Israel" in the Merneptah Stele must refer to Israelite elements that did not participate in the Bible's main narrative (Eisodus, Slavery, Exodus).

Biblical Genealogies

There is a third line of evidence that we can admit here as well. The genealogies recorded in the Bible reveal a remarkable internal consistency, and thus to our mind they may be utilized to reconstruct the relative chronology of events narrated in the Bible.[96] In order to establish the date of the Exodus, for example, one seeks a genealogy from a known fixed point and then works back in time until one reaches the Exodus. Unfortunately (though not surprisingly), there is only one such genealogy in the Bible, namely, the genealogy of King David. We say "not surprisingly," because comparative sociological research has demonstrated that royal lineages are transmitted with greater depth than the genealogies of non-royals.[97]

The genealogy of David recorded in Ruth 4:18–22 and 1 Chronicles 2:5–15 is as follows: Nahshon – Salmon – Boaz – Obed – Jesse – David. Since, per scholarly consensus, David can be dated to c. 1000 B.C.E.,[98] and Nahshon lived five generations earlier, all we need to do is to determine the proper coefficient to be multiplied by these five generations. While most scholars use the average of 25 years per generation, exhaustive research by David Henige, based on a survey of 737 known genealogies in world history, demonstrates that the average age per generation is actually 30 years.[99] But that figure is only the calculated average: 217 of the 737 dynasties have a range of 30 to 34 years per generation, and 87 of them have a range of 35 to 39 years.

Working back from David at c. 1000 B.C.E., we therefore reach Nahshon at c. 1150 B.C.E. (i.e., 5 generations = 150 years). Nahshon is an important figure in our calculations, because he is mentioned on two occasions as a member of the Exodus and Wandering generation: in Exodus 6:23 as the brother-in-law of Aaron, and in Numbers 1:7 as the leader of the tribe of Judah. True, this calculation brings us only to the middle of the 12th century, and not to the early decades thereof, per what we suggested above. But if we use one of the higher figures based on Henige's research—say, 35 years per generation, which is well within the range of possibility—then the Davidic lineage reaches to 1175 B.C.E. In short, if the genealogy of David recorded in the Bible is to be accorded any credibility, it clearly favors a 12th-century date for the Exodus, as opposed to earlier dates proposed by other scholars.

Unfortunately, the genealogy of David is the only one in the Bible

that can be used for the purposes of dating the Exodus. In theory, we would benefit from similar genealogies from others in David's circle, or from the approximate era, but no others are available. The lineage of Saul (presented in 1 Samuel 9:1) is promising, but each of his ancestors listed there is mentioned only here, and not earlier in the Bible: Aphiah – Becorath – Zeror – Abiel – Kish – Saul. It would be helpful if Aphiah or Becorath appeared in the Exodus-Wilderness narratives, but they do not.[100]

1 Kings 6:1

An oft-cited verse for fixing the date of the Exodus is 1 Kings 6:1: "And it was, in the four hundred and eightieth year of the Israelites' going-out from the land of Egypt, in the fourth year, in the month of Ziv, that is, the second month, in the reign of Solomon over Israel; and he built the House to the Lord." This seems to give us a clear chronology. If we can fix the date of Solomon's construction of the Temple, or more generally of his reign, and work back 480 years, one would reach the date of the Exodus.

Of course, the calculus is not that simple. We are able to date Solomon's reign with confidence to c. 965–930 B.C.E.[101] Since the construction of the Temple was begun during the fourth year of Solomon's reign and was completed seven years later (1 Kings 6:38), we can date the construction project to the years c. 961–954. If we use the year 960 B.C.E. for the purposes of our calculations, and the Exodus transpired 480 years earlier (1 Kings 6:1), we arrive to c. 1440 B.C.E.

But there are two problems with this approach. First, and most obviously, a 15th-century date for the Exodus leads to the question: where were the Israelites before they first emerged in the historical and archaeological record? Within Egypt, as we have seen throughout this chapter, references to Israel, the Shasu of Edom/Seʿir, the cities mentioned in the Bible (Pithom and Ra'amses), and more, along with the four-room houses at Medinet Habu, all congregate in the late Ramesside period (late 13th and 12th centuries). Within Canaan, the evidence from the central hill country reveals the emergence of Israel during the 12th century. A 15th-century date for the Exodus, as presupposed by a literal acceptance of 1 Kings 6:1, raises more questions than it answers.

Secondly, one cannot take at face value the years presented in the early biblical books. The numbers used are always greatly exaggerated and, at times, they are imbued with symbolism (even if the exact nature of that symbolism eludes us).

The use of round numbers, especially exaggerated ones and multiples of 40, is characteristic of the epic tradition. Examples include: God's words to Abram that his ancestors would be strangers in a foreign land for 400 years (Genesis 15:13); the 40 years of the wandering (Deuteronomy 29:4); Moses's age of 80 at his first appearance before Pharaoh (Exodus 7:7); his death at the age of 120 (Deuteronomy 34:7); the various instances of 40 and 80 in the Book of Judges (3:11; 3:30; 5:31; etc.);[102] and the 40-year reigns of both David and Solomon (2 Samuel 5:4; 1 Kings 11:42).[103]

This same use of exaggerated numbers using multiples of 40 is attested in ancient Near Eastern literature. For example, Nabonidus, king of Babylon (r. 556–539 B.C.E.), asserted that Naram-Sin, king of Akkad (r. c. 2254–c. 2218) ruled 3,200 years earlier,[104] when we know that the distance separating the two rulers is c. 1,700 years. This is all part of the epic storytelling style of the ancient world, which we have discussed above.[105]

All of this is simply to say that no historical reconstruction should be based on the 480-year time span mentioned in 1 Kings 6:1. Over time, and especially during the period of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, accurate records were kept by royal chancelleries, so that the years provided in the canonical Book of Kings (at least from 1 Kings 12 onward), which in turn derive from the Annals of the Kings of Israel (1 Kings 14:19, etc.) and the Annals of the Kings of Judah (1 Kings 14:29, etc.), are most reliable.[106] However, this same accuracy does not apply to the round, exaggerated numbers used in the early biblical tradition.[107]

In recognition of the nonhistorical nature of the 480-year figure in 1 Kings 6:1, some scholars have attempted to interpret the number as symbolic of 12 generations × 40 years (as representative of a single generation in ancient Israelite lore). Yet this too fails, for there are neither 480 years nor twelve generations separating the Exodus from the construction of the Temple. As we saw above, the genealogy from Nahshon to David spans only five generations, so that the genealogy from Nahshon to Solomon spans only six generations.

Conclusions

As we have argued herein, the background for the Eisodus, Slavery, and Exodus is the Ramesside period, or to be more specific, the time period of the late 19th Dynasty and the first half of the 20th Dynasty, that is, c. 1250–c. 1150 B.C.E. All of the Egyptian material we have cited falls into this time period, as summarized here:

1. P.Anastasi VI, dated to the reign of Seti II (r. 1214–1208), with reference to the Shasu of Edom being admitted into Egypt and being allowed to settle in Per-Atum (= Pithom).

2. P.Anastasi III, dated to the reign of Merneptah (r. 1224–1214), P.Anastasi V, dated to the reign of Seti II (r. 1214–1208), and the Louvre Leather Roll, dated to the 19th Dynasty generally, all with reference to brickmaking, including the lack of straw—even if the specific identify of the workers is not disclosed.

3. P.Leiden 348, dated to the reign of Ramesses II (r. 1290–1224), with reference to the ʿApiru constructing the city of Pi-Ramesse (see also the more fragmentary version in P.Leiden 349).

4. The four-room houses at Medinet Habu, dated to the time of Ramesses IV (r. 1164–1156).

5. P.Harris I, detailing the achievements of Ramesses III (r. 1195–1164), with reference to the capture of Shasu of Seʿir and their assignment to work in the temples.

6. The famous reference to "Israel" in the Merneptah Stele, however it may be interpreted and to whatever "Israel" it may refer.

7. P.Anastasi V, dated to the reign of Seti II (r. 1214–1208), with reference to two slaves escaping via Migdol.

8. The Elephantine Stele, erected by Sethnakht (r. 1198–1195), with reference to the overall chaos at the end of the 19th Dynasty.

9. Another section of P.Harris I (see above, no. 5), with additional description of the overall chaos at the end of the 19th Dynasty.

10. The Medinet Habu and P.Harris accounts describing the Sea Peoples invasion during year 8 of the reign of Ramesses III (c. 1188).

We add to this mix a point intimated above, but not stated explicitly. As Sarah Groll noted, while some of the toponyms discussed herein occur in later Egyptian texts, only in the documents of this time period does one find the collocation of Per-Atum (Pithom), Pi-Ramesse (Ra'amses), Tjeku (Succoth), Migdol, *pꜣ-ṯwf* (Sea of Reeds), and most likely Goshen.[108] Pi-Ramesse, for example, only reappears after a long absence in the third century B.C.E.

How, then, do we reconstruct what actually happened, and how do we correlate the history with the biblical narrative? We assume that groups of (proto-)Israelites and related tribes—among them the Shasu of Edom/Seʿir mentioned in Egyptian texts—entered Egypt in various stages and by various means during the Ramesside period. Some of these arrived as family units, with their flocks, per P.Anastasi VI, dated to the reign of Seti II. Some were brought to Egypt as captives, as indicated by P.Harris I during the reign of Ramesses III. Most were exploited as a ready labor force in the eastern Delta, constructing Per-Atum (Pithom) and Pi-Ramesse (Ra'amses), in line with Exodus 1:11. Some lived much farther south, including at Thebes. Still others did not participate in the Eisodus and sojourn in Egypt at all, but rather remained in the general region of Canaan, where they were encountered by Merneptah's troops and are referenced as "Israel" in the Merneptah Stele.

As we attempt to read the biblical tradition of the Exodus against the historical framework of Ramesside Egypt, somewhere within this mix, we may assume that one group of Israelites took advantage of the general turmoil during the transition period between the 19th and 20th Dynasties (c. 1198) and/or during or after the Sea Peoples invasion dated to year 8 of the reign of Ramesses III (c. 1188). They escaped into the desert, wandered the Sinai, and eventually settled in the central hill country of Canaan.[109] As we noted above, according to the biblical tradition, no Egyptian troops or authorities were encountered after the Sea of Reeds event, a point that speaks in favor of the arrival of the Israelites in Canaan after the Egyptians had retreated from the province.

In general, the sojourn in Egypt was not very long. Turning to the evidence of the biblical genealogies—with special attention to the lineage of Moses (Levi–Kohath–Amram–Moses; see Exodus 6:16–20),[110] we see that this lineage indicates that the total amount of time

in Egypt could not have been very long. According to the biblical tradition, Levi and his son Kohath are among those who immigrated to Egypt (Genesis 46:11), while the latter's grandson Moses already is leaving Egypt.

Once more, we need to dismiss the actual years presented in the Bible. God informs Abraham that his descendants will be enslaved for 400 years in a foreign land (Genesis 15:13), and then the text states that the Israelites were resident in Egypt for 430 years (Exodus 12:40–41).[111] More importantly, we stress the other statement made by God to Abraham, "And the fourth generation shall return here" (Genesis 15:16), which is precisely what occurred (see above, e.g., for the Moses lineage).

We therefore posit that the biblical tradition arose out of the various movements (into and out of Egypt, as noted above), presumably at different times and under different circumstances. As we noted earlier, history is always more complicated than a single episode or a single account, but the tradition frequently memorializes, commemorates, and indeed celebrates only one main narrative. Such is what occurred in ancient Israel: the story is stylized as the descent to Egypt by a single extended family, Jacob and his children; the slavery of the main group engaged in brickmaking for the building of Pithom and Ra'amses; the miraculous hand of God bringing plagues against Egypt; and, finally, the Exodus from Egypt of the core group, which would traverse the Sinai and settle in Canaan.

What happened to others who arrived in Egypt and were not necessarily related to Jacob? The tradition is silent. What happened to the potential Israelite groups doing enforced labor in Upper Egypt, that is, those who lived in the four-room houses? The tradition is silent. What happened to Israelite elements that may never have experienced Egypt at all? The tradition is silent. And presumably so much more of the history of the Israelites during this crucial time period in their development is unknown. For the narrative coalesced around a single aspect of the history, and the rest is lost in the mists of time.[112]

A well-known analogy from American history presents itself.[113] The Mayflower event was a singular journey, which (after some stops and starts) left Plymouth, England, on September 6, 1620, and which

arrived at present-day Cape Cod, Massachusetts, on November 9, 1620. This event was eventually integrated into the American national epic, but there were earlier journeys, including those that led to the establishments of the Roanoke Colony (1585) and the Jamestown settlement (1607), and of course numerous later voyages, including the arrival of others on a second ship named Mayflower in 1629, 1630, 1633, 1634, and 1639. Add to this the arrival of people from other European countries, most importantly the Dutch settlement of the Hudson Valley during the years 1609–1624, and we begin to see the emergence of the American nation.

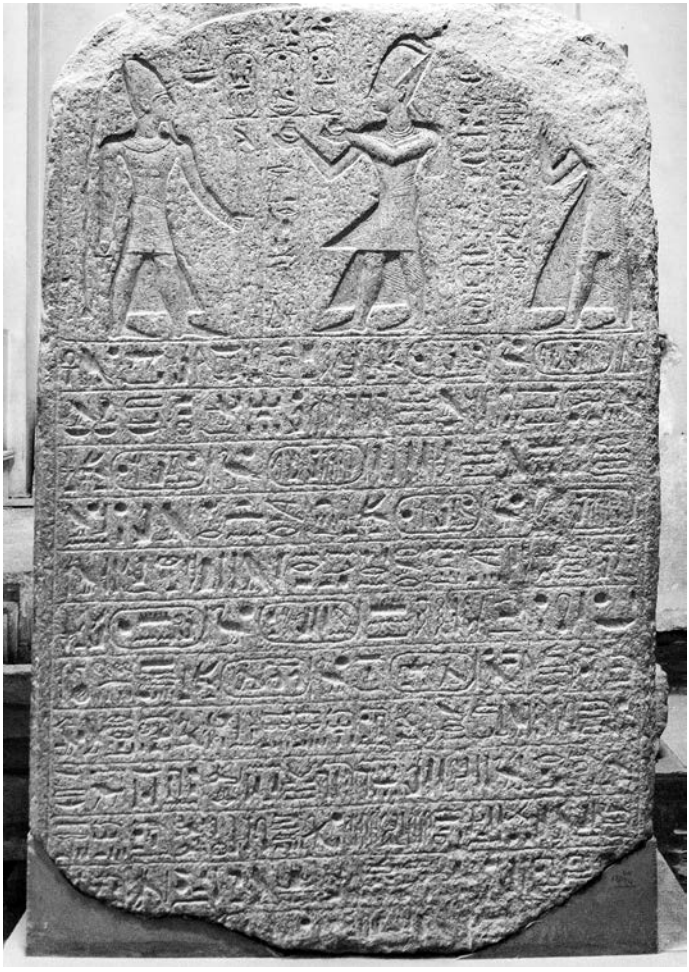
Naturally, the history of America is more complex, as it includes the diversity of native Americans, Spanish colonization in Florida (starting already in 1565), Africans brought to these shores against their will (commencing in 1619), French colonization in Louisiana (starting in 1699), and more. But of all the Atlantic crossings, the one remembered and still celebrated by the vast majority of Americans as Thanksgiving Day is the Mayflower event.

And so it was in ancient Israel. Almost undoubtedly, numerous eisodi and exodi occurred. In fact, the geography of the region speaks in favor of this view, for the environment of both the city of Pi-Ramesse and the Wadi Tumilat implies different Exodus tracks, which cannot be united into a single sortie.[114] Or to put this cleverly, per the felicitous expression coined by Abraham Malamat, we rather should recall Moses's words to Pharaoh as "Let My People Go and Go and Go and Go."[115] However, in an effort to create a unified national epic, most likely with the goal of unifying disparate tribes, the tradition recalls only a single Eisodus and more importantly a single triumphant, dramatic Exodus.

The latter would be celebrated for generations during the combined festivals of Pesaḥ and Matzot, spring holidays associated with the lambing of the flocks and the start of the barley harvest, respectively. The meaning of the word *Pesaḥ* remains an enigma, notwithstanding its usual English translation as "Passover."[116] The latter word, *Matzot*, means "unleavened bread," still consumed during the week of Passover by Jews around the world. The two main components of the ancient Israelite economy were animal husbandry and crop production, with each segment of the population able to participate in one of these

spring festivals. Eventually, they were combined into a single holiday, and then more importantly their agricultural origins were overlaid with the historical commemoration of the Exodus from Egypt.

Through this process, the Exodus from Egypt became the single unifying factor in ancient Israel, and the single event most mentioned in all the Bible, throughout all its genres (prose, poetry, prophecy, etc.).



400-YEAR STELE. Erected originally in the Egyptian capital city of Avaris to honor Pharaoh Seti I, this epigraphic document is now in the Egyptian Museum, Cairo.

THE HYKSOS (AN EXCURSUS)

Many readers of this chapter may have read elsewhere[117] that some connections existed between the Hyksos and the Israelites. In light of everything that we have written above, we deny any possible relationship, with one small qualification (see below).[118]

But first, who were the Hyksos? The term derives from the Egyptian term *ḥqꜣw ḫꜣswt,* "rulers of foreign lands," though it has come down to us in the Greek form via the historians Manetho and Josephus. The term is used in Egyptian texts to refer mainly to Near Eastern rulers who established themselves in northern Egypt in c. 1640 B.C.E., as the 15th Dynasty. Their capital was at Avaris (today, Tell ed-Dabʿa) in the eastern Delta, and they ruled until c. 1530 B.C.E.

The Hyksos rule rested on the considerable number of immigrants in the eastern Nile Delta, who arrived mainly from the northern Levant during the second part of the 12th Dynasty and during the 13th Dynasty (c. 1850–1700 B.C.E.), and who served the pharaohs of this period in different capacities. The inhabitants of Avaris, which was an important harbor town, were most probably responsible for expeditions and trade by sea, but they also offered military service and most likely participated in the expeditions to the turquoise and copper mines on the Sinai, during the second part of the 12th Dynasty (c. 1900–1800 B.C.E.). In a period of decline during the late 13th Dynasty, Avaris remained a booming trade center and therefore had the power to establish itself as an independent small kingdom in the northeastern Delta c. 1720 B.C.E., thereby constituting the 14th Dynasty ruled by kings of western Asiatic origin.

This dynasty seems to have been toppled c. 1640 B.C.E. by another group of Asiatic powerholders who established themselves as the "Hyksos," the 15th Dynasty. They were able to control the northern part of Egypt, and for some time even Upper Egypt, in a kind of vassal system. During this period, the south of Egypt was ruled by the 16th and 17th Dynasties, centered in Thebes. Together the 14th–17th Dynasties comprise what Egyptologists call the Second Intermediate Period.

The 14th and the 15th Dynasties introduced Canaanite religion and built temples of Near Eastern architecture in Avaris, such as a Broad-Room Temple for the Syrian storm-god and a Bent-Axis Temple for

his consort, either Astarte or Asherah.[119] The presence of Canaanite religion in the eastern Delta became so firmly rooted that it was respected even after the former vassal dynasty under Pharaoh Ahmose conquered Avaris and established the 18th Dynasty. The Hyksos population was most likely largely dispersed throughout the country, but Canaanite cults continued in Avaris in unbroken succession until the 19th Dynasty, which adopted the Syrian storm-god Ba'al Zephon in the guise of the Egyptian storm-god Seth as their dynastic ancestor.[120] This move was intended to provide a certain legitimacy to the Ramesside 19th Dynasty of non-royal origin.

The era of the introduction of the cult of the storm-god was commemorated in the 400-Year Stele (see image on p. 54), originally positioned in front of the temple of the storm-god Seth of Avaris in the time of Ramesses II. The 400-year event itself, however, most likely had taken place already under the last king of the 18th Dynasty, Horemheb (r. 1315–1301 B.C.E.), who, being without heir, promoted his aged comrade-in-arms Pa-Ramesses (later Ramesses I [r. 1301–1300 B.C.E.]) and his son Seti I (r. 1300–1290 B.C.E.) to be his successors. Therefore, they appear also on the stela of Ramesses II, which seems to be a replacement of an older stela, commissioned under Horemheb.

The commemorative stele may concomitantly celebrate the return of the Egyptian capital to the general region of Avaris (after its long establishment in Thebes throughout the 18th Dynasty). According to their titles, the real founders of the 19th Dynasty seem to have originated from the eastern Delta and may have adopted some of the heritage of the Hyksos, especially the devotion to the local god Seth-Baal.[121] Note that the names of Ramesside pharaohs Seti I and Seti II (father and grandson of Ramesses II, respectively) mean "the one belonging to Seth."

How was the heritage of the Hyksos remembered more than a thousand years later? In the third century B.C.E., during the Ptolemaic period, Manetho, an Egyptian priest, wrote a history of Egypt in Greek, known as the *Aegyptiaca*, now lost to us. Significant portions of his work, however, were cited by Josephus, the Jewish historian of the first century C.E., who also wrote in Greek,[122] and by scattered later church fathers. Within the work is an extensive king list, with the kings divided into numbered dynasties—the system still employed today, so

that Egyptologists remain in Manetho's debt until the present day.

While sometimes it is difficult to distinguish between the original Manetho statements, on the one hand, and Josephus's own statements, on the other—since the former are quoted and embedded in the latter—Manetho appears to refer to two different Exodus versions. In the one version, a group of 480,000 Hyksos, also called by him "shepherd kings," leave Egypt and travel to Jerusalem. In the other version, an Egyptian priest called Osarseph leads 80,000 lepers to rebel against Egypt, he commits all manner of sacrilege against the Egyptian deities, and at the end of the story he changes his name to Moses. Scholars have detected a hint of anti-Jewish sentiments in Manetho's second version especially (note the association with lepers), which is why Josephus was more inclined to favor the first version (*Ag. Ap.* 1.26–31).

Josephus's acceptance of the Hyksos–Israelite connection, as posited by Manetho, has at times been renewed in modern scholarship. Not that many scholars would date the Exodus to the removal of the Hyksos from Egypt, c. 1530 B.C.E., but many would associate the Joseph story with the rise of the Hyksos and the 15th Dynasty rule. The logic is: this would be the most likely time for a Semite from the land of Canaan (read: Joseph) to rise to a high level of power in Egypt, second in command only to the Pharaoh (Genesis 41:39–44).

As we have seen, however, the chronology is all wrong. The biblical narrative focuses on the 19th and 20th Dynasties, not the Second Intermediate Period. That said, there may be one glimmer of a connection, namely, the relationship between the 400-Year Stele and the use of 400-year time spans in the Bible.

As we saw above, the Israelites reckoned their sojourn in Egypt as 400 years (Genesis 15:13) and their overall residency in the country as 430 years (Exodus 12:40–41). Is there a connection between the two?

The best one can say is that the Israelites who recorded the historical narrative that emerged as the books of Genesis and Exodus understood their connection to the eastern Delta, and thus they may have appropriated in some fashion the figure of 400 years—perhaps in an honest way, or perhaps in a somewhat defiant way, with a meaning no longer obvious to us.

Here it is important to note that the Hyksos did not disappear after they were dethroned and the 15th Dynasty came to an end. The

notion that they left Egypt, either by force or on their accord, after all, is mentioned for the first time only by Manetho at a distance of about 1,250 years. Most likely, the Hyksos-people simply remained in the eastern Delta region, where they blended in with all the other Semites who arrived on a regular basis in later centuries.[123] Possibly, some of the latter-day Hyksos-people left Egypt along with the Israelites, per the Bible's reference to the *'erev rav*, "mixed multitude" (Exodus 12:38), which went forth with the Israelites.[124]

As such, the Israelites may have felt some modicum of connection to the Hyksos, but it would be a very distant glimmer. At an even greater distance, the *longue durée* of a Semitic population living in Egypt may explain Josephus's identifying the Hyksos with the Jews of yore.

All said, though: there can be real no connection between the Hyksos and the Israelites of the Exodus story. In addition to the chronological issue, there are also geographical and historical considerations. The palaces and temples of the Hyksos, as revealed through the decades-long excavations at Tell ed-Dab'a (ancient Avaris) are similar in architectural style to buildings in northern Syria and Mesopotamia; while the origin of the Israelites, as we have emphasized herein, are to be found amongst the Shasu Bedouin folk who roamed the far southern Levant (including Edom/Se'ir).

Furthermore, we note that the population under Hyksos rule was an urban and urbane society, characterized by trade, especially by sea, and by the importation of horses and chariots into Egypt. As indicated, they even experienced the glory of controlling the Delta and the northern part of the Nile Valley for more than 100 years. These historical facts stand in complete opposition to the traditions of the Israelites, characterized by their simple lifestyle, the herding of sheep and goats, and most important of all the experience of oppression in Egypt (with the singular exception of Joseph).

ently, women from this region were used as servants, hence the origin of the term.

31 For some potential parallels, see John Van Seters, "The Problem of Childlessness in Near Eastern Law and the Patriarchs of Israel," *JBL* 87.4 (1968), 401–408, though to my mind the Nuzi document HSS V 67 remains the most informative vis-à-vis Genesis 15–16.

32 For a general survey, see Barry L. Eichler, "Nuzi and the Bible: A Retrospective," in H. Behrens, D. Loding, and M.T. Roth, eds., *Dumu-e2-dub-ba-a: Studies in Honor of Åke W. Sjöberg* (Philadelphia: Samuel Noah Kramer Fund, University Museum, 1989), 107–19. See also M.J. Selman, "Comparative Customs and the Patriarchal Age," in A.R. Millard and D.J. Wiseman, eds., *Essays on the Patriarchal Narratives* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1980 / Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1983), 91–139. As both authors note, in the early years of Nuzi studies (1920s and 1930s), major scholars of the documents, such as E. A. Speiser and Cyrus H. Gordon, were wont to see numerous parallels with the Genesis narratives. Scholars are less inclined to do so today, but the relevance of HSS V 67 to the Book of Genesis has stood the test of time.

33 For further discussion, see Edward L. Greenstein, "The Formation of the Biblical Narrative Corpus," *AJS Review* 15.2 (1990), 151–78, esp. 165–67.

34 For a more developed statement, see Rendsburg, *How the Bible Is Written* (see n. 21), 443–67.

35 The approach taken here views the ancestral narratives as a unified literary construct. Most scholars subdivide the Book of Genesis into three separate sources: Yahwist (J), Elohist (E), and Priestly (P), of varying dates, though J is typically dated to the tenth century B.C.E. (see the Learn More box).

2. Egypt and the Exodus

1 Much of what we present herein is based on our earlier treatments: Manfred Bietak, "On the Historicity of the Exodus: What Egyptology Today Can Contribute to Assessing the Sojourn in Egypt," in Thomas E. Levy, Thomas Schneider, and William H.C. Propp, eds., *Israel's Exodus in Transdisciplinary Perspective: Text, Archaeology, Culture, and Geoscience* (Cham: Springer, 2015), 17–36; and Gary A. Rendsburg, "The Early History of Israel," in Gordon D. Young, Mark W. Chavalas, and Richard E. Averbeck, eds., *Crossing Boundaries and Linking Horizons: Studies in Honor of Michael C. Astour on His 80th Birthday* (Bethesda, MD: CDL Press, 1997), 433–53.

2 See in general Donald B. Redford, *Egypt, Canaan, and Israel in Ancient Times* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1992). This book contains much valuable information on the interconnections between Egypt and Canaan, but the present authors part company with Redford on issues relating to the Exodus and associated topics discussed in the present chapter. See also Thomas Schneider, "Foreigners in Egypt: Archaeological Evidence and Cultural Context," in Willeke Wendrich, ed., *Egyptian Archaeology*, Blackwell Studies in Global Archaeology (Oxford: Blackwell, 2010), 143–63; and Anna-Latifa Mourad, *The Rise of the Hyksos: Egypt and the Levant from the Middle Kingdom to the Early Second Intermediate Period* (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2015).

3 Percy E. Newberry, *Beni Hasan*, Part I, Archaeological Survey of Egypt 1 (London: Egypt Exploration Fund, 1893), 69, pl. XXX. See more recently: Susan Cohen, "Interpretative Uses and Abuses of the Beni Hasan Tomb Painting," *JNES* 74 (2015), 19–38, esp. 36; Janice Kamrin, *The Cosmos of Khnumhotep II at Beni Hasan* (London: Kegan Paul, 1999 / London: Routledge, 2016), 93–96; and Mourad, *Rise of the Hyksos* (see n. 2), 86–90.

4 See also the meaning "lineage, ancestor(s)," etc., in Ugaritic, Safaitic, etc. For the Egyptian evidence, see Adolf Erman, *Wörterbuch der Aegyptischen Sprache*, vol. 1 (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1926), 167. For a discussion on the problematics of this term, see Thomas Schneider, *Ausländer in Ägypten während des Mittleren Reiches und der Hyksoszeit*, Teil 2: *Die Ausländische Bevölkerung*, Ägypten und Altes Testament 42 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2003), 5–7; and Mourad, *Rise of the Hyksos* (see n. 2), 14 nn. 14–15.

5 See the classic treatment by J. M. A. Janssen, "On the Ideal Lifetime of the Egyptians,"

Oudheidkundige Mededelingenesis uit het Rijksmuseum van Oudheden 31 (1950), 33–43.

6 Though we also should note that Joseph's father, Jacob/Israel, was similarly embalmed/mummified (Genesis 50:2).

7 Throughout this chapter, we have used the ancient Egyptian chronology reconstructed by Thomas Schneider, "Contributions to the Chronology of the New Kingdom and the Third Intermediate Period," *Egypt and the Levant* 20 (2010), 373–409. To keep matters simple, we have dispensed with the "circa" (c.) that would be required before each date.

8 For the Egyptian text, see Alan H. Gardiner, *Late Egyptian Miscellanies* (Brussels: Fondation égyptologique Reine Élisabeth, 1937), 76–77. For standard translations, see Ricardo A. Caminos, *Late-Egyptian Miscellanies* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1954), 293; and John A. Wilson, "The Report of a Frontier Official," in *ANET*, 259.

9 For literature on the Shasu Bedouin, see Raphael Giveon, *Les bédouins Shosou des documents égyptiens*, Documenta et Monumenta Orientis Antiqui 18 (Leiden: Brill, 1971), 131–34; Manfred Weipert, "Semitische Nomaden des zweiten Jahrtausends: Über die Šȝśw der ägyptischen Quellen," *Biblica* 55 (1974), 265–80; William A. Ward, "The Shasu 'Bedouin', Notes on a Recent Publication," *Journal of Economic and Social History of the Orient* 15 (1972), 35–60; and Shmuel Aḥituv, "Nodedim ba-Negev bi-Mqorot Miṣrayim" [Nomads in the Desert in Egyptian Sources], in Robert Chazan, William W. Hallo, and Lawrence H. Schiffman, eds., *Ki Baruch Hu: Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical, and Judaic Studies in Honor of Baruch A. Levine* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1999), 21*–27*.

10 See James E. Hoch, *Semitic Words in Egyptian Texts of the New Kingdom and Third Intermediate Period* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1994), 106–107.

11 Hoch, *Semitic Words* (see n. 10), 270–71. As Hoch observes, in this instance the phonetic correspondence is atypical, but the lexical correspondence seems secure. The word shows two very fitting classifiers: wall and building .

12 Gardiner, *Miscellanies* (see n. 8), 35; and Caminos, *Miscellanies* (see n. 8), 126, 128.

13 Sarah I. Groll, "The Egyptian Background of the Exodus and the Crossing of the Reed Sea: A New Reading of Papyrus Anastasi VIII," in Irene Shirun-Grumach, ed., *Jerusalem Studies in Egyptology*, Ägypten und Altes Testament 40 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1998), 190. The word has a more complicated history, though. First it was borrowed from Semitic *gašm*, "rain, storm," into Egyptian (for which see Hoch, *Semitic Words* [see n. 10], 354); it then became the name of the region; and then the term (re-)entered Hebrew as *gošen* (though see the Greek form in the Septuagint that retained the final /m/, thus Γεσεμ (Gesem). For the paleolake in the Wadi Tumilat, see Manfred Bietak, *Tell el-Dab'a II* (Vienna: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1975), 88–90, plan 4.

14 Bietak, "Historicity of the Exodus" (see n. 1), 22–23.

15 For discussion, see James K. Hoffmeier, *Ancient Israel in Sinai* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2005), 242–43. See also chap. 3 herein. The identification of *śa-ʿ-r-ir* with Seʿir is not accepted by everybody: see Michael C. Astour, "Yahwe in Egyptian Topographic Lists," in Manfred Görg and Edgar Pusch, eds., *Festschrift Elmar Edel 12. März 1979*, Ägypten und Altes Testament 1 (Bamberg: [n. publ.], 1979), 17–34; and Faried Adrom and Matthias Müller, "The Tetragrammaton in Egyptian Sources – Facts and Fiction," in Jürgen van Oorschot and Markus Witte, eds., *The Origins of Yahwism*, BZAW 484 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), 93–113.

16 If the former option is followed, then the form "Yahweh" most likely derives from the Semitic verbal root *h-y-h* / *h-w-h*, "to be, exist," and the divine name means either simply "He is" or "He exists," or with the derived meaning "He causes things to be" or "He causes things to exist." If the latter option is followed, the meaning of "Yahweh" as a place name would be lost in the mists of time, though once adopted as a divine name, the devotees of the deity, that is, the Israelites, came to etymologize and understand the form per the above, as "He is," "He exists," etc. On the overlap between the names of deities and places, we may note Athena goddess of Athens; the Celtic goddess Arduinna, associated with the Ardennes Forest (modern-day Belgium); or Bethel, the city in Canaan, which morphs into

a deity in Hebrew, Phoenician, and Aramaic texts (see, e.g., Jeremiah 48:13).

17 Modern parallels abound: Americans may not be able to distinguish between Dutch and (Flemish-speaking) Belgians, French and (French-speaking) Belgians, Czechs and Slovaks, Germans (esp. Bavarians) and Austrians, and so on; while Europeans may not be able to distinguish between Aussies and Kiwis, Americans and Canadians (Québécois excepted), and so on. Consider, e.g., how Hercule Poirot would be miffed when referred to as French, rather than Belgian.

18 See Eric H. Cline, *1177 B.C.: The Year Civilization Collapsed* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 2014), 142–47.

19 The two texts are discussed by Itamar Singer, "A Political History of Ugarit," in W. G. E. Watson and N. Wyatt, eds., *Handbook of Ugaritic Studies*, Handbuch der Orientalistik 39 (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 715. See also Harry Hoffner, *Letters from the Hittite Kingdom*, ed. Gary M. Beckman, SBL WAW 15 (Atlanta: SBL, 2009), 281–83.

20 Colleen Manassa, *The Great Karnak Inscription of Merneptah* (New Haven: Yale Egyptological Seminar, 2003), 34, 100–101 (for the hieroglyphic transcription, see Plate 6, line 24); and Kenneth A. Kitchen, *Ramesside Inscriptions, Translated and Annotated,* vol. IV, *Merenptah and the Late Nineteenth Dynasty* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), 5.

21 Dafna Langgut, Israel Finkelstein, and Thomas Litt, "Climate and the Late Bronze Collapse: New Evidence from the Southern Levant," *TA* 40 (2013), 149–75.

22 See Aidan M. Dodson, "Fade to Grey: The Chancellor Bay, *Éminence Grise* of the Late Nineteenth Dynasty," in Mark Collier and Steven S. Snape, eds., *Ramesside Studies in Honour of K. A. Kitchen* (Bolton, BC: Rutherford Press, 2011), 145–58.

23 Pierre Grandet, "L'exécution du chancelier Bay: O. IFAO 1864," *Bulletin de l'Institut français d'archélogie orientale* 100 (2000), 339–56.

24 See Ernst Axel Knauf and Philippe Guillaume, *A History of Biblical Israel: The Fate of the Tribes and Kingdoms from Merenptah to Bar Kochba* (Sheffield: Equinox, 2016), 36. For a detailed study, see Israel Knohl, "Joseph and the Famine: The Story's Origins in Egyptian History," online at https://www.thetorah.com/article/joseph-and-the-famine-the-storys-origins-in-egyptian-history (2019). Knohl further speculates that the name Bay, which he reads as Baya, means "in Yah," that is, the name of Yahweh in shortened form.

25 See Abd el-Mohsen Bakir, *Slavery in Pharaonic Egypt*, Supplement des Annales du Service des Antiquités de l'Égypte 18 (Cairo: Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 1952); Shafik Allam, "Slaves," in Donald B. Redford, ed., *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2001), vol. 3, 293–96; and Antonio Loprieno, "Slavery and Servitude," in Elisabeth Frood and Willeke Wendrich, eds., *UCLA Encyclopedia of Egyptology* (Los Angeles: UCLA, 2012), online at: https://uee.cdh.ucla.edu/articles/slavery_and_servitude.

26 D.J.A. Clines, ed., The *Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*, 6.215–25.

27 See, in general, Ann Macy Roth, "Work Force," in *Oxford Encyclopedia* (see n. 25), vol. 3, 519–24; and Loprieno, "Slavery and Servitude" (see n. 25).

28 Note that in Late Egyptian, in use during the New Kingdom, final /r/ sounds often were dropped. Hence, the identification of Egyptian Per-Atum with Hebrew *pitom* (Pithom) is secure. For the phonology, see Antonio Loprieno, *Ancient Egyptian: A Linguistic Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1995), 38.

29 Though the Israelites also engaged in field work (see Exodus 1:14), presumably with reference to agricultural labor.

30 Some studies located Pithom at Tell el-Maskhuta, but this identification no longer is tenable. See Donald B. Redford, "Pithom", in Wolfgang Helck and Wolfhart Westendorf, eds., *Lexikon der Ägyptologie* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1982), cols. 1054–58; and John S. Holladay, "Pithom," in *Oxford Encyclopedia* (see n. 25), vol. 3, 50–53.

31 Alan H. Gardiner, "The Delta Residence of the Ramessides," *JEA* 5 (1918), 267–69; Henri Cazelles and Jean Leclant, "Pithom", in Louis Pirot, et al., ed., *Supplément au Dictionnaire de la Bible,* vol. VIII, fasc. 42 (Paris: Letouzey / Ané, 1967), cols. 1–6; Kenneth A. Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 256–59, 555; Manfred Bietak, "Review of John S. Hol-

laday, *Cities of the Delta III, Tell el-Maskhuta*," *Bibliotheca Orientalis* 41 (1984), cols. 619–22; James Hoffmeier, *Israel in Egypt* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1996), 119–21; and Bietak, "Historicity of the Exodus" (see n. 1), 26.

32 Note that while the Bible calls the latter city simply Ra'amses, its fuller name in Egyptian is Pi-Ramesse (or Per-Ramesse), i.e., "the house of Ramesses."

33 Tell ed-Dab'a, 1 mile south of Qantir, is the location of Avaris, the Hyksos capital during the Second Intermediate Period, and constitutes the southern part of Pi-Ramesse. See Labib Habachi, "Khata'na-Qantir: Importance," *Annales du Service des Antiquités de l'Égypte* 52 (1954), 443–559; Habachi, *Tell el-Dab'a I: Tell el-Dab'a and Qantir: The Site and its Connection with Avaris and Piramesse*, ed. Eva-Maria Engel, et al. (Vienna: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2001), 69–75; and John van Seters, *The Hyksos: A New Investigation* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press 1966). For the firmest evidence, based on the more recent excavations of the site, see Manfred Bietak, *Tell el-Dab'a II* (Vienna: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1975); Bietak, *Avaris and Piramesse: Archaeological Exploration in the Eastern Nile Delta*, Ninth Mortimer Wheeler Archaeological Lecture (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1981); and Manfred Bietak and Edgar B. Pusch, "Piramesse/Qantir," in Roger S. Bagnall, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Ancient History* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2013), vol. 9, 5333–36.

34 For another evocation of Tanis in the Bible, see Numbers 13:22. Incidentally, just as Pi-Ramesse "moved" from Qantir to Tanis, so did Per-Atum (Pithom)—from Tell er-Retaba to Tell el-Maskhuta (see nn. 30–31), which is to say, the Temple to Atum was relocated from the former to the latter sometime during the late Saite period (second part of the 26th Dynasty / c. 600–525 B.C.E.) or afterwards.

35 In general, see K. A. Kitchen, "From the Brickfields of Egypt," *TynB* 27 (1976), 137–47.

36 For the text, see Gardiner, *Miscellanies* (see n. 8), 30–31. For the translation, see Caminos, *Miscellanies* (see n. 8), 105–106.

37 For the text, see Gardiner, *Miscellanies* (see n. 8), 48–49, 57. For the translation, see Caminos, *Miscellanies* (see n. 8), 188–89, 225.

38 Ellen F. Morris, *The Architecture of Imperialism: Military Bases and the Evolution of Foreign Policy in Egypt's New Kingdom*, Probleme der Ägyptologie 22 (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 740–42. On the former, see also Jozef Hudec et al., "Formation of an Empire: Results of the Season 2017 in Tell el-Retaba; Part 3: Defensive Constructions of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Dynasties—Phases E, D4 and D3," *Egypt and the Levant* 29 (2019), 40–49. Note that the fortress at Kom Qulzoum, while smaller, has exceptionally thick walls. Other such fortresses in the Isthmus of Suez may await discovery and/or may have been destroyed during the construction of the Suez Canal during the 19th century.

39 Kitchen, "From the Brickfields of Egypt" (see n. 35), 141–42.

40 For the text, see Gardiner, *Miscellanies* (see n. 8), 134. For the translation, see Caminos, *Miscellanies* (see n. 8), 91.

41 For secondary literature, see John A. Wilson, "The 'Eperu of the Egyptian Inscriptions," *American Journal of Semetic Languages* 49 (1933), 275–80; Moshe Greenberg, *The Ḫab/piru*, American Oriental Series 39 (New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1955); Rafael Giveon, "Hapiru," in Wolfgang Helck and Wolfhart Westendorf, eds., *Lexikon der Ägyptologie,* vol. II (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1977), col. 952–55; Oswald Loretz: *Habiru-Hebräer: Eine sozio-linguistische Studie über die Herkunft des Gentiliziums ʿibrî vom Appellativum Ḫabiru* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1984); Nadav Na'aman, "Ḫabiru and Hebrews: The Transfer of a Social Term to the Literary Sphere," *JNES* 45 (1986), 271–88; and Anson F. Rainey, "Shasu or Habiru: Who Were the Early Israelites?" *BAR*, November/December 2008, 51–55.

42 Rainey, "Shasu or Habiru" (see n. 41), 51–55.

43 See further David A. Falk, "Brick by Brick: What Did the Israelites Build in Egypt?" *BAR*, Spring 2020, 54–57.

44 Uvo Hölscher, *The Excavation of Medinet Habu,* vol. 2: *The Temples of the Eighteenth Dynasty*, Oriental Institute Publications 41 (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1939), 68–72, fig. 59.

45 Manfred Bietak, "An Iron Age Four Room House in Ramesside Egypt," *Eretz-Israel* (Avraham Biran Volume) 23 (1991), 10*–12*; and Bietak, "Historicity of the Exodus" (see n. 1), 18–20.

46 The literature is vast; see especially the following: Israel Finkelstein, *The Archaeology of the Israelite Settlement* (Jerusalem: IES, 1988), 236–59; Ehud Netzer, "Domestic Architecture in the Iron Age," in Aharon Kempinski and Ronny Reich, eds., *The Architecture of Ancient Israel, From the Prehistoric to the Persian Period* (Jerusalem: IES, 1992), 193–201; John S. Holladay, "Four-Room House," in Eric M. Meyers, ed., *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Archaeology in the Near East* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1997), 337–42; Bunimovitz and Faust, "Ideology in Stone: Understanding the Four-Room House," *BAR*, July/August 2002, 32–41, 59–60; Bunimovitz and Faust, "Building Identity: The Four Room House and the Israelite Mind," in W. G. Dever and S. Gitin, eds., *Symbiosis, Symbolism, and the Power of the Past: Canaan, Ancient Israel, and Their Neighbors from the Late Bronze Age Through Roman Palaestina* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 411–23; and Faust, *Israel's Ethnogenesis* (London: Equinox, 2006), 71–84. See also chap. 3 herein.

47 Translation based on John A. Wilson, "From the Lists of Ramses III," in *ANET*, 262. For the hieroglyphic transcription, see Wolja Erichsen, *Papyrus Harris I, Hieroglyphische Transkription*, Bibliotheca Aegyptiaca V (Brussels: Fondation égyptologique Reine Élisabeth, 1933), 93; and Pierre Grandet, *Le papyrus Harris I,* Bibliothèque d'Étude 109/i–ii (Cairo: IFAO, 1994), 202–207.

Point of general interest: P.Harris I is the longest Egyptian papyrus roll ever found, measuring 41 meters. It was purchased in Egypt by Anthony Charles Harris (1790–1869) in 1855 and then sold by his daughter to the British Museum in 1872 (along with other documents).

48 The Egyptian scribe uses the Semitic word for tents here, namely *ihr*, which corresponds to the Hebrew *'ohel*, for which see Hoch, *Semitic Words* (see n. 10), 31.

49 See conveniently the map in Faust, *Israel's Ethnogenesis* (see n. 46), 76.

50 A surface reading of Genesis 47 may suggest that Goshen and the "land of Ra'amses" are one and the same location—and many commentaries on the Book of Genesis state this explicitly. However, based on our ever-increasing knowledge of the eastern Delta and the Wadi Tumilat, the two should be distinguished, as indicated here.

51 On this aspect of the Exodus account, see Ronald Hendel, "The Exodus in Biblical Memory," *JBL* 120 (2001), 601–22; and Ronald Hendel, "The Exodus as Cultural Memory: Egyptian Bondage and the Song of the Sea," in *Israel's Exodus* (see n. 1), 65–77.

52 On the dating of biblical texts, see in general Ronald Hendel and Jan Joosten, *How Old Is the Hebrew Bible?* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 2019). For Archaic Biblical Hebrew specifically, with attention to Exodus 15 and Judges 5, see the early study by David A. Robertson, *Linguistic Evidence in Dating Early Hebrew Poetry* (Missoula, MT: SBL, 1972). For a more recent concise survey, see Alice Mandell, "Biblical Hebrew, Archaic," in Geoffrey Khan, ed., *Encyclopedia of Hebrew Language and Linguistics* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), vol. 1, 314–18. For further insights into the antiquity of Judges 5, see Hendel and Joosten, *How Old Is the Hebrew Bible?* 101–104.

53 W. M. Flinders Petrie, *Six Temples at Thebes, 1896* (London: Bernard Quaritch, 1897), with the mention of Israel, in the translation of the stele by Wilhelm Spiegelberg, on p. 28.

54 Translation after Kitchen, *Ramesside Inscriptions*, vol. IV (see n. 20), 15, lines 19:2–10.

55 The Egyptian scribe here uses the Semitic word *shalom*, "peace," for which see Hoch, *Semitic Words* (see n. 10), 285–86.

56 Shmuel Aḥitu v, *Canaanite Toponyms in Ancient Egyptian Documents* (Jerusalem: Magnes / Leiden: Brill, 1984), 198–200.

57 For discussion, see Robert A. Mullins, "The Emergence of Israel in Retrospect," in *Israel's Exodus* (see n. 1), 523–24. For a more wide-ranging discussion, see Anson F. Rainey, "Israel in Merenptah's Inscription and Reliefs," *IEJ* 51 (2001), 57–75.

58 For the original publication, see Alan H. Gardiner, *Egyptian Hieratic Texts* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1911), 25*. For translations, see John A. Wilson, "A Satirical Letter," in *ANET*,

477; Edward F. Wente, *Letters from Ancient Egypt*, ed. Edmund S. Meltzer, SBL WAW 1 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990), 108; and James P. Allen, "The Craft of the Scribe," in *COS*, vol. 3, 13. We hasten to add here: not that all Shasu are Israelites, nor are all Israelites to be classified as Shasu—but as we suggest above, concerning the Shasu of Edom in P.Anastasi VI, possibly here in P.Anastasi I the Shasu in the area may be (proto)-Israelites.

59 For bibliography on this text, see n. 58. There are numerous alternative interpretations of *ỉsr* in this passage, for which see Hans-Werner Fischer-Elfert, *Die satirische Streitschrift des Papyrus Anastasi I: Übersetzung und Kommentar*, Ägyptologische Abhandlungen 44 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1986), 199–200. See also Aḫituv, *Canaanite Toponyms* (see n. 56), 73. To our mind, though, the connection between *ỉsr* and Asher remains secure; such is also implied by Rainey, "Israel in Merenptah's Inscription and Reliefs" (see n. 57), 75. For an extensive discussion, including possible other mentions of *ỉsr* in Egyptian texts, see Alan H. Gardiner, *Ancient Egyptian Onomastica* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1947), vol. 1, 191*–193*. See further chap. 3 herein.

60 To this day, the Galilee is populated by Bedouin Arabs. Although they live in small villages, they retain their Bedouin ways and Bedouin identity.

61 Finkelstein, *Archaeology of the Israelite Settlement* (see n. 46), 336–41; and Erez Ben-Yosef, "The Architectural Bias in Current Biblical Archaeology," *VT* 69 (2019), 361–387.

62 Zeev Herzog, "The Beer-Sheba Valley: From Nomadism to Monarchy," in Israel Finkelstein and Nadav Na'man, eds., *From Nomadism to Monarchy: Archaeological and Historical Aspects of Early Israel* (Jerusalem: IES, 1994), 146–49. Herzog points out that the material culture may allow us to identify more different population groups involved than just the Canaanites: Israelites, Amalekites, Kenites, Calebites, and others.

63 Gary A. Rendsburg, "Moses as Equal to Pharaoh," in Gary M. Beckman and Theodore J. Lewis, eds., *Text, Artifact, and Image: Revealing Ancient Israelite Religion*, Brown Judaic Studies 346 (Providence: Brown Judaic Studies, 2006), 201–19; and Rendsburg, "Moses the Magician," in *Israel's Exodus* (see n. 1), 243–58. For yet another (potential) indication of how conversant the Israelites were with Egyptian culture and religion, note the copy of the Book of the Dead, dated to the 19th Dynasty, owned by one Adoni-roʿeh-yah ("My Lord is the shepherd of Yah," where Yah is the shortened form of the name of the God of Israel)—at least according to the reading and interpretation in Thomas Schneider, "The First Documented Occurrence of the God Yahweh? (Book of the Dead Princeton 'Roll 5')," *JANER* 7 (2008), 113–20.

64 See further Gary A. Rendsburg, "Reading the Plagues in Their Ancient Egyptian Context" (2015), at https://www.thetorah.com/article/reading-the-plagues-in-their-ancient-egyptian-context; and Rendsburg, "YHWH's War Against the Egyptian Sun-God Ra" (2016), at: https://www.thetorah.com/article/yhwhs-war-against-the-egyptian-sun-god-ra.

65 *CAT* 1.14 col. III, line 55–col. IV, line 18. For the Ugaritic text and an English translation, see Edward L. Greenstein, "Kirta," in Simon B. Parker, ed., *Ugaritic Narrative Poetry*, SBL WAW 9 (n.p.: Scholars Press, 1997), 18–19. There are many more parallels to the larger Exodus narrative and the Epic of Kirta, for which see Cyrus H. Gordon, "Notes on the Legend of Keret," *JNES* (1952), 212–13; Gregorio del Olmo Lete, "La conquista de Jericó y la leyenda ugaritica de KRT," *Sefarad* 25 (1965), 1–15; and Gary A. Rendsburg, "The Epic Tradition in Ancient Israel—and What Happened to It?" in Isaac Kalimi, ed., *Writing and Rewriting History in Ancient Israel and Near Eastern Cultures* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2020), 17–30, esp. 19–21.

For a study which places the Moses narrative into an even larger cultural context, see Edward L. Greenstein, "The Fugitive Hero Narrative Pattern in Mesopotamia," in John J. Collins, T. M. Lemos, and Saul M. Olyan, eds., *Worship, Women, and War: Essays in Honor of Susan Niditch*, Brown Judaic Studies (Providence: Brown Univ., 2015), 17–35.

66 For something very specific, albeit with a separate geography and a separate chronology from our present concern, see Manfred Bietak, "Gedanken zur Ursache der ägyptisierenden Einflüsse in Nordsyrien in der Zweiten Zwischenzeit," in Heike Guksch and Daniel Polz, eds., *Stationen: Beiträge zur Kulturgeschichte Ägyptens Rainer Stadelmann*

gewidmet (Mainz: Philip von Zabern, 1998), 165–76.

67 Translation based on John A. Wilson, "The Pursuit of Runaway Slaves," in *ANET*, 259.

68 The word appears not only in P.Anastasi V 20.2 but also elsewhere in Egyptian texts; see further Hoch, *Semitic Words* (see n. 10), 169–70.

69 James K. Hoffmeier, "The Search for Migdol of the New Kingdom and Exodus 14:2: An Update," *Buried History* 44 (2008), 3–12.

70 For reasons still largely unknown, almost 2300 years ago the Jews of Alexandria rendered this term into Greek as *erythra thalassa*, "Red Sea" (thus the Septuagint, c. 250 B.C.E.), from which the sense passed into Latin as *mare rubrum*, "Red Sea" (thus the Vulgate, c. 400 C.E.). These renderings yielded English "Red Sea" in older English translations, a tradition which persisted into the 20th century, until scholars realized that the Hebrew term *yam suf* really means "Sea of Reeds." The picture is actually more complicated, since in other passages (e.g., 1 Kings 9:26), the term *yam suf* is used to refer to the Gulf of Eilat/Aqaba, one of the northern arms of the Red Sea.

71 P.Sallier I 4.9; P.Anastasi III 2.11–12; P.Anastasi IV 15.6 (written without the definite article p3); P.Anastasi VIII recto 3.4; etc.

72 For the localization and geographical position, see Bietak, *Tell el-Dab'a II* (see n. 33), 117–21 (fig. 23); 136–37, 139, 221 (fig. 45); Manfred Bietak, "Comments on the 'Exodus'," in *Egypt, Israel, Sinai: Archaeological and Historical Relationships in the Biblical Period* (Tel-Aviv: Tel-Aviv Univ. Press, 1987), 163–71, esp. 167; Sarah Israelit-Groll, "*p3-twf*," in Eliezer D. Oren and Shmuel Aḥituv, eds., *Aharon Kempinski Memorial Volume: Studies in Archaeology and Related Disciplines* (Beer-sheva: Ben-Gurion Univ. Press, 2002) = *Beer-sheva* 15 (2002), 138–42, esp. 139; James K. Hoffmeier, *Israel in Egypt* (see n. 31), 199–222; Hoffmeier, *Ancient Israel in Sinai* (see n. 15), 75–109; James K. Hoffmeier and Stephen O. Moshier, "New Paleo-Environmental Evidence from North Sinai to Complement Manfred Bietak's Map of the Eastern Delta and Some Historical Implications," in Ernst Czerny, et al., *Timelines: Studies in Honour of Manfred Bietak*, Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta 149 (Leuven: Peeters, 2006), vol. 2, 167–76; and Bietak, "Historicity of the Exodus" (see n. 1), 27–29, esp. figs. 2.3–4.

73 See Rendsburg, "Moses the Magician" (see n. 63), 251–52.

74 Translation of Miriam Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, vol. 3 (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1980), 130.

75 See Verena M. Lepper, *Untersuchungen zu pWestcar: Eine philologische und literaturwissenschaftliche (Neu-) Analyse*, Ägyptologische Abhandlungen 70 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2008).

76 Translation of Miriam Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, vol. 1 (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1973), 217.

77 See further Rendsburg, "Moses the Magician" (see n. 63), 252–53. See also F. Ll. Griffith, "Herodotus II, 90: Apotheosis by Drowning," *Zeitschrift für Ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde* 46 (1909–1910), 132–34.

78 Translation by A. D. Godley, *Herodotus: The Persian Wars*, vol. 1, Loeb Classical Library 117 (London: William Heinemann, 1921), 375.

79 For a survey, see James M. Weinstein, "Egypt and the Levant in the Reign of Ramesses III," in Eric H. Cline and David O'Connor, eds., *Ramesses III: The Life and Times of Egypt's Last Hero* (Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 2012), 164–71. See also James M. Weinstein, "The Egyptian Empire in Palestine: A Reassessment," *BASOR* (1981), 1–28. Even with new data from new excavations during the last 40 years, the picture described by Weinstein remains more or less valid. See recently Nadav Na'aman, "Egyptian Centres and the Distribution of the Alphabet in the Levant," *Tel Aviv* 47.1 (2020), 29–54.

80 Beno Rothenberg, ed., *Researches in the Arabah 1959–1984,* vol. 1: *The Egyptian Mining Temple at Timna* (London: Institute for Archaeo-Metallurgical Studies, 1988), 270–78.

81 The mention of the Egyptians in Judges 10:11, in the mouth of God, presumably refers back to the Exodus narrative.

82 David Ussishkin, *The Renewed Archaeological Excavations at Lachish (1973–1994),* vol. 1 (Tel Aviv: Emery and Claire Yass Publications in Archaeology, 2004), 1626–28; and Ussishkin,

Biblical Lachish: A Tale of Construction, Destruction, Excavation and Restoration (Jerusalem: IES / Washington: BAS, 2014), 194–96, figs. 10.5–6. A leading expert on scarabs, Baruch Brandl, rejects the identification of the Lachish scarab with the name of Ramesses IV, but the seal seems to date to the 20th Dynasty; see "Scarabs and Plaques Bearing Royal Names of the Early 20th Egyptian Dynasty Excavated in Canaan – From Sethnakht to Ramesses IV," *Egypt and the Levant* 14 (2004), 60.

83 David Ussishkin, "Lachish," *NEAEHL* (1993), vol. 3, 900–904. For further details, see Ussishkin, "Levels VII and VI at Tel Lachish and the End of the Late Bronze Age in Canaan," in Jonathan N. Tubb, ed., *Palestine in the Bronze and Iron Ages: Papers in Honour of Olga Tufnell* (London: Univ. College London Institute of Archaeology, 1985), 213–30; Ussishkin, *Renewed Archaeological Excavations,* vol. 1 (see n. 82), 352–61; and Ussishkin, *Biblical Lachish* (see n. 82), 191–98. On the Egyptian objects, see also Cline, *1177 B.C.* (see n. 18), 120–21.

84 Given the short distance to the Philistine towns of Gath (9 mi.) and Ekron (14 mi.), David Ussishkin, the excavator of Lachish, is of the opinion that more likely the Sea Peoples destroyed the town, though he does not rule out an Israelite destruction; see Ussishkin, *Biblical Lachish* (see n. 82), 196–201. The explicit statement in Joshua 10:31–32, however, that the town was taken by the Israelites because Lachish was in a coalition of enemies, along with the archaeological evidence, which reveals a total destruction (as stated in the biblical text), speaks in favor of an Israelite destruction. There are also no traces of any Philistine material culture at the site.

85 Ussishkin, *Biblical Lachish* (see n. 82), 191–94.

86 For translations, see Kenneth A. Kitchen, *Ramesside Inscriptions, Translated and Annotated*, vol. V: *Sethnakht, Ramesses III & Contemporaries* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008), 8; and Rosemarie Drenkhahn, *Die Elephantine-Stele des Sethnachts und ihr historischer Hintergrund*, Ägyptologische Abhandlungen 36 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1980), 64.

87 Translation based on John A. Wilson, "A Syrian Interregnum," in *ANET*, 260. For the original, see Erichsen, *Papyrus Harris I* (see n. 47), 91; P. Grandet, *Le papyrus Harris I* (see n. 47), 335–36 (75,6–76.2).

88 Interestingly, the Hebrew lexical-semantic approximation of this Egyptian phrase (*s nb m'ḫ3-f*) occurs in Judges 17:6; 21:25, "each man did what was right in his own eyes," to describe the chaos that the biblical authors sensed in the lead-up to the establishment of the monarchy.

89 That is, with no king or central authority.

90 The name means literally "he made himself" (compare English "self-made man"), so it is unclear if Irsu is his proper name or a sobriquet of some sort.

91 For scholars who have looked to the turmoil of c. 1198 B.C.E. as the backdrop of the Exodus, see Abraham Malamat, "The Exodus: Egyptian Analogies," in Ernest S. Frerichs and Leonard H. Lesko, eds., *Exodus – The Egyptian Evidence* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1997), 22–25; Johannes C. de Moor, *The Rise of Yahwism: The Roots of Israelite Monotheism,* 2nd ed. (Leuven: Leuven Univ. Press & Peeters, 1997), 227–40 (with the more specific identification of Irsu = Moses); Knauf and Guillaume, *History of Biblical Israel* (see n. 24), 36; and Israel Knohl, "Pinpointing the Exodus from Egypt," *Harvard Divinity Bulletin* (Autumn/Winter 2018), at: https://bulletin.hds.harvard.edu/pinpointing-the-exodus-from-egypt/.

92 For the former text, see K. A. Kitchen, *Ramesside Inscriptions Historical and Biographical*, vol. V (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983), 27–35. For the translation, see K. A. Kitchen, "The 'Sea Peoples' Records of Ramesses III," in *COS Online* 4.11–14. For further details, see Eric H. Cline and David O'Connor, "The Sea Peoples," in *Ramesses III* (see n. 79), 180–208.

93 Incidentally, most scholars believe that the Sea Peoples first tried to invade Egypt by land and by sea, and then, once defeated by Ramesses III, they moved northward along the Mediterranean coast and settled the coastal plain of southern Canaan or were even settled there by Ramesses III. In reality, the opposite occurred. First the Sea Peoples took from the Egyptian province Canaan a part of the coastal strip and settled there. Afterwards they attacked Egypt, both by sea

and by land (i.e., by marching across the Sinai). In general, the attempt of an invasion by land and its logistics were largely overlooked by scholars. After all, in order to invade Egypt by land, one first would need a land base. For details, see Rainer Stadelmann, "Die Abwehr der Seevölker unter Ramses III," *Saeculum* 19 (1968), 156–71; and Manfred Bietak, "The Sea Peoples and the End of the Egyptian Administration in Canaan," in Avraham Biran and Joseph Aviram, ed., *Biblical Archaeology Today II: Proceedings of the Second International Congress on Biblical Archaeology, Jerusalem, June–July 1990* (Jerusalem: IES, 1993), 299–306.

94 See references above, n. 38.

95 For the most recent treatment, with a new suggestion, see Yoel Elitzur, "Qīr of the Aramaeans: A New Approach" (in Hebrew), *Shnaton* 21 (2012), 141–52, with English abstract on pp. ix–x.

96 Gary A. Rendsburg, "The Internal Consistency and Historical Reliability of the Biblical Genealogies," *VT* 40 (1990), 185–206.

97 Abraham Malamat, "Tribal Societies: Biblical Genealogies and African Lineage Systems," *European Journal of Sociology / Archives Européennes de Sociologie* 14 (1973), 126–36, esp. 136.

98 A key factor in fixing the date of David to c. 1000 is the synchrony between Sheshonq I (r. 962–941), founder of the 22nd Dynasty, with Solomon and Rehoboam (David's two successors). Said pharaoh is referred to as Shishaq (in English translations: Shishak) in 1 Kings 11:40; 14:25, referring to Solomon and Rehoboam, respectively. See chaps. 4 and 5.

99 David P. Henige, *The Chronology of Oral Tradition: Quest for a Chimera* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), 121–44. Much of this research is summarized in concise form in David P. Henige, "Generation-counting and Late New Kingdom Chronology," *JEA* 67 (1981), 182–84. For a similar calculation, see Martha T. Roth, "Age at Marriage and the Household: A Study of Neo-Babylonian and Neo-Assyrian Forms," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 29 (1987), 715–47; and Karl Jansen Winkeln, "The Relevance of Genealogical Information for Egyptian Chronology," *Egypt and the Levant* 16 (2006) 257–73.

To mention just two lineages, one from antiquity with direct relevance to the Bible, and one of more recent vintage but with some resonance in the field of biblical studies, note the following: a) the Achaemenid dynasty, during the years 522–338, from Darius I through Artaxerxes III, spanning six generations, for an average of 30.8 years per generation; and b) the so-called Solomon dynasty of Ethiopia, which includes 17 generations spanning the years 1270–1851 (from Yekuno Amlak through Yohannes III), or 582 years, for an average of 34.2 years per generation.

100 Note that the genealogies of Samuel and Zadok in the Book of Chronicles link them to the tribal ancestor Levi, but these lineages clearly have been doctored to establish a Levite heritage for these two key figures. The registry in 1 Chronicles 6:18–23 places Samuel 19 generations removed from Levi, while the parallel lineage in 1 Chronicles 6:7–13 is garbled and too difficult to reconstruct. The genealogy of Zadok also occurs twice in Chronicles (1 Chronicles 5:30–34; 6:35–38), though without variation, with David's priest appearing 13 generations removed from Levi. Both lists reflect "lineage growth," a common phenomenon in the transmission of genealogies, for which see Henige, *Chronology of Oral Tradition* (see n. 99), 38. To be sure, the genealogies of Samuel and Zadok should not and cannot be used in the current enterprise; see in detail Rendsburg, "Internal Consistency" (see n. 96), 195–97.

101 See above, n. 96; and see further herein, chap. 4.

102 On the internal chronology of the Book of Judges, see chap. 3, pp. 89–90.

103 For an additional round number, though not one which is a multiple of 40, see Jephthah's use of 300 years in Judges 11:26.

104 Nabonidus, Sippar Cylinder Inscription, col. 2, line 58, for which see Paul-Alain Beaulieu, "The Sippar Cylinder of Nabonidus," in *COS Online* 2.312.

105 We do, however, admit that 400 years of the 400-Year Stele (see the excursus on the Hyksos below) appears to be an accurate representation of the passage of time—from Horemheb back to Nehesy, the 14th Dynasty

pharaoh and the first to use the epithet "beloved of Seth."

106 See chap. 5 herein.

107 On the shift from the epic storytelling tradition (mainly Genesis through Samuel) to the style of the Book of Kings and elsewhere, see Rendsburg, "Epic Tradition" (see n. 65), 26–27.

108 Israelit-Groll, "*p3-twf*" (see n. 72), 139. See also Bietak, "Historicity of the Exodus" (see n. 1), 29–30.

109 See chap. 3 herein.

110 For additional related lineages, see Rendsburg, "Internal Consistency" (see n. 96), 186–89, esp. the chart on p. 189.

111 The question of possible separate sources aside, the different numbers (400 and 430) may reflect an unstated inner-biblical tradition of 30 years of free and prosperous living while Joseph was yet alive and in charge.

112 A different approach is offered by Nadav Na'aman, who assumes that the Israelites originated from the local Canaanite population, with the suggestion that the burden of the Egyptian occupation during the Late Bronze Age in Canaan might have added later to the popularity of the Exodus story and to its establishment as the national myth. Nadav Na'aman, "The Exodus Story: Between Historical Memory and Historical Composition," *JANER* 11 (2011), 39–69.

113 Others have used the same analogy; see, e.g., William G. Dever, *Who Were the Early Israelites and Where Did They Come From?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 234.

114 See the earlier statement in Bietak, "Historicity of the Exodus" (see n. 1), 28 and map here on p. 22.

115 Abraham Malamat, "Let My People Go and Go and Go and Go," *BAR*, January/February 1998, 62–66.

116 The Hebrew term lives on in the name of the Christian holiday of Easter in various languages: Spanish *Pascua*, Italian *Pasqua*, Portuguese *Páscoa*, French *Pâques*, Dutch *Pasen*, Swedish *Påsk*, Greek *Páscha*, Russian *Pascha*, etc.

117 For example, Hershel Shanks, ed., *Ancient Israel*, 3rd ed., 51–52.

118 See already Bietak, "Historicity of the Exodus" (see n. 1), 31–32; and with much greater detail, Bietak, "From Where Came the Hyksos and Where Did They Go?" in Marcel Marée, ed., *The Second Intermediate Period (Thirteenth–Seventeenth Dynasties): Current Research, Future Prospects*, Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta 192 (Leuven: Peeters, 2010), 139–81 + plates 11–26.

119 Burnt acorns found on an altar in front of the Broad-Room Temple and the Bent-Axis Temple are an indication that the goddess Asherah, who is synonymous with the oak tree, was venerated here. A tree pit beside the altar may have been for such a tree, which is not native to Egypt and must have been introduced by the Canaanites.

120 The name Ba'al Zephon is attested in the Ugaritic ritual texts, meaning "Baal of Mt. Zaphon (= modern-day Jebel Aqra' in northern Syria). But see also the appearance of this term as a place name in Exodus 14:2; 14:9, in the lead-up to the Sea of Reeds crossing—even if its precise location cannot be established.

121 Labib Habachi, "Sethos I's Devotion to Seth and Avaris," *Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde* 100 (1974), 95–102 + plates V–VI.

122 For more on Josephus, see chs. 7–8.

123 Strictly speaking, the Hyksos were the rulers (see above, for the etymology of the word), and thus we use the term "Hyksos-people" to refer to the general population of Avaris and environs during the 15th Dynasty.

124 See also Numbers 11:4, though a different term, *'asafsuf*, is used there.

3. The Emergence of Israel in the Land of Canaan

1 Israel Finkelstein et al., "Reconstructing Ancient Israel: Integrating Macro- and Micro-archaeology," *Hebrew Bible and Ancient Israel* 1 (2012), 141. For the most sustained exposition, see Israel Finkelstein, *The Archaeology of the Israelite Settlement* (Jerusalem: IES,

ANCIENT ISRAEL

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HERSHEL SHANKS

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