



RECENT RESEARCH ON THE DATE AND SETTING OF THE EXODUS

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The date and nature of the Exodus have been subjects of scholarly debate since the beginnings of Egyptology in the mid- 19th century, and the dispute continues unabated today.

The exodus from Egypt is a topic around which whirl controversy, debate and heated argument. There is no consensus regarding the date of the Israelite slavery, nor its nature, nor even its historicity...It is an area where archaeological interpretation and biblical narrative collide (Oblath 2007: 380).

Sadly, most contemporary Biblical scholars deny the historicity of God's miraculous deliverance of Israel from Egypt as documented in the Old Testament (Ex 2-12) and alluded to in the New Testament (Acts 7:36; Rom 9:17).

The "No Exodus" Theory

Not Mentioned in Egyptian Records

What are the reasons for the widespread skepticism concerning the Exodus? A major stumbling block is that there is no mention of Israelites in Egypt or of an Exodus from Egypt in Egyptian records:

The book [Exodus] relates to Egyptian history but only in a vague way. Not a single Egyptian is identified by name, not even the pharaohs, despite the fact that two of them, the pharaohs of the oppression and the exodus, are involved... Historians acknowledge that, after more

than two centuries of archaeological research, there is still an absence of evidence for the presence of Israel in Egypt (Johnstone 2007: 372).

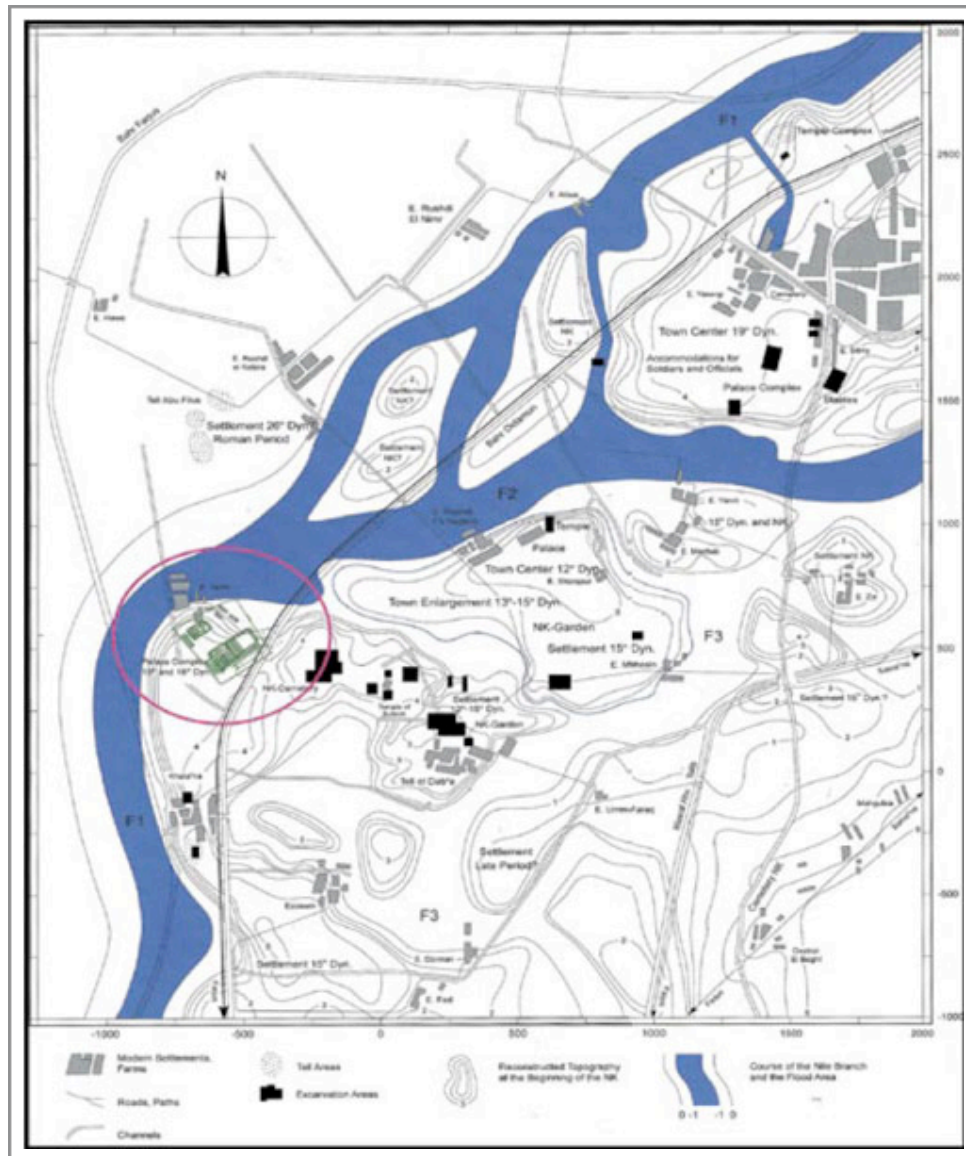
What is usually implied by “evidence” is a reference to Israel or the Exodus in Egyptian written records. It is interesting that Johnstone uses the phrase “absence of evidence” with regard to the Exodus. There is an oft-repeated adage in Biblical and archaeological studies with regard to efforts to reconstruct events of thousands of years ago from the bits and tatters of information that have survived: “absence of evidence is not evidence of absence.” Rather than blindly accepting a learned scholar’s argument from silence to dismiss the factuality of the Exodus, let us look at the reality of the situation.

Where would one expect to find written records of the presence of Israel in Egypt, or of the Exodus? In Rameses, of course, the place where the Israelites were settled when Jacob and his family entered Egypt (Gn 47:11), where the Israelites labored as slaves (Ex 1:11) and where they departed under the leadership of Moses (Ex 12:37; Nm 33:3). Fortunately, we know a lot about Rameses, modern Tell el-Daba in the northeastern Nile delta, since it has been excavated almost continuously since 1966. What historical records have been found from the time period of the Exodus at ancient Rameses? Exactly nothing! In fact, the only historical document to be found from any period from all of the excavations in the area of ancient Rameses over a period of more than 40 years is one small 2x2 in (5x5 cm) fragment of a clay tablet. It appears to be part of a letter from the king of the Hittite empire to Rameses II (ca. 1290–1224 BC) concerning terms of a peace treaty between the two parties.

Surviving Egyptian inscriptions were, for the most part, propagandistic records carved in stone extolling the accomplishments of the god-king Pharaohs. An event that demeaned Pharaoh or Egypt would never be recorded. Moreover, writing was believed to be sacred, giving reality to the statements being recorded. If an event was not recorded, then it was as though it had never happened (Wheeler 2002).

And why did not Moses identify the Pharaohs of the oppression and Exodus? Egyptologist Kenneth Kitchen provides the answer (1986):

[Pharaoh is] the common OT title for the kings of ancient Egypt. It derives from a phrase used for the royal palace and court until the New Kingdom when, in the mid-18th Dynasty, it came to be used of the king himself. It first so occurs under Thutmose III and IV (15th cent. B.C.), then with Ikhnaton (ca. 1360), and thereafter frequently... The biblical and Egyptian uses of "pharaoh" correspond closely. Thus in the Pentateuch "Pharaoh" is used without a proper name precisely as in Egypt...From the 10th cent. B.C. onward "Pharaoh" plus a proper name became common usage; cf. Pharaoh Hophra [Jer 44:30] and Pharaoh Neco [2 Kgs 23:29-35; 2 Chr 35:20-22; 36:3-4; Jer 46:2].



Map of excavation areas at Rameses in the northeastern delta. A number of ancient cities were located in this region, requiring excavations over a large area. The locale is generally referred to as Tell el-Daba, after the name of the village where archaeological investigations began. In actual fact, however, excavations have been carried out at a number of small agricultural villages in the vicinity. The royal precinct at the time of the Exodus was located at Ezbet Helmi, indicated by the red circle. When Jacob and his family came to Egypt, Joseph "gave them property in the best part of the land, the district of Rameses" (Gn 47:11). An Asiatic settlement from the time of Joseph was found at Tell el-Daba, quite possibly the very place where Jacob and his family settled. The Egyptian town at that time was called Rowaty, "the door of the two roads" (12th–13th Dynasties).

Later, from the late 18th century BC to ca. 1555 BC, the town was known as Avaris, "the royal foundation of the district" (13th, 15th Dynasties). From ca. 1555 BC until the site was abandoned at the time of the Exodus it was named Perunefer, "happy journey" (18th Dynasty). The royal city of Rameses II in the 13th century BC, named Rameses, is located in the area labeled "Town Center 19th Dyn." to the north. (From Bietak and Foster-Müller 2005: 66)

On a more positive note, I believe there is evidence for the presence of Israel in Egypt, albeit indirect. First, there is evidence for Asiatic slaves in Egypt during the period of the Sojourn, some even bearing Biblical names (Aling 2002; Hoffmeier 1997: 61–62, 112–16; Luft 1993; David 1986: 189–93). Some of them were called "Habiru" (Hoffmeier 1997: 116), a designation for stateless individuals from which the name Hebrew may derive. Secondly, the earliest Asiatic settlement at Tell el-Daba has all the earmarks of being Israelite, including a four-room house, a plan adopted by the Israelites when they became sedentary during the judges period, and a tomb which is possibly that of Joseph (Wood 1977).

No Evidence for a Conquest

The second major argument raised against the validity of the Exodus account is that archaeological evidence demonstrates that the Conquest as described in the book of Joshua is unhistorical (McKenzie 2008: 121):

Excavation over the past half century has revealed no evidence of destruction, and in some cases no occupation...for most of the cities... supposedly conquered by the invading Israelites. The two most famous examples, Jericho and Ai, are transparent etiologies [stories made up to explain something, such as a ruin]. Ai means "ruin." The city [identified by the author as et- Tell] was abandoned before the Late Bronze Age and resettled as an unwalled village after 1200. It was, therefore, already a "ruin" when the Israelites supposedly conquered it, and the story explains how it became one. Jericho [according to the dating of Kathleen Kenyon] also was unwalled at the time of the supposed conquest. It had once stood as one of the world's oldest cities and a symbol of the greatness of the Canaanite culture. Its

acquisition by Israel, therefore, symbolized the complete possession of the land.

Since there was no Conquest, the Israelites could not have wandered in the wilderness for 40 years, ergo, no Exodus.

As readers of *Bible and Spade* know, evidence for the Conquest is one of our favorite subjects, and we have published a number of articles on the topic (on Ai: Wood 1999a, 1999b, 2000a, 2000b, 2000c, 2001, 2003: 264–68, 2008c; see also Briggs 2005; on Jericho: Wood 1987, 1990, 1999c, 2003: 262–64; see also Ashley and Aust 2003), so we will not repeat that information here. Suffice it to say that the supposed discrepancies between the archaeological findings and the Biblical record concerning the Conquest are due to bad scholarship and improper interpretation of the archaeological data, not on any shortcomings of the Bible. In fact, archaeology, when properly understood, demonstrates the accuracy and eyewitness nature of the Biblical text with regard to Conquest events.



ABR Photographer Michael Luddeni on the base of what was once a colossal statue of Rameses II, estimated to have been 33 ft (10 m) tall, in Qantir, ancient Rameses. The tops of the cartouches (name ellipses) of Rameses II are barely visible behind the vegetation in front of the base. After Rameses II built his capital city here in the 13th century BC, the full name of which was

“The House of Rameses Beloved of Amun Great of Victories,” the area became known as Rameses, including Perunefer 1.25 mi (2 km) to the southwest, the city the Israelites departed from in 1446 BC. The commonly known name Rameses appears in Genesis, Exodus and Numbers rather than the earlier names (Rowaty, Avaris and Perunefer), which had gone out of use.

The Thirteenth Century Exodus Theory

Those who believe that there was an actual Exodus generally fall into two camps: those that believe that it happened in the 13th century BC, and those that believe that it happened in the 15th century BC. We shall begin by briefly reviewing the 13th century theory. The two main reasons put forward for placing the Exodus in the 13th century BC are the mention of the city of Rameses in Exodus 1:11 and the destruction of Hazor recorded in Joshua 11:11.

Exodus 1:11

In Exodus 1:11 we read:

So they put slave masters over them to oppress them with forced labor, and they built Pithom and Rameses as store cities for Pharaoh.

As mentioned above, the ancient city of Rameses built by Rameses the Great (Rameses II) is well known from Egyptian records and archaeological excavation. Thus, it is presumed that the Israelites helped build Rameses II's capital city and that they were still in Egypt in the 13th century BC. Since we know from the Merenptah, or Israel, Stela that Israel was in Canaan early in the reign of Rameses II's son Merenptah, ca. 1220 BC (Wood 2005a), the Exodus must have taken place 40 years or more prior to that, during the reign of Rameses II. This particular theory has gained favor with many scholars and, as a result, Rameses II is the Pharaoh of the Exodus in Hollywood and the popular media. There are, however, insurmountable obstacles associated with this reconstruction.

Disagreement with Biblical Chronology

A proponent of the "late" date for the Exodus is immediately confronted with the fact that this date is in disagreement with the internally consistent chronology of the Bible. The way scholars who favor this date deal with the Biblical data is to either explain it away or ignore it.

1. 1 Kings 6:1. The primary Scripture for determining the date of the Exodus is 1 Kings 6:1, which states:

In the four hundred and eightieth year after the Israelites had come out of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel, in the month Ziv, the second month, he began to build the temple of the Lord.

Late-date proponents explain away this Scripture by saying that the 480 years cannot be taken literally, but must be understood as a figurative number. It is really 12 idealized generations of 40 years each. Since an actual generation is on the order of 25 years, the real time interval from Solomon's fourth year to the Exodus is only $12 \times 25 = 300$ years. When we add this number to Solomon's fourth year, 967 BC (Young, this issue, 121 n. 11), voilà, we have a year smack-dab in the reign of Rameses II, 1267 BC! Of course, this is an approximation, so the actual date could vary a few years either way from 1267.

In reality, the time interval between the Exodus and Solomon's fourth year was 479 years, not 480, thus invalidating the 12 generations concept. The Israelites left Rameses in year 1, month 1, day 15 of the Exodus era (Ex 12:1; Num 33:3). Since Solomon began to build the Temple in year 480, month 2, the elapsed time was 479 years plus between 15 and 45 days. In addition, we know from genealogical data that there were more than 12 generations between the Exodus and Solomon's fourth year. From Heman the musician, who lived in the time of David, back to Korah, who lived in the time of Moses, there were 18 generations (1 Chr 6:33–37). Adding one additional generation takes us to the time of Solomon, resulting in a total of 19 generations, far more than the imagined 12 generations of the late-date theorists.

To determine the correct year of the Exodus, we simply add 479 to Solomon's fourth year, 967 BC, resulting in 1446 BC.

2. Judges 11:26. In this passage Jephthah tells the king of Ammon that Israel had been living in the land for 300 years prior to the beginning of the Ammonite oppression. Although we do not know precisely when the Ammonite oppression began, it had to have been sometime around 1100 BC (Davis 2008: 153; Ray 2005: 99; Steinmann 2005: 499), placing the Conquest at ca. 1400 BC and the Exodus in the mid-15th century BC. The

only explanation for Judges 11:26 from the late-date camp that I am aware of is that of Kitchen (2003b: 209), who claims that Jephthah did not know what he was talking about:

Brave fellow that he was, Jephthah was a roughneck, an outcast, and not exactly the kind of man who would scruple first to take a Ph.D. in local chronology at some ancient university of the Yarmuk before making strident claims to the Ammonite ruler. What we have is nothing more than the report of a brave but ignorant man's bold bluster in favor of his people, not a mathematically precise chronological datum.

3. 1 Chronicles 6:33–37. As explained above, the genealogy of Heman in 1 Chronicles 6:33–37 results in 19 generations from the time of Moses to the time of Solomon. If we use the rule of thumb of 25 years per generation, we obtain $19 \times 25 = 475$ years, very close to the more precise figure of 479 years in 1 Kings 6:1. Proponents of the late date have not provided an explanation for 1 Chronicle 6:33–37, as far as I know.

4. Ezekiel 40:1. As Rodger Young has pointed out (this issue, 115–17) this verse provides a precise date for a Jubilee year in 574 BC. According to Jewish sources, this was the 17th Jubilee. The first year of this Jubilee cycle was 622 BC (49 inclusive years). Going back 16 Jubilee cycles to when counting began brings us to $622 + (16 \times 49) = 1406$ BC, the year the Israelites crossed the Jordan and entered Canaan. Since this was exactly 40 years from when the Israelites left Egypt (Dt 1:3; Jos 4:19, 5:10), the date of the Exodus can be precisely fixed at 1446 BC, independently of 1 Kings 6:1. The late-date camp is yet to respond to this precise method of determining the date of the Exodus.



Palace of Jabin King of Hazor, massively destroyed by fire in the second half of the 13th century BC. But which Jabin, the one of Joshua 11 or Judges 4? Advocates of a 13th century BC Exodus claim that it was destroyed during the Conquest under Joshua. This cannot be, however, because then there would be no city for Deborah and Barak to conquer in

Judges 4 since Hazor was not rebuilt until the time of Solomon.

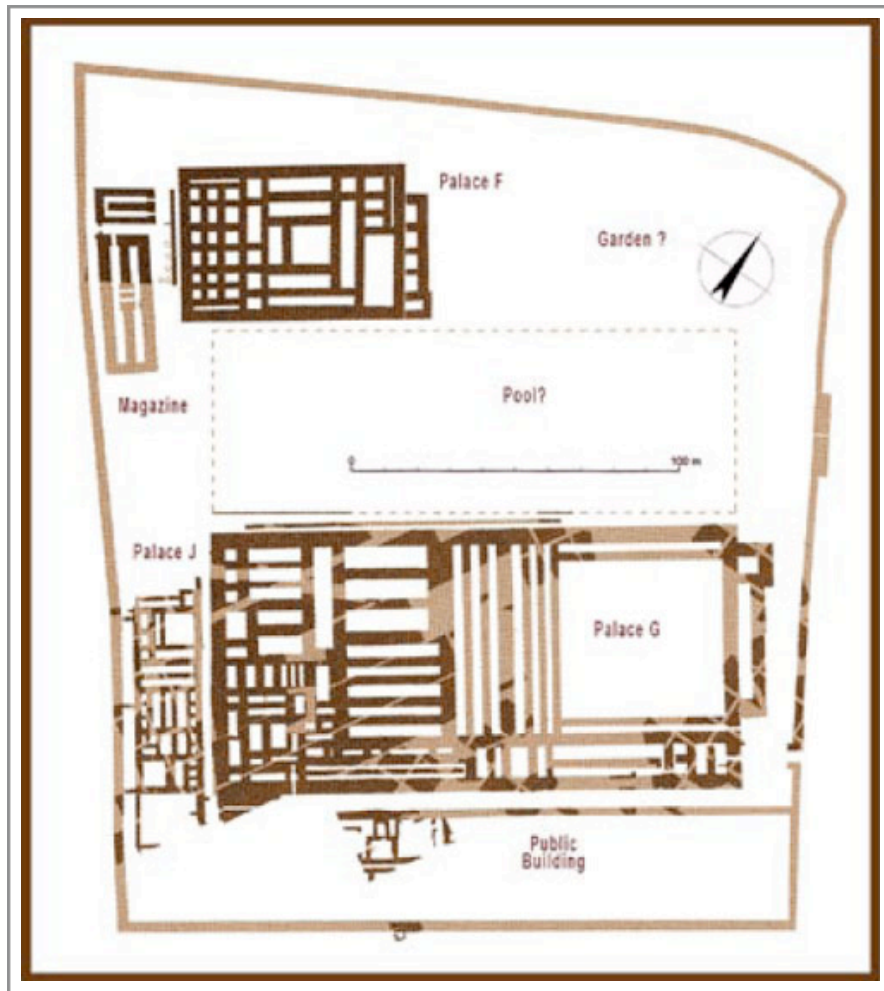
Disagreement with Biblical History

A close reading of the context of Exodus 1:11 makes it clear that the 13th century model is incompatible with the Biblical narrative. If Hebrew slaves were involved in the construction of the new capital of Rameses II, the work would have started early in Rameses II's reign, ca. 1280 BC. Using the 12-generation concept for the 480 years of 1 Kgs 6:1 places the Exodus just 13 years later in 1267 BC. It is not possible to fit the events between the building of the store cities and the Exodus (Ex 1:11–12:36) into a 13-year timespan.

- Following the building of Pithom and Rameses the Israelites experienced a growth in population: "the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and spread" (Ex 1:12), which had to have taken place over a considerable period of time.
- This was followed by an escalation of the oppression (Ex 1:13–14).
- Next, the king decreed that male Hebrew babies should be put to death (Ex 1:15–19). When the midwives ignored the order, "the people increased and became even more numerous" (Ex 1:20), again indicating a long passage of time.
- Moses was born during the time of the ban on male babies.

- At age 40 (Acts 7:23), Moses fled to Midian, during which time “the king of Egypt died” (Ex 2:23) and those seeking Moses’ life died (Ex 4:19).
- After Moses’ return from Midian, the Exodus occurred when Moses was 80 years old (Ex 7:7).

Thus, the building of the store cities in Exodus 1:11 had to have occurred over a century prior to the beginning of the construction of Rameses II’s delta capital, long before Rameses II was even born. The appearance of the name Rameses in this passage and in Genesis 47:11 are examples of editorial updating of a name that went out of use. After the construction of Rameses II’s capital, the area came to be known as Rameses from that time forward. Other examples of such updating are Bethel (Gn 12:8; 13:3; 28:19), Dan (Gn 14:14; Dt 34:1; Jgs 18:29) and Samaria (1 Kgs 13:32; 16:24).



Plan of the royal precinct from the time of Moses. Within the enclosure wall were three palaces, F, G and J. The largest, G, was undoubtedly the official dwelling of Pharaoh when he was in residence at Perunefer. As the adopted son of Pharaoh's daughter (Hansen 2003), Moses undoubtedly spent much time here, as well as in the capital city of Memphis. Proponents of the 13th century date for the Exodus once said that there was no royal residence in the eastern delta in the mid-15th century BC, so the Exodus must have happened in the 13th century BC when Rameses II had his capital there (e.g., Kitchen 2003b: 310, 319, 344, 353 no. 4, 567 n. 17, 635). Excavations in the 1990s put this objection to rest. (Adapted from Bietak and Forster-Müller 2005: 69.)

Another strike against the 13th century scenario is Psalm 136:15, which strongly indicates that the Pharaoh of the Exodus perished in the Reed Sea. Rameses II lived over 40 years beyond the proposed Exodus date of 1267 BC.

Destruction of Hazor

The book of Joshua tells us that the Israelites destroyed three cities by fire: Jericho (Jos 6:24), Ai (Jos 8:28) and Hazor (Jos 11:11). Evidence for destruction by fire should readily be discernable in the archaeological record, making these cities a primary focus of Conquest research. The second major pillar of the 13th century theory is that Hazor was destroyed at the right time to fit this time frame. Excavations have revealed that the city was massively destroyed by fire toward the end of the 13th century BC, most likely by the Israelites (Ben Tor 2006, 1998; Ben Tor and Rubiato 1999). The date of the destruction can be fixed at "1230 (or soon after)" based on inscriptional data (Kitchen 2003a: 27; low Egyptian chronology). But, if we assign this destruction to the Conquest, there would be no city for Deborah and Barak to conquer later on in the time of the judges (Jgs 4–5), since Hazor was not rebuilt until the tenth century BC in the time of Solomon (1 Kgs 9:15). Kitchen explains,

after Joshua's destruction of Hazor [in 1230 BC], Jabin I's successors had to reign from another site in Galilee but kept the style of king of the territory and kingdom of Hazor (2003b: 213).

But where was this new capital located? Kitchen does not offer a candidate. Surveys in the region have determined that there was a gap in occupation in the area of Hazor and the Upper Galilee from ca. 1230 BC to ca. 1100 BC (Finkelstein 1988: 107), ruling out Kitchen's solution to this major problem for the late-date theory. Not only is there no evidence at Hazor to support the late-date theory, but no evidence for occupation in the late 13th century BC has been found at Jericho (Marchetti 2003) or Ai (= Khirbet el-Maqqatir; Wood 1999a, 1999b, 2000a, 2000b, 2000c, 2001, 2008c).

There are a number of other less persuasive reasons given in support of a 13th century date for the Exodus, some of which I have dealt with in a series of articles critiquing the 13th century theory (Wood 2005b, 2007; Young and Wood 2008).

An Exodus in 1446 BC

We have outlined above the chronological data in the Bible that demonstrate that the Exodus took place in 1446 BC. This is supported by evidence from Jericho, Ai and Hazor showing that all three sites were burned by fire at the end of the 15th century BC, the time frame for the Conquest based on a 1446 BC Exodus. At Jericho, not only is there evidence for destruction by fire, but also that the destruction took place just after the harvest, the city walls fell, the siege of the city was short, and the city was not plundered, as the Bible records (Wood 1987, 1990, 1999c, 2003: 262–64; Ashley and Aust 2003). Our excavations at Khirbet el-Maqatir have demonstrated that it meets all of the Biblical requirements to be identified as Joshua's Ai, including destruction by fire (Wood 1999a, 1999b, 2000a, 2000b, 2000c, 2001, 2003: 264–68, 2008c; Briggs 2005). At Hazor, the burning of Stratum XV/2 and the destruction of temples give evidence of the Israelite conquest of the city (Janeway 2003: 95; Wood 2003: 268–69).

The Pharaoh of the Exodus

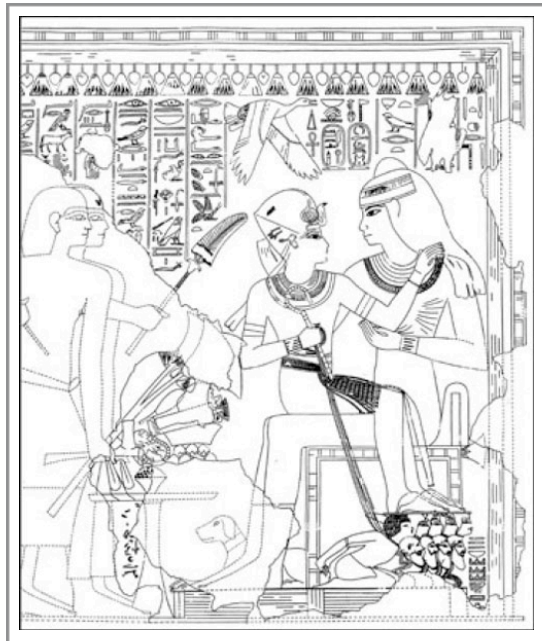
A nagging question is, "who was the Pharaoh of the Exodus?" Psalm 136:15 would lead us to believe that the Pharaoh of the Exodus died in the Sea of Reeds. All we need to do, then, to identify the Pharaoh of the Exodus is find a Pharaoh who died in 1446 BC. But this is no easy task. With our present Egyptian chronologies, we cannot pinpoint the death date of a particular Pharaoh to 1446 BC. There are three sets of dates in use: high, middle and low. They vary by as much as 25 years and, according to the three chronologies, there was no Pharaoh who died in 1446 BC. Presently, the most plausible solution is that of William Shea, who believes he has found evidence that a Pharaoh died in 1446 BC and his death was covered up by Egyptian officials (2003a, 2003b: 245–48). Egyptian theology would not allow for the god-king to die while pursuing runaway slaves. By not recording the event, it would be as if it had never happened (Wheeler 2002).

Shea believes that Amenhotep II was the Pharaoh of the Exodus. Based on the high Egyptian chronology, Amenhotep II took the throne in 1450 BC, immediately after the death of his father Tuthmosis III. Four years later, according to Shea's theory, he perished in the Reed Sea in 1446 BC. He was

then replaced with another king who was given the same name and the entire incident was hushed up. But Shea has uncovered scribal slip-ups that left clues as to what had happened. As a result, it appears that there were two Amenhotep IIs who ruled from 1450 to 1425 BC: Amenhotep IIA, 1450–1446 BC, and Amenhotep IIB, 1446–1425 BC. Although the tomb of Amenhotep II in the Valley of Kings in Luxor (KV 35) is not that of the Pharaoh of the Exodus, but that of Amenhotep IIB, we do have some connections with the first Amenhotep II.

Amenhotep IIA at Perunefer

The events of Exodus 2–12 transpired in the royal delta city called Rameses in the Bible. This is a later name for the city, which was earlier known as Rowaty during the days of Joseph and Jacob, then Avaris during the oppression and Perunefer in the time of Moses. Finally, in the 13th century BC, Rameses II built a great capital there and it became known as Rameses from that time on. The royal residency from Moses' day has been excavated, giving the backdrop against which the confrontation between *Yahweh* and the gods of Egypt took place (Wood 2008a, 2008b).



Amenhotep IIA as a child in the garden at Perunefer, tomb of Kenamun, Valley of the Nobles, Luxor. Young Amenhotep II sits on the lap of his nurse Amenemopet, mother of Kenamun, with attendants before them. Note that Amenhotep II's feet are on a footstool with a representation of Egypt's enemies, illustrating Psalm 110:1: "The Lord says to my Lord: 'Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.'"

During the 15th Dynasty, ca. 1663–1555 BC, Egypt was ruled by Hyksos (foreign rulers) from southern Canaan who had their capital at Avaris. After the native Egyptians overthrew the Hyksos and

drove them back to Canaan, Avaris was taken over by the Egyptians and renamed Perunefer. The tomb of Kenamun in the Valley of Nobles (number TT 93) puts us in touch with individuals associated with Perunefer and the Pharaoh of the Exodus. Kenamun's mother Amenemopet was the nurse of Amenhotep II, undoubtedly Amenhotep IIA. Perhaps as a result of his mother's connections with the royal family, Kenamun served as Superintendent of the Dockyard at Perunefer and later as Chief Steward of Amenhotep II, a position similar to that of Joseph ("over my [Pharaoh's] house, Gn 41:40). In the tomb are several paintings of Amenhotep II, including a painting of young Amenhotep II on Amenemopet's lap at Perunefer. As a young man Amenhotep IIA was famous for his athletic abilities and bravado. Translator John Wilson commented:

The pharaoh who has left us the most numerous records of his physical prowess was Amen-hotep II...Amen-hotep II... gloried in his reputation for personal strength and prowess. His records therefore contrast with those of his predecessor and father, Thut-mose III, in emphasizing individual achievement (1969: 244, 245).

A stela found near the Sphinx at Giza tells of Amenhotep IIA's superhuman skills as a horseman, archer, runner and rower. Here is an excerpt:

He was one who knew horses: there was not his like in this numerous army. There was not one therein who could draw his bow. He could not be approached in running. Strong of arms, one who did not weary he took the oar, he rowed at the stern of his falcon-boat as the stroke for 200 men. When there was a pause, after they attained half an iter's course [about 1 km], they were weak, their bodies limp, they could not draw a breath, whereas his majesty was (still) strong under his oar of 20 cubits in length [ca. 34 ft] (Wilson 1969: 244).



Relief memorializing Amenhotep IIA's archery skills, Luxor Museum. The king is depicted shooting arrows through a copper ingot while driving a chariot at full speed. The feat is described in texts as well. The Sphinx stela says: "He entered into his northern garden and found that there had been set up for him four targets of Asiatic copper of

one palm thickness [a little less than 3 in], with 20 cubits [ca. 34 ft] between one post and its fellow. Then his majesty appeared in a chariot like Montu [Egyptian god of war] in his power. He grasped his bow and gripped four arrows at the same time. So he rode northward, shooting at them like Montu in his regalia. His arrows had come out on the back thereof while he was attacking another post. It was really a deed which had never been done nor heard of by report: shooting at a target of copper an arrow which came out of it and dropped to the ground—except for the king" (Wilson 1969: 244).

In the third year of his reign, 1447 BC, one year before the Exodus, Amenhotep IIA led his first military campaign. It was to the area of "Takhshi," in the vicinity of Damascus, Syria. The record of that campaign begins in a boastful manner typical of the other records of his reign:

He is a king very weighty of arm: there is none who can draw his bow in his army, among the rulers of foreign countries, or the princes of Retenu [Syria-Lebanon], because his strength is so much greater than (that of) any (other) king who has existed. Raging like a panther when he treads the field of battle; there is none who can fight in his vicinity... Prevailing instantly over every foreign country, whether people or horses, (though) they have come in millions of men, (for) they knew not that Amon-Re [creator sun god] was loyal to him (Wilson 1969: 247).



Amenhotep II before Amon-Re at Perunefer, found in secondary use at Bubastis. The inscription reads, “Pre-eminent in Perunefer, the great god, lord of heaven” and “the king of the gods, lord of heaven, residing in Perunefer” (Habachi 2001: 106).

The text then goes on to describe Amenhotep IIA’s brutal treatment of seven enemy princes of Takhshi:

His majesty returned in joy of heart to his father Amon, when he had slain with his own mace the seven princes who had been in the district of Takhshi, who had been put upside down at the prow of his majesty’s falcon-boat...Then six men of these enemies were hanged on the face of the wall of Thebes, and the hands as well. Then the other foe was taken upstream to the land of Nubia and hanged on the wall of Napata [near the Fourth Cataract of the Nile] to show his majesty’s victories forever and ever in all lands and all countries of the Negro land; inasmuch as he had carried off the southerners and bowed down the northerners, the (very) ends of the entire earth upon which Re [the sun god] shines, (so that) he might set forth his frontier where he wishes without being opposed, according to the decree of his father Re (Wilson 1969: 248).

The boastful and arrogant attitude of Amenhotep IIA matches that of the Pharaoh of the Exodus described in the Bible. When Moses first confronted the Egyptian king, his response was, “Who is the Lord, that I should obey him and let Israel go? I do not know the Lord and I will not let Israel go” (Ex 5:2). His cruelty can be seen in his withholding the straw the Israelites needed for making mud bricks (Ex 5:6–9). In addition, he was stubborn and went back on his word on numerous occasions. Even after the death of the

first-born, when he finally let the Israelites go, he reneged and pursued them. In spite of his human strength and abilities, Amenhotep IIA and his army were no match for the God of Israel.

The residency was suddenly abandoned during the reign of Amenhotep II, with no known reason:

The palace district was probably abandoned after the reign of Amenophis II [=Amenhotep II]...The reason for the abandonment of this district, and, presumably, the entire city adjoining the district on the south is an unsolved puzzle at this time. Its solution would be of the greatest importance to historians. The suggestion that the peaceful foreign policy of the late reign of Amenophis II and Tuthmose IV made this militarily important settlement unnecessary is not convincing. A plague, such as the one documented for Avaris in the late Middle Kingdom, and associated with Avaris in later tradition, appears to be the most likely solution of this problem, although it cannot be proven at this time (Bietak and Forstner-Müller 2005: 93, 95; translation by ABR Board member Walter Pasedag).

Although Egyptian history does not provide an answer for this abandonment, Exodus 7–14 certainly does. As a result of the 10 plagues and the death of Pharaoh in the Sea of Reeds Perunefer became an unsuitable, or undesirable, place to live. With the Israelites and their God gone, it appears that the Egyptians quickly put a new Pharaoh on the throne, gave him the same name as the previous Pharaoh, and tried to put things back to normal, including making sure that none of these events were recorded in the history books.

The Asiatic Campaigns of Amenhotep IIB

Following the death of Amenhotep IIA in the fifth year of his reign in 1446 BC, there were two military campaigns of Amenhotep IIB to Syria-Palestine during the seventh (1444 BC) and ninth (1442 BC) years of his reign (Shea 2003a: 45–46, 2003b: 247). The tone of the records of these campaigns is much different than the earlier inscriptions of Amenhotep IIA—no arrogant and bombastic bragging here. Amenhotep IIB had been humbled by what had taken place in Egypt in 1446 BC. It appears that the main purpose of

these campaigns was to replenish lost wealth, slaves, military personnel and military equipment. The table below lists the captives and booty brought back (Wilson 1969: 246, 247).

	<u>Captives</u>	<u>Booty</u>
<u>Year 7, 1444 BC</u>		
Maryanu (elite chariot warriors)	550	820 horses
Wives of Maryanu	240	730 chariots
Canaanites	640	weapons of warfare
Sons of Chieftains	232	silver jewelry
Daughters of Chieftains	323	gold jewelry
Concubines of Chieftains	<u>270</u>	
Total	2,255	
 <u>Year 9, 1442 BC</u>		
Chieftains	127	cattle without number
Brothers of Chieftains	179	60 gold and silver chariots
Apiru (stateless individuals)	3,600	1,032 painted chariots
Shasu (desert nomads, Bedouin)	15,200	13,050 weapons of war
Syrians	36,300	
Nagasuities (inhabitants of northern Syria)	15,070	
Nagasuite family members	<u>30,652</u>	
Total	101,128	

From these records we gain insight into the Egyptian reconstruction plan following the Exodus. The first two years were spent rebuilding the Egyptian army as much as possible. In year seven a campaign was mounted to Syria with the partially reconstituted army to regain a portion of what Egypt had lost in the Exodus events. The results were comparable to earlier campaigns of Tuthmosis III. Another two years were then spent integrating the new personnel and equipment into the army, as well as using the newly acquired wealth to manufacture additional war materiel. Egypt was now prepared to launch the mother of all raids in 1442 BC. The captives and booty taken in that campaign were several orders of magnitude greater than any other recorded Egyptian campaign. This brought Egypt back to what it was prior to

1446 BC, ready to once again resume its role as one of the ancient world's greatest superpowers.

Defacing of Hatshepsut's Image

There is one other event in Egyptian history that might be related to the Exodus. The image and name of Hatshepsut, aunt, step-mother and co-regent with Tuthmosis III, was systematically removed from monuments throughout Egypt. The explanation most often given is that when Tuthmosis III came of age, there was a power struggle resulting in the forceful removal of Hatshepsut from power in ca. 1483 BC. A backlash from this event was the systematic removal of references to her rule. There are a number of problems with this interpretation, however. The main one is that there is evidence the desecration did not begin until sometime after Tuthmosis III's 42nd year of reign, over 20 years after he became sole ruler (Petrovich 2006: 108). It is possible that the desecration was carried out during the reign of Amenhotep II. If so, the Exodus could provide a more reasonable explanation. Hatshepsut is the most likely candidate for the princess who adopted Moses (Ex 2:10; Hansen 2003). If so, Amenhotep IIB might have held her responsible for the events of 1446 BC and thus carried out a campaign to remove her name and image from history.



Defaced image of Hatshepsut. The outline of Hatshepsut seated on a throne clearly can be seen in this relief in the mortuary temple of Hatshepsut at Deir el-Bahri, Luxor, Egypt. Hatshepsut's likeness and her cartouches above were systematically chiseled away as part of a nationwide campaign to remove her name and image from Egyptian history. Possibly this was done because she was the princess who adopted Moses, and thus was held responsible for the events of the Exodus.

Conclusions

Biblical and extra-Biblical evidence clearly point to 1446 BC as the date of the Exodus. Critics say the lack of any reference to this event in the records of ancient Egypt is proof that the Exodus never happened. We should not expect to find such written records, however, because of the lack of historical records of any kind from Rameses and the Egyptian penchant for keeping negative events from their history by not recording them. An Asiatic settlement at the site of Rameses from the time of Joseph and records of Asiatic slaves from the period of the sojourn provide indirect evidence that the Israelites were in Egypt. A royal residence from the time of Moses fitting the Biblical description has now been found at Rameses. Royal inscriptions indicate that there were two Pharaohs with the name Amenhotep II—the first being the Pharaoh of the Exodus who perished in the Reed Sea in 1446 BC and the second a replacement who campaigned in Syria-Palestine to replenish the wealth, slaves and army lost in the Exodus.



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