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THE EXODUS IN LIGHT OF THE BIBLE
AND ARCHEOLOGICAL RESEARCH

A Thesis Presented to
The Faculty of Concordia Seminary
Department of Old Testament Theology

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Bachelor of Divinity

by
Arnold O. Wagner

June, 1945

Approved by:

*The writer frequently fails to draw
the conclusion from the material presented
& to clinch his argument*

Walter T. Koch
Theo. Laitsh

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Introduction

One of the most debated questions in Biblical history is the Exodus from Egypt.

There is a difference of opinion with respect to the time when Moses lived and led the children of Israel out of Egypt. Three views are held:

Some scholars regard Rameses II (1292 B.C.-1225 B.C.) as the Pharaoh of the oppression, and his son, Merneptah (1225-1215 B.C.) as the Pharaoh of the Exodus (Late Date).

Opposed to this dating of the Exodus are those scholars who place the oppression during the reign of Thutmose III (1501-1447 B.C.) and the Exodus under Amenhotep II (1447-1423 B.C., Early Date).

Professor Albright reexamined the pottery and archeological finds in Palestine and concludes that the fall of Canaanite Jericho took place somewhere between 1375 and 1300 B.C.¹ This dating of the fall of Jericho infers that the Exodus occurred between 1415 and 1340 B.C.

Another question which arises in the discussion of the Exodus is the historicity and veracity of the Exodus

1. Albright, Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research, No. 74, April 1939

account. It is treated with distrust by some Bible scholars and a few Egyptologists because they find in it legendary and mythical details. The historical value is denied even of those parts which betray no trace of mythical features. In many cases these scholars do not take the Biblical texts in their plain meaning, but base their views on arbitrary interpretations. They even distort the texts by introducing alterations which they call corrections and emendations. It is in following this path that the whole Exodus narrative is converted into legend and denied that trust-worthiness granted to other records of antiquity.

This conclusion is reached although in some cases the ancient historical records cannot compare with the Biblical records in precision and soberness. Other writers of ancient history base their views on documents transmitted by the peoples themselves, and, as a whole, accept ancient records as the essential foundation for historical reconstruction. Even in documents where only myths and legends are available, these historians attempt to detect at the back of mythical representations the historical kernel and the facts enveloped in legendary wrappings. But when the Bible is involved the critics and their adepts from among Egyptologists and Assyriologists take their own theories for historical foundation.²

2. A. Yahuda, The Accuracy of the Bible, pp 116-117

A Christian accepts the entire Bible as the Word of God, but to accomodate the skeptic this thesis will follow the principle for research in Hebrew origins laid down by Noth.³ He says that the ultimate historicity of a given datum is never conclusively established or disproved by the literary composition itself, but that external evidence confirms the historicity of the given data in the Hebrew texts.

To supply the external evidence demanded by this principle it is necessary to resort to the field of archeology. With the new understanding of ancient life which archeology gives we can understand many things of the Bible which were formerly misunderstood or not understood at all. Any number of historical events and developments have been clarified by additional information from archeological sources. To understand the Biblical statements more accurately, archeology has added much knowledge of peoples who were almost wholly unknown a few decades ago. Utensils and implements used in common life found in excavations help us to determine more accurately the meaning of the terms used for such objects in the Bible. Social customs which appear in the Bible have also been explained or supplemented by the record of the past, and in many instances have been strikingly illustrated.⁴

3. W. Albright, Bulletin of American Schools for Oriental Research, No. 74, April 1939

4. M. Burrows, What Mean These Stones?, p 250

With the better understanding archeology gives we are now able to turn to the question of how archeology affects the truth of the Bible. The more we find that items in the picture of the past, as presented in the Bible, even though not directly attested, are compatible with what we know from archeology, the stronger is our impression of its general authenticity. Mere legend or fiction would inevitably betray itself by anachronisms and incongruities. It will be seen that the account of the Exodus, including the story of Joseph and Israel's sojourn in Egypt, is a case of general compatibility with archeology and the historical conditions of Egypt.⁵

It is the aim of this thesis first of all to determine an approximate date for the event of the Exodus, and secondly to establish the historicity of the Biblical account.

5. M. Burrows, What Mean These Stones?, p 250

PART I

THE DATE

A. The Late Date

To get an accurate view of the Exodus we must also take into account the periods preceeding and following the Exodus, namely Israel's sojourn in Egypt and the Hebrew enterance into Canaan. Since there is some debate over the length of the sojourn of Israel in Egypt, it will be necessary to arrive at some conclusion on this question before we can assign the sojourn to any historical period.

One difficulty lies with the interpretation of the three following Biblical statements:

And he said unto Abram, Know of surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years.¹

Now the sojourning of the children of Israel who dwelt in Egypt was four hundred and thirty years.²

Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made ... And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect.³

No one will find it difficult to reconcile the first two statements. 400 is a round number, while 430 gives the

1. Genesis 15.13

2. Exodus 12.40

3. Galatians 3.16-17

actual number of years that Israel stayed in Egypt. But St. Paul seems to be in conflict with Genesis 15.13 and Exodus 12.40 inasmuch as he says that from the time the promise was given to the promulgation of the law was 430 years. From the time Abraham was called and the promise given him to the departure of Jacob for Egypt is a period of 215 years. This way of reckoning would leave but 215 years for Israel's sojourn in the land of Egypt.⁴

It is impossible to maintain that the sojourn included the period of the patriarchs. Genesis 15,13 and Genesis 46,2-4 both speak of the sojourn in Egypt as taking place in the future. Genesis 46,2-4, where the promise is repeated to Jacob, presupposes that the Israelites as a nation are not yet down in Egypt.⁵ Hence, there are 430 years to account for as the length of the sojourn in Egypt.

We recall that when Jacob was on his way to Egypt, the Lord spoke to him and gave him the same reassuring promises recorded in Genesis 46,2-4. The Scriptures do not record that God repeated His promise to Jacob while the latter lived in Egypt. But this is quite probable. Paul, making his calculation from such a point of view, makes Israel's sojourn in Egypt last 430 years, and hence, all three Scripture passages referred to are in agreement.⁶

4. W.Arndt, Does The Bible Contradict Itself, p 17

5. *ibid.* p 17

6. *ibid.* p 17

Another difficulty in determining the length of Israel's sojourn in Egypt arises with the fourth generation mentioned in Genesis 15.16 and the four generations from Levi to Moses listed in Exodus 6.16 ff. If the figures for the four generations from Levi to Moses are added, allowing 80 years for the time of Moses, the total is 487 years. This figure cannot be correct because it exceeds the length of the sojourn by fifty-seven years. Furthermore, Levi was at least thirty-seven⁶ years old when he went down into Egypt, which makes it impossible to include those years in the sojourn. Genesis 46.11 lists Kohath as going down to Egypt with Levi, and if he were but a year old at the time, the remaining 100 years of Levi's life⁷ were contemporaneous with Kohath's, which reduces the total to 350 years. Since there were 100 years of contemporaneous life in the first generation, another hundred years of contemporaneous life for the remaining three generations would be a reasonable estimate. That would leave only 250 years from the time Levi went down to Egypt to Moses when he led the Israelites out of Egypt. The difficulty now is to reconcile these four generations covering 250 years with the fourth generation in Genesis 15.16 extending over a period of 400 years.

The solution of this difficulty is suggested by Gesenius:

6. of. Gen. 29.34; Gen. 30.24; Gen. 41.46; Gen. 41.53
7. Exodus 6.16

4

The Hebrews, as we do, seem commonly to have reckoned the duration of a generation from thirty to forty years, but in times of the patriarchs it was reckoned at a hundred years. So among the Romans the word "seculum" originally signified "age" or "generation" of men, and was later transferred to denote a century.⁸

A generation here then signifies a century, a period of time, which in the case of Genesis 15.16 has no geneological connotation. Moreover, this interpretation of ליד is in keeping with the context of Genesis 15.13. Here the four generations are equated with four-hundred years. Therefore, the fourth generation in Genesis 15.16 cannot be identified with the four generations from Levi to Moses.⁹

Yet it is true that more than four generations could have lived within four-hundred years. Dr. Arndt solves this problem with the following statement.

It was not at all uncommon in the Hebrew geneological tables to omit names which were considered unimportant.¹⁰

In view of these considerations the Biblical statement in Exodus 12.40 that the children of Israel stayed in Egypt 430 years must stand,

1. The Sojourn

The next question is when did this sojourn take place. If the date of the Exodus (1225 B.C.) is correct, the sojourn in Egypt must have started in the year 1665 B.C. But do the

8. W. Gesenius, Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament, p. 223

9. Exodus 6.16 ff.

10. W. Arndt, Bible Difficulties, p. 53

conditions in Egypt around the year 1665 B.C. conform to those of the Joseph story? The year 1665 B.C. falls within the reign of the Hyksos Kings who ruled from 1788-1580 B.C.¹¹

Somewhere about 1800 B.C. the Hyksos, a warlike horde of mingled Aryan, Hittite, and Semitic Asiatics swept irresistably down the Palestinian coastal read into the fertile plains of the Nile Delta. After driving the native Egyptians far up the river to Thebes, they established themselves for several centuries as an alien dynasty of Pharaohs with their capital at Avaris. Unfortunately these barbarous "Shepherd Kings" destroyed most of the culture found in Egypt, and introduced very little of their own. Enough remains to make it probable that they were predominantly Semitic, and sympathetic, therefore, to the Hebrews.¹²

Breasted gives a more detailed picture of Egypt during the reigns of the Pharaohs from the XVII to the XVIIIth Dynasties, who ruled simultaneously with the Hyksos from 1788-1580 B.C. The transition from the twelfth to the thirteenth dynasty seemingly had taken place without disturbing the tranquil prosperity of the land. The first king, Sekhemre-Khutowe, ruled from the Delta, but his reign was a short one. The Pharaohs who followed regarded themselves as successors of the XIIth Dynasty and assumed the names of its greatest rulers, but this brough them none of its strength

11. J.H.Breasted, A History of Egypt, p.599
12. S.Caiger, The Old Testament and Modern Discovery, p.12

and prestige. Rapid dissolution followed, as the provincial lords rose against each other and strove for the throne. Here and there a fragment of masonry, a statue, or sometimes only a scarab bearing a royal name, furnishes contemporary testimony of the reign of this or that king among them. There was neither power, nor wealth, nor time for the erection of permanent monuments. King still followed king with unprecedented rapidity. For most of these kings our only source of knowledge is the bare name on the Turin Papyrus,¹³ the disordered fragments of which have not even preserved for us the order of these ephemeral rulers except as we find them grouped upon one fragment. Where preserved at all the length of reign is usually but a year, or occasionally two or three years, while in two cases we find after a king's name but three days. Without any dynastic division which can be discerned, we find here the remains of at least one hundred and eighteen names of kings. The ceaseless struggles of these kings make up the obscure history of this dark century and a half since the fall of the XIIth Dynasty. Economically the condition of the country must have rapidly degenerated. While we possess no monuments which tell of this ruin, their very absence is evidence of it.¹⁴

Without centralized resources or organization

13. The Turin Papyrus of Kings, compiled under the XIXth Dynasty, contains a list of Pharaohs including those from the XIIth to the XVIIIth Dynasties. *Cam. Anc. History*, vol. I, p. 167

14. Breasted, *A History of Egypt*, pp. 211-213

the hapless nation was easy prey to foreign aggression. About 1675 B.C., before the end of the XIIth Dynasty, there poured into the Delta from Asia Semitic invaders now generally called the Hyksos. Of the reign of these remarkable conquerors we know no more than of their contemporaries, the Egyptian dynasts of this age already discussed, who continued to rule in Thebes and probably throughour Upper Egypt. The account in Manetho states that the Hyksos Kings laid the whole country under tribute, and Hyksos monuments have been found as far south as Gebelen. The beginning of their rule may have been a gradual immigration without hostilitæes as Manetho relates. It is perhaps in this epoch that we should place one of their kings, a certain Khenzer, who seems to have left the affairs of the country largely in the hands of his vizier, Enkhu. What occasioned the unquestionable barbarities on the part of the Hyksos is now impossible to discern, but it is evident that hostilities must have broken out, causing destruction of the temples.¹⁵

A hundred years is ample to account for the whole Hyksos period. Even if it was actually much longer, this fact would not extend the length of the period from the fall of the XIIth Dynasty to the end of the Hyksos rule. It is evident that many of the numerous kings of this period, enumerated in the Turin Papyrus, may have ruled in the south as vassals of the Hyksos, like the Sekenenre,

15. Breasted, A History of Egypt, pp. 215-222

whom the folk-tale makes the Theban vassal of one of the Apophises.¹⁶

The question now is whether or not the Hyksos period compares with the background of Egyptian life as it is described in the Joseph story. Yahuda¹⁷ does not hesitate to state that not one of the arguments advanced in favor of putting the Joseph period under the Hyksos rule can hold its ground in face of the conditions known to us from those times. We shall now consider some of these arguments.

One of the strongest proofs against putting the rise of Joseph in the time of the Hyksos is the fact that Joseph was given the daughter of the high priest, On, as a special distinction on the part of Pharaoh (Genesis 41.45). This would be impossible under the Shepherd Kings, who did all they could to destroy the Egyptian religion and to weaken the power of the priests. Furthermore, the bestowal of a purely Egyptian honorific name on Joseph (Gen.41,45) would be inexplicable from a Semitic Hyksos ruler to a Semitic vizier, but is very natural from an Egyptian king to a foreigner appointed to the highest post of the state.¹⁸

How is it possible to maintain that Joseph's rise to power was under a Hyksos ruler when the whole story of Joseph emphasizes on every occasion that the Pharaoh was

16. Breasted, A History of Egypt, p. 222

17. Yahuda, The Accuracy of the Bible, p.46

18. ibid. p.50

the ruler over the whole of Egypt? Now this cannot have possibly been the time of the Hyksos, because they never extended their rule over the whole of Egypt and were practically confined to the Delta, being in constant conflict with the legitimate, more or less, independent native chieftans. The suggestion that the powerful Apophis and his successor Khyan extended their rule over the whole of Egypt and even beyond its borders is derived from indirect indications without documentary proofs. There is no substantial reason whatsoever for believing that at this time the southern part of Egypt, with its center at Thebes, was not under the control of indigenous Egyptian kings as before and after him.²⁰

Finally the Joseph story demands an Egyptian government highly organized and centered in the office of the vizier. Nowhere is there an indication of the office of the vizier during the reign of the Hyksos kings, or even a semblance of an organized administration. The only exception Breasted notes is "acertain Khenzer who seems to have left the affairs of the country largely in the hands of his vizier, Enkhu." The account in Genesis speaks of a Pharaoh who actually did entrust the affairs of the government into the hands of his vizier. This Pharaoh must have had a reign of at least twenty-seven years,²¹ which cannot be said of any of the Hyksos kings.

20. Yahuda, *The Accuracy of the Bible*, p. 51
21. cf. Gen. 37, 2; Gen. 41, 46; Gen. 41, 54-56

Hence, the foreign character of the Hyksos, their sphere of influence over only a part of Egypt, and their disorganized administration militate against identifying any Hyksos king as the Pharaoh under whom Joseph came to power.

2. The Oppression

The advocates of the late date proceed to identify Rameses II with the Pharaoh of the oppression. It must be conceded that the history of Egypt during the reign of Rameses II (1292-1225 B.C.) presents an era well suited for the Pharaoh of the oppression.

The late years of Seti I were disturbed by a conflict between his eldest son and the latter's younger brother, Rameses, over the succession. Rameses was plotting to supplant his eldest brother, and during their father's last days, laid his plans so effectively that he was ready for a successful coup at the old king's death. Rameses resorted to the old court devices so that the actual conquest of the throne might be forgotten.²²

He hastened at once to Thebes, the seat of power, made himself strong there, and gained the support of the priests of Amon. He devoted himself with great zeal to the pious works in memory of his father at Thebes and especially at Abydos, where he completed the unfinished temple of Seti I. After opening the gold mines of the Wadi Alaki

22. Cambridge Ancient History, vol. II, pp. 139-140

country in Nubia, Rameses turned his ambition toward the recovery of the great Asiatic empire.²³

When Rameses II ascended the throne, the Hittites had had unqualified possession of Syria for probably more than twenty years. After a preparatory campaign to secure the coast of Palestine as a base of operation, Rameses launched his attack against the Hittite stronghold at Kadesh. The ensuing battle proved Rameses a leader of undaunted courage rather than a military genius. If Rameses could claim any success to offset the disaster he suffered at Kadesh, it was his salvation from utter destruction, and the fact that he eventually held the field added little practical advantage. It is commonly stated that Rameses captured Kadesh, but there is no such claim in any of his records.²⁴

Rameses enjoyed the usual triumph on his return to Egypt without even laying siege to Kadesh. Yet the inevitable result could only be destructive of Egyptian influence among the dynasts of Syria and Palestine. Nor would the Hittites fail to make every possible use of the doubtful battle to undermine that influence and stir up revolt. These Hittite revolts cost Rameses three more years in the recovery of Palestine. Now the Pharaoh was at liberty to resume his ambitions in the conquest of Asia, and his lists credit him with having subdued Naharin, Lower Retenu, Arvad, the Keftiu,

23. Cambridge Ancient History, vol. II, p. 140

24. Ibid., pp. 141-147

and Ketwe in the Orentes valley. It is very uncertain whether he succeeded in holding these northern conquests.²⁵

After probably some fifteen years of campaigning, a treaty of peace and alliance between Rameses II and Khetasar, the Hittite king, brought the wars in Asia to a final and sudden end. Once consummated, the peace was kept, and although it involved the sacrifice of Rameses' ambitions for conquest in Asia, the treaty must have been satisfactory to both parties. Thirteen years later the Hittite king visited Egypt to celebrate the marriage of his eldest daughter as the wife of Rameses. From the day of the peace compact with Khetasar, Rameses was never called upon to engage in war again.²⁶

As the conclusion of the war in Asia gave him greater leisure, Rameses devoted himself to vast monumental buildings. At Thebes he spent enormous resources on the completion of his father's mortuary temple, on his own beautiful sanctuary, known to all visitors at Thebes as the Ramessuem, and on the enlargement of the Luxor temple. Surpassing in size all buildings of the ancient and modern world, the colossal colonnaded hall of the Karnak temple, started by the Pharaoh's father, was now completed by Rameses II.²⁷

Few of the great temples of Egypt have not some chamber, hall, colonnade, or pylon which bears the name of

25. Cambridge Ancient History, vol. II, pp. 147-148

26. *Ibid.*, pp. 149-150

27. *Ibid.*, p. 152

Rameses II, in the perpetuating of which the king stopped at no desecration or destruction of the ancient monuments of the country.

Numberless were the monuments of his ancestors on which he placed his own name, or still worse, from which he remorselessly appropriated building material, as if the ancient monuments of the nation were public quarries.²⁸

But in spite of these facts, his own legitimate building was on a scale quite surpassing in size and extent anything that his ancestors had ever accomplished.

Rameses II left over a hundred sons and at least half as many daughters from his enormous harem. He thus left a family so numerous that they became a Ramessid class of nobles whom we still find over four hundred years later. He was also a great magician, whose memory lived in the folktales of Egypt a thousand years later. Rameses lived in a magnificence even surpassing that of Amenhotep III. As the years passed the sons of his youth were taken from him until twelve were gone, and the thirteenth was the eldest and heir to the throne. During the late years of his reign Rameses lost his vitality for aggressive rule. The Libyans and the maritime peoples allied themselves together and entered the western Delta with impunity. Senile decay rendered him deaf to alarms and complaints which would have brought instant retribution upon the invaders in the days of his vigorous youth. Finally, having ruled for sixty-seven years this great Pharaoh died in 1225 B.C.²⁹

28. Cambridge Ancient History, vol. II, p.152

29. ibid. pp.162-163

From the history of Egypt during the reign of Rameses II, as presented above, it would appear that the oppression of the Israelites could have taken place at the time of this Pharaoh. The story of the oppression related in Exodus reflects such political conditions in Egypt at the time. The question remains: does the evidence furnished by archeology also uphold this view. In support of the active oppression under Rameses II the discovery of the cities of Pithom and Raamses supply the strongest evidence.

The site of Pithom was identified in 1883 by Professor Naville. It is situated on the south side of the sweet-water canal which runs from Cairo to Suez through the Wadi Tumilat. Naville found a number of inscriptions which show not only that the site represents an ancient city whose religious name was "Pi Tam," while its civil name was Thuku (Succoth), but also that the founder of the city was Rameses II.

Naville says:

I did not find anything more ancient than his monuments. It is possible that before his time there may have been a shrine consecrated to the worship of Tum, but it is he who built the enclosures and the store-houses. He is the only king whose name appears on the naos and on the monuments of Ismailiah. Nowhere is it stated that he restored the construction of former kings.³⁰

Rameses fought the Hittites, and although his conquests were ephemeral, the late view points out that Pharaoh's fear of danger was not imagined, but he very likely was afraid

30. Quoted by Griffiths, The Exodus in Light of Archeology, p.44

that Israel would join the Hittites and revolt. Thus he ordered the cities of Pithom and Raamses to be built as fortresses to guard against invasion from the north, for Goshen marked the end of the caravan routes and the entry into Egypt.³¹

The identification of the city rests on the hieroglyphic inscriptions referring to Pi-Tum. The so called store-chambers were really fortress implacements, and among the quantities of pottery there was "no type of vessel which could be described as Hebrew."³² Though there were traces of Rameses II, the city had clearly been founded centuries earlier. As to Pi-Tum, it could be used of any temple where Tum was worshipped.³³ Hence, the Pi-Tum discovered need not necessarily be identified with the city built by the Israelites.

The other city, Raamses, was located by Sir Flinders Petrie at Tell el-Retabeh. Here also inscriptions were found referring to Tum and Rameses II. Petrie writes:

The city of Raamses is identified by remains of a town and temple built by Rameses II. A large scene from the temple front, representing Rameses slaying a Syrian, is now at Philadelphia. There is no other city of this date along the valley, except Pithom. An official here was over the foreigners of Thuku, or Succoth, the general name of this land, which was occupied with Bedawy 'booths' or succoth; he probably was the superintendent of the Israelites.³⁴

In describing the cities Price says that they were strongly built, and separated by brick partitions from eight to ten

31. Naville, Archeology and the Old Testament, p.63

32. Duncan quoted by Caiger, Bible and Spade, p.65

33. Caiger, *op. cit.*, p.65

34. Quoted by Griffiths, Ex. in Light of Archeology, p.45

feet thick. The bricks, half sun-baked, were made some with and some without straw. The store-houses occupy in Pithom almost the whole area of the city, the walls of which are about 650 feet square and 22 feet thick.³⁵

Because sections of the buildings at Raamses were constructed of bricks without straw, some scholars have used this fact to prove that the Israelites were the builders of the city. With reference to Pithom and Raamses the Bible gives no information of the nature of their building operations and makes no mentions of straw for bricks at all. Furthermore, the Pharaoh of the Exodus did not command the children of Israel to make bricks without straw, but told them to furnish their own straw, and, hence, the bricks of Raamses prove nothing.³⁶

Rameses' great building enterprises were not achieved without vast expenses of resources, especially those of labor. While he was unable to draw upon Asia for captive labor, yet his extensive building must have been accomplished largely by such means.³⁷ The plight of the Israelites as recorded in Exodus 1 fits perfectly into the conditions of Egypt under Rameses II, and therefore Griffiths concludes that Pithom and Raamses were built by the Israelites. Both cities have been identified, both were store-cities, both were built under Rameses II, and both were in the district of Succoth.³⁸

35. I.M.Price, The Monuments of the Old Testament, p.186

36. T.Thorson, Oppression and Exodus, p.82

37. Breasted, A History of Egypt, p.446

38. J.S.Griffiths, The Exodus in the Light of Archeology, p.45

Advocates of the late date lay much stress on the fact that their view harmonizes with Exodus 1.11, namely, that "the children of Israel built treasure cities in Egypt, Pithom and Raamses." They point out that the Raamses after whom the city is named is doubtless Rameses II. But from Genesis 47.11 we learn that Raamses was the name of a province in Egypt, the name by which Goshen came to be known already in the days of Joseph at least 200 years before the time of Rameses II. After a careful study of the relevant MSS., including the Syrian, some scholars have come to the conclusion that the true reading of this verse is not "Pithom and Raamses," but Pithom of Raamses (the province). These scholars may be right or wrong, but their possibility of being right shows how narrow the basis is on which the opposite view rests.³⁹

Yet how could the store-city be called Raamses when there was no king by the name of Raamses before the 13th century? It is a fact that seventy kings reigned four hundred years before Rameses II between 1900 and 1600 B.C., many of whom are not known by name. Those we know have real Egyptian names as Amenemhet, Senusret, Apophis etc. Is there not the possibility of a Rameses among the unknown?⁴⁰ Furthermore, before Rameses I the name does occur as a brother of Harembib under the XVIIth Dynasty. Again, the

39. Ross, Hibbert Journal, 1940-1941, pp.306-307
 40. Yahuda, The Accuracy of the Bible, p43

name Ramose occurs on a tomb dating from the time of Amenhotep III. It is also startling to find the name Rames as that of a prince in the XVIIth Dynasty.⁴¹

A.H.Gardiner in the Journal of Egyptian Archeology asserts that, "We may feel certain that Tell el-Retabeh is not Raamses."⁴² This statement of Gardiner is supported by Petrie himself. Neither Pithom nor Raamses needed to be built by Rameses II, for both of them had been in existence long before the XIXth Dynasty. Petrie dug into the foundation deposits of Raamses and discovered a small arched brick tomb of an infant buried at full length with its head to the east. At Gezeh in Palestine Macalister found infants buried in a similar way after they had been sacrificed at the founding of a city, castle, or house. The revolting Canaanite practice was current long before the time of Rameses II. Furthermore, Petrie came across stone vases of the Old Kingdom and also weights and measures dating from the IXth to the XIIth Dynasties at a depth of twelve to fifteen feet below the level of the XVIII and XIXth Dynasty buildings.⁴³

These discoveries prove the antiquity of the city and make it manifest that the Israelites were not the original builders, but were building on a foundation already hoary with age.

41. T. Thorsen, Oppression and Exodus, p.12

42. Quoted by Knight, Nile and Jordan, p.138

43. ibid., p.138

It is remarkable that at Saft el-Henna, or Goshen, the cemetery discovered by Petrie yielded 1,500 graves, which on examination dated from the time of the XVIIIth Dynasty and continued down to Roman times. During the XVIIth Dynasty the burials were particularly numerous with many of the dead interred in slipper shaped coffins. The fact that the deaths took place in Goshen under the XVIIth Dynasty, when the oppression of the early date was in progress, gives point to the pathetic cry of the Hebrews at the Red Sea. "Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness?" (Ex.14.11)⁴⁴

With the exception of the favorable historical conditions under Rameses II, the only evidence for the oppression of Israel by this Pharaoh are the store-cities of Pithom and Raamses. When the archeological evidence is considered, the identity of these cities remains an open question, and it is clear that both of the cities were founded much earlier than Rameses II. Neither the Bible nor Archeology furnish any reason to substantiate the belief that Rameses II was the Pharaoh of the Oppression.

3. The Exodus

Having identified Rameses II as the Pharaoh of the oppression, those who favor the late date of the Exodus (1225 B.C.) proceed to identify Merneptah (1225-1215 B.C.) with the Pharaoh of the Exodus.

44. Knight, Nile and Jordan, p.138

One of the chief arguments for the late date of the Exodus is the discovery of the Merneptah Stele in 1896 by Sir Flinders Petrie. The inscription is a hymn of victory, celebrating the triumph of Merneptah over the Libyans. It was cut on the back of a magnificent black granite stele over ten feet high.⁴⁵ The concluding strophe reads:

The kings are overthrown, saying: "salaam!"
 Not one holds up his head among the nine bows.
 Wasted is Tehenu,
 Kheta is pacified,
 Plundered is the Canaan with every evil,
 Carried off is Askelon,
 Seized upon is Gezer,
 Yenoam is made as a thing not existing,
 Israel is desolated, his seed is not;
 Palestine has become a widow for Egypt.
 All the lands are united, they are pacified;
 Every one that is turbulent is bound by King
 Merneptah, who gives life like Ra every day.⁴⁶

This inscription contains the only mention of Israel in a document of this age outside the Bible. For that reason it is of great importance. It should be noted that "Israel" is mentioned along with peoples and places in Palestine and Phoenecia. The Egyptian used a certain "determinative" in connection with names of settled peoples, and that sign is here used with Tehenu, Kheta, Askelon, Gezer, and Yenoam, but not with "Israel."⁴⁷ Thus the "Israel" here referred to was not in Egypt, and had not settled in Palestine as the adherents of the late date claim.

45. Griffiths, The Exodus in the Light of Archeology, p.49

46. G.Barton, Archeology and the Bible, p.376

47. ibid., p.376

The phrase, "his seed is not," has been given several meanings as the slaying of the male Israelite children by the Egyptians, the destruction of crops, the oppression of Pharaoh who knew not Joseph, and the Egyptian version of the Exodus current at the court of Merneptah.

Breasted in his "Ancient Records" points out that: "This phrase is found five times elsewhere in the inscriptions referring to a number of other peoples as follows:

1. 'Those who reached my border are desolated, their seed is not.'
2. 'The Libyans and the Seped are wasted, their seed is not.'
3. 'The fire has penetrated us, our seed is not.'
4. 'Their cities are made ashes, wasted, desolated; their seed is not.'
5. 'Gored is the chief of Amor ... his seed is not.'

The words "his, their, our seed is not," are therefore a conventional phrase applicable to any defeated and plundered people.⁴⁸

Breasted also explains the line, "Palestine has become a widow for Egypt." Quoting a parallel passage where Rameses II is called a "husband" or protector "of Egypt," he adds:

Hence a land may be widowed, without a husband, without a protector, and Palestine had no protector against Egypt.⁴⁹

The inscription then records the defeat of an "Israel" in or near Palestine.⁵⁰

The adherents of the late date of the Exodus (1225 B.C.)

48. Breasted quoted by Griffiths, The Exodus in the Light of Archeology, p.50

49. ibid., p.50

50. ibid., p.51

refer the Israelite incident of the Merneptah Stele to the defeat of the Hebrews at the hands of the Amalekites and Canaanites in their first attempt to enter Canaan under Moses.⁵¹ Professor Naville says:

There is no indication whatsoever that this state of things is due to the victories of the king ... It is not said that he personally did anything in the destruction of Askelon or Innuamma.⁵²

Nor does the inscription prove that the victory over Israel was won by an Egyptian home army. We have no means of judging whether some or all these victories were due partly to Egyptian garrisons, or to troops sent specially from Egypt, or to native vassals or allies of the king. This severe reverse was inflicted upon a nomadic Israel in or near Palestine by rulers who were under the suzerainty of the Egyptian king. The defeat sufficed to protect Canaan from further attack by Israel until thirty-eight years later, thus fulfilling the essential conditions of the Israel stele, and placing the Exodus during the reign of Merneptah.⁵³

This interpretation of the Merneptah Stele presents several vexing difficulties. If the Amalekites and Canaanites were Egyptian allies who defeated "Israel" in their first attempt to invade Canaan, there is a striking contradiction with the Merneptah Stele. As Egyptian allies fighting in

51. Numbers 14.40-45; Deuteronomy 1.41-46

52. Naville quoted by Griffiths, Ex. in Light of Arch., p.52

53. ibid., pp.51-52

in the interest of Merneptah, why should the Amalekites and Canaanites own territory, "Askelon be carried off, Gezer seized, and Palestine become a widow for Egypt?" 54

If the Exodus took place in 1225 B.C., there is also an inexplicable disagreement with the testimony of archeology from Jericho. Garstang's excavations at Jericho testify to the destruction of that city around 1400 B.C.⁵⁵ Scripture asserts that it was the Israelites who razed Jericho after their wanderings in the wilderness.⁵⁶ If then Merneptah (1225-1215 B.C.) was the Pharaoh of the Exodus, Jericho was destroyed before the Israelites¹²⁸⁺ Egypt.

This interpretation of the Merneptah Stele furthermore conflicts with the Biblical chronology in I Kings 6.1. In this passage the period from the Exodus to the building of the temple in the fourth year of Solomon's reign is described as 480 years. The accepted dates for the building of the temple range from 984-969 B.C. If 480 years are added to 984 or 969 B.C., the Exodus would fall in the middle of the fifteenth century, and not in the middle of the thirteenth.⁵⁷

Higher criticism regards the verse in I Kings 6.1 as a gloss. The reasons given are the divergence of the Septuagint which reads 440 years; the artificial character of the number 480, a multiple of 40; and that 40 is commonly used in the Old Testament not as an arithmetic expression, but as

54. Griffiths, The Ex. in Light of Arch., p.53

55. Garstang, Foundations of Bible History, p.146

56. Joshua 1.1-2; Joshua 6

57. Griffiths, op. cit., p.60

a vague statement of number.⁵⁸

In answer to these objections it must be emphasized that:

1. The original language and older manuscripts take precedent over a translation.
2. Because a number is a multiple of 40, that does not brand it with an artificial character even if it does occur several times in the Scriptures.
3. 480 may be a round number, but to round the number off to 263 years to harmonize with the Merneptah Stele is an arbitrary procedure without legitimate justification.

Another conflict with the Merneptah Stele and Biblical chronology arises in the account of the life of Moses. If Rameses II was the Pharaoh who built the cities of Pithom and Raamses, then Moses must have been born during his reign. To make every concession possible, we will grant that the birth of Moses occurred simultaneous with the first year of Rameses II's reign, 1292 B.C.⁵⁹ In Acts 7.23 the Bible asserts that Moses was forty years old when he fled to the land of Midian, where he remained in seclusion for another forty years, Acts 7.30. Hence, Moses was at least eighty years old when he stood before the Pharaoh of the Exodus. But who was this Pharaoh? If we subtract eighty years from 1292 B.C., we arrive at the year 1212 B.C., the third year of Siptah's reign (1215-1209 B.C.). But according to the adherents of

58. Griffiths, The Ex. in Light of Archeology, p.60

59. Dates of Pharaohs taken from Breasted, A History of Egypt, p.599

of the late date of the Exodus, this event took place during the reign of Merneptah in the year 1225 B.C.

If the Merneptah Stele is conclusive evidence for the Exodus in 1225 B.C., then the Pharaoh of the oppression could not have been Rameses II. Since Moses was eighty years old at the time of the Exodus, he was born in the year 1305 B.C. Again we find that the Pharaoh of the oppression at the birth of Moses was not Rameses II, but Seti I (1313-1292 B.C.). Another glance at the Biblical record will reveal that at the birth of Moses the store-cities of Pithom and Raamses were at least in the process of building, if not already completed. According to this way of figuring, Seti I, and not Rameses II, was the builder of Pithom and Raamses. Thus a check on Biblical chronology strikingly militates both against Rameses II as the Pharaoh of the oppression and Merneptah as the Pharaoh of the Exodus.

In summary that late view of the Exodus (1225 B.C.) faces the following obstacles:

1. The disorganized Hyksos government is not adequate for the setting of the Joseph story.
2. In the section of the oppression it was shown that the evidence for identifying Rameses II as the builder of Pithom and Raamses is not conclusive.
3. If the Merneptah Stele refers to the defeat of Israel by the Amalekites and Canaanites, the allies of Egypt, there is a contradiction.

4. An Exodus in 1225 B.C. conflicts with the Biblical chronology for the life of Moses and the building of Solomon's temple.

5. If the Exodus occurred in 1225 B.C., the excavations from Jericho throw the Biblical narrative into an irreconcilable conflict.

In view of these considerations it is, therefore, highly improbable that the Exodus occurred in 1225 B.C. under Merneptah as the advocates of the late date maintain.

B. THE MIDDLE DATE

1. The Sojourn

Albright's dating of the destruction of Jericho (1375-1300 B.C.) suggests two historical periods for the background of the Joseph story.⁶⁰

If the destruction of Jericho occurred between 1375 and 1300 B.C., the Exodus took place somewhere between 1415 and 1340 B.C. Hence, the latest the sojourn could have started is in the year 1770 B.C. But 1770 B.C. also falls within the period of the Hyksos kings (1788-1580 B.C.)⁶¹ and meets with the same objections just discussed.

If the Exodus took place in the year 1415 B.C., then the era of Joseph must have begun around the year 1845 B.C. At this time Egypt was under the control of the Pharaohs of the Middle Kingdom. This era of Egypt's history does present an adequate setting for the Joseph story, and the possibility of Joseph's rise to power will be discussed under the early date for the Exodus.⁶²

60. Albright, Bulletin of the American Schools for Oriental Research, No. 74, April 1939

61. Breasted, A History of Egypt, p. 599

62. cf. pp. 33-36

2. The Oppression

Since Jericho was destroyed approximately forty years after the Exodus, the latter event occurred between the years 1415 and 1340 B.C. Moses was eighty years old at the time of the Exodus,⁶³ and, hence, the oppression must have taken place between 1420 and 1495 B.C.

The historical background for an Israelite oppression in the year 1420 B.C. finds its setting during the reign of Thutmose IV (1420-1411 B.C.). It is possible that Thutmose IV was not at first designed to be his father's successor if we may believe a folk-tale in circulation centuries after his accession. However, he was called upon to maintain the empire in Asia, which brought his armies as far north as Naharin. In the spring of the year eight (1412 B.C.) news of a serious revolt in Nubia compelled Thutmose IV to quell the uprising.⁶⁴

In view of Thutmose's difficulties in Asia and Nubia he had just reason to fear the increasing numbers of the Israelites. But from Exodus 1.11,14 it is evident that the greater portion of the oppression engaged the Israelites in construction work. Thutmose IV then would have to create enough work for nearly 600,000 men.⁶⁵ Such an inference cannot be maintained from what we know of Thutmose's scanty

63. Acts 7. 23; Acts 7.29-30

64. Breasted, A History of Egypt, pp.327-328

65. Exodus 12.37

building operations. Breasted says, "It is probable that Thutmose did not long survive the war in Nubia. He was, therefore, unable to beautify Thebes and adorn the state temples as his fathers had done."⁶⁶ Thus in the first nine years of the oppression Thutmose's scanty building operations make it difficult to conceive of a Hebrew oppression during his reign.

The historical background for Israel's oppression in the year 1495 B.C. takes us back to the time of Thutmose III (1501-1447 B.C.). This is the same period to which the oppression under the late date of the Exodus has been assigned, and essentially the historical conditions would not differ to any extent. A more detailed discussion of Israel's oppression during the reign of Thutmose III will be presented in a following section.⁶⁷

3. The Exodus

It has already been noted that the Middle Date for the Exodus is based on Albright's dating of the destruction of Jericho. Since the publication of Garstang's work, Albright has found that an upper shrine at Jericho contained a large commemorative scarab of Amenhotep III, three small scarabs of the same Pharaoh, and one of Rameses II to say nothing of great masses of broken pottery and other

67. cf. pp.48-51

objects. While the general evidence of the pottery points to the destruction of Jericho cir. 1400 B.C. as a maximum date, Albright suggests considerable lower dates. Moreover, the evidence of the Mycaean pieces and of the four local imitations of a Mycensean type is squarely against the date for the destruction of Jericho before the middle of the fourteenth century or after the middle of the thirteenth. Therefore, Albright contends that in all probability the fall of Canaanite Jericho took place somewhere cir. 1375 and 1300 B.C.⁶⁸

In answer to the position taken by Albright, we will first of all consider the number of sherds which support this dating, and secondly, the history of Jericho.

Ross calls attention to the fact that the number of sherds dating from 1385-900 B.C. found in the necropolis of Jericho was twenty-two.⁶⁹ On the same site Garstang and his assistants examined 40,000 pieces which pointed to the destruction of the city around 1400 B.C.⁷⁰

Garstang⁷¹ also records that the destruction of Jericho is well marked by black layers of burnt matter running down from the ruined parapet of the outer wall. In this area a few houses sprang up, outside and upon the disused fortifications, after the destruction of the upper city.

68. Albright, Bulletin of the American Schools for Oriental Research, No.74, April 1939

69. Ross, Hibbert Journal, 1940-1941

70. C.Marston, New Bible Evidence, p.130

71. Garstang, Foundations of Bible History, p.146

In the second half of the Late Bronze Age these houses were destroyed leaving a second layer of ashes. Between the two layers of burnt matter there was found in the course of excavation a vase of Mycenaean style, the date of which may be assigned with some certainty to about 1300 B.C. It pertains, as the evidence shows, to a partial reoccupation of the northern extremity of the site, outside the former limits of the upper city and above the debris that marks its fall. It follows that the upper city had already been reduced to ruins before that date. The evidence then points towards the year 1400 B.C. for the fall of Jericho.

As stated before, Albright's dating of the fall of Jericho places the Exodus cir. 1415 or 1340 B.C. In support of Albright's view archeological evidence is used to show that there was no settled population in the region of Edom and Moab until the twelfth or thirteenth century B.C. such as is supposed by the account of Israel's journey around the land of Edom. Hence, this circumvention of Edom would have been unnecessary as early as 1400 B.C. At the most, occasional collisions with nomadic tribes would have hindered Israel's progress through Edom and Moab. But a date in the neighborhood of 1300 B.C. for the Exodus would bring the Israelites into northern Moab not far from the middle of the thirteenth century.^{72.}

72. Burrows, What Mean These Stones?, p.75

But there is archeological evidence to support the early occupation of Edom, for the Ras Shamra Tablets speak of Edom as an organized kingdom as early as 1400 B.C. Furthermore, Ross says:

There is, moreover, this further consideration which I can confirm by more than one visit to these regions, that if the Moabites and the Edomites lived after the manner of the present day Bedouin inhabitants, imperishable traces of their occupation would not remain.⁷³

Hence, Israel's journey around Edom could have been necessary as early as 1400 B.C.

The archeological evidence from Ai is also used to support Albright's dating of the fall of Jericho. Madame Krause-Marquet and her assistant excavators at Ai have come to the conclusion that Ai was destroyed about 2000 B.C., and remained an uninhabitable ruin till about 1260 B.C. Accepting this conclusion, Pere Vincent offers this solution in defence of the Biblical narrative. Jericho had become the scene of a holocaust, and the tribes and the townships of Ganaan leagued themselves together to bar the way of the invaders. Ai was obviously the rallying point and was defended on the south side by walls that still exist and in places rise to a height of sixteen feet. Ai means ruin par excellence, but the ruin as a fortress was stronger than any city in the vicinity, and as a field of battle had obvious

73. Ross, Hibbert Journal, 1940-1941

J,W.Jack adds that:

If this theory of Vincent's be correct, the narrative of Joshua becomes the actual account of a striking episode in the Israelite conquest of Canaan.⁷⁴

Therefore if the archeological evidence from Edom and Ai is carefully considered, Israel's entrance into Canaan is possible cir. 1400 B.C. and need not be delayed until the middle of the twelfth century. Since Albright's dating of the fall of Jericho is based on insufficient evidence, and the overwhelming testimony of archeology points to 1400 B.C. for the destruction of the city, his position cannot be maintained.

74. Jack quoted by Ross, Hibbert Journal, 1940-1941

C. THE EARLY DATE

1. The Sojourn

The early date for the Exodus (1447 B.C.) takes us back to the year 1877 B.C. in the days of the XIIth Dynasty for the historical setting of the beginning of Israel's sojourn in Egypt. At this time the nation was made up of an aggregation of small states or petty principedoms, the heads of which owed the Pharaoh their loyalty, but they were not his officials or servants. The Middle Kingdom was thus a feudal state not essentially unlike that of later Europe. It was a state which could exist only as long as there was a strong man in the palace at Ithtowe: and the slightest evidence of weakness meant its rapid dissolution. For our knowledge of these barons we are dependent upon their surviving tombs and monuments for the dead. All such remains in the Delta have perished, so that we can speak with certainty only of the conditions in the south, and even here it is only in Middle Egypt of which we are adequately informed.¹

1. Breasted, A History of Egypt, pp. 157-158

The domains over which the nomarch ruled were not all his unqualified possessions. His wealth consisted of lands and revenues of two classes; the paternal estate, received from his ancestors, and the count's estate, conveyed as a fief by the Pharaoh anew at the nomarch's death. It was this fact which to some extent enabled the Pharaoh to control the feudatories and to secure the appointment of partisans of his house throughout the country.

The treasury was the organ of the central government, which gave administrative cohesion to the otherwise loose aggregation of nomarchies. It had its income paying property in all the nomes. The central office of the treasury was the "White House," which through its subdepartments of the granery, the herds, the "double gold-house," and other produce of the country, collected into the central magazines and stock-yards the annual revenues due to the Pharaoh. The head of the "White House" was the chief treasurer.²

Justice was dispensed by the administrative officials; thus a treasurer of the god boasts that he was one "knowing the law, discreet in executing it." The six "Great Houses" of courts of justice, with the vizier at its head, sat at Ithtowe. There was besides a "House of Thirty" evidently possessing judicial functions precided over by the vizier.

2. Breasted, A History of Egypt, p.165

The scanty records of the time throw little light on the other organs of the government. For the purpose of carrying on public works as well as for taxation and census records, the country was divided into two administrative districts of the North and South. The "Magistrates of the Southern Tens" served in both districts, showing that they were not confined to the South alone. An elaborate system of registration was in force. Every head of a family was enrolled as soon as he had established an independent household, consisting of all the members including the serfs and slaves. His oath to the correctness of the registration list was taken by a "Magistrate of the Southern Tens" in the land office, one of the bureaus of the vizier's departments where all this registration was filed. The office of the vizier contained the central archives of the government, and all records of the land administration with the census and tax registration were filed in his bureaus. The vizier under the Pharaoh was virtually the head of the government.³

These political conditions of the XIIth Dynasty form an ideal setting for Joseph and the beginning of Israel's sojourn in Egypt. Of special significance is the statement in Genesis 41.41, "I have set thee over all the land of Egypt." By the author's frequent use in the Joseph narrative of the specific expression $\text{בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם}$, "twinland," he intends

3. Breasted, A History of Egypt, p.165-166

to emphasize the fact that in Joseph's time both lands were under the administration of Joseph as a sign of consolidated power and unified government. Thus the narrator shows complete familiarity with the changed conditions in the Nile valley from the time of Joseph and his own time. Hence, his concern is to stress the fact of a united Egypt, when he tells of Joseph's installation over the whole country of the $\square \text{ } \text{?} \text{ } \text{?} \text{ } \text{?}$. Immediately after Joseph's appointment as vizier, he journeyed throughout the whole of the "two lands" (Gen.41.46). In this last instance it is particularly clear that all the territories from the south to the north in both Lower and Upper Egypt were included.⁴

This remarkable emphasis assumes special historic importance when it is recalled that before the New Kingdom there was only one vizier for both territories. Only in the New Kingdom do two viziers appear, one for Upper Egypt, and one for Lower Egypt. The author of the Joseph narrative must have known of these changed conditions, and therefore wanted to bring out the fact that in contrast to his time, when there were two viziers, Joseph was the sole vizier over the whole country of the "two lands." He emphasizes this, not only because it had been the administrative system of that earlier time, but also because of the necessity of preparing for the threatening catastrophe which rendered essential a

4. Yahuda, The Accuracy of the Bible, p.22

unified and strong administration of the entire country in the hands of a wise and far-seeing counsellor. If there had not been a change in the vizierate, and the author had no knowledge thereof, he would simply content himself with the statement that Joseph was installed vizier of Egypt.⁵ In general then, the story of Joseph must have taken place under some Pharaoh of the Middle Kingdom.

To assign any one Pharaoh of the Middle Kingdom to the life of Joseph would be a rather hazardous undertaking in view of the uncertain chronology for this period of Egyptian history. The debatable point with regard to the Middle Kingdom is the period of time which it covered. It is impossible to believe that the events of the Middle Kingdom can fill out the fifteen hundred years necessitated by the longer chronology as against the four or five hundred years at the most demanded by the shorter chronology.⁶

2. The Oppression

With the expulsion of the Hyksos by Ahmose (1580-1557 B.C.) Egyptian history enters upon a new stage. No sooner had Ahmose freed the country from the Hyksos pressure on the northern frontiers than he was obliged to turn his attention to the south, where the disorganization following the Middle Kingdom had given the Nubians opportunity to

5. Yahuda, The Accuracy of the Bible, p.23

6. Cambridge Ancient History, vol. I, p.315

revolt. After quelling the revolt in Nubia, Ahmose had to defeat his inveterate rivals in Egypt south of el-Kab in a battle on the Nile, and the repression of still another rebellion by the same enemy left Ahmose in undisputed possession of the throne.⁷

There seem to have been few nobles who supported Ahmose in his struggle to expell the Hyksos and to strengthen Egypt from within. The confiscation of their property marked the extinction of the landed nobility, which had so largely formed the substance of the governmental organization of the Middle Kingdom.⁸

The course of events, which culminated in the expulsion of the Hyksos, left Ahmose at the head of a strong army, and Egypt now became a military state. Having throughly learned war and having perceived the enormous wealth to be gained by it, the whole land was roused and stirred with a lust for conquest which was not quenched for two centuries. In Syria the army had learned the tactics of war and the stratigic disposition of forces, the earliest of which we know anything in history. The Hyksos had brought the horse into Egypt and left the Egyptians in possession of a large proportion of chariotry, while the stables of the Pharaoh contained thousands of the best horses to be had in Asia.⁹

The supreme position occupied by the Pharaoh meant a

7. Cambridge Ancient History, vol.II, p.40

8. ibid., p.41

9. ibid., pp.42-43

very active participation in the affairs of the government. He was accustomed every morning to meet with the vizier to consult with him on all the current business which came under his eye. Immediately thereafter he conferred with the chief treasurer. The Pharaoh's office, in which the officials made their daily reports to him, was the central organ of the government where all its lines converged. Even the limited number of state or administrative documents preserve to us the vast array of detailed questions in practical administration which the busy king decided. The internal administration required frequent journeys to examine new buildings and check all sorts of official abuses. The increasing business of the government constrained the Pharaoh to appoint two viziers, one residing at Thebes for the administration of the south, while the other in charge of the north lived at Heliopolis. Thus the land was owned by the crown, worked by the king's serfs, and controlled by his officials.¹⁰

As Ahmose gained leisure from his arduous wars, the new state slowly emerged. None of his buildings and few of his monuments have survived. His greatest work remains the XVIIIth Dynasty itself. After a reign of at least twenty-two years, Ahmose died in 1557 B.C. and the crown passed to his son and successor, Amenhotep I.¹¹

10. Cambridge Ancient History, vol. II, p.44

11. ibid., p.53

At the accession of Amenhotep I, Nubia had so long been without a strong arm from the north, that Amenhotep I was obliged to invade the country by force and quell the uprisings.

There was similar trouble in the Delta, where the long period of disorganization of the Hyksos had given the Libyans the opportunity of pushing in and occupying the rich Delta lands. Finding the Libyan aggression too threatening to be ignored, Amenhotep I drove back the invaders and retained his frontiers. He was now at liberty to turn his arms to Asia, but unfortunately there are no records of this Syrian campaign. After a reign of at least ten years the architect of Amenhotep's Theban buildings narrates the king's death at Thebes.¹²

If it was the Hyksos who welcomed the Israelites, it is very likely that their expulsion caused the Hebrew oppression. When Ahmose I expelled the Hyksos, why did he not drive out the foreign Hebrews with them? Jacob's family had not entered Egypt as usurpers or conquerors, but as a pastoral people, and the departure of Israel would have meant a serious economic loss to Ahmose I. The war of Hyksos expulsion left the land impoverished, and made the repopulation and rebuilding of the country necessary. Hence Ahmose did not want to lose the Hebrews no more than the Southern States wanted to lose the slaves in their program of rehabilitation after the Civil War.¹³

12. Cambridge Ancient History, vol. II, p. 54

13. Thorson, Oppression and Exodus, pp. 5-6

The Exodus narrative opens with the statement: "Now there arose a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph." (Ex.1.8) In the passage just quoted the Egyptian "ignore" or "know not" has a hostile connotation,¹⁴ and this hostility implies a change of rule. There is a period of transition in the Egyptian government within the scope of Biblical chronology, namely the expulsion of the Hyksos and the founding of the XVIIIth Dynasty after the expulsion of the Hyksos. The new king over Egypt which knew not Joseph evidently refers to the rise of the XVIIIth Dynasty after the expulsion of the Hyksos, during whose reign the Israelites had been made welcome.¹⁵

As the Hyksos were the conquerors of a foreign people, they would quite naturally seek as many allies as they could to strengthen their hold on Egypt, and possibly found such support in the children of Israel who too were a foreign people. As of kin with the hated Hyksos, the Hebrews, who remained in Goshen after the Hyksos departure, were now subjected to an iron rule. The XVIIIth Dynasty started to rebuild the temples and repair the ruins inflicted by the Hyksos. In these building operations the inscriptions record the employment of many Fenkhu (Phoenecians, Asiatics), and the Israelites may have been included in their numbers.¹⁶

Ahmose's tours of inspection revealed a new danger

14. Naville, Archeology and the Old Testament, p.90
 15. Knight, Nile and Jordan, p.136
 16. Caiger, Bible and Spade, 9.64

threatening the country. With the Hyksos danger on the north and the Nubian insurrection in the south, Ahmose had just reason to fear the growing Israelite power from within. In conference with his trusted officials:

He said unto his people, Behold the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we: Come on, let us deal wisely with them; lest they multiply, and it come to pass, that, when there falleth out any war, they join also unto our enemies and fight against us, and so get them up out of the land. Therefore they did set over them taskmasters to afflict them with their burdens, and they built for Pharaoh treasure cities, Pithom and Raamses.¹⁷

After Ahmose had expelled the Hyksos it was natural for him to fortify his weak north-eastern frontier. Under the Hyksos rule there was no necessity for fortification, but now it became the point of attack. Therefore, to guard against the Hyksos pressure from Asia and to suppress the Hebrew danger from within, Ahmose most likely ordered the cities of Pithom and Raamses to be built. In spite of the fact that there are no records of Ahmose's building activity in the Delta, and that the monuments of this king are few, it is equally true that few records of any period of Egyptian history have been found in the Delta.¹⁸

After Ahmose's rule the reign of Amenhotep I passed with no unusual attempt to suppress the increasing Israelites. There is some doubt whether Amenhotep I left a son entitled to the throne. His successor, Thutmose I, was the son of a woman whose birth and family are of doubtful connection, and

17. Exodus 1.9-11

18. Thorson, Oppression and Exodus, p.13

her great son evidently gained the throne by his marriage with a princess of the old Theban line named Ahmose, through whom he could assert a valid claim to the throne in 1540 or 1535 B.C. Thutmose I at once gave his attention to Nubia, which he reorganized by withdrawing from it the mayor's control of Nekhen and placing it under the administration of a viceroy. Evidently Amenhotep I's conquest of Asia had not been sufficient to ensure Thutmose's treasury of the regular tribute he now enjoyed from Nubia.

Thutmose I now gave his attention to a similar task in Asia. Syria and Palestine, divided by the physical conformity of the land, was split into numerous petty principedoms, each consisting of a city with the surrounding fields and outlying villages, all under the control of a local dynast. These miniature kingdoms were embroiled in frequent wars with one another as each dynast endeavored to unseat his neighbor and absorb his territory. Seemingly without difficulty Thutmose I reached Naharin, where he defeated the Asiatics in a great slaughter, and set up a stone boundary tablet along the Euphrates. How much Thutmose accomplished in the reorganization of Asia we do not know, but it seems that he returned from Asia without anxiety and devoted himself to the regeneration of Egypt. He began the restoration of the temples neglected since the time of the Hyksos.¹⁹

19. Cambridge Ancient History, vol. II, pp. 54-59

The close of the reign of Thutmose I is involved in deep obscurity and there is no reconstruction without its difficulties. Thutmose I's claim to the throne may have been weakened by the death of his queen, Ahmose, who was a descendent of the old Theban princes who expelled the Hyksos. There was a strong party who regarded the blood of this line as alone entitled to royal honors. All her children died except one daughter, Makere-Hatshepsut, who was the only child of the Theban line. So strong was the party of legitimacy, that it even forced the king years before to proclaim her as his successor. The current verdict of historians has long been that Thutmose II, a feeble and diseased son of the old Pharaoh, followed upon his father's demise. His brief reign is of such slight importance that its exact place in the transition from Thutmose I to queen Ahmose's daughter, Hatshepsut, and Thutmose III is of little consequence.²⁰

Hatshepsut's partisans were not able to crown their favorite without a difficult struggle with a third Thutmose. He was the son of an obscure concubine, Isis, and it is probable that he married Hatshepsut to gain a valid title to the throne. By a dramatic coup d'etat, which was at first completely successful in 1501 B.C., the young Thutmose III stepped into the palace of the Pharaoh. Before long the queen's partisans had become so strong that the king was seriously hampered and thrust into the background.²¹

20. Cambridge Ancient History, vol. II, pp. 60-61

21. Ibid., p. 61

Hatshepsut thus became the ruler, and the conventions of the court were all warped to suit the reign of a woman. Her father's architect, Ineni, defines the position of the two rulers as follows. After a brief reference to Thutmose III as "the ruler upon the throne of him who begat him," he says: "His sister, the Divine Consort, Hatshepsut, administered the affairs of the two lands by her designs; Egypt was made to labor with bowed head for her, the excellent seed of the god, who came forth from him." Closest to the queen was Sennemut, tutor of Thutmose III as a child. He was now entrusted with the education of the queen's little daughter, Nefure. The aged Ineni was succeeded as overseer of the treasury by a noble named Thutiy. The whole machinery of the state was in the hands of the partisans of the queen whose careers were identified with the fortunes of Hatshepsut. Confident of her imperial wealth, Hatshepsut's first enterprise was the building of her magnificent Der el-Bahri temple against the western cliffs of Thebes. For the lavish adornment of her temple Hatshepsut embarked upon her famous expedition to Punt and brought back a fabulous fortune. Besides her own temple and tomb the queen employed her growing wealth in the restoration of the old temples which had not yet recovered from the Hyksos invasion. In celebration of her royal jubilee she made preparations for the erection of the obelisks in the colonnaded hall of Karnak which was built by her father. Sennemut levied the

necessary forced labor, who erected the tallest shafts in Egypt up to that time, being $97\frac{1}{2}$ feet high, weighing nearly 350 tons, and richly overlaid with electrum.²²

A relief in the Wadi Maghara in Sinai reveals her operations among the copper mines, which continued down to the twentieth year of her reign. Sometime between this date and the close of the year twenty-one, when we find Thutmose III ruling alone; the great queen must have died.²³

The main fact which renders the personality of this queen of engrossing interest to our subject is that there are many cogent reasons for believing that she is to be identified with the daughter of the Pharaoh, who was the means of preserving the life of the infant Moses. This identity harmonizes perfectly with the whole scheme of Biblical chronology.

Moses was eighty years old at the time of the Exodus (Ex.7.7) and if we add eighty years to 1445 B.C. (early date of the Exodus), the birth of Moses may be placed about 1525 B.C. at the very period Hatshepsut was a princess, the favorite daughter of Thutmose I.²⁴

If our chronology is right, Thutmose I was the author of the inhuman command, "Every son that is born ye shall cast

22. Cambridge Ancient History, vol. II, pp. 62-65

23. Ibid., p. 65

24. Knight, Nile and Jordan, p. 136

into the river." (Ex.1.22) This is apparent from the fact that Thutmose I reigned from 1544 to probably 1515 B.C., and Moses, as near as we can tell, was born in 1525 B.C.²⁵

Thutmose I intensified the oppression to a policy of extinction, not as an arbitrary act, but as one of expediency dictated by fear of an Israelite uprising. Israel had entered Lower Egypt as a tribe, populated the whole district, and spread throughout the whole land. In view of the previous oppression under Ahmose I, Thutmose I had just reason to suspect Israel's sympathy with the rebellious Nubians and Syrians. Therefore, Thutmose I issued the edict which took the lives of the Hebrew male infants.

Hatshepsut's rule was followed by the long and glorious reign of Thutmose III (1501-1447 B.C.) who showed no love for the departed queen. Around her obelisks at Karnak, Thutmose III had a masonry sheathing built, covering her name and the record of her erection of them at the base. Everywhere he had her name erased. In the relief scenes of the same temple, where Sennemut, Nehsi, and Thutiy had been so proud to appear, their names and figures were ruthlessly chiselled away. These mutilated monuments stand to this day as grim witnesses of the great king's vengeance.²⁶

The peaceful rule of Hatshepsut had been the signal

25. Knight, Nile and Jordan, p.136

26. Cambridge Ancient History, vol.II, p.66

for revolt for the Syrian dynasts. In 1479 B.C. Thutmose III left Egypt, pushed forward into Syria, and proved himself to be both an able and courageous warrior in his seventeen campaigns to subdue the rebellious tribes in Asia.²⁷

After his second campaign Thutmose III made plans for the enlargement of the Karnak temple marred by Hatshepsut's obelisks. Unable or unwilling to build around his father's obelisks, Thutmose laid out his imposing colonnaded halls which today form one of the greatest architectural beauties at Thebes. The greatest hall is nearly one hundred and forty feet long.²⁸

On the walls of this magnificent building were recorded long annals of his victories in Asia and extensive lists of the plunder he had taken. A list of 119 towns which he captured on his first campaigns was three times displayed upon the pylons.²⁹

Shortly after his eighth campaign Thutmose III made a tour of inspection throughout Egypt, closely questioning the local authorities wherever he landed for the purpose of suppressing corruption in the local administration during the collection of taxes. On these journeys he had opportunity to observe the progress of the noble temple buildings which he was either erecting, restoring,

27. Cambridge Ancient History, vol. II, p. 67

28. Ibid., p. 73

29. Ibid., p. 79

or adorning at over thirty different places of which we know. Many more have perished. He revived the Delta, and from there to the third cataract his buildings were rising, strung like gems along the river.³⁰

As he felt his strength failing, the great king made co-regent his son, Amenhotep II. When the co-regency lasted for about a year, the greatest of Egyptian conquerors died at the end of his fifty-fourth year upon the throne.³¹

This historical background of Egypt under Thutmose III presents a powerful Pharaoh under whom the Israelite oppression could have occurred.

Knowing the circumstances accompanying Thutmose III's rise to power, we can ascertain why Moses fled to Midian. The Bible asserts that "by faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter." As an adopted son of Hatshepsut, Moses had certain privileges at the royal court. To Thutmose the title, "son of Pharaoh's daughter," meant that Moses was the divine offspring of Amun-Ra and next in line to the coveted throne. Petrie notes that "it is very uncertain if a king could reign, except as a husband of the heiress of the kingdom, the right to which descended in the female line."³² That Hatshepsut had Moses in mind as her successor is indicated

30. Cambridge Ancient History, vol. II, p. 81

31. Ibid., p. 86

32. Quoted by Thorson, Oppression and Exodus, p. 47

by her refusal to marry Thutmose III, and the latter's insane rage against Hatshepsut's monuments.

Undoubtedly Moses' conduct invited Thutmose to place such suspicion upon Moses. The words of Stephen indicate that Moses was conscious of the fact that he was to be the leader of the Exodus.

And seeing one of them suffer wrong, he (Moses) defended him, and avenged him that was oppressed, and smote the Egyptian: For he supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them; but they understood not.³³

Moses evidently stayed at the court of Hatshepsut until the year of her death. Immediately after Moses smote the Egyptian, a Hebrew, who recognized Moses as a member of the royal house rebuked him saying:

Who made thee a prince and a judge over us?... Now when Pharaoh heard this thing, he sought to slay Moses. But Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh.³⁴

Another reason which inclines us to believe that it was Thutmose III who was the Pharaoh of the oppression, is the fact that the death of Hatshepsut coincides with the year that Moses fled to Midian. As near as can be ascertained, the death of Hatshepsut occurred in the year 1486 B.C. Moses was forty years old when he fled to Midian and was born cir. 1526 B.C.³⁵ Forty years subtracted from 1526 B.C. arrives at the year 1486 B.C. when Hatshepsut died.³⁶

33. Acts 7.24-25

34. Exodus 2.14-15

35. cf. p.47

36. Thorson, Oppression and Exodus, pp.48-49

From the foregoing it is very probable that the Israelite oppression was a feature of the XVIIIth Dynasty. With the expulsion of the Hyksos, "Thutmose was the Pharaoh" who knew not Joseph," and forced the Israelites to build the fortress cities of Pithom and Raamses. Thutmose I issued the edict of the killing of the male children, and his daughter, Hatshepsut, was the princess who rescued Moses and adopted him as her son. At Hatshepsut's death, Thutmose III drove Moses from Egypt in a fit of jealousy and continued the oppression of the Israelites.

With the political history of Egypt in mind we can determine the motives for Israel's oppression, Moses' adoption, and flight to Midian. The figures of secular and Biblical chronology both support this early date for the oppression in every detail.

3. The Exodus

There is abundant archeological evidence for the early date of the Exodus. In the first place there are the remains from the destruction of Jericho. It was ancient custom to build one city over the ruins of another, and this is what Garstang found to be true in his excavation of Jericho. Potsherds from the lower strata disclosed that the earliest occupation of Jericho dated from 2500-1900 B.C. With the help of assistants Garstang examined no fewer than 60,000 fragments from the strata of the burnt city. 40,000 of these potsherds attested to the destruction of

Jericho somewhere around 1400 B.C.³⁷

On the western hills of Jericho, Garstang found the necropolis of the city. In the richer tombs the presence of scarabs inscribed with the cartouch of the reigning Pharaohs proved to be important. These scarabs, eighty in all, served to date the pottery in their particular tombs which could be compared with the broken sherds in the city. As the tombs were opened, the latest interment was found to belong to the century 1500-1400 B.C. The eighty scarabs found bore in succession the cartouches of the XVIIIth Dynasty Pharaohs. One scarab bears the joint names of Hatshepsut and Thutmose III (1501-1487 B.C.), and another bears two royal seals of Amenhotep III (1413-1377 B.C.). All series of the dated scarabs end with the two seals of Amenhotep III. Thus, there is evidence quite independent of the pottery, that the city ceased to exist during the reign of Amenhotep III. It is very significant that no pottery or decoration representative of Akhenaten or Tutonkhamen were found at all. Thus, everything points to the destruction of Jericho during the reign of Amenhotep III (1413-1377 B.C.).³⁸

In his discussion of the destruction of Jericho Garstang himself states:

37. C. Marston, New Bible Evidence, pp. 129-136

38. ibid., p. 137

Among the thousands of potsherds characteristic of the period, found above and below the ruins, not one piece of Mycenaean ware has been observed. This fact suggests the fourteenth century had not yet begun at the time the walls fell.³⁹

Another city destroyed by Joshua in his campaigns in Palestine was Hazor. (Josh. 11. 11) In the concluding section on the destruction of Hazor by Joshua, Garstang notes that the destruction of the camp was complete and final. The objects discovered in the excavation of the area indicate that it was occupied till about 1400 B.C., when it was abandoned and never reinhabited.⁴⁰

The fact that Jericho and Hazor, conquered in the course of Joshua's campaigns, seem on archeological grounds to have suffered destruction at about the same time, is of itself sufficiently striking to merit consideration. It is of first importance when the approximate date, 1400 B.C., is found to tally closely with the clear indication of the Biblical narrative, namely that these cities were destroyed at about the same time.⁴¹

It is clear that Jericho and Hazor were destroyed at about the same time, but the question now is, who wrought the destruction? In 1887 three-hundred and twenty clay tablets inscribed with cuneiform writing were unearthed at Tell el-Amarna. Though all of the tablets were found in the deserted palace of Akhenaton (Amenhotep IV), some of

39. Garstang, *Foundations of Bible History*, p.146

40. *ibid.*, p.198

41. *ibid.*, p.54

them were addressed by name to Akhenaton's predecessor, Amenhotep III, whose reign ended not later than 1375 B.C. In general the tablets contain the complaints of Palestinean vassals to the Egyptian Pharaohs of the attacks of a people called the SA-GAZ, or Habiru. Consequently the acute phase of the attack described in these tablets may be held to cover the years 1380 to 1365 B.C.⁴²

The letter of Arad-Hiba, king of Jerusalem, complains of the attacks of a people whom he constantly calls the "Habiru."

The Habiru are now capturing the fortress of the Pharaoh. Not a single governor remains among them to my lord, the king; all have perished. Zimrida of Lachish has been killed. May the king send help. Lo, if no reinforcements come this year, all the countries of the lord, the king, will be utterly destroyed ... The land of the king is lost to the Habiru. And now indeed, a city of the territory of Jerusalem, Bet-Ninib, has been captured ... After taking the city of Rubuda, they are now attempting to take Jerusalem ... What have I done against my lord, the King, that thou lovest the Habiru, and hatest the governors? ... The Habiru have wasted all the territory of the King.⁴³

The problem is to identify these Habiru. Interpreting the Amarna tablets Price contends that:

From parallel passages it has been definitely established that the SA-GAZ and the Habiru of the Jerusalem letters are one and the same peoples, that they were none other than the nomadic Hebrews who were making their first irruption into Canaan, their future home.⁴⁴

42. Garstang, Foundations of Bible History, p.253

43. Gaiger, Bible and Spade, p.101

44. I. Price, The Monuments and the Old Testament, p.162

Emil Kraeling⁴⁵ now seriously questions the identification of the Habiru or SA-GAZ of the Amarna Tablets with the Hebrews. He derives his argument from the Ras Shamra Tablets which reveal that about a hundred towns belonged to the kingdom of Ugarit; that Niqmed, the king under whom the texts were recorded, was a vassal of the Hittite king Shuppiluluma; and that the correct name of the Habiru was Hapiru. While the SA-GAZ of the Ras Shamra Tablets differs slightly from the SA-GAZ of the Amarna Tablets, where there are variations, it seems clear that the same designation is meant. Thus, Kraeling concludes that the reading Hapiru instead of Habiru makes the equation with the Aperu of the Seti Stele more certain, and, therefore, the Hapiru and the Aperu were a people altogether distinct from the Hebrews.

In reply to this objection the Seti Stele (1314-1292 B.C.) gives the names of the Palestinean tribes conquered by the Egyptians, among whom are the Syrians, Canaanites, Bedouins, and a people called the Aperiu or Aperu. The word apparently is an Egyptian attempt to reproduce the name Habiru or Hebrew.⁴⁶ If the Aperu of the Seti Stele are Hebrews, then the Hapiru of the Ras Shamra Tablets are also Hebrews.

Garstang admits that the words Habiru and Hebrew

45. E. Kraeling, Bulletin of American Schools for Oriental Research, No. 77, February 1940

46. Caiger, Bible and Spade, p.108

may be philologically equivalent, but contends that no historical connection can be traced between the Habiru revolution recorded in the Amarna Tablets and the original invasion of Canaan by the Israelites under Joshua. The Israelites launched their attack from the east by way of Jericho, whence they drove a wedge across the highlands through Gibeon and Ajalon, which took place some twenty-five years before the Habiru disturbance. Secondly the Habiru attack of the Amarna Tablets came from the north and was a sequel to the conquest of Syria by the Hittite king, Suppiluliuma, whose campaigns can be traced with certainty by the parallelism of his own archives with those of the Amarna Tablets. The original invasion of Canaan by the Hebrew-Israelites under Joshua was distinct both in character and in date from that of the Hebrew-Habiru.⁴⁷

On the other hand Garstang makes concessions which have considerable bearing on the interpretation of the Habiru of the Amarna Tablets. He points out that the summoning of Joshua of the tribal representatives to Shechem may be estimated provisionally between 1370 and 1367 B.C. and, therefore, overlap the period of the Habiru revolution. Now one of the undated letters written to the Pharaoh by Abd-Khupa of Jerusalem, actually reports

47. Garstang, Foundations of Bible History, pp. 255-257

the secession of Shechem to the Habiru. "Labaya and the land of the Shechem have given (all) to the Habiru." That Abd-Khipa by this statement did in effect record the peaceful occupation of Shechem by Joshua is possible. The ruler of Jerusalem, beset with his own immediate problems, would hardly be able or interested to discern any difference between the Hebrew-Israelites from the east, and the Hebrew-Habiru from the north. The one name, Habiru, would cover both without distinction.⁴⁸

In a footnote Garstang also observes that the chief difficulty with the Amarna letters is the lack of fixed chronological points. One letter, written by Labaya, the chief of Shechem, bears the suggestion of a date in the signs 10-2. The date may refer to the reign of Amenhotep III and so indicate that a much longer range of time is covered than has hitherto been suggested. The date of this letter would fall about the year 1400 B.C., and so would point to a contact between Habiru and Israelite about the time of the fall of Hazor, a fertile possibility which must await further light.⁴⁹

Most scholars agree that as far as the name goes, Habiru and Hebrew are identical. "If Habiru does not mean Hebrew, then no name has been found in Babylonian or Assyrian to designate this important people."⁵⁰ The circumstances of the Habiru invasion are precisely those of

48. Garstang, Foundations of Bible History, pp.254-255

49. ibid., p.256

50. Jack, quoted by Caiger, Bible and Spade, p.102

of the Hebrew invasion as regards the date, the locality, the results, and the actual place names concerned. Even the references to Jerusalem, Lachish, and Shechem imply just the situation described in the Bible; the first two cities besieged but not taken, the last falling into the Hebrews hands (Joshua 24.1). In the words of the Amarna tablets:

They are now attempting to take Jerusalem... Gezer, Askelon, and Lachish have given oil, food, and supplies to the Habiru ... Labaya and the land of Shechem have given all to the Habiru.⁵¹

Thus, in all probability, the Tell el-Amarna Tablets record the Israelite conquest of Canaan.

The only Biblical witness for any date of the Exodus is I Kings 6.1:

And it came to pass in the four hundred and eightieth year after the children of Israel were come out of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel ... that he began to build the house of the Lord.

Garstang does not hesitate to accept the statement of the Biblical author as a clear indication of the date of the Exodus. He regards 480 as a round figure, which may be assumed to aim at accuracy within the broad margin of twenty years on both sides.⁵²

Professor Rowley's attitude toward the same figure is typical of another school of thought.

51. Gaiger, Bible and Spade, p.102

52. Ross, Hibbert Journal, 1940-1941

Were it not that the number 480 happens to suit the theory of the Exodus, it would be suspected by all as an artificial computation. For elsewhere we find a curious fondness for numbers that are a multiple of forty, and it is very probable that the author of I Kings 6.1 believed that twelve generations spanned the period and computed it on that basis.⁵³

Rowley's argument is equally true in its obverse. Israel's bondage in Egypt lasted 430 years, and if the author of Exodus had been obsessed with forty and its multiples, he would have made the number 440. The waters of the flood prevailed for 150 days, and dry land appeared on the 601st year.⁵⁴

Professor Curtes⁵⁵ as a result of careful investigation, has shown that on the basis of the synchronisms of the Assyrian eponyms, Solomon's temple was built either in 973 B.C., or on the basis of the synchronisms of the two kingdoms of Judah and Israel, in 965 B.C. If we add to both of these dates 480 years for the date of the Exodus, we get in the one case 1453 B.C., and 1445 B.C. in the other. Since 965 B.C. is the more generally accepted date for the founding of Solomon's temple, we will place the Exodus in the year 1445 B.C. The historical conditions of Egypt support the belief that the Exodus occurred at this time.

In 1445 B.C. the Pharaoh Amenhotep II was on the throne

53. Ross, Hibbert Journal, 1940-1941

54. ibid.

55. Knight, Nile and Jordan, p.136

of Egypt. When the news of Thutmose III's death (1447 B.C.) reached Asia, all Naharin, the Mitanni, and probably the northern coastal cities staged a simultaneous uprising to throw off the Egyptian yoke. With all his father's energy the young Amenhotep II prepared for the crisis and marched into Asia in the second year of his reign. So effective was Amenhotep's victory that no further uprising against his suzerainty in Asia was ever attempted. On his arrival at Thebes the young Pharaoh directed his attention to Nubia. Here Amenhotep exerted no more influence than was necessary to keep the trade routes open and prevent the barbarians from raiding the country. From then on Amenhotep II was not involved in war. After a reign of some twenty-seven years Amenhotep II was interred in the Valley of the Kings where his body rests to this day. ⁵⁶

But does the life of Moses fit into this historical background? The reader will recall that Moses fled from Thutmose III to the land of Midian and remained there in seclusion for forty years.⁵⁷ "And it came to pass 'after many days' that the king of Egypt died." (Ex.2.23) The phrase, "after many days," confirms the belief that it was Thutmose III from whom Moses fled. The expression just quoted suggests that the king who died had reigned a long time, and Thutmose III we know had a reign of fifty-four years

56. Cambridge Ancient History, vol.II, pp.89-91

57. cf., p.51

(1501-1447 B.C.). During the first years of his reign, Thutmose III was subservient to Hatshepsut, and a period of about forty years of independent rule corresponds to Moses' stay in Midian. Thus, both the Bible and historical chronology agree that it was Thutmose III who died while Moses was in Midian.⁵⁸

Moses waited for the death of the oppressor Thutmose III before returning to Egypt, and then appeared before the Pharaoh of the Exodus, Amenhotep II. When Asia broke out in revolt, Israel too sought its independence from Egypt. The first two years of Amenhotep's presence in Egypt allow ample time for the duration of the ten plagues, and significantly the second years of Amenhotep's reign, 1445 B.C., marks both the beginning of Amenhotep's campaign against Asia and the Hebrew Exodus from Egypt. In all probability a section of Pharaoh's army was destroyed in the Red Sea, and the remaining divisions marched north into Canaan, while the Israelites escaped eastward into the wilderness of Sinai.

Therefore, by accepting the Biblical dates, supported by the archeological finds at Jericho, almost all the difficulties are removed for a satisfactory solution. By adding 430 years to 1445 B.C., the approximate date of the Exodus, we go back to the nineteenth century B.C. This

58. Marston, New Bible Evidence, p.154

was the time of the great Pharaohs of the Middle Kingdom before the Hyksos invasion in 1780 B.C., under whom Joseph came to power. The Exodus then took place as stated in I Kings 6.1, 480 years before the building of Solomon's temple, namely in 1445 B.C. under Amenhotep II. The fall of Jericho, the first city in Canaan taken by the Israelites, occurred later in 1405 B.C. The Tell el-Amarna letters of about 1370 B.C., in mentioning the presence of the Hebrews in the region of Jerusalem, perfectly accord with the Biblical account describing the Hebrews pushing their campaign from Jericho towards the north and west, and confirm the notice (Judges 1.8) about the invasion of the region about Jerusalem.

Thus, the Biblical data prove to be the best founded and provide the simplest solution to the whole question of the date of the Exodus.

PART II
HISTORICITY

By faith a Christian accepts the entire Bible as the inerrant Word of God, but the skeptical mind regards the Biblical account as legend and refuses to accept the incidents as true. Therefore, the second object of this thesis is to furnish external evidence from archeology to establish the historicity of the given data in the Biblical narrative.

Throughout the account of the Exodus we are shown an environment such as can only be conceived in Egypt. We shall see that all the arrangements, institutions, officials, titles, customs, and usages have a peculiar Egyptian character; the whole phraseology and style of the narrative bears a typical Egyptian stamp.

A. The Sojourn

As we have seen history¹ presents conditions compatible with the background of the Joseph story. Archeology also testifies to the probability of Joseph's career. Doubt was once cast on the possibility of a mere Canaanite slave achieving such high promotion, but excavators have discov-

1. cf., pp.36-38

ered many historic parallels to Joseph's career. In the Tell el-Amarna Tablets we read that during the years of famine, Arisu, a Canaanite raised himself to be a prince in Egypt, compelling all the people to pay him tribute. A very striking analogy is the case of Yankhamu, another Canaanite, who became grand vizier to the Pharaoh Amenhotep II with special charges over the food supplies of the Delta.²

The inscriptions also record parallel instances of storing corn in order to feed the hungry in time of dearth. Thus the Ameni Inscription³ reads:

There came years of famine. Then I ploughed all the acres of the province and nourished the Pharaoh's subjects. I looked after their food, so that there was none hungry among them.

A similar account, the Bebi Inscription,⁴ usually assigned to the time of Joseph, states:

I collected corn as a friend of the Harvest God. I was watchful in the time of sowing, And now, when a famine arose lasting many years, I distributed corn to the city each year of famine.

The Biblical narrative has also preserved an authentic picture of the Egypt of those days as attested to by the monuments. The names Potiphar, Zaphenath-paneah, Asenath, etc., are of genuine Egyptian formation. Very characteristic is the importance attached to dreams and magicians. The Hebrew Bible is sprinkled with words and idioms which

2. Caiger, The O.T. & Modern Discovery, p.12

3. *ibid.*, p.13

4. *ibid.*, p.14

could have originated only in the Nile Valley. Examples of such expressions will be presented in a later section. Joseph's signet ring, vesture of fine linen, gold chain about his neck, and the privilege of riding in the "second chariot" are all portrayed as typical marks of royal favor. The embalming of Jacob's body is likewise in conformity with Egyptian usage.⁵

B. The Oppression

The details in connection with the oppression also fit into the background of Egyptian life. The Bible describes the oppression in this way:

And the Egyptians made the children of Israel to serve with rigor: and they made their lives bitter with hard bondage, in mortar, and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field: all their service, wherein they made them serve, was with rigor.⁶

The reason why these labors were especially oppressive is that the Israelites were shepherds, nomads, and possessors of cattle who lived in Goshen, a grazing country. The Pharaoh over Joseph even made the able Hebrews rulers over his own cattle (Gen.47,6). Instead of the easy going life of the cattle drivers the Israelites now became bricklayers and builders, condemned to a labor unknown to them. A shepherd, for the most part, is his own boss, but now the taskmasters were hard and exacting which embittered them still more against

5. Caiger, The O.T. & Modern Discovery, p.14

6. Exodus 1.13-14

this new way of life. Added to their burden was their treatment as prisoner slaves when they had not even declared war against Egypt.⁷

Pharaoh's reason for the oppression, "and so get them up out of the land," is of significance when it is realized that "going up from the land" is the usual Egyptian idiom for going to Canaan. Canaan is a land of mountains and the Egyptian went up to that country.⁸

When the Pharaoh issued the edict of the killing, he said:

When ye do the office of the midwife to the Hebrew women, and see them upon the stools; if it be a son, then ye shall kill him: but if it be a daughter, then shall she live. Ex.1,16

The practise of delivering infants from a birth stool is an Egyptian custom depicted on the relief scenes of Egyptian art. One relief represents the birth of Hatshepsut, and another the birth of Amenhotep III. In both instances the mother sits on a stool, while two goddesses are near her acting as midwives.⁹

After the birth of Moses, when his mother could no longer hide him, the Exodus narrative continues:

She took for him an ark of bulrushes, and daubed it with slime and with pitch, and put the child therein; and she laid it in the flags by the river's brink. Exodus 2,3

The use of the word "teba" for ark is significant. Here its real meaning is coffer, chest, holy shrine, or

7. Naville, Archeology and the Old Testament, p.40
 8. Yahuda, The Accuracy of the Bible, pp.72-73
 9. Naville, op. cit., p.46

coffin. Such a chest is generally used for the housing of images of the gods which were dedicated to the temples. On certain festivals the shrines with the deity figures were borne in solemn procession or carried on the Nile from one temple town to another on a bier, which was usually given the form of a barque, such as is conceived as a vehicle for the Sun-god Ra and other gods.¹⁰

Moses' mother used such an ark, or shrine, "teba," as the means for saving her child. She placed the infant in a chest which was exactly in the form used for enshrining images of gods, and laid it in a spot where Pharaoh's daughter was accustomed to bathe at a certain hour. Her hope was that the princess would, at the first glance, suppose it to be a chest containing the image of a god that had fallen from a boat into the river and drifted ashore, and thus she would have it rescued. Hence, the use of the word "teba" provides the key to the understanding of the whole episode.¹¹

The expression, bath par'o, "the daughter of Pharaoh," is not, as generally conceived, the designation for "a" daughter of Pharaoh, but is a literal reproduction of the Egyptian "saat nesu," daughter of the king, which was the official title of a princess of royal blood, just as "sa nesu," son of the king, was the official title of royal princes. Thus the narrator wanted to emphasize that it was the royal princess who came to the child's rescue. Otherwise

10. Yahuda, The Accuracy of the Bible, p.67-68

11. ibid., p.67

he would simply have said "one of Pharaoh's daughters."¹²

To show how accurately the bible mirrors the life of the times, Havard Carter¹³ found again and again the term "Pharaoh's daughter" inscribed on a sarcophagus for Hatshepsut. Thus, the author of the Exodus uses the very term by which she was known at the royal court.

The designation of "Pharaoh's daughter" is evidence of historical accuracy. The Bible does not describe Hatshepsut as "queen," for she did not begin to reign till 1514 B.C., and Moses was born in 1525 B.C. Had she been spoken of as "queen," there would have been a manifest discrepancy. Instead she is referred to as the "daughter of Pharaoh."¹⁴

Possibly Hatshepsut would have followed the same cruel policy of her father had not her womanly instincts been aroused at the sight of the infant's helpless condition. When the ark of papyrus containing Moses was opened, "the babe wept and she had compassion on him." (Ex.2,5) As the favorite daughter of Thutmose I, this remarkable princess wielded considerable authority, and it was therefore appropriate that she should be able to defy the royal edict.¹⁵

Marston calls attention to the fact that Josephus mentions the name of the princess who found Moses as "Thermuthis," which is an echo of her father's name Thutmose. Even if little trust can be placed in Josephus' historical accuracy, the similarity is striking.¹⁶

12. Yahuda, The Accuracy of the Bible, p.68
 13. Thorson, Oppression and Exodus, p.26
 14. Knight, Nile and Jordan, p.137
 15. ibid., p.137
 16. C. Marston, New Bible Evidence, p.162

The circumstances of Moses' rescue suggest the locality of this historic event. Undoubtedly Hatshepsut was bathing in a branch of the Nile free from crocidiles. This fact suggests the vicinity of Zoan, or Tanis. Heliopolis is not near the river and Memphis is crocidile haunted, but the field of Zoan answers the necessary particulars as stated in Psalm 78.12, "marvelous things did He in the sight of their fathers, in the land of Egypt, in the field of Zoan." 17

The objection has been raised that the kings of the XVIIIth Dynasty resided at Thebes, and that there is no evidence that Hatshepsut ever came in contact with the Hebrews in the north. But Heliopolis at this time was the center of administrative authority for the north, and Thutmose I could very likely have been in this region on one of his customary tours of inspection,¹⁸ which if not at Heliopolis because of the crocidiles, might just as well have been in the region of Zoan. Hatshepsut being heir apparent to the throne would likely accompany her father on some of these tours of inspection.

That the name "Mosheh," the Hebrew form of Moses is of Egyptian origin, has long been recognized. It has been suggested that it is the same Egyptian element, "mes," as in many theophorical names, like Thut-mes or Ra-mes, meaning Thoth or Ra has given birth. Other Egyptologists have thought that it

17. Knight, Nile and Jordan, p.157

18. Thorson, Oppression and Exodus, pp.27-28

is to be identified with "mesy," the born one, in the sense of boy, child, whereby the anonymity of the foundling should be emphasized.¹⁹

However, in Exodus 2,10 Scripture states, "And she called his name Moses: and she said, Because I drew him out of the water." Now it is known from Egyptian that "the water" was the common expression for the Nile. The second element of the name, "sheh," is a very common Egyptian word meaning pond, lake, but was also applied to the Nile, especially to the broad expanses of it, such as that near the Fayyum. As to the first element, "mu," it was used as a selected metaphorical expression for "seed" in the sense of son, child. Thus, "mu-sheh" simply means "the child of the Nile."²⁰

Through Divine intervention Moses was given all the advantages of royal training. "And the child grew, and she brought him unto Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son." (Ex.2,10) As an adopted son of a princess Moses was reared in the most resplendent court of Egyptian history. Here lived Sennemut, the renowned architect, Hapuseb, the prime minister who united church and state, and Nehsi, the treasurer who supervised the expeditions to the land of Punt. Maspero²¹ says that Hatshepsut was not married while she was co-regent with Thutmose III. This may account for her eagerness to adopt the infant Moses, while records of her own words assert that

19. Yahuda, The Accuracy of the Bible, p.65
20. ibid., p.66
21. Taken from Thorson, Oppression and Exodus, p.34

"her spirits inclined toward foreign peoples."

It was custom in Egypt to keep the child in the custody of the mother until the age of four. After that Moses' schooling consisted in writing, ethics, philosophy, and good manners. At the military school, the "Royal Stable for Education, he was in all probability trained for a career in the army. That Moses received some military training is possible in view of his later leadership of Israel through hostile territory to the borders of the promised land.²²

Tradition says that Moses was educated at Heliopolis, the ancient seat of learning, where he studied geometry, astronomy, literature, and law under professors who were also the priests of the temple. The Egyptians had an extensive knowledge in the field of medicine. The Eber's Papyrus enumerates 700 substances as having medical properties, while the Egyptian physicians wrote books on anatomy. The Physicians practised surgery, specialized in the treatment of disorders, and seem to have known something about the circulation of the blood. The courts were crowded with all the foreign master minds of antiquity eager for learning, whose names constituted a brilliant galaxy on the university roll.²³

The claim of modern critics that Moses was unable to write is now impossible to maintain, for even the slaves had to know how to write to render an account of their daily labors.²⁴

22. Therson, Oppression and Exodus, pp. 53-58

23. ibid., p. 39

24. ibid., p. 40

In a background such as this Moses became learned "in all the wisdom of Egypt." (Acts 7.23)

Archeology also furnishes information on the plight of the Israelites during the oppression under Thutmose III. The Bible passages to which the archeological remains refer, are the words of the Pharaoh of the Exodus, but there is no reason to believe that the same conditions did not prevail at the time of the oppression under Thutmose III.

The condition of the Hebrews in Egypt seems to have been one of mingled severity and comfort. They certainly enjoyed an abundance of food, especially of the vegetable nature, for the Delta, where most of Israel dwelt, was a vegetable garden. Later on in Sinai the Israelites complained:

Would that we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat at the flesh pots, when we did eat bread to the full.²⁵

We remember the fish which we did eat in Egypt for naught; the cucumbers and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlic... it was well with us in Egypt.²⁶

On the other hand the Israelites were subjected to the cruel oppression of forced labor. Wall paintings in a tomb at Abd el-Gurnah, dating from Thutmose III, portray the building of the temple of Amen at Karnak with the slave gangs (apparently Semitic) hard at work. Over them stands the slave driver with an inscription running: "The taskmaster saith to his laborers, the rod is in my hand; be not idle."²⁷

In connection with the supervising of the bondmen two

25. Exodus 16.3
26. Numbers 11.5,18
27. Caiger, Bible and Spade, p.76

officials are mentioned, "negesim" and "shoterim," generally translated taskmaster and officers. (Ex.5,13-14) It is only from the Egyptian pictures showing the bondmen and their overseers at work, that we can detect the meaning and function of these officials. The first means "drivers, oppressors," and this corresponds exactly to the Egyptian title "rud.w" employed for overseers who supervised the workmen, oppressed and flogged them to their heart's desire. The second word, "shoterim," does not mean officers, but is derived from "shatar," writing, and means a scribe, who had entire control of the bondmen, of their work, of their food, and of all other particulars concerning them. In this case they had actual control also over the supply of the bricks as it is said in Exodus 5.6-14.²⁸

There is documentary evidence from an Egyptian papyrus in which a man who had to supervise or to construct a building says: "I am not provided with anything; there are no men for making bricks and there is no straw in the district." This offers a striking parallel to the complaint of the Hebrew supervisors to Pharaoh in Exodus 5.16: "There is no straw given unto thy servant, and they say to us, make bricks."²⁹

C. The Exodus

Moses waited for the death of the oppressor Thutmose III before returning from his refuge in Midian, and then appeared

28. Yahuda, The Accuracy of the Bible, p.69
 29. ibid., p.75

before the Pharaoh of the Exodus, Amenhotep II.

And afterward Moses and Aaron went in and told Pharaoh, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness. And Pharaoh said, Who is the Lord that I should obey his voice to let Israel go?³⁰

At this point the objection is raised that Moses and Aaron could not have had access to the court of Pharaoh. But Maspero³¹ states that:

He (the king) gave audience daily to all, whether high or low, who were, or believed they were, wronged by some official, and who came to appeal to the justice of the master against the injustice of his servant.

In the eyes of the king the Egyptians were but slaves whose religious motives compelled them to execute his orders blindly. Even the highest and most powerful functionaries were regarded by the Pharaoh as servants. The king's most trifling favors his subjects engraved upon their tomb stones as their most brilliant titles to glory in this life. Thus, the conventions of the court would not prevent a hearing of Moses' and Aaron's request before Pharaoh.

The Pharaoh's challenge, "Who is the Lord that I should obey his voice?" is not startling from the Egyptian point of view. When Moses appeared before Pharaoh and sought permission for the children of Israel to sacrifice to their God in the wilderness, Pharaoh flew into a rage, laid heavier tasks upon them, and said, "Ye are idle, ye are idle; therefore ye say, Let us go and sacrifice to the Lord."³² Yet when

30. Exodus 5:1-2

31. Maspero quoted by Thomson, Canaanite and Egyptian, p. 75

32. Exodus 5:17

Egyptian conditions are considered, Pharaoh's reproach is quite natural. On a chalk tablet in the British Museum there are enteries of a labor overseer, in which he recorded daily the number of absent workmen. In most cases the couse given is illness, others just stayed away for several days, and more remained away from work to sacrifice to the gods. In a land where ritual played so prominent a part, a workman would have hardly been refused time off to sacrifice to the gods or to the dead. What enraged Pharaoh is that the pious pretensions of his own people had caused him enough trouble, and to permit alien slaves to make use of the same pretense tried his patience.³³

Another reason for his refusal to comply with Moses' later request to leave the country was that Pharaoh wanted to protect his industrial and commercial interests. If the request were granted, the departure of Israel would throw out of gear the whole building, manufacturing, and agricultural machinery of the Delta. That the sudden departure of Israel could have left Egypt in a state of confusion is indicated by the monuments. Numerous unfinished building projects dating from the reign of Amenhotep II tally strongly with the Exodus narrative. Petrie remarks:³⁴

Nothing strikes us more extraordinary than the condition of injury and confusion in which the most important buildings of Egypt seem to have remained. The most imposing works stood amidst half

33. Yahuda, The Accuracy of the Bible, pp.77-78

34. Quoted by Thorson, Oppression and Exodus, p.72

ruined unfinished walls for a whole reign; the other parts were walled off to hide offensive memorials; other structures were either incomplete or half ruined.

Moses' request to worship in the wilderness only met with increased hardships imposed by the Pharaoh. Now the Israelites had to supply their own straw and "yet shall ye deliver the tale of the bricks."³⁵ Archeology explains this strange expression, "tale of the bricks," in a remarkable manner. On one of the tombs depicting the manufacture of bricks, a man is seen crouching before rows of bricks and measuring them, so that the daily quantity prescribed should be supplied by the bondmen. On the opposite corner a scribe is engaged registering the supply of bricks, and next to him a man is sitting, stick in hand, ready to exercise his authority as taskmaster. How well Moses knew what he was talking about can be shown by the expression "mathkoneth" (Ex.5,8), translated "the tale of the bricks," but which literally means "the measuring of the bricks." He does not say "mispar," the number, but the "measuring" of the bricks, and this is exactly in conformity with what we see. The practical Egyptian did not count the bricks, but laid them in rows and measured them, just to calculate the space they would fill in a building.³⁶

In the second audience with Pharaoh, Moses and Aaron asserted their divine authority by changing their rods into

35. Exodus 5.18

36. Yahuda, The Accuracy of the Bible, p.76

serpents. In all the miracle working of Moses and Aaron in Egypt, a great role was played by the rod, which in Hebrew is designated by the word "matteh." In some passages it is called the "rod of God," (matteh-Elohim, Exodus 4.20; 17.9). The real nature of the rod of God is best illustrated by the Egyptian "holy rod." There were several types of rods for magical purposes, tipped with the heads of various gods. Thus there is a "holy rod of Amon," a "rod of Khnum," a "rod of Horus of Edfu," and the like. Sometimes by the addition of the hieroglyphic sign of a god-determinative the rod was more clearly characterized as divine. Of course Moses' rod cannot possibly have borne any image in the fashion of the Egyptian rods, because this was obnoxious to Jehovah.³⁷

The animal into which the rod was changed has special significance when it is considered in the background of Egyptian thought. In Exodus 4.3 the Hebrew word for serpent is "nahash," whereas in Exodus 7.9-12 it is "tannin." "Tannin" does not mean serpent as it is generally rendered. "Tannin" is translated as serpent in Exodus 7.9-12 to agree with Exodus 4.3, whereas in all the other eleven passages where it occurs, it is conceived of as a monster or a dragon of mythological character. In reality its true meaning is apparent from Ezekiel 29.3 and 32.2, where it is applied to Pharaoh. We know that the Pharaoh was represented by a crocodile, symbolizing Egypt's power and might. Pharaoh was deified as

37. Yahuda, The Accuracy of the Bible, pp.106-107

the crocodile-god Sobek, and by applying "tamin" to Pharaoh it can only mean crocodile. As a matter of fact the whole passage of Ezekiel, 29.3-7, is a very vivid description of the crocodile. By accepting this meaning for "tamin" it becomes perfectly clear that the crocodile is meant, and not a whale or mythological monster.³⁸

Therefore, Aaron's rod was converted into a crocodile, and not as Moses' rod into a serpent. In the first case when God revealed himself to Moses, the miracle with the serpent was to show Moses and the Hebrews that the serpent, the holiest symbol of gods and kings, could be produced from a mere rod. In the case of Aaron, Pharaoh was to be shown that the mighty crocodile was nothing more than a rod in the hand of Jehovah's envoy. The whole scene is so typically Egyptian that it could not have been conceived or understood in its far reaching consequences but in Egypt.³⁹

The manifestation of divine power by Moses and Aaron made no impression on Pharaoh, because his magicians were able to duplicate the miracle. This fact occasioned the Ten Plagues.

The plagues have been subject to much careful research in the light of modern science and have been found capable of being explained as the supernatural accentuation of otherwise natural phenomena, following what we term natural law, though at the same time transcending it. When Pharaoh pursued

38. Yahuda, The Accuracy of the Bible, pp.109-110

39. ibid., p.110

the children of Israel, it seemed as if Israel's escape were hopeless as the Red Sea formed what appeared to be an insuperable barrier to further flight. By the exercise of His omnipotence God might have rescued the Israelites from Pharaoh's grasp by transporting the whole host through the air. Yet God made Israel march on as it had marched before. The emphasis lies on the fact that God does not perform freak miracles, but releases His power through the ordinary channels of nature. In almost every instance the plagues consisted of a visitation which might arise in the ordinary course of events. Still a miraculous element is attached to each plague, manifesting itself in the time when the plague occurred and in its peculiar virulence.⁴⁰

Another theory, the natural theory, attempts to explain the ten plagues as the ordinary occurrences in nature. This theory discards the miraculous element altogether and rejects the possibility of any divine intervention.

*It will be hard to think that this is in-
v. Sh. L.* It is also possible to show that each of the plagues was directed against the worship of a particular Egyptian deity. The plagues thus form a series of victories on the part of God over some Egyptian deity or some part of Egyptian ritual, and as such must have had a tremendous effect on the religious life of Egypt.

In the first plague the waters of Egypt were turned into blood (Ex. 7, 20). According to the natural theory the

40. Arndt, Bible Difficulties, p. 22

waters of the Nile became discolored as they rose for the annual inundation in the third week of June. Sometimes it turns green, or later red, and the water becomes unwholesome and unsavory. The pollution is due to the multiplication of minute organisms, both vegetable and animal, through the bursting of the sudd above Khartoum. The red tincture is ascribed to the presence of myriads of microscopic bacteria known as sphaeroplea annulina.⁴¹

As fascinating as this explanation may be, it does not account for the plain words of Scripture. If one is willing to admit that the plagues were the supernatural accentuation of a natural phenomenon, a miracle, why not take the Bible at its word when it expressly states that the waters turned to blood?(Exodus 7.20)

The attack of Jehovah against an Egyptian deity is undeniably conspicuous in the first plague. It was not an ordinary river that turned to blood, but the beneficent Nile whose waters were deified and worshipped. Numerous hymns in praise of the god Nilus are extant engraved on stone, while temples at Nilopolis and Heliopolis were erected in his honor. Nilus is hailed as "the giver of life to all men, bringer of joy, creator, and nourisher of the whole land." Jehovah now made this god disgusting as the deified waters stank and were made putrid.⁴²

The second plague of the frogs was the miraculous inten-

41. Knight, Nile and Jordan, p.157

42. ibid., p.158

sifying of a well known feature in Egyptian natural history. Every canal and pond besides the great river swarmed with frogs which followed the abating waters of the inundation. The frogs spawned in the soft mud and marshy places as the hot sun hatched their eggs into an army of destruction.⁴³

Now the frog-headed goddess Hekt became an object of loathing. Sitting on the lotus leaf, "the Queen of the Two Worlds" became a hideous nightmare as the frogs penetrated everywhere. The frog cult was one of the oldest in Egypt, and the frog goddess was believed to have played a prominent part in the creation of the world. Piled at the roadsides, the heaps of carcasses must have been a striking blow at their superstition.⁴⁴

In the third plague the dust of the land became lice. No agreement has been reached for the translation of the Hebrew word for lice. Some have rendered פִּיִּי as a mosquito or a sand flea. Gesenius⁴⁵ offers the following explanation:

The word for lice in the Hebrew text reads פִּיִּי which seems to be the collective form from the singular פִּי, meaning gnat. In the LXX פִּיִּי is translated as σκνιφες while the Vulgate uses "sciniphes," a species of small gnats very troublesome from their sting, and abounding in the marshy regions of Egypt.

To fit the "lice" into the scheme of natural sequence Knight⁴⁶ says that the mosquitoes bred in myriads from the putrid carcasses of the frogs. If Gesenius' translation of "gnat"

43. Knight, Nile and Jordan, p.158

44. ibid., p.158

45. Gesenius, Hebrew & Eng. Lexicon of O.T., p.481

46. Knight, op. cit., p.159

is accepted, it is more probable that these insects bred in the marshy regions left from the subsiding waters of the Nile.

In order to justify their inability to reproduce the third plague, the magicians declared that this was the "finger of god" (Ex.8,19). The fact that this expression came from the mouth of the magicians to excuse the failure of their own efforts suggests an Egyptian origin. As a matter of fact "the finger of Seth" was current in the Egyptian texts of magic. The phrase had its origin in the myth where Seth, in his fight against Horus for world dominion, injured Horus' eye. Thus, "the finger of Seth" was from old a source of terror. The "finger of Thoth" is mentioned as a constant threat to Apophis, the monstrous serpent-dragon of the night and the most terrible foe of the sun-god Ra. It is now clear that the plague of the "lice" appeared to the magicians as a blow coming from an unknown source over which they had no power. Consequently the plague could only be caused by the finger of a god like Seth or by some other hostile deity. The expression, "finger of God," as well as the whole idea of an atrocious visitation caused by the "finger of God" can only be conceived of in an Egyptian environment.⁴⁷

The fourth plague consisted of swarms of "flies" (A.V. and R.V.). No definite meaning has been ascertained for the translation of צלצלים. Gesenius⁴⁸ thinks it is the gad-fly, an exceedingly trouble some insect to man and beast because of its blood sucking. In the LXX it is rendered as dog-fly,

47. Yahuda, The Accuracy of the Bible, pp.86-88

48. Gesenius, Hebrew & Eng. Lexicon of O.T., p.821

while the Vulgate regards אַרְבֵּי as a mixture of noxious insects. The rabbins almost unanimously accept the latter meaning, which corresponds to the English "swarms."

As the previous plagues struck at some phase of Egyptian worship, so the fourth plague shattered one of the most cherished superstitions of the priesthood. If the translation of "swarms" is accepted, it is possible that beetles were included in the swarms of insects. If there is one thing by which Egyptian relics can be identified, it is the scarab or sacred beetle, the emblem of royalty and divinity. From the time of the XIIIth Dynasty the material heart of the mummy was replaced by an amulet, inscribed with a beetle to guard the deceased against danger until the day of resurrection. There is a beetle in Egypt which gnaws both man and beast, destroys clothes, furniture and plants. Now the sacred beetle itself became a menace as Jehovah struck another powerful blow against this superstition of the priesthood.⁴⁹

In the fifth plague murrain took its toll from among the beasts of Egypt. Modern bacterial research has revealed how great a factor insects are in the spread of disease. Even today travellers in Egypt report the heavy loss of cattle and the scarcity of meat due to the ravages of murrain.⁵⁰

The murrain of the cattle gave polytheism and idolatry a still greater thrust. The plague attacked not only the ordinary domestic animals, but also those animals sacred to the

49. Knight, Nile and Jordan, p.159

50. Thorson, Oppression and Exodus, p.93

worship of the Egyptians. At Heliopolis the calf Mnevis was adored as an incarnation of Ra. At Erment near Thebes, Mentu, the god of the nome, was worshipped in the form of a bull called Bakis. At the Serapeum of Memphis one can still see the catacombs where the sarcophagi of the numerous Apis bulls were revered as the embodiment of Ptah. The heavens and the sky were worshipped under the semblance of the great cow-goddess, Nut. In 1906 Naville⁵¹ discovered at Der el-Bahri a solar disc depicting a giant Hathor cow flanked by two ostrich plumes. Naville interprets the ostrich plumes as representative of Amenhotep II, the Pharaoh of the Exodus. Tremendous must have been this blow against the Pharaoh as his sacred cows fell victims to the ravages of the murrain.⁵²

The plague of the boils was probably the direct result of the murrain. As the cattle died, their putrid bodies became centers of a horrible pestilence infecting both man and beast. Egypt had ever been the home of some of the most loathsome skin diseases which can afflict mankind. In many cases these evils have been the direct result of the carelessness where-with infection has been allowed to spread from decaying vegetable and animal matter.⁵³

Meanwhile the boils were another assault on the elaborate ceremony of the priestly cast. "The magicians could not stand before Moses because of the boils, for the boils were upon the magicians and all the Egyptians." Thus, by

51. Knight, Nile and Jordan, p.160

52. *ibid.*, p.161

53. *ibid.*, p.161

disabling the magicians Jehovah brought the intricate ritual of the temples to a sudden and painful halt.

In the next plague a miraculous storm of thunder and hail struck Egypt. Severe thunderstorms are exceedingly rare in the Nile Valley, but such as have been witnessed are a remarkable for their fury as for their infrequency. That the visitation took place towards the end of January is evidenced by the note that "the flax and the barley were smitten; for the barley was in the ear, and the flax was balled. But the wheat and the rice were not smitten, for they were not grown up." (Ex.9,31-32) Evidently the author was well versed in the details of Egyptian agriculture, because there these grains ripened in the sequence noted.⁵⁴

One of the most remarkable instances which confirms the author's familiarity with the Egyptian language is the expression for thunder, "the voices of Elohim." The Hebrew word for thunder in Exodus 9.23 is "Qoloth," voices, and in 9.28 "voices of God" for mighty thunders. This is not the usual Hebrew expression for thunder, but the common Egyptian designation for this natural phenomenon. To the Egyptian Thunder was "kheru en neter," a voice of god, or "kheru en beya," a voice of heaven, or the voice of Amon in heaven, exactly as it is called in Exodus 9.28, "the voice of Elohim."⁵⁵

The explanation of "gib'ol" for balled in Exodus 9.31 was sought for in vain from among the Hebrew form roots

54. Knight, Nile and Jordan, p.161

55. Yahuda, The Accuracy of the Bible, p.90

and the roots of kindred Semitic languages. If we go out into the fields of ripened flax, we shall observe that the flax has flowers shaped like little cups. As a cup in Hebrew is called "gib'ol," the author coined the term with regard to the shape of the flower looking like a "little cup." Here too it is difficult to imagine that an author living in a country far from Egypt could have created such a Hebrew word which most beautifully conveys the shape of the flax flower.⁵⁶

Another phrase noteworthy in its Egyptian context is, "such as hath not been in Egypt since the day it was founded." From the earliest times the Egyptians regarded the foundation of the Kingdom of Lower and Upper Egypt as the greatest and most significant event in their history. It was always conceived of as the moment which marked the boundary line between the world of the gods and the world of men descended from them. Thus, the phrase referred to the oldest epoch of Egyptian history within memory. Thutmose III says that Amon rejoiced over him more than over all the other kings who have been in the land "since it was founded." This parallel, to which many more could be added, shows how clearly the Scripture follows in wording and in spirit the Egyptian manner of speaking.⁵⁷

An east wind which blew all day and all night brought on the plague of the locusts.⁵⁸ These creatures have wrought similar devastations in the land of Egypt before, but the special characteristic of this plague was the incredible

56. Yahuda, The Accuracy of the Bible, p.91

57. *ibid.*, pp.100-101

58. Exodus 10.13

numbers of the invaders. "They covered the face of the earth, so that the land was darkened."⁵⁹ Denon, a Frenchman who accompanied Napoleon to Egypt, tells of a swarm of locusts which skimmed the soil and devoured each blade of grass in its path. Fortunately the wind changed its direction contrary to the march and drove the locusts back to the desert.⁶⁰

The plagues of the hail and locusts also had its effect on the religious life of the Egyptians. Hail wrought the ruin of the first portion of the Egyptian harvest, and the locusts destroyed the second portion of the crops. The significance of these plagues lies in the fact that Egypt was regarded as a sacred land by its inhabitants. Egypt was the garden of the East and the granary of the world. Yet here Jehovah displayed His power by destroying the crops of the Egyptian's sacred soil.⁶¹

The plague of the three-day darkness resembles a well known natural phenomenon of Egypt, the Khamsin. The Khamsin wind is like a blast from an open furnace, charged with so much fine sand and dust as to turn day into night. The air is filled with an intensely black impenetrable fog wherein respiration is difficult. The Bible describes this plague as "darkness which may be felt" (Ex.10,21). The Khamsin has been known to travel over certain portions of the land enshrouding them in utter gloom, while leaving other portions in bright

59. Exodus 10.15

60. Thorson, Oppression and Exodus, p.102

61. Knight, Nile and Jordan, p.162

sunshine. Thus it happened that "there was darkness in all the land of Egypt three days; they saw not one another, neither rose any from his place for three days; but all the children of Israel had light in their dwelling" (Ex.10,22-23).⁶²

The Khamsin could have been the cause of the darkness to the extent that it could be felt, but it overlooks the miraculous detail that only the children of Israel had light in their dwelling.

This time the plague of darkness was God's direct attack on the chief of the Egyptian pantheon. The mighty sun-god, Amon-Ra, whom every Pharaoh worshipped as his divine father, now had his light extinguished for three days. Indeed, this was a colossal blow to the principle divinity of the Theban cult.⁶³

The tenth and last plague culminated in the death of the first-born of the Egyptians. Frequently following the Khamsin the Bubonic pestilence is one of the last plagues of the year, and it is sometimes associated with a low Nile.⁶⁴ Yet the death of the first-born is void of all natural explanation. The Bubonic plague would not only take its toll from among the first-born, but would also attack the remaining strata of population. Furthermore, death caused by a Bubonic plague would not be restricted to the hour of midnight. Here we must accept the plain words of Scripture which

62. Knight, Nile and Jordan, p.162

63. ibid., p.162

64. Thorson, Oppression and Exodus, p.104

attributes the death of the first-born to the action of the Lord. "And it came to pass, that at midnight the Lord smote all the first-born in the land of Egypt." 65

Maspero⁶⁶ gives an insight into the horrible grief which must have gripped the Egyptians on the following morning.

Describing the Egyptian mourning for a husband, he states:

Towards morning a sudden burst of lamentations and cries wakens the neighbors and tells them that all is over. Wife, children, relations, slaves, ... the whole family appears to be smitten with madness. They throw themselves upon the corpse, embrace it, literally inundate it with tears, beat their chests, and tear their clothes. After a few moments the women leave the chamber of death; then with nude bosoms, head sullied with dust, hair dischevelled, and feet bare they rush from the house into the still deserted streets. Soon the whole neighborhood re-echoes with the wild clamor to which even the indifferent respond from their houses.

The death of the first-born of man and beast again showed the power of Jehovah over the alleged sovereignty of Ptah. Egypt looked to Ptah as the giver and sustainer of life, and as the god from whom the land of Egypt had received its name, (Ha(t)-ka-Ptah). The wholesale destruction of the first-born was a proclamation to all that Ptah was powerless to protect those who trusted in him.

Thus, all the plagues were designed to be a signal demonstration to Amenhotep and all the Egyptians of the superiority of Jehovah over the divinities before whom the people grovelled in abject fear. With the stroke of every

65. Exodus 12.29

66. Maspero quoted by Thorson, Oppression and Ex., p.104

Plague God proclaimed His majesty and power, "Against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgements: I am the Lord."⁶⁷

If the first-born of Pharaoh died in the tenth plague, (Ex. 12.29), one naturally inquires if the Egyptian records afford any confirmation of this extraordinary tragedy. Egyptologists all call attention to the irregularity in the royal succession after Amenhotep II. If we may believe a folk-tale in circulation some centuries later, Thutmose IV, the son of Amenhotep II, was not at first designed to be his father's successor. While on a hunting expedition in the desert near Gezeh, Thutmose IV fell asleep in the shadow of a Sphinx. The sun-god, with whom the Sphinx was identified, then appeared to Thutmose in a dream and asked him to clear away the sand around the Sphinx. As a reward the sun-god promised Thutmose the kingdom. The prince vowed to do as the god desired, and immediately upon his accession cleared away the sand from around the Sphinx. The whole incident is recorded on a stele in the vicinity of Gezeh.⁶⁸

One of the mummies found in the royal tomb of Amenhotep II is that of an eleven year old boy, whose hair is shaven from the greater part of the scalp. It is possible that he was the first-born of Pharaoh who fell a victim of the tenth plague.⁶⁹

The death of Pharaoh's eldest son finally forced from

67. Exodus 12.12

68. Cambridge Ancient History, vol.II, p.91

69. Thorson, Oppression and Exodus, p.104

the proud lips of Amenhotep II the words: "Rise up, get you forth from among my people." (Exodus 12.31)

In obedience to this command Moses ordered the Israelites to eat the Paschal lamb with their loins girded, their shoes on their feet, and their staff in hand as if prepared to leave at a moment's notice. Had the narrator lived in the land of Israel many centuries after the Exodus, he would have told them to hasten with the meal and to put their cloaks on their shoulders, because this was the way the Hebrew would set out for a journey in his own country. But when the Egyptian went out, he had a girdle around his loins, his sandals on, and a stick in his hand.⁷⁰

The number of Israelites who left Egypt has also been treated with distrust by some Biblical scholars.

And the children of Israel journeyed from Raamses to Succoth, about six-hundre thousand on foot that were men, beside children. Exodus 12.37

Since no mention is made of women, 600,000 men beside children supposes a population of nearly two million. It is claimed that two million people could not inhabit the Wady Tumilat.

In reply to this assertion it is thought that the Wady Tumilat, or Goshen, occupied a much larger area than it does today. It appears as if the desert constantly enroached on Goshen from the south and narrowed it to a mere strip of land a few miles wide.⁷¹ Furthermore, Exodus 1.7 states that the Israelites filled the land, and, hence, they would not be

70. Yahuda, The Accuarcy of the Bible, p.89

71. Thorson, Oppression and Exodus, p.113

confined to the land of Goshen. The nature of the oppression described in Exodus 1.14 also indicates that the Israelites were dispersed throughout the land of Egypt.

That the greater part of the Israelites lived in Goshen is disclosed by an inscription of Merneptah, the Pharaoh of the XIXth Dynasty. Referring to the region of Goshen the inscription reads:

The country around was not cultivated, but left as a pasture for cattle because of the strangers. It has been abandoned since the time of the ancestors.⁷²

As early as Amenhotep II (1413-1377 B.C.) another inscription describes the land of Goshen as being in a similar condition. While on a hunting expedition to Sheta, Amenhotep II relates that the country was full of roaming cattle. This hunting ground is now located near Tell el-Yahudigah in the region of Goshen.⁷³

Some Biblical scholars find it difficult to believe that the Israelites could have eluded the pursuing army of Pharaoh. They claim that two million people, including children, would not be able to travel fast enough to stay ahead of Pharaoh's cavalry. But we know e.g. that in the reign of Empress Elizabeth Petrovna (1761 A.D.) an entire Tartar tribe numbering 40,000 left Russian territory. Included in their numbers were women, children, and cattle, who had to travel through several thousand miles of inhospitable country. Like Pharaoh, the Russian Emperor pursued them but failed to overtake them.⁷⁴

72. Thorson, Oppression and Exodus, p.116

73. *ibid.*, p.114

74. *ibid.*, p.114

The climax and most thrilling event of the Exodus narrative is the crossing of the Red Sea. The fleeing host of Israel moved out to encamp "before Pi-hahiroth between Migdol and the sea, over against Baal Zephon."⁷⁵ The place where the Israelites crossed agrees so well with the topography of Ras Atakeh that the crossing was no doubt near that point. At the southern end of the Egyptian land frontier on the east is a most natural situation for a "Migdol," watch-tower, and a suitable plain for the encampment lies between it and the sea. The mountain peak pointed out, though not certainly identified, as Baal Zephon, is "over against" on the east side of the sea. The pursuing Egyptian army thrown across the narrow space between the range of Atakeh and the sea would effectively cut off any hope of retreat for the Israelites, for here "the wilderness shut them in."⁷⁶

Those who seek a natural interpretation for the following miracle contend that the flat sand-bar of this arm of the Red Sea was especially exposed to the influence of wind and tide. As the tide went out, the waters went back "before an east wind," leaving bare a wide strip of the sand-bar over which the whole host of Israel could pass quickly. The Egyptians coming up in the darkness would not be able to tell where the shore line began, for at this point it is difficult at any time to determine where the shore line is. Thus, the pursuers followed blindly on the trail of the fugitives beyond

75. Exodus 14.2

76. M.Kyle, The Deciding Voice of the Monuments, pp.278-279

the line of safety. The wind abated and the tide of the sea came in on its strength. The infiltration gave the first warning of destruction as it clogged the Egyptians' chariot wheels so that "they drave them heavily" on the sandy beach now turned to a quicksand by the incoming waters. Too late, the soldiers discovered that they were beyond the shore line and tried to escape by retreat, but the waters, released from the pressure of the wind, rushed in full tide to overwhelm the Egyptian army.⁷⁷

The claim that an extraordinary ebb set in to make the crossing possible for the Israelites, and that the Egyptian army was overwhelmed by the returning tide, violates the words of the Biblical account. In Exodus 14.22 Scripture states that "the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand and on their left." If merely an unusual ebb had been responsible for the crossing, there would not have been water on both sides. While holding to the principle that God performs miracles through natural means, we must not alter the Scriptural account, but leave its sense unimpaired.⁷⁸

The discovery of Amenhotep's mummy in the Valley of the Kings came as a shock to some Biblical scholars, because it proved that the Pharaoh of the Exodus had not been drowned in the Red Sea.⁷⁹ Exodus 14.28 does not claim that Pharaoh himself was drowned, but asserts that only "the chariots, and the horsemen, and all the host of Pharaoh that came into

77. Kyle, Deciding Voice of the Monuments, p.279

78. Arndt, Bible Difficulties, p.78

79. Caiger, O.T. and Modern Discovery, p.19

the sea after them" were covered by the water.⁸⁰ If Pharaoh did drown, it is possible that his body was recovered and given a royal burial, for "Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea shore." (Exodus 14.30)

Caiger⁸¹ maintains that there is no sign on the mummy of Amenhotep II to indicate that his death was caused by drowning. In view of our scanty knowledge of Egyptian methods of embalming, it may be that in the process of embalming all modern scientific evidence for drowning had been removed.

One must admit that in the contemporary records of Amenhotep II there is no reference whatsoever to such national disasters as the ten plagues, the destruction of the Egyptian army in the Red Sea, far less the escape of the Hebrew colonists. Yet this is only to be expected, because the Egyptians were the last people to record their misfortunes on the monuments.⁸²

Thus, archeology confirms the touches of Egyptian life in the Exodus narrative as true, and the victorious song of Moses still re-echoes across the centuries, "Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?"⁸³

80. Caiger, O.T. and Modern Discovery, p.19

81. Caiger, Bible and Spade, p.73

82. *ibid.*, p.73

83. Exodus 15.11

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