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THE DATE OF THE EXODUS

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Old Testament Theology
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Bachelor of Divinity

by

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In determining the date of the Exodus, one finds little direct evidence outside the Bible record. Egypt was indeed constantly in contact with Palestine from the time of Joseph (or even of Abraham) until the fugitives from the Babylonian conquest sought refuge there, and one might have hoped to find some reference to Jewish history in the Egyptian records. It is natural that the Bible scholar look for some reference to the Exodus in particular. For the Exodus was one of the foremost events that took place in the history of the Israelites. All through the Old Testament, constant reference is made to that great event.

How is the fact that such references are missing to be explained? In the first place, the Egyptians were not historically minded as the Assyrians.¹ It must also be remembered that the Egyptian Pharaohs were not likely to devote much space on their royal inscriptions to the doings of some rebellious subjects, especially as the stories reflected so little credit on the Pharaohs themselves.²

¹Sir Frederic Kenyon, The Bible And Archaeology (New York: Harper & Brothers, n.d.), p. 69.

²S. L. Caiger, The Old Testament And Modern Discovery (London: S. P. C. K., 1935), p. 10.

Furthermore, neither the papyri thus far discovered nor the monuments and tombs of Egypt give us a record of the Exodus, or even of the Oppression, which must have extended over a considerable period.³ There is one mention of Israel on a monument erected by Merneptah, king of Egypt, about 1250 B.C., in which it is stated that "Israel is desolated her seed is not." However, this stele does not shed light directly on the Exodus and has only created new problems.

Indirectly, however, due to modern archaeological research, one is in a much better position in dealing with the problem of the date of the Exodus than a number of years ago. Many documents have been found which have shed some light on the subject. For example the discovery of the Tell el-Amarna Letters in 1887. These historical tablets have disclosed a multitude of new facts of great importance which have a bearing on that portion of history which deals with the Oppression and the Exodus of the Israelites. The fairly recent excavations of Jericho and other cities have also added to the general picture of this period.

Even from the Biblical account the period of Egyptian history at which the Exodus of the Israelites took place can only be determined inferentially. The Book of Exodus does not mention the name of any of the Pharaohs at that

³W. J. Jack, The Date Of The Exodus (Edinburgh, England: T. & T. Clark, 1925), p. 4.

time. The first Pharaoh named in the Bible is "Shishak, king of Egypt," who reigned several hundred years later.⁴ This Pharaoh is known as Sheshonk I, and is the first king of the twenty-second or Libyan Dynasty, who ascended the throne around 924 B.C.⁵ Nor can positive evidence as to the age in which these Pharaohs lived be gathered from the manners and customs mentioned in the Book of Exodus.

Therefore because of the lack of direct information regarding the time of the Exodus many divergent views have been expressed on this issue. However, at present there are two main schools of thought as to when the Exodus of the Israelites from Egypt took place. The first is that one which dates the Exodus during the XVIII Dynasty, about 1447 B.C., just after the long reign of Thutmose III.⁶ Allowing, then, for the forty years in the wilderness, this would place the date of the conquest of Canaan about 1400 B.C. The second theory dates the Exodus during the XIX Dynasty, about 1290 B.C. This theory regards Rameses II (c. 1301-1234 B.C.) as the Pharaoh of the Oppression.⁷

⁴I Kings 11:40-14:25.

⁵Jack Finegan, Light From The Ancient Past: The Archaeological Background of the Hebrew-Christian Religion (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, c.1946), p. 113.

⁶John Garstang, The Foundations of Bible History: Joshua, Judges (London: Constable, 1931), p. 55.

⁷Finegan, op. cit., p. 107.

These theories must be considered and checked from various viewpoints. First, the chronological data must be so treated as not to do violence to the Biblical statements. Second, the history of the Pharaohs of the XVIII and XIX Dynasties of Egypt and their control over Palestine must be taken into consideration. Third, the archaeological data which have come to light in the excavations of Transjordan, of Jericho, and other cities in Palestine must be taken into account.

The following chapters will deal with each of these phases of the problem.

CHAPTER II

THE DATE OF THE EXODUS A PROBLEM IN CHRONOLOGY

In determining the date of the Exodus, one is thrown into the whole baffling problem of Old Testament chronology in general. While there is no uniformity of opinion among Old Testament scholars on a number of vital questions, modern research and archaeological discoveries have made it possible to reach some conclusions that are almost universally accepted. It can also be said that generally these studies have solved many problems and that Biblical chronological data are treated with more respect by all scholars than formerly.

The chronological data in the Old Testament that deal with the Exodus refer to longer periods of time before as well as after the Exodus.

The first of these is I Kings 6:1. In this passage we are told that 480 years elapsed between the Exodus and the foundation of Solomon's temple in his fourth year.

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

John Garstang¹ in his book The Foundations of Bible

¹John Garstang, The Foundations of Bible History: Joshua, Judges (London: Constable, 1931), p. 55.

History has no hesitation in accepting this statement as a clear indication of the date of the Exodus. And J. M. Adams² accepts the statement in I Kings 6:1 "as a credible historical notice referring to comparatively recent times, concerning whose genuineness and accuracy there is no justifiable question."

However, H. H. Rowley's³ attitude to the same figure, as is quoted by W. Ross in the Hibbert Journal, is typical of another school of thought.

Were it not that the number four hundred and eighty happens to suit a 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 multiples of forty, and it is very probable that the author of I Kings vi.1 believed that twelve generations spanned the period, and computed it on that basis.

In answer to this, however, W. Ross⁴ maintains that the Scripture writers are by no means held to multiples of forty, for there are many examples in Scripture which prove that just the opposite is true. One such example is found in Genesis chapters seven and eight where we read that the waters

²J. M. Adams, Ancient Records And The Bible: A Survey of Archaeological Evidence in their Bearing on the Integrity of the Historical Narratives of the Bible (Nashville, Tenn.: Broadmann Press, c.1946), p. 209.

³William Ross, "Jericho and the Date of the Exodus," The Hibbert Journal, XXXIX (October, 1940-July, 1941), 299 f.

⁴Ibid., 300.

of the Flood prevailed for 150 days, and dry land appeared in the 601st year. W. Ross,⁵ furthermore, points out that H. H. Rowley's argument in effect reveals his bias: "To refuse to accept I Kings vi.1 creates the suspicion at once that it cannot be fitted into some preconceived theory."

If, therefore, I Kings 6:1 is trustworthy, as we believe, then it becomes one of the bases in determining the date of the Exodus. In order to do this, however, one must, first of all, compute the date of the building of Solomon's temple.

To determine this date one is not dependant entirely upon Biblical chronology. It can be fixed with the help of astronomy and the Assyrian inscriptions, called Eponym Lists.⁶ These lists cover a period from about 893 to 666 B.C.⁷ The date of all the years is determined from the mention of a total solar eclipse which is stated to have occurred in the ninth year of Ashur-dan. Astronomers have discovered that this eclipse took place on June 15, 763 B.C.⁸ By means of these authentic Assyrian records, then, one can determine

⁵Ibid.

⁶"An Eponym refers to an official who is so prominently connected with a thing that his name is used to designate his year of office in Assyrian chronology." Adams, op. cit., p. 371.

⁷J. P. Free, Archaeology and Bible History (Wheaton, Ill.: Van Kampen Press, c.1950), p. 176.

⁸Ibid.

that the great battle of Karkar was fought in the year 854/3 B.C.⁹ The archaeological records of Shalmaneser III also tell us that he was opposed in this battle of Karkar by a coalition of twelve allies, one of whom was King Ahab of Israel.¹⁰

Since Ahab fought in the battle of Karkar in 854/3 B.C., the date of Ahab must include these years. And since the Bible sets forth the length of reign for each of the kings of Judah and of Israel, one can reckon backward and arrive at 970/1 B.C. for the date of the accession of Solomon and 966/7 B.C. for the foundation of the temple in his fourth year. Taking 966/7 B.C. as the date of the foundation of the temple and adding the 480 years which are stated in I Kings 6:1 to have intervened from the Exodus, we obtain the date 1446/7 B.C. for the Exodus.¹¹

Another passage in Scripture which corroborates this date is that one which deals with the era of the Judges. This passage is found in Judges 11:25-26, where we read that Jephthah rebuked the Ammonites for their attacks on Israel and told them that Israel occupied the region of Heshbon in Moab for 300 years.

⁹Adams, op. cit., p. 170.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 209.

¹¹Ibid., p. 173 f.

And now art thou any better than Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab? did he ever strive against Israel, or did he ever fight against them, While Israel dwelt in Heshbon and her towns, and in Arcoer and her towns, and in all the cities that be along the coasts of Arnon, three hundred years? why therefore did ye not recover them within that time?

Assuming with Miller Burrows¹² and others a date about 1100 B.C. for Jephthah, 300 years back from that would lead one to 1400 B.C. for the occupation of Moab, which preceded the capture of Jericho, and adding the forty years which the Children of Israel wandered in the wilderness, one would arrive approximately at the date 1447 B.C. for the Exodus.

However, if 1 Kings 6:1 and Judges 11:25-26 are reliable statements, they must be in agreement with other periods of Israel's historical development for which we have Biblical statements also, particularly that period which lies between Abraham and Moses.

The most pertinent passage we have on this period is the chronological note in Exodus 12:40, where we read that the Children of Israel remained in Egypt 430 years. "Now the sojourning of the children of Israel, who dwelt in Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years."

This verse, however, has been the subject of much controversy. H. H. Rowley¹³ points out that the Septuagint

¹²Miller Burrows, What Mean These Stones? (New Haven, Conn.: American Schools of Oriental Research, c.1941), p. 73.

¹³Ross, op. cit., 305.

and the Samaritan Texts of the Pentateuch reduce the Israelite bondage in Egypt to 215 years. Their reading is: "Now the journeying of the Children of Israel who dwelt in Egypt, and in the land of Canaan (patriarchal period) was 430 years." Thus we see that this reading makes the 430 years include the patriarchal period as well as the sojourn in Egypt. St. Paul appears to accept this figure in Galatians 3:17.

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.

While Stephen in Acts 7:6 gives the round number of 400 years.

And God spake on this wise, That his seed should sojourn in a strange land; and that they should bring them into bondage, and entreat them evil four hundred years.

There are three things which one can reply to this.

In the first place it can be noted that many scholars believe that the words in the LXX are a gloss by some later scribe who thought that the number of generations covering the period in Egypt were too small for the 430 years. "There can be no doubt that at an early time the Jews felt the difficulty of reconciling this statement with the genealogies, which they held to be incomplete."¹⁴ In order to harmonize this discrepancy with Galatians 3:17, scholars have pointed out that St. Paul is not primarily discussing chronology but is showing that the Law was long after the

¹⁴F. G. Cook, editor, The Holy Bible With Commentary, (London: John Murray, 1877), I, 301.

promise, and, therefore, he takes the well-known figure which his readers would find in their Greek Bibles.¹⁵

In the second place, most Old Testament scholars agree that generations and genealogies are unreliable evidence for chronology.¹⁶ The Hebrew word for generation is דָּבָר (dbr) and may be taken as referring to epochs or periods of time.¹⁷ That period or epoch may be anything, forty years or a hundred, as, for example, in Genesis 15:13-16:

And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not their's, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; And also that nation whom they shall serve, will I judge; and afterward shall they come out with great substance. And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age. But in the fourth generation, they shall come hither again; for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.

Generation here may be taken to represent 100 years, but this is a round number, for we read in Exodus 12:40 the figure 430.¹⁸ Thus we may paraphrase this passage in Gene-

¹⁵ Otto Schmoller, Lange-Schaff Commentary, translated from the German by C. G. Starbuck (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, c.1870), XXIII, 150.

¹⁶ Melvin Grove Kyle, Moses and the Monuments: Light from Archaeology on Pentateuchal Times (Oberlin, Ohio: Bibliotheca Sacra Company, c.1920), p. 150.

¹⁷ Jack Finegan, Light From The Ancient Past: The Archaeological Background of the Hebrew-Christian Religion (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, c.1946), pp. 59-60.

¹⁸ W. J. Jack, The Date Of The Exodus (Edinburgh, England: T. & T. Clark, 1925), pp. 217-18.

sis to read: "They shall be afflicted for about 400 years, and in the fourth dbr or great epoch (that of Moses) they shall return."¹⁹

Finally, the time of arrival of Abraham in Canaan to the migration of Jacob and his family to Egypt was 215 years, as may be calculated from the following texts: Genesis 12:4, 17:1, 17:17, 25:26, 49:9. Hence, if the 430 years of Exodus 12:40 cover the entire period only 215 years are left for the sojourn in Egypt. This would run counter to the whole course of recent archaeological evidences and Biblical statements.²⁰ "In short it must be considered as practically certain that the ancestors of part of Israel, at least, had lived for several centuries in Egypt before migrating to Palestine."²¹ Therefore, one may hold with confidence that the intent of the Biblical writers demands a period of at least 400 years for the sojourn of Israel in the land of Egypt.

Assuming the correctness, then, of the figure 430, and adding the number 1447, we obtain a date about 1877 B.C.

¹⁸W. J. Jack, The Date Of The Exodus (Edinburgh, England: T. & T. Clark, 1925), pp. 217-18.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Adams, op. cit., p. 205.

²¹W. F. Albright, From The Stone Age To Christianity: Monotheism and the Historical Process (2nd revised edition; Baltimore: The John Hopkins Press, 1946), p. 184.

for Jacob's entry into Egypt. Now Jacob was 130 years old when he stood before Pharaoh of Egypt,²² therefore, he was born about 2007 B.C. Isaac, who was 60 when Jacob was born,²³ must have been born in 2067 B.C., and Abraham, who was 100 years old when Isaac was born,²⁴ must have been born in 2167 B.C. Now since Abraham was 75 years old when he left Haran to migrate into Canaan,²⁵ we can calculate that that event took place about 2092 B.C.

Thus we see that the main patriarchal period is dated in the years 2000-1500 B.C. The chronological evidence in the Scriptures points to Abraham's life of 175 years as falling approximately in the years 2167-1992 B.C.

Many Old Testament scholars believe that Abraham is to be dated about 2000 B.C., because "Amraphel king of Shinar," named in Genesis 14:1 as a contemporary of Abraham, is to be identified with the famous Babylonian king Hammurabi, dated about 2100 B.C. on the basis of cuneiform records.²⁶ This identification, however, is questionable. In recent

²²Genesis 47:9.

²³Genesis 25:26.

²⁴Genesis 21:5.

²⁵Genesis 12:4.

²⁶S. L. Caiger, Bible and Spade: An Introduction to Biblical Archaeology (London: Oxford University Press, 1946), p. 184.

years W. F. Albright²⁷ of John Hopkins University has tended to date Hammurabi later than 2100 B.C., assigning his reign to the years 1728-1686 B.C. While Leonard Woolley²⁸ dates his accession at about 1940 B.C. In any case, it has come to be generally agreed that the identification of Amraphel and Hammurabi while not impossible, is doubtful.²⁹

On the other hand, more recent discoveries have been found which shed new light on the date of Abraham. According to the fourteenth chapter of Genesis, eastern Palestine was invaded by a coalition of kings in the time of Abraham. The route taken by the invading armies led from the region of Damascus southward along the eastern edge of Gilead and Moab.³⁰ The explorations of Albright and Glueck have shown that there was a line of important cities along this route before 2000 B.C. and for a century or two after, but not in later periods.³¹ In Genesis 18-19, moreover, Abraham is shown to have lived at the time of the flourishing

²⁷W. F. Albright, "A Third Revision of the Early Chronology of Western Asia," Bulletin of American Schools of Oriental Research, 88 (December, 1942), 32. Hereafter this periodical will be referred to as B.A.S.O.R.

²⁸Sir Leonard Woolley, Abraham: Recent Discoveries and Hebrew Origins (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, c.1936), p. 293.

²⁹Ibid., p. 44.

³⁰Burrows, op. cit., p. 71.

³¹Ibid.

"cities of the plain," Sodom and Gomorrah, which are said to have been destroyed during his lifetime. Glueck's explorations in Edom and Moab show that it was thickly settled at this time, but shortly thereafter a gap of several centuries in their occupation began.³² The circumstances reflected in the story of Abraham therefore fit very well into the archaeological evidence. Thus we see that one has a very logical reason for dating Abraham at about 2000 B.C. According to any current view of chronology, then, the main patriarchal period comes within the years 2000-1500 B.C., and 2000 B.C. is still a useful date to remember for Abraham when dealing in round numbers.

Summing up the above data, we find that by taking the date 966/7 B.C. (the building of Solomon's temple) plus 480 (Exodus 6:1) plus 430 (Israel's period in Egypt - Exodus 12:40) plus 215 (patriarchal period - Genesis 12:4, 20:5, 25:26, 47:9), we reach an approximate date for Abraham's departure from Haran, about 2090 B.C.³³

Thus we see that the chronological data in the Bible favor the early date, 1447 B.C., for the date of the Exodus rather than the late date, 1290-1300 B.C.

What was happening in Egypt in the fifteenth century?

³²Nelson Glueck, "Explorations in Eastern Palestine and the Negeb," B.A.S.O.R., 55 (September, 1934), 15-16.

³³Jack, op. cit., p. 208.

Does the story of the Exodus fit into the historical background of Egypt during this time? These questions will be considered in the next chapter.

There is no record of Abraham's alleged visit to Egypt in the days of the Patriarchs referred to in Genesis 12:10, there is no Biblical record of Hebrew-Egyptian relations until the period of Jacob and Joseph. Now we have learned in the previous chapter that Jacob's entry into Egypt and the beginning of the Israelite sojourn in that country occurred in 1875 B.C. This would date the entry during the Hyksos period, according to the longer chronology of Egyptian chronology, or about a hundred years before it, according to the shorter scheme,¹ for the beginning of the political power of the Hyksos in Egypt was preceded by nearly two centuries of gradual infiltration from about 1950 B.C.²

Kyle³ and many other eminent historians agree, on the whole, that the conditions of the Hyksos period afford a natural setting for Jacob's rise to power and for the

¹W. J. Jack, *The Bible in the Light of Archaeology* (Birmingham, England: C. & T. Clark, 1935), p. 171.

²Miller Harrow, *What Were These Hyksos?* (New Haven, Conn.: American Schools of Oriental Research, c. 1941), p. 89.

³Walter Grove Kyle, *Jacob and the Hyksos: Light from Archaeology on Biblical History* (Baltimore, Md.: Bibliotheca Sacra Society, c. 1929), pp. 120-22.

CHAPTER III

THE DATE OF THE EXODUS IN THE LIGHT OF EGYPTIAN HISTORY AND CONTROL OVER PALESTINE

Apart from Abraham's enforced visit to Egypt in the days of the famine referred to in Genesis 12:10, there is no Biblical record of Hebrew-Egyptian relations until the period of Jacob and Joseph. Now we have learned in the previous chapter that Jacob's entry into Egypt and the beginning of the Israelite sojourn in the same country occurred in 1877 B.C. This would date the entry during the Hyksos period, according to the longer scheme of Egyptian chronology, or about a hundred years before it, according to the shorter scheme,¹ for the beginning of the political power of the Hyksos in Egypt was preceded by nearly two centuries of gradual infiltration from about 1900 B.C.²

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¹W. J. Jack, The Date Of The Exodus (Edinburgh, England: T. & T. Clark, 1925), p. 171.

²Miller Burrows, What Mean These Stones? (New Haven, Conn.: American Schools of Oriental Research, c.1941), p. 59.

³Melvin Grove Kyle, Moses and the Monuments: Light From Archaeology On Pentateuchal Times (Oberlin, Ohio: Bibliotheca Sacra Company, c.1920), pp. 120-22.

settlement of Israel in Egypt. Furthermore, archaeological evidence is forthcoming to show relations between the Hebrews and the Hyksos: two distinctly Hebrew names, Ya'qobhar and Hur are found on Hyksos scarabs.⁴

The fact that the Hebrews were in Egypt during the time of the Hyksos period substantiates the statement that the Israelites received a friendly reception in Egypt because at that time the country was under rulers who themselves were of Semitic descent. In the same way, one can conclude that after the expulsion of the Hyksos the Egyptians would have used repressive measures against the hitherto favored Hebrews.

Many scholars have felt that the Exodus must have been connected in some way with this expulsion of the Hyksos from Egypt which took place under Ahmose I (c. 1580-1557 B.C.)⁵ between the years 1580 B.C. and 1550 B.C.⁶ H. R. Hall and Gardiner are among those who have held such a view.⁷

Hence the Exodus of the Israelites is regarded not only as synchronous with the expulsion of the Hyksos in

⁴Burrows, op. cit., p. 71.

⁵James Henry Breasted, A History Of The Ancient Egyptians (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, c.1905), pp. 426-27. The dates followed here are those of Breasted.

⁶Burrows, op. cit., p. 71.

⁷Jack, op. cit., pp. 169-73.

Egypt but also as a part of that movement. However, to place the date of the Exodus as early as 1580 B.C. would involve one in great difficulties.

To place the Exodus at this date would do violence not only to the implications of Exodus 1:7-14 regarding intensified persecution of the Hebrews, but also would run roughshod over I Kings 6:1 to lengthen the period from Solomon to the Exodus to 612 years instead of 480 demanded by the biblical statement.

Moreover, the archaeological evidence all favors a later date, as we shall presently see in the next chapter.

However, a more formidable argument in support of the late date theory claims that Palestine was so effectively controlled as an Egyptian province that it was practically impossible for the Israelites to have taken possession of the land before the reign of Ramesses II (c. 1301-1234 B.C.). This means that if we allow for the forty years sojourn of the Israelites in the wilderness, the Exodus would be dated around the year 1250 B.C. Thus W. F. Albright says:⁹

From about 1550 to about 1225 B.C. Palestine remained an Egyptian province uninterruptedly except for brief rebellions, such as one at the end of the reign of Queen Hatshepsut and others in the time of Sethos I and Ramesses II.

Let us examine the history of Egypt and Palestine dur-

⁸J. McKee Adams, Ancient Records And The Bible: A Survey of Archaeological Evidence in their Bearing on the Integrity of the Historical Narratives of the Bible (Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman Press, c.1946), p. 215.

⁹William Foxwell Albright, From The Stone Age To Christianity: Monotheism and the Historical Process (2nd revised edition; Baltimore: The John Hopkins Press, 1946), p. 155.

ing the eighteenth and nineteenth Dynasties a little closer.

The invasion of Palestine was begun under Ahmose I (c. 1580-1557 B.C.), the founder of the XVIII Dynasty. He was succeeded by his son Amenhotep I and then by his daughter's husband, Thutmose I, who campaigned successfully in Nubia and as far as the Euphrates. The only living child of Thutmose I and his queen was a daughter, the remarkable Hatshepsut. Legally, Hatshepsut was the only heir to the throne, yet she could not actually reign as king but could only convey the crown to her husband by marriage. Thutmose I also had a son who was born by one of his secondary wives. In order to secure the throne for his son, he was married to his half-sister, Hatshepsut, and reigned as Thutmose II. The only son of Thutmose II was born to him by a harem girl and was still a boy when his father died. As Thutmose III he ruled nominally with Hatshepsut (c. 1501-1480 B.C.), but actually this powerful woman took full control of the government.

After Queen Hatshepsut died, Thutmose III (c. 1501-1447 B.C.) reigned as Pharaoh alone. He is generally characterized as one of the greatest monarchs of ancient Egypt. Upon emerging as sole ruler, this Pharaoh burst forth in furious activity. He expressed his resentment at having been kept so long in a minor position by hacking out the figure and name of Hatshepsut wherever these appeared

on monuments throughout Egypt. Then he led his armies into battle in Palestine and Syria. In seventeen campaigns Thutmose III established the absolute power of Egypt as far as the Euphrates and built the first real Egyptian Empire. The whole country of Palestine on both sides of the Jordan was made an Egyptian province by this Pharaoh.

This vast empire remained intact, more or less, through the reigns of Thutmose III's immediate successors, Amenhotep II (c. 1447-1420 B.C.) and Thutmose IV (c. 1420-1411 B.C.). Thus we see that from about 1550 B.C. to about 1411 B.C., Palestine was under the control of Egyptian Pharaohs.¹⁰

With the principle facts regarding the reigns of the Pharaohs of the early eighteenth Dynasty before us, we can proceed to bring the Exodus into the picture and draw several inferences.

First, taking once again the year 1447 B.C. as the date of the Exodus, we find that it falls within the last year or two of the reign of Thutmose III (c. 1501-1447 B.C.), who would then become the Pharaoh of the Oppression.¹¹

This picture of Thutmose III, as the oppressor of the Israelites, would be quite credible since we know that he

¹⁰For a complete discussion of the succession of rulers at this time see George Steindorff, and Keith C. Seele, When Egypt Ruled The East, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, c.1942).

¹¹J. P. Free, Archaeology and Bible History (Wheaton, Ill.: Van Kampen Press, c.1950), p. 88.

was a great builder and employed Semitic laborers on his construction projects.¹² Ahmose I (c. 1580-1557 B.C.), who expelled the Hyksos, might have been the "new king over Egypt, who knew not Joseph" mentioned in Exodus 1:8,¹³ and Queen Hatshepsut might have been the "Pharaoh's daughter" of Exodus 2:5-10.¹⁴ And if we accept Thutmose III as the Pharaoh of the Oppression then his successor, Amenhotep II (c. 1447-1420 B.C.) was the Pharaoh of the Exodus.¹⁵ Thus we see that the early date 1447 B.C. fits very well into the historical picture.

Returning, now, to the question of Egyptian control over Palestine, we find that Amenhotep III (c. 1411-1375 B.C.) was the immediate successor of Thutmose IV. It was during his reign that the empire attained its greatest splendor.¹⁶ However, it was about the twelfth year of this reign (c. 1400 B.C.) that certain movements began here and there which led to the gradual weakening of Egypt's hold upon her outside possessions.¹⁷

¹²S. L. Caiger, The Old Testament And Modern Discovery (London: S. P. C. K., 1938), p. 17.

¹³Ibid., p. 14.

¹⁴Jack Finegan, Light From The Ancient Past: The Archaeological Background of the Hebrew-Christian Religion (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, c.1946), p. 106.

¹⁵Caiger, op. cit., p. 20.

¹⁶Finegan, op. cit., p. 93.

¹⁷Jack, op. cit., pp. 34-8.

During the reign of his immediate successor, Amenhotep IV (c. 1375-1358 B.C.), also known as Aknaton, the crisis in Palestine became acute.¹⁸ Confirmation of all this has been immensely strengthened by the discovery of the large collection of Tell el-Amarna Letters (over 350 in all)¹⁹ which were found in 1887 in the archives of Aknaton's foreign office.²⁰

These letters, covering a period from about 1400-1366 B.C.,²¹ show that Egyptian control over Palestine had become so weakened and relaxed from about 1400 B.C. onwards, that any well disciplined, organized force could take possession of the land. The writers complain bitterly of Egypt's silence, her indifference, her lack of response to their appeals for help against the invaders.

The trouble comes from several quarters.²² First, in the north, the Hittites, under the leadership of Shuppiluliu, were pouring south and attacking Syria. Second, further south, the trouble was caused by Amorites who had the assistance of Aramean nomads called SAGAZ. These people,

¹⁸Ibid., p. 38.

¹⁹Sir Frederic Kenyon, The Bible And Archaeology (New York: Harper & Brothers, n.d.), p. 71.

²⁰Gaiger, op. cit., p. 21.

²¹Jack, op. cit., p. 42.

²²Ibid., pp. 47-57.

along with the Hittites, captured town after town in northern Palestine. Finally, in the south, affairs were equally serious. Practically all of these southern princes sent letters appealing for help against invading armies. In particular, the governor of Jerusalem, Abdi-Hiba, makes urgent requests for Egyptian troops, stating that unless they can be speedily sent, the whole country will be lost to Egypt. He calls the invading armies the "Habiru", a name which many scholars believe to be the exact equivalent of "Hebrew".²³ However, even though the two may be philologically equivalent, no historical connection can be traced between the Habiru revolution and the original invasion of Canaan by the Israelites under Joshua. The two movements were essentially distinct.²⁴ For, on the one hand, the Israelites launched their attack from the east by way of Jericho, while, on the other hand, the "Habiru" launched their attack from the north.²⁵ The most one can say is that the "Habiru" were groups of nomadic or semi-nomadic people on the desert border of the Fertile Crescent. In times of peace they worked in various capacities for the settled people. In unsettled periods they

²³ Finegan, op. cit., p. 101.

²⁴ Jack, op. cit., pp. 128-29. Jack says "Habiru" were the Hebrews of the Exodus.

²⁵ John Garstang, The Foundations of Bible History: Joshua, Judges (London: Constable, 1931), p. 255.

might have raided the urban areas or hired themselves out as mercenaries to one party or another.²⁶

At this point it is interesting to note T. J. Meek's view with regard to the date of the Exodus.

He believes that the "Habiru" invasion of the Amarna Letters was one of the great invasions of Bedouins from the desert, an invasion which was proceeding in a southwesterly direction. One group broke off under the leadership of Joshua and pushed into Palestine, conquering Jericho some time during the fourteenth century B.C. As the movement proceeded southward, other groups broke off and later formed the kingdoms of Ammon, Moab, and Edom. A portion of this Bedouin movement got into Egypt, was led out from there by Moses about 1200 B.C., picked up a few other tribes or clans in the region of the Sinai Peninsula, and then invaded Palestine directly from the south without going around to the east of the Dead Sea. Thus in this view there are two distinct phases: the invasion of the Joseph tribes (these tribes had never been in Egypt) led by Joshua from Transjordan in the late fifteenth and fourteenth century B.C., and the invasion by Moses into Judah from the south in the second half of the thirteenth century B.C.²⁷ In a

²⁶G. E. Wright, "Epic of Conquest," The Biblical Archaeologist, III (September, 1940), 30-1.

²⁷Ibid., 38.

word, then, the conquest was a gradual infiltration into the country from the north and east that extended over a considerable period of time and did not become an accomplished fact until the time of the monarchy.²⁸

However, there are a number of objections which one may raise against this theory of the date of the Exodus.²⁹ First, Joshua is placed at least a century and a half before Moses, so that the former did not succeed the latter. Second, the detailed story in Numbers of the circumvention of the Moabites and Edomites, the defeat of Sihon, and the movement of the Israelite tribes from Egypt around the Dead Sea, working their way north, could not then be accepted, at least with the Biblical writers' interpretation. Third, Joseph is not associated with Egypt. Finally, scholars are by no means certain today that the Amarna Letters offer sufficient evidence to assume such a major invasion from the desert regions.

In returning to the assertion of the late date theorists that Palestine was so effectively controlled that it was almost impossible for the Israelites to have taken possession of the land before 1290 B.C., we find that it is not in accord with the historical evidence. There is

²⁸F. J. Meek, "The Israelite Conquest of Ephraim," B.A.B.O.R., 61 (February, 1936), 19.

²⁹Wright, op. cit., 38.

good reason to believe that Egyptian control in Palestine was so weakened that it was an easy matter for outsiders to come in and capture the land. On the other hand, if we take the year 1400 B.C. as the time of the entry of the Israelites into Palestine, it would have taken place about the time when the country was seething with factions and plots. With Egyptian power near its lowest ebb, the Israelites would have had an excellent opportunity to consolidate their positions. Furthermore, if the spoilation of the previous Egyptian conquests in Palestine was anything like that depicted in the records, the triumphs of Egypt meant in effect the ruin of the country and accounted in a large measure for the decay of the old Canaanite power and civilization allowing the Israelites to capture the land more readily.³⁰ Thus the date, 1400 B.C., would be in perfect harmony with the historical data.

However, the late date theorists, while admitting the serious loss of control referred to, hold that the land was reconquered by Egypt during the nineteenth Dynasty. Therefore, they argue, the period of the Israelite conquest must have taken place almost two centuries later when Palestine was permanently lost.³¹ We proceed, therefore, to examine

³⁰Garstang, op. cit., pp. 113-15.

³¹Jack, op. cit., p. 55.

the history of the nineteenth Dynasty and see how extensively Egypt reconquered Palestine.

Seti I (c. 1322-1301 B.C.), the second king of the nineteenth Dynasty, invaded Palestine and waged a number of campaigns on the Mediterranean Coast, in northern Palestine and Syria. Just how extensive and lasting these campaigns were it is hard to tell. However, one can say that there is no trace in his campaigns of any occupation of central and southern Palestine which would be the territory in which the Hebrews of the Exodus were settled at this particular time if they had reconquered the land around 1400 B.C.³²

Seti's famous son and successor, Ramesses II (c. 1301-1234 B.C.), continued what his father started. However, he succeeded only in winning back what his father held before him.³³ The chief result of his wars in Palestine and Syria was to bring ruin and disaster to Canaanite civilization near the coast, and to stop the Hittites' further progress towards the south.³⁴

After Ramesses II, the hold of each successive Pharaoh, even upon Syria and the coast territories became

³²Ibid., p. 62.

³³Ibid.

³⁴Garstang, op. cit., p. 280.

weaker, Merneptah (c. 1233-1223 B.C.), his immediate successor, seems to have undertaken a campaign against Palestine. He refers to his numerous victories in an inscription on the back of a large stele, discovered by Sir Flinders Petrie in 1896.³⁵ This victory stele was erected in the fifth year of Merneptah's reign, c. 1228 B.C.,³⁶ and records his various campaigns in the Near East, particularly in Palestine. The importance of this inscription lies in the fact that Israel is here mentioned for the first time as being outside of Egypt and evidently in Palestine as a settled community.³⁷ If, then, the Exodus would have taken place during the reign of Ramesses II, how can the upholders of the late date theory explain the victory stele?

The brief historical sketch of the later Egyptian campaigns shows that these afford little ground for the contention of the late date theorists that the Israelite conquest must have taken place when Palestine was permanently lost, c. 1250 B.C.

However, in reviewing this whole situation, there are a number of facts which must be remembered. First, full

³⁵Caiger, op. cit., p. 25.

³⁶Jack, op. cit., p. 254.

³⁷William Ross, "Jericho and the Date of the Exodus," The Hibbert Journal, XXXIX (October, 1940-July, 1941), 301-02.

weight is not given by the upholders of the late date theory to the fact that the settlement of Canaan took place gradually and was not permanent.³⁸ Thus at first only a limited amount of territory was under Hebrew rule. After the first conquests much territory was lost and for many generations the Israelites only occupied, for all practical purposes, the central range. Thus they were isolated and independent from the rest of Palestine and would hardly have come in contact with the Egyptian army.³⁹ A realization of this leads us to see that the military campaigns of Seti I, Rameses II, and others must have left the Israelites practically untouched in the highland territory which they occupied at first.

In the second place, it must be remembered that the campaigns of these later Pharaohs were directed entirely against the Syrians and Hittites in the north.⁴⁰ The issue always lay between Egypt struggling to maintain her power in Palestine and Hittite movements from the north endeavoring to secure a place in southwestern Asia. Thus the campaigns of Egypt could have but little effect on the Israelites, whose chief centers at that time lay far away

³⁸ Jack, op. cit., pp. 69-70.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 75.

⁴⁰ Ibid., pp. 76-81.

from the beaten track.

In the third place, the fact that the Biblical record makes no reference to attacks by the Egyptians against the Israelites does not afford any valid argument against the early date theory.⁴¹ For the writers of the Old Testament were not attempting any exhaustive history either of their own nation nor of neighboring peoples. Their purpose was purely religious, not political. They recorded those facts which set in sharper relief the realization of the Messianic mission of Israel.

However, there is another argument on which great stress is laid in support of the late date theory. It is based upon the statement in Exodus 1:11 that the Israelites during their sojourn in Egypt "built for the Pharaoh treasure cities, Pithom and Raamses." Since these cities are connected with Ramesses II (c. 1301-1234 B.C.), it is assumed that the Exodus could not have taken place before his reign.⁴²

Both of these cities have been excavated and identified. Pithom is now identified with the site, Tell Retabeh,⁴³ (supposed to be Raamses by its excavator, Petrie),⁴⁴ and

⁴¹Ibid., p. 81.

⁴²Finegan, op. cit., p. 107.

⁴³Albright, From The Stone Age To Christianity, p. 194.

⁴⁴Galger, op. cit., p. 15.

Raamses is identified with Tanis,⁴⁵ which is the same place as Avaris, the Hyksos capital.⁴⁶ Among the inscriptions found at Raamses are some which show slave labor being done by a people called 'Apiru which are identified by many scholars with the Hebrews.⁴⁷ But this identification is debatable since the 'Apiru may have been Hebrews who re-immigrated into Egypt or were prisoners of war from Palestine.⁴⁸ Furthermore, G. E. Wright⁴⁹ also points out that the term 'Apiru may just refer to a social status rather than a racial group. Therefore, to assume on this evidence that the Israelites of the Exodus built this city, Raamses, during the reign of Ramesses II, is unwarranted. There are also a number of other considerations which one must take into account when dealing with this problem. In the first place, we learn from Genesis 47:11 that Raamses was the name of a province in Egypt for which the name of Goshen came to be known (Genesis 47:6).⁵⁰ Lagarde, Hommel, and other scholars⁵¹ have come to the conclusion that the true

⁴⁵Albright, From The Stone Age To Christianity, p. 194.

⁴⁶W. F. Albright, "Archaeology and the Date of the Hebrew Conquest of Palestine," B.A.S.O.R., 58 (April, 1935), 16.

⁴⁷Burrows, op. cit., pp. 74-5.

⁴⁸Jack, op. cit., p. 237.

⁴⁹Wright, op. cit., 31.

⁵⁰Ross, op. cit., 307.

⁵¹Ibid.

reading of this verse is not "Pithom and Raamses", but Pithom of Raamses (the province). Secondly, we learn that in Genesis, Raamses was the name of a district in the time of Jacob, and from the Egyptian monuments there is evidence that one of the sons of Aahmes was named Rames.⁵² Finally,⁵³ the name Raamses, applied to the city in Exodus 1:11 "may not have been adopted till long after the city was built, and indeed till long after the Israelites had left Egypt."⁵⁴ Thus "there seems little ground for using the building of the city as an argument in favor of a late date for the Exodus."⁵⁵

We have examined the historical setting of the Exodus, and find that the conditions of the early date fit the circumstances. There is no compelling reason to accept the late date.

⁵²F. C. Cook, editor, The Holy Bible With Commentary. (London: John Murray, 1877), I, 454.

⁵³Burrows, op. cit., p. 75. He points out that "it is possible that the Hebrew writer in Exodus 1:11 used a relatively late name for the city even though referring to an earlier time, just as one of us might say that the Dutch built New York."

⁵⁴Jack, op. cit., p. 25.

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 25 f.

CHAPTER IV

THE DATE OF THE EXODUS IN THE LIGHT OF ARCHAEOLOGY

In the two preceding chapters we have discovered that, for the most part, the available chronological and historical data point to a date around 1447 B.C. for the Exodus and 1400 B.C. for the Israelites entrance into the Promised Land. It is necessary now that we direct our attention to the archaeological data which have come to light in the excavations of Transjordan and Palestine in order to discover to what extent these data enlighten the general period of the Israelite conquest. Does this evidence favor the early date, 1400 B.C., or the late date, c. 1250 B.C., for the Hebrew conquest of Palestine?

To some extent we can trace the probable course of the Israelites in their journey from Egypt to Palestine. We learn from the Bible that the name of the wilderness and the mount where the Law was given was Sinai. We learn further that from this wilderness of Sinai the Israelites journeyed by many stages to Eziongeber. From Eziongeber they came to Kadesh or Kadesh-barnea in the wilderness of Zin and apparently made their headquarters there for some time. From Kadesh, Moses sent messengers to the king of Edom requesting permission for the Israelites to pass through the land.

And Moses sent messengers from Kadesh unto the king of Edom, . . . Let us pass, I pray thee, through thy country . . . we will go by the kings high way, we will not turn to the right nor to the left, until we have passed thy borders.

These words presuppose that at the time of the Israelite conquest a strong kingdom existed in Edom. Thus when the ruler of Edom refused permission for the Israelites to pass through the land, it became necessary for them to make their weary way around the kingdom through the wilderness. As we have noted previously, there was a flourishing civilization in Transjordan about the time of Abraham. A main central highway ran through the land at that time and is clearly traceable by the ruins of the sites. In fact this was probably the same highway along which the eastern kings of Genesis fourteen moved when they invaded Canaan.²

However, Nelson Glueck³ from his excavations in Transjordan is convinced that the regions of Edom and Moab had no settled communities between the nineteenth and thirteenth centuries B.C. In fact, to him the period between these centuries represents an historical blank. Since Israel apparently encountered settled people in the Edomite

¹Numbers 20:14, 17.

²Jack Finegan, Light From The Ancient Past: The Archaeological Background of the Hebrew-Christian Religion (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, c.1946), p. 131.

³Nelson Glueck, "Explorations in Eastern Palestine and the Negeb," B.A.S.O.R., 55 (September, 1934), 15-16.

region (Numbers 20:14 ff.), this would seem to point to a date later than the period of 1400 B.C. as their entry into Canaan. Therefore, he reasons⁴ that the situation presupposed in Numbers 20:14-17 did not exist before the thirteenth century B.C. but did prevail from that time on.

It becomes impossible, therefore, in the light of all this new archaeological evidence . . . to escape the conclusion that the particular Exodus of the Israelites through southern Transjordan could not have taken place before the thirteenth century B.C. . . . Had the Exodus through southern Transjordan taken place before the thirteenth century B.C., the Israelites would have found neither Edomite nor Moabite kingdoms, well organized and well fortified, whose rulers could have given or withheld permission to go through their territories. Indeed the Israelites, had they arrived on the scene first, might have occupied all of Edom and Moab themselves, and left the land on the west side of the Jordan for late comers.

However, three things can be said in reply. First, Glueck's evidence is based upon pottery fragments found in Edomite territory, where as yet thorough excavations have not been carried out.⁵ In fact it has been pointed out that while the classification of pottery evidence in Palestine has been highly refined in recent years, adjustments of more than one hundred years have been made in the past.⁶

⁴ Nelson Glueck, The Other Side of the Jordan (New Haven, Conn.: American Schools of Oriental Research, c.1940), p. 146.

⁵ Joseph P. Free, Archaeology and Bible History (Wheaton, Ill.: Van Kampen Press, c.1950), p. 99.

⁶ Ibid.

Furthermore, W. F. Albright points out,⁷ that as far as the potsherd evidence in southern Palestine is concerned "no exact date can be set." Second, the Ras Shamra Tablets (c. 1400 B.C.) speak of Edom as an organized kingdom.⁸ Third, if the Edomites and Moabites lived after the manner of their present day Bedouin inhabitants, very little imperishable evidence would remain.⁹ Thus we see that Glueck's objection to the early date for the Exodus is not as conclusive as is imagined by the late date theorists. Until more light is shed upon the subject, one cannot consider this objection as an argument against the early date theory.

Once again, then, if we can determine the date of the Israelites' conquest or entry of Palestine, we could reckon back from it to the approximate date of the Exodus. We know from the Book of Joshua that the city Jericho was the first conquest which the Israelites made. If we can discover when this city ceased to exist, we will be able to arrive at a date for the conquest of Palestine.

The excavation of Jericho was first attempted by Ernst

⁷W. F. Albright, From The Stone Age To Christianity: Monotheism and the Historical Process (2nd revised edition; Baltimore: The John Hopkins Press, 1946), p. 195.

⁸William Ross, "Jericho and the Date of the Exodus," The Hibbert Journal, XXXIX (October, 1940-July, 1941), 303.

⁹Ibid.

Sellin in 1907-1909, and was continued by John Garstang in 1930-1936 with great success.¹⁰ The latter excavator has divided up the history of this city into five successive alphabetical periods. City A belongs to the first part of the Early Bronze Age.¹¹ City B was founded about 2500 B.C., or shortly before, and was occupied in the days of the Pharaohs, falling about 1700 B.C. City C with its palace and tremendous city wall dates from about 1700 B.C. to about 1500 B.C., when it was violently destroyed. This period corresponds to the rule of the Hyksos in Egypt, and the names of Hyksos kings are found stamped upon jar handles. City D, the one mentioned in Joshua, was founded shortly after 1500 B.C. and was destroyed some time in the end of the fifteenth century B.C., or the beginning of the fourteenth. City E belongs to the Iron Age. The construction of this city may well be connected with the statement in I Kings 16:34 that a man from Bethel by the name of Hiel

¹⁰ Chester G. McCown, The Ladder of Progress in Palestine (New York: Harper & Brothers, c.1943), pp. 69-70.

¹¹ "Bronze Age" is a technical term of archaeologists for the period preceeding the introduction of iron into common use shortly after 1200 B.C. This Age is usually divided up as follows: Early Bronze Age, shortly before 3000 to about 2100 B.C.; Middle Bronze Age I, about 2100-1900 B.C.; Middle Bronze Age II, about 1900-1500 B.C.; Late Bronze Age, about 1500-1200 B.C. G. E. Wright, "Epic of Conquest," The Biblical Archaeologist, III (September, 1940), 33.

built Jericho in the days of Ahab and Jezebel.¹²

John Garstang established the chronology of these successive cities by excavating the Tell and the cemeteries, which yielded great quantities of pottery and scarabs which could be dated. Here the evidence for the destruction of the Late Bronze Age city seems to be very clear. First, the series of scarabs, which he found, end with the reign of Amenhotep III (c. 1411-1375 B.C.), and there is nothing else to suggest a later date.¹³ Second, practically no Mycenaean pottery, which began to be imported from the Aegean area about 1400 B.C., has been found in the city's destruction.¹⁴ Therefore, J. Garstang asserts¹⁵ that all the archaeological evidence points towards the year 1400 B.C. for the fall of the last city of Jericho which thereafter remained until the time of king Ahab.

Since, therefore, the excavations of Jericho point to the date c. 1400 B.C. for the city's destruction and since the Children of Israel were in the wilderness for forty years, we may conclude that the Exodus took place around the year 1447 B.C. Thus we see that not only the

¹²McCown, op. cit., pp. 68-84. He gives a very complete discussion of the Jericho evidence.

¹³Ibid., pp. 79-80.

¹⁴Free, op. cit., p. 132.

¹⁵Ross, op. cit., 302.

chronological and historical evidence agrees with the early date, but that the archaeological evidence also confirms the same.

However, there are serious objections to this evidence. Some scholars have felt that the Jericho evidence points to a date later than 1400 B.C. for the fall of the city. W. F. Albright¹⁶ dates the fall between the years 1375 B.C. and 1300 B.C. Vincent¹⁷ dates the fall of Jericho between 1250 B.C. and 1200 B.C., but G. E. Wright points out¹⁸ that if such a date is accepted, it would not be in harmony with the evidence since the characteristic pottery of the period 1300-1200 B.C. is entirely absent at Jericho, "and the final destruction of the Late Bronze Age city must, therefore, be earlier than the thirteenth century."¹⁹ While G. E. Wright concludes²⁰ that Jericho must have fallen before the thirteenth century, he sees no way to date it more closely than to put it within the period

¹⁶W. F. Albright, "The Israelite Conquest of Canaan in the Light of Archaeology," B.A.S.O.R., 74 (April, 1939), 20.

¹⁷H. H. Rowley, "The Exodus and the Settlement in Canaan," B.A.S.O.R., 85 (February, 1942), 31.

¹⁸Wright, "Epic of Conquest," The Biblical Archaeologist, 35.

¹⁹G. E. Wright, "Two Misunderstood Items in the Exodus-Conquest Cycle," B.A.S.O.R., 86 (April, 1942), 34.

²⁰Ibid.

between 1475 B.C. and 1300 B.C. "Absolutely all that we can say about it with certainty is that the city fell to the Hebrews sometime between cir. 1475 and 1300 B.C."

John Garstang,²¹ however, observes that few of these opinions are based on first-hand knowledge of the results of his excavation at Jericho, and that many are based on definite preconceptions concerning the date of the Exodus. He points out, furthermore, that no scholar has as yet produced from the results of his excavations any evidence that City D remained in existence after the reign of the Egyptian Pharaoh, Amenhotep III (c. 1411-1375 B.C.). Then, too, it must be remembered that even if one did accept G. E. Wright's conclusions this date would still be in general agreement with the theory that the Israelites arrived in Palestine around 1400 B.C.

Another objection to the date 1400 B.C. for the conquest of Palestine is the problem of the city Ai. It will be remembered that the Israelites proceeded at once from Jericho to Ai, near Bethel, and took it after an initial failure.²²

The site of Ai, now called et-Tell, has been excavated by Mme. Judith - Krause. She found that the mound had not

²¹Free, op. cit., p. 131.

²²Joshua 7-8.

been inhabited between 2200 B.C. and 1200 B.C.²³ If this conclusion is correct, then the account of the capture and destruction of Ai in Joshua seven and eight would have to be relegated to the region of the legendary.²⁴

However, a possible explanation of this problem, concerning Ai, has been offered by the French Catholic archaeologist, Père Vincent. He has suggested²⁵ that when the Israelites attacked Ai, the Canaanites of Bethel were merely using the ancient ruins of the Early Bronze City as an outpost against invaders. This would mean that the inhabitants of Bethel had merely an outpost at Ai of such proportions that it left no remains to betray its existence to the excavator.²⁶

Another solution has been offered in the suggestion of J. Simons²⁷ that Et-Tell is not to be identified with Biblical Ai. Therefore, "if Et-Tell is not to be identified with Ai, then the indication that Et-Tell was not in existence in 1400 B.C. has no bearing on the Biblical indication

²³W. F. Albright, "Archaeological Exploration and Excavation in Palestine and Syria," American Journal of Archaeology, XL (Jan.-Mar., 1936), 158.

²⁴Albright, "The Israelite Conquest of Canaan in the Light of Archaeology," B.A.S.O.R., 16.

²⁵Free, op. cit., p. 134.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Ibid.

concerning Ai."²⁸

Many other possible explanations have been offered, but the scope of this paper does not permit one to go into greater detail.²⁹ The matter must be left for the present as undetermined, but as deserving attention.

A more serious objection to the early date of the Exodus, however, is based upon the evidence of three Canaanite cities, namely, Bethel (Beitin), Lachish (Tell el-Duweir), and Debir (Tell Beit Miraim), each of which, according to archaeological evidence, was destroyed in the thirteenth century B.C., more than a hundred years after the destruction of Jericho.³⁰ As a result, many scholars maintain that the Exodus could not have taken place before the thirteenth century B.C. To attain any clarity in this extremely complicated situation, therefore, we must review the evidence of each of these cities and see if the data confirm the early date or the late date for the Exodus.

In the case of Bethel, it may be noted that in the Book of Joshua no account is given of its capture other than the summary of the Hebrew campaigns in Joshua 12. On

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ W. F. Albright says that perhaps the story of Bethel was transferred to the ruins of Ai. W. F. Albright, "Archaeology and the Date of the Hebrew Conquest of Palestine," B.A.S.O.R., 58 (April, 1935), 15.

³⁰ Flanagan, op. cit., pp. 136-141.

the other hand, in Judges 1:23-25 we read that Bethel was captured by the house of Joseph after the death of Joshua. In other words, we may assume that Bethel was lost after Joshua's time and destroyed in a later campaign in the early period of the Judges, and excavations there indicate that the town fell during that period.³¹ Furthermore, it is of importance to note that the site of Bethel is now occupied by a village, and, as a result, the area of excavation was more limited than usual.³² Thus we see that in view of the evidence one can still hold to the early date theory.

Lachish, the capture of which is related in Joshua 10:31 f., was destroyed in the late thirteenth century B.C., according to conclusions based on recent excavation.³³ This factor is urged as another proof that the Israelite conquest took place later than c. 1400 B.C.

It must be remembered, however, that

so far as excavation has gone, the sections of the city's history which have been most fully illuminated are those which fall just before the Exile and during the Persian period. As yet the periods of the Hebrew

³¹Free, op. cit., p. 141.

³²W. F. Albright, "A Summary of Archaeological Research During 1934 in Palestine, Transjordan and Syria," American Journal of Archaeology, XXXIX (Jan.-Mar., 1935), 141-42.

³³W. F. Albright, "Further Light on the History of Israel from Lachish and Megiddo," B.A.S.O.R., 68 (December, 1937), 24. He dates fall of Canaanite Lachish in 1231 B.C.

conquest and monarchy to ⁶⁰⁰ B.C. have hardly been touched except in tombs.³⁴

If this is true, then, one cannot be dogmatic and state that the Israelites captured this town sometime after 1250 B.C. Only when further evidence is gathered can anyone draw a logical conclusion.

Debir was another city named among those captured in Joshua's time,³⁵ and according to Judges 1:10-13, it was recaptured for the tribe of Judah by Othniel, Caleb's nephew. The site has been excavated, and the evidence gathered is interpreted as pointing to the city's destruction in or about the second half of the thirteenth century B.C.³⁶ Thus the evidence of archaeology is here, too, marshaled to favor the arrival of the Israelites and the destruction of the city shortly before 1200 B.C. However, perhaps the solution suggested above for Lachish, applies here as well. Furthermore, we can only hope that when more archaeological data are available, the difficulties will be solved.

In general, however, it may be noted that not all scholars are agreed as to just what date these cities were

³⁴McCown, *op. cit.*, p. 135.

³⁵Joshua 10:38 f.

³⁶W. F. Albright, "The Israelite Conquest of Canaan in the Light of Archaeology," *B.A.S.O.R.*, 74 (April, 1939), 23.

destroyed. W. F. Albright maintains³⁷ that they were destroyed some time in the thirteenth century B.C. While Free, Garstang, and others maintain³⁸ that these cities fell shortly after 1400 B.C. Furthermore, many scholars believe that the Israelites' conquest of Palestine was a gradual process and not permanent and complete.³⁹ There was a taking, losing, and then retaking of these cities.

Thus, in view of these different opinions, we see that archaeology has not in all instances simplified the problem of the date of the Exodus but has introduced some new complications. Miller Burrows says:⁴⁰ "Perhaps we should say rather that it has uncovered the original complexity which was obscured by the apparent simplicity of the records."

In conclusion we may say that our examination of the date of the Exodus has revealed the weakness of the late date theory and confirmed the earlier date. We have examined the arguments of the late date theorists and have not found in them sufficient evidence to warrant the conclusions adopted. On the other hand, we have shown by a

³⁷ Finegan, op. cit., pp. 136-41.

³⁸ Free, op. cit., p. 137.

³⁹ Ross, op. cit., 304.

⁴⁰ Miller Burrows, What Mean These Stones? (New Haven, Conn.: American Schools of Oriental Research, c.1941), p. 79.

combination of arguments, Biblical, chronological, historical, and archaeological that best justice is done to the evidence now available if we conclude that the Israelites entered Egypt around 1587 B.C., left the land about 1447 B.C. and entered Palestine in approximately 1407 B.C.

However, it must be admitted that no single theory as to the date of the Exodus is as yet conclusive. There are perplexities, as there must be in dealing with any subject where the evidence is mainly indirect; and there is probably no point we have advanced on which some scholars may not differ from us. Nevertheless, we believe that the earlier date 1447 B.C., which has been advocated by many scholars, is the one which is best suited to satisfy all the conditions.

- Exodus 12:37.
- Numbers 7:13.
- Numbers 26:31.

Franklin S. Hoelzer, *From the Nile to the Jordan: A Study of the Exodus and the Date of the Exodus*, published by The Sunday School Times Co., N.Y. 1917, p. 105 ff.

APPENDIX

THE NUMBER OF ISRAELITES AT THE TIME OF THE EXODUS

The number of Israelites at the Exodus is given as 600,000 fighting men,¹ indicating a population of between two or three millions. This figure is confirmed by two censuses, one taken shortly after entering the wilderness,² and one nearly forty years later.³

Many writers, however, consider this figure incredible. As a result we have numerous objections offered against it. Let us examine a few of these objections.

In the first place, many critics maintain that the Land of Goshen could not accommodate so many people.⁴ This argument is not so clear since the estimates of the size of Goshen are very divergent. Also it must be remembered that this section of the land in which the Israelites dwelt was very fertile and therefore could support a larger population compared to that of other localities.

¹ Exodus 12:37.

² Numbers 2:32.

³ Numbers 26:51.

⁴ Franklin E. Hoskins, From the Nile to Nebo: A Discussion of the Problem and the Route of the Exodus (Philadelphia: The Sunday School Times Co., c.1912), p. 166 f.

Another objection is the fact that in Exodus 14:7 we read that the Pharaoh "took six hundred chariots" to turn back the Children of Israel. Critics maintain that this force would be inadequate in dealing with the 600,000 fighting men of the Israelites.⁵ However, it must be remembered that military power does not merely depend on numbers but upon weapons, equipment, training, etc. In fact it would be surprising that any of the fleeing slaves had weapons at all, and certainly very few could have been trained soldiers.

Another objection which the critics have raised to these large figures is founded on the theory that it would have been impossible to get the large number of Israelites in formation to travel. However, as T. Whitelaw points out,⁶ the arranging of the four divisions for marching may have gone on simultaneously, since they were widely separated from each other, with Judah on the east side of camp, Reuben on the south, Ephraim on the west, and Dan on the north. If such simultaneous formation was employed, a number of miles could be covered in a day.

In view of all these objections raised by the critics of the Bible, many scholars have attempted to explain away

⁵Ibid., p. 169.

⁶T. Whitelaw, "Numbers," The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia (Howard Severance C., c.1915), IV, 2163.

the large figures by assuming that the Hebrew word for "family" or "clan" in the ancient records was somehow mistaken for the word "one thousand". On the basis of this theory, then, F. Hoskins,⁷ in his book From the Nile to Nebo, comes to the conclusion that there were only about 100,000 people in the camp of Israel.

However, this problem involves far more than a mere matter of statistics, for the whole narrative is conditioned on the presence at the Exodus and in the wilderness of a very large population. We must consider all the remarks made in the Bible about the Israelites having multiplied so greatly in Egypt. We must consider why the king of Egypt was so worried lest the Israelites should grow too strong for him.

In summing up the whole problem of the number of the Israelites, it should be said that the critic has no right to reconstruct the account of the situation on the mere basis of a mere theory, particularly when the records of the event in the Bible can be understood so as to constitute no problem.⁸

⁷Hoskins, op. cit., p. 183.

⁸J. P. Free, Archaeology and Bible History (Wheaton, Ill.: Van Kampen Press, c.1950), p. 116.

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