

Lesson 1 - Who Was the Pharaoh of the Exodus?

Background

The Exodus was perhaps THE greatest salvation event in the entire Old Testament

The Exodus and Passover - both point to Christ as the symbolic and true Passover lamb whose blood was shed to atone for the sins of the nation and redeem all those who believe.

Why is this unsolved?

1. The Pharaoh is unnamed in the book of Exodus.
2. There is no accounting of time in the Old Testament with reference to B.C. or A.D. or any other point fixed and known to the Old Testament authors.
3. There is a debate within Egyptology regarding the correct dates for the reigns of the Pharaohs.
 - a. The dating of Egypt's pharaohs comes primarily from the 3rd century B.C. Egyptian priest & historian Manetho who ordered the reigns of the pharaohs into thirty dynasties or families in his work *Aegyptiaca* (History of Egypt).
 - b. The ancient Egyptians themselves kept record of time according to an astronomical cycle called the Sothic cycle. One of the reasons why many scholars today argue for a revised chronology of ancient Egypt is the question of whether or not the Sothic cycle is a reliable method for dating.

Why is Pharaoh unnamed?

Exodus 3:14 (ESV)

¹⁴ God said to Moses, "**I AM** WHO **I AM**." And he said, "Say this to the people of Israel: '**I AM** has sent me to you.' "

Exodus 5:2 (ESV)

² But **Pharaoh** said, "**Who is the LORD**, that I should obey his voice and let Israel go? **I do not know the LORD**, and moreover, I will not let Israel go."

The irony is that we don't know Pharaoh's name, but we do know the Lord's name. Exodus was not written to exalt the Egyptian Pharaoh but rather the God of Israel.

When Did the Exodus Occur?

1 Kings 6:1 (ESV)

¹ In the **four hundred and eightieth year** after the people of Israel *came out of the land of Egypt*, in the **fourth year of Solomon's reign** over Israel, in the month of Ziv, which is the second month, he began to build the house of the LORD.

Edward R. Thiele – His book, *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*, is widely regarded as one of the most important works on the chronology of Hebrew kings.

- Thiele dates the reign of Solomon as beginning in 971/970 B.C.
- This would put the fourth year of his reign at 967/966 B.C.
- This would put the **date of the Exodus at 1447/1446 B.C.** (per 1 Kings 6:1)

Exodus 1:11 (ESV)

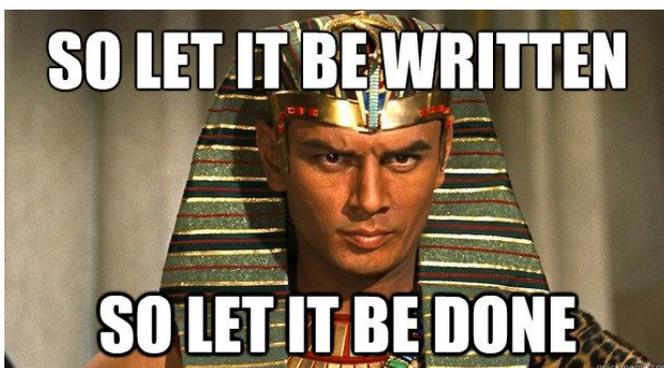
¹¹ Therefore they set taskmasters over them to afflict them with heavy burdens. They built for Pharaoh store cities, Pithom and Raamses.

- *This verse has led to some concluding the Exodus must have coincided with the reign of Rameses II (the Great), which would put it much later (see below)*

Who Was the Egyptian Pharaoh in 1447/1446 B.C.?

Depends on which revised Egyptian chronology you subscribe to:

Pharaoh (18th Dynasty)	Low	High
Ahmose I	1549–1524 BC	1570-1546 BC
Amenhotep I	1524–1503 BC	1546-1525 BC
Thutmose I	1503–1493 BC	1525-1512 BC
Thutmose II	1493–1479 BC	1512-1504 BC
Hatshepsut (Queen)	1479–1458 BC	1504-1461 BC
Thutmose III	1479–1425 BC	1504-1450 BC
Amenhotep II	1427–1397 BC	1450-1423 BC



What about Rameses?

For Rameses I or II (the Great) to have been the Pharaoh during the Exodus would require the date of the Exodus to be much later. Rameses I and II ruled in the 19th dynasty:

Rameses I: 1292-1290 B.C.

Rameses II: 1279-1213 B.C.

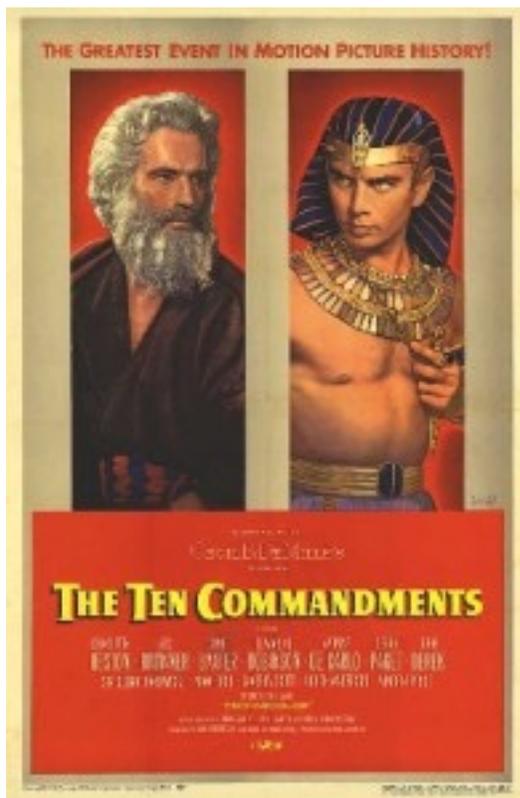
<https://crossexamined.org/ancient-israel-myth-or-history-part-3c/>

(Accessed on March 3, 2019)

Who Was the Pharaoh of the Exodus?

by Ted Wright (July 2, 2013)

As promised, let us now consider what is perhaps THE greatest salvation event in the entire Old Testament – the Exodus. The Exodus is not just an old Hollywood movie in which Charlton Heston played Moses, it was an event grounded in history and is a record of the redemption of an entire nation based on God’s promises to Abraham centuries earlier (see Gen. 12; 18; & 22).



As many Christians are aware, the entire Old Testament predicts and anticipates Christ in type and in prophecy.^[1] The biblical Exodus and Passover, both point to Christ as the symbolic and true Passover lamb whose blood was shed to atone for the sins of the nation and redeem all those who believe – not just for Jews but anyone who will believe. The 64 million dollar question, however, is how do we know the exodus actually happened like the Bible says it did? Most Christians take the biblical account at face value and believe that it happened as the Bible says, yet few can point to evidence outside of the Bible that it actually took place. Understandably, many skeptics are quick to point out that there is not a shred of historical evidence for any Israelite exodus from Egypt.

Let me state here that a blog article is certainly NOT the place to learn everything there is to know about all of the complex historical dimensions of the Exodus, but hopefully it will answer some of your questions and provide an answer to those who would question the biblical record.

As I have stated in my previous post, *chronology* is the key to unlocking the history of ancient Israel and to our understanding of how events recorded in the Bible parallel the histories of other nations in the Ancient Near East. If we assume an incorrect chronological date for a biblical event, then it becomes very difficult, if not impossible, to locate that event in the past. Such is the case, not only with locating the biblical patriarchs, but also in discovering the exodus, the conquest, or Israelite kingdom under the rule of David and Solomon in the archaeological record. In truth, this is where much (but certainly not all) of the battle lies when it comes to debates in biblical archaeology [a term now abandoned by most scholars][2]

The Date of the Exodus

In his book on the Old Testament historical period, professor Eugene Merrill states,

“The date of the exodus, the most important event in Israel’s past, is so crucial to the rest of the story that it is mandatory to give some consideration to the problem of ascertaining that date and as many other important dates as possible. Obviously, there is no reckoning of time in the Old Testament with reference to B.C. or A.D. or any other point fixed and known to the Old Testament authors, so the matter is more complicated than it might ordinarily seem.”[3]

Most critical scholars and archaeologists today date the writing of the book of Exodus from around the time of the Babylonian exile (circa 586 B.C.), and usually hold that the Exodus is an etiological story created by Jewish scribes during Babylonian captivity to lend credibility and a sense of purpose to their plight. It certainly has no basis in history or fact. But if one uses the Bible’s own internal references concerning the Exodus then the date should be evident.

Elsewhere Merrill explains:

“According to 1 Kings 6:1, the exodus occurred 480 years prior to the laying of the foundations of Solomon’s temple. This Solomon undertook in his fourth year, 966 B.C., so the exodus according to normal hermeneutics and serious appraisal of the biblical chronological data, took place in 1446 [B.C.]”[4]

IF this is the correct date of the exodus then, in theory, we should be able to locate archaeological remains of that event in ancient Egypt. But not so fast. Just because we might have the right date doesn’t mean that Egyptian evidence will be evident. More questions need to be asked. Before we look at some of those questions, let’s begin with what is probable: the identity of the pharaoh of the Exodus. Who was he? Furthermore, what do we know about him? This might seem like a simple question, but it is a bit more complex than one might imagine.

Who Was The Pharaoh of the Exodus?

I find it rather interesting that the Exodus account in the Old Testament doesn’t mention the name of the pharaoh. Since Moses was the author, he certainly *could have* named him. So why didn’t he? In short, I believe that pharaoh’s name is not mentioned on purpose. Throughout the Exodus narrative, the pharaoh either implies or asks “*Who is the Lord that I should obey his*

voice to let Israel go? I do not know the Lord, nor will I let Israel go" (Ex. 5:2). The irony, perhaps intentional, is that we don't know pharaoh's name, but we do know the Lord's name (Yahweh – "I AM"). The book of Exodus, was not written to exalt the Egyptian pharaoh (who was considered "the divine god-king"), but rather the God of Israel.

An additional problem in ascertaining the exact pharaoh of the Exodus has to do with a debate within Egyptology itself. The debate concerns assigning correct dates to the reigns of Pharaohs. The dating of Egypt's pharaohs comes primarily (although not exclusively) from the 3rd century B.C. Egyptian priest & historian Manetho who ordered the reigns of the pharaohs into thirty dynasties or families, in his work *Aegyptiaca* (History of Egypt).^[5] The ancient Egyptians themselves kept record of time according to an astronomical cycle called the Sothic cycle. One of the reasons why many scholars today argue for a revised chronology of ancient Egypt is the question of whether or not the Sothic cycle is a reliable method for dating.^[6] To make a very long and complex story short, I'll state here that I hold to the *revised chronology* which makes minor adjustments on dates and therefore affects the identity of the pharaoh.

According to the *standard chronology*, most critical scholars believe that Rameses II (ca. 1304-1236 B.C.) was the pharaoh of the exodus. There are, however, many problems with identifying Rameses II as the pharaoh of the exodus, one of which is that he was one of the longest reigning kings in ancient Egypt. As Merrill points out, "If Rameses' death had brought Moses back to Egypt, the exodus would have taken place after 1236, a date too late to satisfy anybody."^[7] But perhaps, more importantly, there is no archaeological or inscriptional evidence in Egypt or ancient Canaan which fit the biblical descriptions.

But, don't despair! With a little detective work; a starting point of around 1446 B.C.; and a knowledge of the Egyptian 18th Dynasty, it is possible to ascertain the probable identity of the pharaoh in the book of Exodus. Interestingly, there are about three pharaohs whose lives parallel and interact with the OT Exodus narrative: (1) the pharaoh who issued the decree to kill the firstborns; (2) the pharaoh of the oppression of Israel and (3) the pharaoh of the actual exodus event itself. Because of space, we'll look at the first and last one.

The Pharaoh Who Decreed to Kill the Firstborn Jewish Children

From chronological considerations found in the biblical text^[8], it is very possible that Amenhotep I was the pharaoh who issued the decree in Exodus 1:15-16 to kill all male Hebrews. As we look closer at this time frame in Egyptian history we also discover that Thutmose I (1528-1508 B.C.), the son of Amenhotep I, had a daughter named Hatshepsut. Hatshepsut is fairly well known from historical and archaeological sources and has a very interesting story herself. In order to secure royal inheritance rights for herself, Hatshepsut married her half-brother Thutmose II. When Thutmose II died prematurely, Hatshepsut assumed the role of pharaoh along with and her younger (male) nephew (& stepson) Thutmose III. As William Murnane observes, "Although Hatshepsut did not dethrone her nephew, she asserted a claim to royal power equal to his and, as senior coregent, took precedence over him in contemporary monuments."^[9] During her co-regency with the younger Thutmose III, Egypt enjoyed a time of prosperity and great building. One of the most well known structures which

survives today is the queen's mortuary temple (also called *Deir el-Bahari*) located in the Valley of the Kings.

It is very possible that when she was younger, it was this bold young queen who drew Moses from the Nile (Ex. 2:5-10). In another touch of irony, Hatshepsut is said to be one of the first women in ancient history of whom we are well informed.^[10] If she is the daughter of pharaoh who rescued Moses from the Nile against the decree of her grandfather Amenhotep I, then it seems appropriate that she is remembered in both Egyptian and biblical history.

The Pharaoh of the Exodus

Finally, we consider the identity of the famous pharaoh of the biblical exodus. Following the conclusions of the above discussion, and if the revised chronology of Egyptian history is correct, then **Amenhotep II (1450-1425 B.C.)** must be the pharaoh of the biblical exodus. Merrill elaborates:

Our identification of Amenhotep II as the pharaoh of the exodus is supported by two other considerations. First, although most of the kings of Dynasty 18 made their principle residence at Thebes, far to the south of the Israelites in the Delta, Amenhotep was at home in Memphis and apparently reigned from there most of the time. This placed him in close proximity to the land of Goshen and made him readily accessible to Moses and Aaron. Second, the best understanding suggests that Amenhotep's power did not pass to his eldest son, but rather to Thutmose IV, a younger son. This is at least implied in the so-called dream stela found at the base of the Great Sphinx near Memphis.^[11]

Other inscriptional evidence outside of the biblical record gives us a picture of what Amenhotep was like. According to Alfred J. Hoerth,

Amenhotep II was a famous sportsman in his youth and he left several stories of his physical abilities (ANET 243-45). For example, it was recorded that no one else was strong enough to draw his bow. One day he tested two hundred stiff bows and then began riding his chariot around a series of copper targets, each about three inches thick. According to the story, every shot hit the mark, and the arrows fell through the back of the targets.^[12]

In addition to these and other traits of bravado and military prowess, it is understandable why Moses was reluctant to confront the pharaoh as God had commanded him. Yet, as the story unfolded in Exodus and the Lord God sent the ten plagues to Amenhotep II, we read that the he "*hardened his heart*" against God and against setting the Jews free. This seemingly benign statement – "*the hardening of pharaoh's heart*" – is also an argument for the authenticity of the biblical account. If (or since) Moses was the author of the Pentateuch, and he had first-hand knowledge of Egyptian culture and religion, then he certainly would have understood that the "*hardening of the heart*" was not a good thing. This is according to the *Egyptian Book of the Dead* (Papyrus of Ani). This document was a religious text which describes what happened in the afterlife according to Egyptian religion. After death, the pharaoh's heart was weighed in a scale balance by Anubis (the god of the underworld) against the feather of *ma'at* or truth.^[13] To have a heavy heart or a hardened heart (i.e. a stubborn/proud heart) would have condemned the pharaoh in the afterlife. Interestingly, most ancient Egyptian mummies (especially pharaohs) have been found buried with sacred trinkets and scarabs (dung

beetles)[14] made from gold or other materials, and would have been placed over the heart to protect it in the afterlife. These scarabs were inscribed with spells from the *Book of the Dead*. [15]

There is so much more that I could mention here, but as you can see from the above discussion, this is just the tip of the iceberg (as they say) of evidence for the biblical exodus. There is actually much more internal textual and literary evidence that the Exodus account is genuine, but space and time will not allow us to review it here. For more detailed information I would recommend two of the best sources I know of which are accessible to most people: (1) *Ancient Egypt and the Old Testament* by John D. Currid, and (2) *Israel in Egypt: The Evidence for the Authenticity of the Exodus Tradition* by James K. Hoffmeier.

I think it's probably safe to say that many biblical skeptics demand spectacular evidence and spectacular evidence may be forthcoming. Research is continuing in this fascinating field and new discoveries are being made every year. One thing I can say confidently, is that so far, the Egyptian evidence, when properly understood is consistent with the biblical record. Even our adherence to the new chronology is within the pale of academic respectability and orthodoxy.

In my final blog on this subject (which hopefully will not be this long!), we'll examine other evidences of the Exodus as well as evidence for the military conquest of Canaan under Joshua.

[1] See, Walter C. Kaiser, Jr.'s, *The Messiah in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing, 1995) & Sam Nadler's, *Messiah in the Feasts of Israel* (Charlotte, NC: Word of Messiah Ministries, 2006).

[2] See Ziony Zevit, "The Biblical Archaeology versus Syro-Palestinian Archaeology Debate in Its American Institutional and Intellectual Contexts," in James K. Hoffmeier and Alan Millard, Eds, *The Future of Biblical Archaeology: Reassessing Methodologies and Assumptions* (Grand Rapids, London: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004), 3-19.

[3] Eugene H. Merrill, *An Historical Survey of the Old Testament*, Second Ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1991), 97.

[4] Eugene H. Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests: A History of Old Testament Israel* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993), 58.

[5] See, William W. Hallo & William Kelly Simpson, *The Ancient Near East: A History* (London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Publishers, 1971), 210-213.

[6] For more on this, see David M. Rohl's book, *Pharaoh's and Kings: A Biblical Quest* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1995). In this book Rohl argues for a revised chronology of ancient Egypt based on refinements in archaeology and inscriptional evidence.

[7] Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests*, 62.

[8] Such as the reference in 1 Kings 6:1 and Ex. 7:7 which states that Moses was 80 years old when he led the people from Egypt (assuming an approximate exodus date of 1446 B.C.)

[9] William J. Murnane, "New Kingdom (Dynasties 18-20)" in David Noel Freedman, Editor in Chief, *The Anchor Bible Dictionary, Volume 2 D-G* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 348-53.

[10] Attributed to Egyptologist, James Henry Breasted – not sure of the original source.

[11] Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests*, 63.

[12] Alfred J. Hoerth, *Archaeology and the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1998), 161.

[13] For very rich and enlightening discussion on this topic see, John D. Currid's excellent book, *Ancient Egypt and the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997), especially his discussion 'The Hardening of the Pharaoh's Heart' pp. 96-103

[14] Considered sacred in ancient Egypt. Thousands of these have been discovered in the Ancient Near East.

[15] See, *The Book of the Dead* (The Papyrus of Ani) Egyptian Text Transliteration and Translation by E.A. Wallis Budge (New York: Dover Publication, 1967). This work contains many fascinating details on Egyptian culture, religion and beliefs about the afterlife.

<http://www.biblearchaeology.org/post/2008/02/22/Amenhotep-II-as-Pharaoh-of-the-Exodus.aspx>
(Accessed on March 3, 2019)

Amenhotep II as Pharaoh of the Exodus

- Feb 22, 2008 - by [William Shea PhD](#)

The Exodus Problem

Three main views have been proposed: (1) that he belonged to the 18th Dynasty and ruled in the 15th century, (2) that he belonged to the 19th Dynasty and ruled in the 13th century, and (3) that there was no Exodus and thus no Pharaoh of the Exodus, but it was only a literary creation of later Israelites. The first view may be referred to as the early date for the Exodus, the second is the late date, and the third is the nonexistent Exodus.

Exodus Literature

Literature on the subject of the Exodus is extensive. In his Schweich Lectures for 1948, *From Joseph to Joshua*, literature from the 19th century to 1948 was covered by the excellent English bibliographer H. H. Rowley. He provided an exceptionally thorough list of studies in favor of dating the Exodus in the 13th century under the 19th Dynasty and in the 15th century under the 18th Dynasty. T. L. Thompson, in J. H. Hayes and J. M. Miller's work *Israelite and Judean History* has updated this bibliography to 1977 (1977: 149–50, 167–68, 180–81). The bibliographies in these sections are of more value than the discussions in the text, which adopts a very negative view on the historicity of the Exodus. A strong picture has been made for the 19th Dynasty as the background for the Exodus in the work of K.A. Kitchen, *Pharaoh Triumphant* (1982). More recently, a theologically sensitive, but historically minimalist, commentary on Exodus has been contributed to *The New Interpreter's Bible*, by W. Brueggemann (1994: 675–982).

The attitude of Old Testament theologians toward early Israelite history has varied. G. von Rad used the first major section of his *Old Testament Theology* to give a negative evaluation to the historicity of the Biblical account and that left him free to construct his theology unhampered by historical limitations (1962). G. Ernest Wright, on the other hand, held that theology must ultimately be rooted in history in his *God Who Acts*. Coming from the Albright school as he did, Wright firmly anchored his Exodus and Conquest in the 13th century. In his 13th century approach Wright was preceded by W. F. Albright in his *The Archaeology of Palestine* (1961: 108–109) and paralleled by J. Bright's *History of Israel* (1983).

Three more specialized works on the Exodus and its Egyptian background have appeared quite recently. A conference on the subject was held at Brown University in 1992 and its proceedings were published as *Exodus: The Egyptian Evidence* (Frerichs and Lesko 1997). Unfortunately, most of the studies published in this work adopt a negative evaluation of the historicity of Exodus. Two of the contributors to this conference, Dever and Weinstein, attacked the editor of [Bible and Spade](#) for his date of the destruction of [Jericho](#) to the Biblical time of Joshua, even

though they offered no critique of his excellent and detailed studies of the pottery of Jericho (ibid. 69, 93–94). More positive, but more general, is J. D. Currid's *Ancient Egypt and the Old Testament* (1997). This work does not deal in detail with the event of the Exodus, but provides much useful information on the Egyptian cultural, religious, and linguistic background for the event. Along the same line is J. K. Hoffmeier's *Israel in Egypt: The Evidence for the Authenticity of the Exodus Tradition* (1997). This work includes primary archaeological evidence from surface survey work in the region of the northern lakes across the Isthmus of Suez.

A commentary on Exodus published very recently is that of W. H. Propp in the Anchor Bible Series, *Exodus 1–18* (1999). Unfortunately, any historicity of the Exodus is buried here beneath a welter of source criticism, anthropology, and mythology. The promise is made that the history involved will be treated in a second volume that will be published later. The most recently published commentary on Exodus available to me at this writing is that of Peter Enns, *Exodus*, in the NIV Application Commentary (2000). This work is literarily conservative, theologically insightful, but historically inconclusive, as is expressed in the introductory summary statement:

One final matter concerning history is the fact that a good many historical issues remain hopelessly unresolved. In what century the Exodus took place will remain a point of debate for some time, even among evangelicals. We still do not know who the Pharaoh of the Exodus was. Curiously enough, we are not told (see Ex 1:8). To this day we do not know what route the Israelites took, what specific body of water they crossed, or where Mount Sinai is. These events form the very basic contours of Exodus and yet they continue to elude us. Can proper interpretation of the book proceed only after these basic questions are answered? No. In fact, the church has been deriving spiritual benefit from Exodus for a long time without such firm knowledge (25).

Enns is certainly right that one can derive spiritual and theological value from the book without knowing the precise historical setting. Nevertheless, to be able to connect the book more directly with ancient history can only enhance its theological meaning.

Interim reports on the excavations at Tell el-Dab'a, which contains the ruins of ancient Avaris and Ramesse, can be found in the two publications of lectures by the excavator, M. Bietak (1981 and 1996). These works provide archaeological evidence that bears on the setting of the Israelite Sojourn that led to the Exodus.

To summarize, older works on the question of the Exodus have concentrated upon deciding between dating it to the 13th century under the 19th Dynasty or the 15th century under the 18th Dynasty. That was the approach taken in my review of the subject in the revised edition of the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (1982). More recent works have gone in either one of two directions. On the negative side, more works are currently being published than previously that question the historicity of the Exodus. On the positive side, other works are coming out which have provided a closer attention to Egyptian archaeology and socio-cultural history, as findings from those fields present a background for the book of Exodus and the events that it describes.

The 13th Century Exodus

Dating the Exodus on the basis of Biblical evidence has involved either one of two approaches. The theory that dates the Exodus in the time of the 19th Dynasty in the 13th century BC utilizes the name of Ramesses for the store city that the Israelites built for Pharaoh (Ex 1:11). The long-lived Ramesses II was known as a great builder. The location of his delta capital is known and part of his palace there has been excavated.

The use of this evidence to date the Biblical Exodus is complicated, however, by the use of the same name of Ramesses for the land to which the Patriarchs came centuries earlier (Gn 47:11; cf. Gn 15:13; Ex 12:40). Since no ruler is known by the name of Ramesses that early in Egyptian history, both of these references to Ramesses look like an updating of an earlier place name. This phenomenon is also evident in Genesis 14:14 where the later name of Dan has been used for the contemporary name of Laish (Jgs 18:7–29). In some cases, the Bible gives the older name and later name together (Gn 23:2). Thus the mere use of the name of Ramesses is not a secure basis upon which to identify the Pharaoh of the Exodus and, through him, to date the Exodus.

The 15th Century Exodus

The other approach to dating the Exodus through Biblical evidence is the chronological approach. In this case the datum in 1 Kings 6:1 is utilized to date the Exodus and through this Biblical date the Pharaoh who ruled Egypt at the time can be determined and his person, character, and reign can be explored for potential Biblical connections. That is the approach taken here and it requires a detailed examination of chronology.

Biblical Chronology

The starting point for such a study of chronology is in the monarchy, for 1 Kings 6:1 dates the Exodus a particular time span back from a regnal year of Solomon. For this starting point we may utilize Edwin R. Thiele's chronology developed in his Ph.D. thesis at the University of Chicago, later published under the title of *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings* (1965). According to that chronology, Solomon died in 931 BC after a reign of 40 years. That means that he came to the throne in 971 BC. According to Thiele, dates that are given in the text that deal with the building of the Temple show that Solomon used a Tishri calendar to measure those regnal years (Thiele 1965: 29). The reign of Rehoboam who followed Solomon in Judah was calculated according to the accession year system which means that Year 1 started the year after Rehoboam, likewise Solomon, came to the throne. For Solomon this means that 971/970 BC was his accession year and 970/969 BC was his first full regnal year (Thiele 1965: 28–30). That makes 967/966 BC his fourth year. The Exodus occurred in the spring and Solomon's Temple building began in the spring (the month after Passover), and thus the building began in the spring of 966 BC, between the two Tishri new years. This gives us the starting point from which to figure backwards, the spring of 966 BC.

The time period to add to this date is the 480 years that are given in 1 Kings 6:1. This goes back to the time when “the Israelites had come out of Egypt.” Adding those 480 years dates the Exodus to the spring of 1446.

There is evidence from 1 Kings 6:1 that a precise numbering was intended. The fourth year of Solomon is not a round year and the precise month when the building began, Ziv, is given according to the old calendar, not the one adopted during the Babylonian Exile. The same precision is encountered with the completion date for the Temple in the 11th year of Solomon, in the month of Bul. These two dates were compiled according to a very specific system, and there is no indication in the text that those who recorded these data thought any differently about the accuracy of the 480-year figure.

Instead of assuming that the 480 years is a certain number of generations, as some do, one could propose alternately that the successive Passovers were recorded at the central shrine, the tabernacle at Shiloh, throughout this period. When the tabernacle equipment was stored in the newly built Temple in Jerusalem, the records from Shiloh would have been brought there, and could have served as the basis for these calculations. At the very least, this date deserves continued consideration as a working hypothesis. From these data we have developed a date of the spring of 1446 as a working date for the Exodus. The question then is, how well does this date fit with Egyptian chronology and history?

Egyptian Chronology

Egyptian chronology is constructed from the king lists, from the highest regnal year dates attested for the various kings, from Manetho, and from Egyptian astronomical data. The Egyptian astronomical dates include the dates in the civil calendar for the observation of the heliacal rising of the star Sothis, and new moon dates. Neither of these two astronomical factors is completely secure. We do not know for certain whether the Sothic observations were made in the south or in the north and that makes a significant chronological difference. New moon dates are useful but must be determined with precision. If a new moon date is off by one day, the date for it does not move by one year; it rather moves 11 years in one direction or 13 years in the other. Thus a precise chronology may call for a precision that is not yet available to us from these ancient texts.

These variations have given rise to the proposal of three different chronologies, which are known as the high, middle and low dates or schemes (Åström 1989). These have been calculated for the 12th Dynasty, the 18th Dynasty and the 19th Dynasty. We are concerned here especially with the 18th Dynasty because that was the royal house that ruled Egypt through the 15th century BC. Adopting the high dates for Thutmose III in that century does not necessarily mean that the high dates have to be adopted for the 19th Dynasty. Those dates could just as well be calculated according to the middle or low chronology; it would just mean that there was more time involved in the period of the late 18th Dynasty and the early 19th Dynasty.

For our purposes here the important dates to note are those for the reign of Thutmose III: high, 1504–1450 BC; middle, 1490–1436 BC; low, 1479–1425 BC. The current trend among Egyptologists, especially from Germany, has been in the direction of the low chronology. The middle chronology was that proposed by R. A. Parker (1957: 39–43; 1976: 177–89). The high chronology is the older chronology advocated by L. Borchardt (1935) and J. H. Breasted (1964: 170, 502). There still are modern advocates of the high chronology. In my earlier encyclopedia article on the date of the Exodus I utilized the high chronology both because it seemed to be the most accurate and it also provided the best fit with Biblical data about the Exodus (1982: 234).

Egyptian History

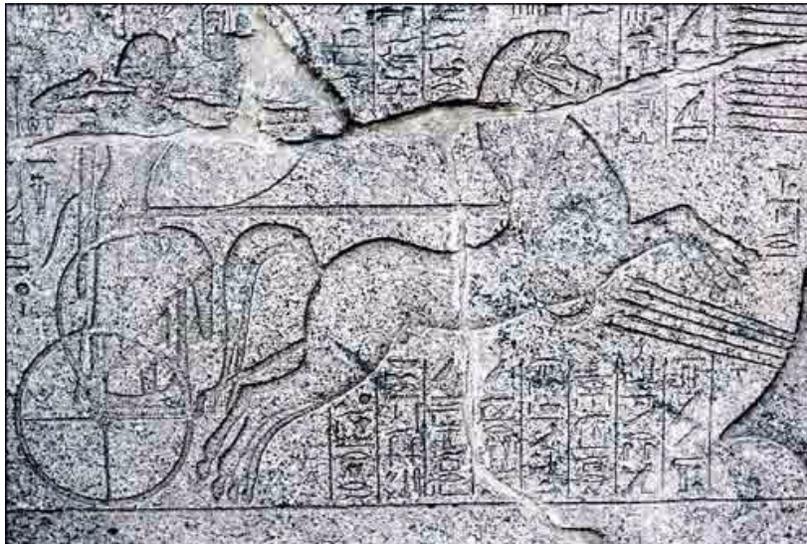
In my earlier article on the date of the Exodus, I selected Thutmose III as the Pharaoh of the Exodus for several reasons. First, he is the Pharaoh who died closest to the Biblical date of the Exodus and no Pharaoh died for a quarter of a century before him (Hatshepsut) and no Pharaoh died for another quarter of a century after him (Amenhotep II). Thus he appeared to be the Pharaoh whose death came closest to the Biblical date for the Exodus. Then also he died at the right time of the year, in the spring, March 17 to be exact according to correlations for the 13th day of the seventh Egyptian month (Biography of Amenemhab). In addition, the mummy that is labeled as that of Thutmose III does not fit well with his dates according to x-ray. According to his inscriptions, he should not have died until he was well over 60 years of age, but the mummy labeled Thutmose III shows bone features of a man 40–45 years of age (Harris and Weeks 1973: 138). Finally, Thutmose III was the Pharaoh who really set Egypt on the road to an Asiatic empire with his almost annual campaigns from Year 23 to Year 42. The outflow of equipment and the inflow of booty from these campaigns would have created a demand for the store cities that the Israelites are said to have built (Ex 1:11).

There was a weakness in this presentation, however, and it was chronological. The problem is that the Biblical date points to 1446 as the year of the Exodus, while the dates for Thutmose III indicate that he died in 1450. I attempted to compensate for this difference by mentioning the coregency between Thutmose III and his son Amenhotep II at the beginning of the 480-year period and the coregency between David and Solomon at the end of the period. However, these compensations do not successfully close the gap between 1450 and 1446.

During and after the writing of the encyclopedia article on the Exodus, I had a few discussions with Siegfried Horn about the issue. I pointed out to him that Thutmose III was the only Pharaoh of Egypt who died around the right time of the Biblical date. Since he had suggested Amenhotep II as Pharaoh of the Exodus in his dictionary article (Horn 1979: 350), there appeared to be a discrepancy here. His suggestion to resolve this problem was that perhaps Amenhotep II died at the time of the Exodus and a substitute was placed on his throne without making the transition evident to the populace generally. While the theory sounded interesting, there were no inscriptions or archaeological evidence to support the idea.

As it turns out, Siegfried may have been right. While no evidence for the death of one Amenhotep and the succession of another Amenhotep was forthcoming at that time, a reexamination of the Egyptian texts from this period provides that kind of evidence when they are correctly understood. The evidence was right there all the time, but we did not recognize it.

The reason why we did not recognize it at the time was because the Egyptians may have covered up the problem.



Relief of Amenhotep II in his chariot firing arrows at a copper ingot target, Temple of Amun, Thebes, Egypt. The king often boasted of his physical prowess. He recorded, "...he entered into his northern garden and found that there had been set up for him four targets of Asiatic copper of one palm in their thickness, with 20 cubits between one post and its fellow. Then his majesty appeared in a chariot like Montu [the god of war] in his power. He grasped his bow and gripped four arrows at the same time. So he rode northward, shooting at them like Montu in his regalia. His arrows had come out on the back thereof while he was attacking another post. It was really a deed which had never been done nor heard of by report: shooting at a target of copper an arrow which came out and dropped to the ground except for the king..." (*ANET* 244). [Clifford Wilson]

No Co-regency Between Thutmose III and Amenhotep II

The interpretation that there was a coregency between these two Pharaohs does not stem from any direct inscriptional evidence for it. Rather, it has been created because of some problem texts. There are no nice double-dated inscriptions for these two rulers like those of the 12th Dynasty. There are some occasional concurrences of their two cartouches together, but this is slender evidence indeed upon which to propose a coregency. Gardiner calls the juxtaposition of these cartouches in three locations "doubtful evidence" for a coregency and notes, "the student must be warned against this kind of evidence" (1964: 200).

What then are the problem texts that this proposed coregency is supposed to solve? The problem here comes from two pairs of texts from the reign of Amenhotep II in which they both referred to his “first victorious campaign,” but the campaigns are different and they occurred in different years. The second problem has to do with accession date(s) of Amenhotep II. He appears to have two, one for the time immediately following his father’s death and one for another time. The problem texts may be described as follows:

The Amada and Elephantine Stelae of Year 3 (Cumming 1982: pt. 1. 24–28; ANET 247–48)

After a long and self-laudatory introduction, Amenhotep II tells of his inauguration of repairs and expansion of the temples for Khnum of Elephantine and Anukis of Amada in Nubia. This he carried out:

after the return of his Majesty from Upper Retjenu when he had overthrown all his opponents in order to broaden the boundaries of Egypt on the *first campaign of victory* (italics mine; Cumming 1982: 27).

The text goes on to tell how the king slew seven hostage chieftains that he had brought back to Egypt from Takhsi in Syria and then hung their heads or bodies and hands on his royal ship as it sailed south to Thebes. After arriving there he hung six of them on the wall of the city and he sent the seventh on by boat to be hung on the wall of Napata near the fourth cataract of the Nile in Nubia.

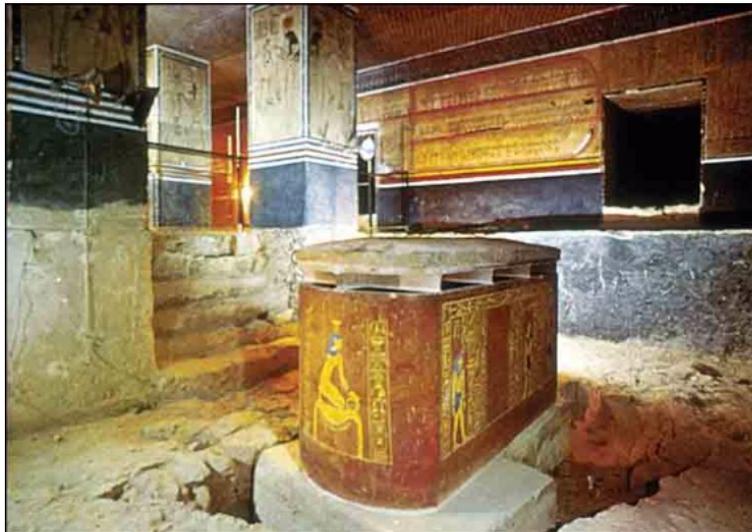
The same event, the slaying of the chieftains of Takhsi, is mentioned in the Biography of Amenemhab. There it follows directly after the recital of the death of Thutmose III.

He introduces the coronation of Amenhotep II by dating it, when the morning brightened.” At that time Amenhotep II “was established upon the throne of his father” (Breasted 1906: 319). As a part of that ceremony, Amenhotep then slaughtered the seven princes of Takhsi and suspended their heads from his royal boat as he sailed from Memphis to Thebes. It is clear that Amenemhab knew nothing of a coregency between Thutmose III and Amenhotep II for if there had been such an arrangement, there would not have been a need for this installation ceremony after his father died.

On the other hand, one may question Amenemhab’s dating of the death of the princes of Takhsi at the same time as Amenhotep’s inauguration. Amenhotep’s own inscription dates that event in Year 3 at the end of his military campaign then. Events are commonly telescoped in tomb biographies more than they are in the royal annals. Thus Amenemhab seems to have telescoped two events together that actually occurred three years apart.

Whether the slaying of the princes of Takhsi took place at the time of Amenhotep’s coronation or at the time of his return from a military campaign, it is a remarkably brutal act. Gardiner refers to it as “an act of barbarity which in the crude moral atmosphere of that warlike age could be regarded with special pride” (1964: 199). Amenhotep did have a precedent in this action in that of his great grandfather Thutmose I who, in sailing back from a military campaign in Nubia, hung the head or heads of his enemies on his royal boat. In my previous

interpretation of the events surrounding the Exodus I interpreted this action by Amenhotep II as a demonstration of his frustration at having arrived back in Egypt only to find his father, Thutmose III, dead in the course of the events of the Exodus. Since our more closely detailed focus is upon Amenhotep II as the Pharaoh of the Exodus, the execution of the princes of Takhsi may simply be a manifestation of his own brutality apart from any connection with the Exodus. If this Pharaoh then fell victim to the Exodus events instead, it looks as if that judgment was well deserved.



Tomb of Amenhotep II, Thebes, Egypt. The author suggests this was the second Egyptian pharaoh to have the title Amenhotep II. The first was the Pharaoh of the Exodus who died in the Reed Sea and the second, buried here, took his place and used the same name.

The Memphis and Karnak Stelae of Years 7 and 9

The only dated inscription from the reign of Amenhotep II which dates between the military campaigns of Years 3 and 7 is an appendix to the campaign of Year 3 on the Elephantine Stela in which he gave instructions in Year 4 for the extension of the festival of Anukis of Nubia from three days to four days and additional provisions were to be made for the celebration of that festival. The day and month of these instructions is not given; they could have occurred quite early in the year. There is also one non-royal inscription from Year 4 and that comes from Minmosi, superintendent of the quarries at Turah, who was commissioned to open up new quarries to produce stone for the construction and repair of the Temples (Cumming 1984: pt. 2, 143–44). No other dated inscriptions from Year 4 are known and no dated inscriptions are known from Year 5 or Year 6.

The campaigns of Years 7 and 9 are recited on a pair of stelae, one from Memphis and the other from Karnak, the northern and southern capitals of the country. The introduction to this text is similar in content to that which introduces the stela from Year 3, but it is shorter. The campaign of Year 7 was aimed at Syria. Almost a dozen sites there are mentioned as having been captured. They appear to range geographically from northeastern Syria down to the southwest. A summary of the captives taken is recited with the final reference to his return to Memphis.

The serious problem here that this text creates stems from the fact that this campaign is referred to in the text as "*his first campaign of victory*" (italics mine; Cumming 1982: pt. 1, 30). Thus we have the problem of two first campaigns of victory on our hands for this Pharaoh. In speaking of this contradiction Gardiner observes, "Too much has possibly been made of this discrepancy..." and he goes on to suggest that the first campaign really belonged to Thutmose III, and Amenhotep was acting as leader of the troops for him (Gardiner 1964: 200). Another way to attempt to resolve this problem is to suggest that there was a coregency between Thutmose III and Amenhotep (Redford 1965: 108–22). In fact, these two pairs of stelae are probably the main reason why such a coregency has been suggested. The idea here is that the campaign of Year 3 occurred during the short coregency and the campaign of Year 7 occurred after Amenhotep II became sole ruler. But since Pharaohs who were coregents did not start the number of their regnal years over when they became sole ruler, there is no reason why they should start numbering their military campaigns over either. We know that the identification of the campaign of Year 7 is not a scribal error because the campaign of Year 9 is identified as "his second campaign of victory" in the same text (Cumming 1982: pt 1, 31).

This problem is accentuated by the fact that Takhsi from the campaign of Year 3 is never mentioned in the campaign of Year 7, even though the focus of that campaign was also upon Syria. Adding to this problem is that we have two different accession dates for Amenhotep II, one of them implied and the other stated directly. The implied date for Amenhotep's accession is the day after Thutmose III's death. Since Thutmose III died on VII/30, Amenhotep should have been inaugurated on VIII/1. The anniversary of the coronation of Amenhotep is given in the account of the campaign of year 9, however, and the date given there falls at the end of the 11th month. (Cumming 1982: pt 1, 32).

Summary of These Problems

There are two major and direct conflicts between the stelae of Year 3 and those of Years 7 and 9. Both of the campaigns of Years 3 and 7 are identified as the king's first victorious campaign. This problem is not resolved by proposing a coregency here and it is not resolved on the basis of a simple scribal error, since the report from Year 9 refers to that campaign as his second victorious campaign. The other problem is the different accession dates. From the death date of Thutmose III the accession date of Amenhotep II should have been VIII/1, but the report of the campaign of Year 9 indicates instead that his accession date was toward the end of the 11th month. So we have here a Pharaoh who had two first campaigns of victory and two different accession dates. These problems have not yet been resolved satisfactorily.

Potential Correlations With the Exodus

It is of interest to note that these complications in the texts of Amenhotep II occur right at the time when the Exodus of the Israelites occurred according to the Biblical date for that event (1 Kgs 6:1). Above, the date of 1446 was suggested as the Julian date for that event, using correlations with the chronology of the monarchy. For the dates of Amenhotep we have used the high chronology for the reign of Thutmose III, 1504–1450) as explained above. Now these two chronologies can be correlated. In order to do so it should also be noted that the Egyptians

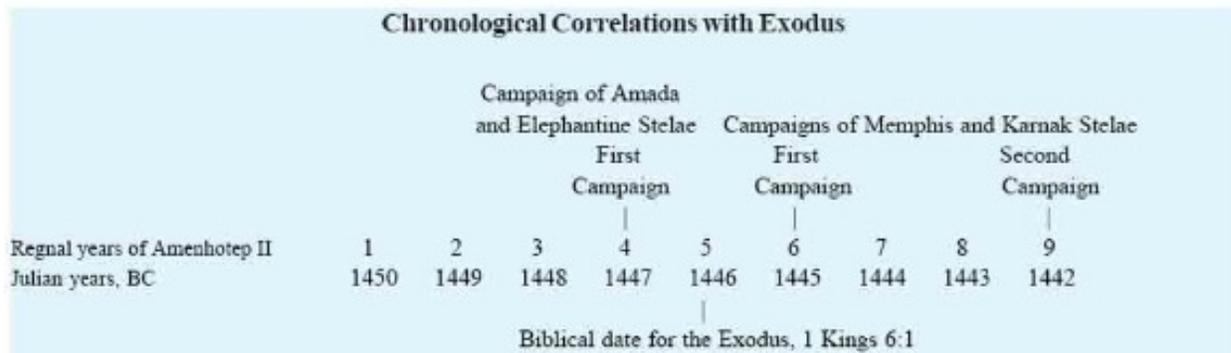
used the non-accession year method of reckoning, in which the first regnal year of the king began on the day of his accession. They did not wait until the next New Year to start that first year.

Chronologically this means that Year 1 of Amenhotep II fell in 1450 BC. That means that his third year, the year of the first victorious campaign of the Amada and Elephantine stelae, fell in 1448. It also means that the first victorious campaign of Year 7 on the Memphis and Karnak stelae occurred in 1444 BC and the campaign of Year 9, also on the Memphis and Karnak stelae, was conducted in 1442. According to the dates for these three campaigns, the Biblical date for the Exodus fell right between the campaigns of these two stelae, in 1446. These correlations can be diagrammed as shown below.

The chronological correlation here fits very well. The Biblical date for the Exodus falls right between the two first campaigns of victory for the king named Amenhotep II. If the king of the first campaign died at the time of the Exodus, then the king of the new first campaign and the second campaign should be a new king who also took the same nomen and prenomen of Amenhotep II. This could have resulted from an attempt to cover up the disaster that had taken place. Instead of taking a new set of throne names, the king who came to the throne after the first Amenhotep took the same set of throne names. But the attempt to cover up the disaster was not complete or perfect. A hint of it was left behind by the king or the scribes who either forgot or intentionally did not take into account the first victorious campaign of the first king by that name. Hence the conflict arose, both in terms of numbering his campaigns and in terms of identifying his accession date.

This synthesis raises the question of whether the Pharaoh of the Exodus did die at the time of the Exodus. The account of Exodus 14–15 is not directly explicit upon this point, but it is the logical inference there. *Yahweh* says that He will get glory over Pharaoh. While some of that glory could be maintained by his loss of troops in the Sea of Reeds, if he escaped with his own life some of that glory could have been diminished. Depictions of the wartime Pharaoh show him in his larger-than life chariot heading his troops into battle. In actual battles against armed troops of the enemy this probably was propaganda and Pharaoh probably directed the battle from the rear of his army. But against largely unarmed civilians like the fleeing Israelites, Pharaoh would have had no reason not to lead his troops into the dry bed of the Sea of Reeds and thus he would have been the lead candidate for death by drowning there. Thus the logic of Exodus 14–15 is that Pharaoh did die by drowning at the time of the Exodus. This point is confirmed by Psalm 136:15 which says that *Yahweh* “overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea” (cf. Ex 14:28; Ps 106:9–11).

Chronological Correlations with Exodus



Events in Egypt After the Proposed Date for the Exodus

If Amenhotep II was the Pharaoh of the Exodus according to the above correlations, and he died at that time, then we should identify him as Amenhotep IIA and connect him with the Elephantine and Amada stelae of Year 3. Then the Pharaoh of Egypt who came to the throne and took his name should be identified as Amenhotep IIB and connected with the Memphis and Karnak stelae. The question then is, is there any additional information from the rest of the reign of Amenhotep II that would tend to confirm his identity as the Pharaoh after the Exodus?

The same points that I utilized in my earlier article on the date of the Exodus can be used here. The only difference is that the identity of the Pharaoh of the Exodus has been shifted from Thutmose III to Amenhotep IIA. That resolves the chronological discrepancy between the Biblical date for the Exodus in 1446 and the date of Thutmose III’s death in 1450, and in so doing it puts the Exodus directly in the middle of two sets of problematic texts and thus provides another potential explanation for them.

1. Regardless of the number of Israelites who left Egypt, their departure still would have deprived the Egyptians of a sizeable supply of slave labor. Thus the total of persons brought back to Egypt by Amenhotep IIB as reported at the end of the campaigns of Years 7 and 9 may not be inflated. The total given in the text is 89,600 men, whereas, the individual numbers themselves total 101,128 (*ANET* 247). While some have questioned the very high number given here, if one looks at the needs for state labor right after the Exodus, the number does not look so high after all.
2. From the end of Amenhotep IIB’s reign comes a text so unusual that some Egyptologists think that he may have been drunk while dictating it (Gardiner 1964: 199; Cumming pt. 1, 1928: 45–46). In this text Amenhotep expresses his hatred of the Semites. The inscription is dated 14 years after his last Asiatic campaign, that of Year 9, which shows that he still had Semites (Hebrews?) on his mind, even when he was down south in Nubia. The text conveys his counsel to the governor of Nubia. The Hebrews are not mentioned directly, but Takhsi is the location where Amenhotep IIA campaigned. If Amenhotep IIB held the Hebrews responsible for the death of his predecessor, that could have supplied fuel for his expression of hatred for the

Semites. He also gives a warning against magicians. While the Nubians were noted for their practice of magic, there might also be an echo of the encounter with Moses the master magician here.

3. From after the end of the reign of Amenhotep IIB comes another document that could relate to the son of the Pharaoh after the Exodus. The text is the Dream Stela of Thutmose IV in which he tells about how, when he was out hunting he sat down to rest near the Great Sphinx and fell asleep. In his dream the sphinx told him that he would become Pharaoh even though he had not expected to become the ruler. He was not in line for it since he was not the crown prince at the time. In return for this reward he was to clear the sand away from around the sphinx. The stela with this text is located between the paws of the sphinx (ANET 449).

This text has been related to the Exodus account before (Horn 1979: 350), with Thutmose IV being the lesser son of the Pharaoh of the Exodus. In that case, his older brother died allowing him to come to the throne when he did not expect it. The same relation still holds true under the hypothesis described above, but the relationship is more complex. According to the genealogy worked out above, Thutmose IV would have been the son of Amenhotep IIB. This still means that he probably had an older brother who died in the tenth plague, but his coming to the throne had more to do with the death of his uncle. Assuming that Amenhotep IIA and IIB were either full or half brothers, Amenhotep IIA who died at the time of the Exodus would have been the uncle of the future Thutmose IV. Thus he would have come to the throne both because his uncle died in the Sea of Reeds and because his older brother died in the tenth plague.

These factors continue to support the idea that Amenhotep IIB would fit well as the Pharaoh after the Exodus, while his predecessor Amenhotep IIA would fit better as the Pharaoh at the time of the Exodus. His son and successor, Thutmose IV, also fits well as the son of the Pharaoh after the Exodus.



The Great Sphinx

at Giza, Egypt. An inscription between the paws, the “Dream Stela” or “Sphinx Stella,” tells how Thutmose IV was promised kingship by Harmakhis, god of the Sphinx, even though he was not

the first-born son of Amehotep IIB. It is possible that Thutmose IV's older brother died in the plague of the first born.

A Mummy for the Pharaoh of the Exodus?

According to the Biblical indications discussed above, a Pharaoh died in the Sea of Reeds at the time of the Exodus event. What would have happened to his body? There are two possibilities here. One is that his body sank into the depths of the water and was never recovered. Another possibility is that his body washed ashore like the bodies of some of his soldiers (Ex 14:30). If his body washed ashore and was recovered by a search party sent out then it undoubtedly would have been taken back to Egypt for burial, but not the kind of burial that was usually accorded dead Pharaohs. In this case the burial would have been more secretive because there was a new Amenhotep on the throne who had taken his place. We might expect, therefore, that little work had been done on his tomb thus far and that his interment was one with minimal preparation. The question is, is there a body among the royal mummies that could fit this specification?

First of all, there is a mummy of Amenhotep II that we would designate here as Amenhotep IIB, the Pharaoh who lived to the end of his 26 regnal years. It is a mummy of the right age and, contrary to many of the mummies of the kings, it was found in the right place in his own sarcophagus in his own tomb, No. 35 in the Valley of the Kings. X-rays of his mummy reveal him to have been about 45 years old when he died (Harris and Weeks 1973: 138). This fits well with the chronology of his reign. If he came to the throne at about age 18-20, and ruled to his 26th year, this mummy fits well with that which we have proposed for Amenhotep IIB.

Is there any evidence for another mummy that might be connected with Amenhotep IIA? There is a free floating royal mummy of the 18th Dynasty that has not yet been identified and this mummy is that of a king who was about the right age at death for what we have proposed for Amenhotep IIA. In his inaugural text, the Sphinx Stela, he indicated that he was 18 years of age when he came to the throne (Cumming, pt. 1, 1982: 20). Since he died about Year 5 of his reign, this would have meant that he was in his early 20s when he died in the Sea of Reeds. There is a mummy of this approximate age that has been misidentified as Thutmose I. There was no label on this mummy's wrappings to identify him as such; it was only assumed that this was Thutmose I because he was found in the Deir el-Bahr mummy cache near a coffin that belonged to a Thutmose. The mummy of Thutmose I was a well-traveled mummy. Originally, he was undoubtedly buried in his own tomb. Then Hatshepsut later had her father moved into her own tomb. Still further, Thutmose III built another tomb for Thutmose I (No. 38). His body, however, was not found there, so when this unidentified body was found near one of the coffins of a Thutmose, Maspero, who made this discovery, assumed that it was Thutmose I.

Thutmose I was not related to the Pharaoh under whom he worked, Amenhotep I. Amenhotep I had no surviving male issue, so Thutmose I, formerly a general in the army, came to the throne. The length of his reign is disputed but he probably ruled for at least a decade. Thus he should have been a man of middle age when he died. The mummy that had previously been identified as that of Thutmose I has now been x-rayed and it shows instead that it belonged to a young

man of about 18 years of age (Harris and Weeks 1973: 132). Thus this mummy cannot be that of Thutmose I. The question then is, to whom does this mummy of the 18th Dynasty belong? Could it be Amenhotep IIA?

The age would fit reasonably well with what we know of the early career of Amenhotep IIA. He should have been in his early 20s at the time of his one major military text, that of Year 3, and by the time of the Exodus in Year 5. Also there are some interesting features to this mummy. First, it is not desiccated like the normal mummies that were either soaked in a solution of natron, a sodium salt, or packed in dry natron. This argues for a rapid burial of this body. Second, there was no resinous coating applied to this mummy, as commonly was done, which provides a second argument for a rapid burial. As a result, this has been called "one of the best preserved of all royal mummies" (Harris and Weeks 1973: 34). The irony of this may be that it is the best preserved because it was not preserved in the normal way. His head was shaved and there are abrasions on the tip of his nose and on his right cheek that look like they may be antemortem or intramortem injuries, not postmortem changes.

In discussing this mummy, J. Tyldesley speculates that since it is not Thutmose I it may be one of his sons (1996: 127). Perhaps he was not one of the sons of Thutmose I but rather one of the sons of Thutmose III, Amenhotep IIA, to be more specific. It is probable that we never will know the identity of this mummy but it does raise the tantalizing possibility that this body could be that of the Pharaoh of the Exodus.



Sarcophagus of Amenhotep II, in his tomb at Thebes.

Summary

The evidence presented above is only circumstantial. No Egyptian inscription exists which tells directly of the Exodus of the Israelites and we may expect that none will ever be found. The reason for this is the propagandistic nature of Egyptian royal inscriptions. The kind of problem was even more acute for the Egyptians than for the Assyrians and Babylonians. In those eastern countries the king was only a servant of the gods; kings were rarely deified. In Egypt all of the Kings were treated as gods, Horus incarnate. For an event like the Biblical Exodus to have

occurred on the watch of the divine Horus would have struck directly at his nature as a god, thus that kind of event could not be admitted, even if it occurred.

That being the case, more indirect channels must be utilized in a search for the Pharaoh of the Exodus. Irregularities that could match with some aspects of the Biblical story must be sought. Discrepancies between Egyptian texts at the appropriate time chronologically may provide this kind of indirect evidence for the Exodus. That is as much as one can hope for from Egyptian texts relating to the Exodus.

Using the Biblical date for the Exodus when applied to the Julian calendar indicates that search should be made first for this kind of indirect evidence around the middle of the 15th century BC. Only one Pharaoh is clearly known to have died at that time and that was Thutmose III. For that reason I selected him as the best candidate for the Pharaoh of the Exodus in my earlier study on this subject.

Closer attention to Biblical chronology has led to discrepancies within Egyptian texts from early in the reign of Amenhotep II. Using the precise Biblical date for the Exodus locates that event early in the reign of that king, not at the end of his predecessor. There is a gap of about three years between his dated inscriptions, between Year 4 and Year 7, which provide a gap into which the events of the Exodus can be placed. That being the case, the available tensions between his texts from Year 3 and Year 7 become more significant. On that basis the proposal has been developed here that Amenhotep II was the Pharaoh of the Exodus. The Biblical evidence requires his death at that time, around Year 5 of his reign. The king that served out the balance of his reign should, therefore, be his successor. In this case, however, the successor took the same nomen and prenomen and other titles that were used by the preceding Pharaoh. For that reason we have identified these two kings as Amenhotep IIA and Amenhotep IIB. Amenhotep IIA is the King whom should have died at the time of the Exodus and Amenhotep IIB was the king who served out the rest of his term as if he were that same king.

There are some features that come from the reign of the king that we have identified as Amenhotep IIB, the Pharaoh after the Exodus, which fit well with his succession at that time. There was his need for a new supply of manpower for state building projects and this need was filled by the 90,000 or more captives that he brought back to Egypt from his campaigns of Years 7 and 9. There was his extraordinary hatred for Semites expressed, strangely, in Nubia toward the end of his reign. As part of that expression to the governor there he warned him against magicians, which could carry an echo of a memory of the function of Moses at the time of the Exodus. His son, Thutmose IV fits well as the son of the Pharaoh after the Exodus because of the irregular nature of his accession expressed in the text of his Dream Stela found between the paws of the Great Sphinx.

There is a possibility that the body of the Pharaoh of the Exodus was recovered from the Sea of Reeds and that body has been found among the royal mummies of the 18th Dynasty. The mummy misidentified as Thutmose I has now been redated by x-rays and found to be that of a young man half the age of Thutmose I. There are some unusual features of this mummy that

could suggest a connection with the Exodus but, given the nature of mummy evidence, that link probably cannot be forged even if it is a correct connection.

The evidence is circumstantial, but the circumstances point to Amenhotep IIA as the Pharaoh of the Exodus.

Recommended Resources for Further Study

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(Accessed on March 3, 2019)

Who was the Pharaoh of the Exodus?

Question: "Who was the Pharaoh of the Exodus?"

Answer: The name most commonly associated with the Pharaoh of the Exodus is Ramses (often spelled as Ramesses or Rameses). This is the name used in movies such as *The Ten Commandments*, *The Prince of Egypt*, and *Exodus: Gods and Kings*. While this connection may be common in pop culture, the Bible doesn't give an explicit name for this ruler. Determining exactly who the Pharaoh of the Exodus was isn't something answerable using Scripture alone.

An additional difficulty in naming the Pharaoh of the Exodus is that Egyptian history is erratic and notoriously unreliable. Archaeologists note that Egyptian records often overlap, contradict each other's dates, and leave out major historical events. This is especially true if the events are unflattering to the reigning Pharaoh. Determining the time period when Jewish slaves would have been held in Egypt, then, becomes trickier than simply comparing Egyptian records to non-Egyptian records. In order to harmonize the book of Exodus, Egyptian history, and secular archaeology, one has to be open-minded about potential dates for the events recorded in all three sources.

Given that flexibility, there is at least one strong possibility for the Pharaoh of Exodus: Neferhotep I, Pharaoh of the 13th Dynasty. Consider the following historical facts:

Neferhotep's dynasty began because his predecessor, Amenemhat III, had no surviving sons and his daughter, Sobekneferu, was childless. This would explain why, in [Exodus 2](#), Pharaoh's house takes in an apparently orphaned Hebrew child. Sobekneferu could have been the Egyptian princess who drew [Moses](#) out of the Nile and named him.

Neferhotep I presided over Egypt during an era of profound chaos, described in the Ipuwer Papyrus: "Plague stalks through the land and blood is everywhere. . . . Nay, but the river is blood . . . gates, columns and walls are consumed with fire . . . the son of the high-born man is no longer to be recognized. . . . The stranger people from outside are come into Egypt. . . . Nay, but corn has perished everywhere." Few monuments from the period survive.

Neferhotep was not succeeded by his son Wahneferhotep but rather by his brother Sobkhotep IV. This fits with the story of the biblical Pharaoh, who lost a son to the final [plague of Egypt](#), the death of the firstborn ([Exodus 12:29](#)).

There is no surviving mummy of Neferhotep. The lack of remains is to be expected if Neferhotep was among those swept away during the [crossing](#) of the Red Sea ([Exodus 14](#)).

Other historical tidbits about the era of Neferhotep I overlap with the biblical story of Exodus. These include evidence of a slave town, Kahun, which appears to have been hastily abandoned, as Scripture describes. Staves shaped like snakes have been found, dated to this same time period, echoing the tricks of the Pharaoh's magicians ([Exodus 7](#)). Shortly after Neferhotep's reign, Egypt was overrun by the Hyskos, an unlikely event unless the nation was profoundly weakened.

Unfortunately, the realities of ancient Egyptian history make it all but impossible to say for certain which Pharaoh is described in the [book of Exodus](#). It may even have been a Pharaoh whose memory has been completely obliterated by time and forgotten by history. That anonymity could even be a deliberate punishment, another reminder that supposedly divine rulers are nothing compared to the one true God. At the very least, available evidence supports the biblical Exodus as a real, historical event.

Recommended Resource: [Exodus NIV Application Commentary by Peter Enns](#)

<http://www.biblearchaeology.org/post/2009/02/27/Moses-and-Hatshepsut.aspx>
(Accessed March 5, 2019)

Moses and Hatshepsut

- Feb 27, 2009 - by [Col. \(Ret.\) David G. Hansen PhD](#)

This article was first published in the Winter 2003 issue of [Bible and Spade](#).

One of the most interesting questions about Old Testament history concerns the Exodus occurrence and who might have been the Pharaoh. An article in [Archaeology and Biblical Research](#) by J. LoMusio several years ago provided a well-reasoned argument, with considerable evidence that Moses lived during Egyptian Dynasty 18 in the 15th century BC (1989).

In this present article, I will bring LoMusio's information up-to-date, add additional details, and expand the debate beyond the usual discussions found in commentaries. Further, I will use current information about references to "Pharaoh's daughter" (Ex 2:5, 7, 9, 10; Acts 7:21; Heb 11:24) as a foundation for investigation. In so doing, I believe that a reasonable assumption can be made as to when the Exodus happened and who were some of the unnamed Egyptian personalities in the book of Exodus. However, I am sure that neither this article, nor LoMusio's, will answer many of the perplexing questions to everyone's satisfaction. However, one has to start someplace.

To put the discussion in perspective, it should be understood that there are two generally accepted propositions for the date of the Exodus. The first puts the Exodus in the 15th century BC; the other has the Exodus occurring 200 years later in the 13th century BC. Neither conservatives nor liberals hold one date over the other. Both dates have proponents in each ideological camp. However, the preponderance of scholarship sides with the opinion that "the general period that best fits most of the Biblical and extra-Biblical evidence is the first half of the thirteenth century" (LaSor, Hubbard, and Bush 1996:59).



Queen Hatshepsut with official Royal Beard.

Although the 13th century BC date (sometimes known as the "late" Exodus) may be the one accepted by the most of the scholarly community, a literal reading of the Old Testament places the Exodus in the middle part of the 15th century BC (referred to in some literature as the "early" Exodus). It is not the purpose of this article to detail how the two schools arrive at their conclusions. Interested readers can find a thorough and understandable discussion in John Davis' book, *Moses and the Gods of Egypt* (1986:16–40, available in the [ABR Bookstore](#)).

Suffice it to say, a 15th century BC date can be deduced from a literal reading of 1 Kings 6:1, supported by a corollary passage in Judges 11:26. Acknowledging (as most scholars do regardless of their opinion of the Exodus date) that Solomon began his reign about 970 BC, it can be mathematically concluded from 1 Kings 6:1 that the Exodus occurred around 1446/7 BC, or early in the second half of the 15th century BC.

Those who dismiss the 15th century BC (“early”) date do so by discrediting the text. An example of their argument is:

The Old Testament, an ancient Near Eastern book, often uses numbers quite differently from a modern chronology. Thus the 480 years [in 1 Kings 6:1] may be understood as an “aggregate” or “symbolic number” (LsSor, Hubbard and Bush 1996:60).

The proponents of a 13th century BC (“late”) Exodus believe their position is strengthened by the claim that there is little or no archaeological evidence for the Israelite presence in Canaan during the 15th century BC. This popular assumption has been successfully challenged by conservative archaeologists and Bible scholars, many of whose papers have been published on the pages of this journal. Again, it is not the intent of this article to review the literature regarding the two positions. But, Davis cuts to the heart the matter:

At stake here is the locus of authority. The Bible speaks very clearly to the issue of the date of the exodus and if these statements represent revelatory authority then they are reliable and should constitute the foundation for chronological thought. If these dates are not found to be reliable, then all biblical numbers and chronological notices can be regarded as suspect (1986:39).

[For an extensive ABR web article on this subject, please see: [The Rise and Fall of the 13th Century Exodus-Conquest Theory.](#)]

If, as the Bible states, the Exodus was in the 15th century BC, what does Egyptian history tell us about the culture and personages of that era? Specifically, can we identify “Pharaoh’s daughter” (Ex 2:5, 7, 9, 10; Acts 7:21; Heb 11:24), a person who seems critical to understanding the story and the timing?

The 18th Dynasty

The 15th century BC was the setting in Egyptian history of the great Dynasty 18. Chart 1, *Egyptian Dynasty 18*, shows the Pharaohs of that dynasty and the approximate dates they ruled.¹ The reader will note that 1446/7 BC, the Biblical date of the Exodus derived from a literal reading of 1 Kings 6:1, falls within the early reign of Amenhotep II. Amenhotep II was a particularly proud and boastful ruler. His personality corresponds with the Biblical portrayal of the Pharaoh with whom Moses dealt when he returned to Egypt from his Midianite sojourn. The Bible also reports that Moses was 80 years old (Ex 7:7; Acts 7:30) when he came back to Egypt immediately prior to the Exodus. Therefore, it can be mathematically calculated that Moses was born ca. 1526 BC during the reign of Thutmose I.

Thutmose I had a daughter, Hatshepsut, but no sons by his primary wife, Queen Ahmose. Little else is known about Hatshepsut’s birth-date or her age at death. Thutmose I did have sons, however, by secondary wives. One of those sons was Thutmose II, the next Pharaoh. In

accordance with a custom in the early years of Dynasty 18, Thutmose II married his half-sister Hatshepsut, who had been born of the primary wife and queen, in order to legitimize his religious right to the throne (Robins 1993:26–27).

It is reasonable to assume that Hatshepsut married Thutmose II shortly before he assumed the throne in 1517 BC. “Hatchepsut can have been no more than 15 years old when she married her brother and became consort” (Tyldesley 1996:96). Accordingly, Hatshepsut was born ca. 1533/2 (1517 + 15 = 1532). If Hatshepsut was born in 1533/2, she was six or seven years old when Moses was born ca. 1526 BC.

Egyptian records show that Thutmose II and Hatshepsut had a daughter, but they had no sons. He did have a son by a secondary wife. This son, Thutmose III, was to become the next Pharaoh. When Hatshepsut’s husband/half-brother, Thutmose II, died ca. 1504 BC, Hatshepsut was 29-30 years old. She then reigned as co-regent with her infant stepson, Thutmose III. Thutmose III’s exact age when his father died is unrecorded:

but given that he [Thutmose III] reigned over 50 years and that his mummy was not that of an elderly man, we can deduce that he was a young child or even a baby rather than a teenager (Tyldesley 1996:96).

CHART 1: EGYPTIAN DYNASTY 18	
AHMOSE I	1576–1551
AMENHOTEP I	1551–1530
THUTMOSIS I	1530–1517
THUTMOSIS II	1517–1504
HATSEPSUT	1504–1483
THUTMOSIS III	1504–1450
AMENHOTEP II	1452–1417
THUTMOSIS IV	1417–1390
AMENHOTEP III	1390–1352
AKHENATON	1352–1336
SMENHARE	1338–1336
TUTANKHAMON	1136–1327
AYE	1327–1323
HOREMHAB	1323–1295

Dates are those found in P. Ray (1997: 4)

The co-regency lasted 22 years until Hatshepsut died ca. 1483 BC after which time Thutmose III assumed the sole leadership of Egypt and ruled for another 33 years.

An intriguing question is how did Hatshepsut assume power, keep it for so long and defy tradition, as well as why the male bureaucracy tolerated this aberration? There are numerous theories that try to answer that question. The most probable explanation is that she, possessed a strong character and made the most of the power that had accrued to her as regent. On a practical level, we can imagine that when she became regent she carefully chose the officials who were to serve her (Robins 1993:47).

P. Clayton records that “Hatshepsut was a strong-willed woman who would not let anyone or anything stand in her way” (1994:104). Thutmose II, her husband/half-brother, was known to be in poor health, frail, and “far from energetic” (Tyldesley 1996:82). She may have anticipated his early death and, at age 29 or 30, had ample time to prepare for taking the throne. Although she was supposed to only be co-regent with her stepson, her aspiration to become Pharaoh was soon apparent. By year seven of her reign she had abandoned the title and insignia of a queen and adopted the fivefold titulary and male costume of a king, including an official royal false beard (Carter 1994:105). She also began to assert kingly prerogatives by setting up obelisks and making offerings directly to gods (Robins 1993:46).

Moses, Hatshepsut and Dynasty 18

The Biblical description of how Moses was discovered along the banks of the Nile River by “Pharaoh’s daughter” (Ex 2:3–10) is intriguing since it has parallels with the known character of Hatshepsut. In the Bible, the person who directed Moses’ rescue from the Nile, and later adopted him, is always referred to as “Pharaoh’s daughter” (Ex 2:5, 7, 9, 10; Acts 7:21; Heb 11:24). From the Bible we learn she had slaves and attendants. “Pharaoh’s daughter” must have been an important, powerful, and capable woman to command people to do her bidding. If Hatshepsut was about six or seven years old when Moses was born, it could well be that she was, in fact, the “Pharaoh’s daughter” of the Bible. It is conceivable that Pharaoh’s daughter, even at age six, was very powerful. And, no one could have foreseen the enormous effect of her plucking a Hebrew baby from the Nile to become her new “toy.” Further, a fascinating detail of how women of royal birth were titled in Dynasty 18 is provided by Robins (1993:26):

Women of royal birth [in the 18th Dynasty] can be identified by the use of the title ‘king’s [Pharaoh’s] daughter’, since there is no evidence in the 18th Dynasty of women who are known to have had non-royal parents being given this title. This rules out the possibility that this title was sometimes awarded to enhance the status of non-royal women.

Hatshepsut was the sole child who survived past infancy of the Queen consort, Ahmose, and her Pharaoh father, Thutmose I. Queen Ahmose gave Thutmose I four children, three of whom died in their youth (LoMusio 1989:85). Thus, Hatshepsut was the only woman in 1526 BC who could have had the title “Pharaoh’s daughter,” the designation given in Exodus to the person who saved Moses and later adopted him.

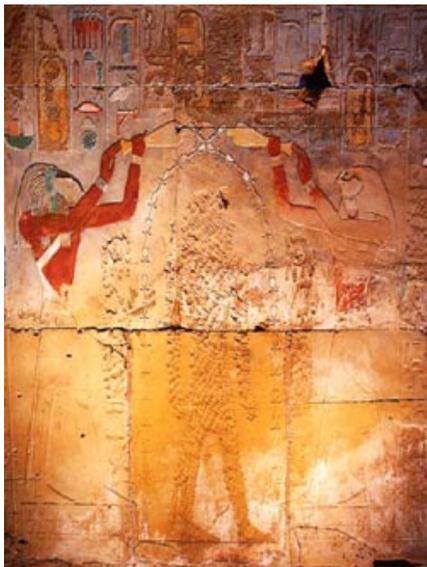
The Exodus account (2:3–10) continues to describe how “Pharaoh’s daughter” told Moses’ sister to take him to a nursemaid who, it turns out, was Moses’ natural mother. How long his mother cared for Moses is not recorded; however, Exodus 2:10 says “when the child grew older, she [Moses’ mother] took him to Pharaoh’s daughter and he became her son.” In her penetrating look into modern Arab culture, Sandra Mackey writes “boys are breast-fed much longer than girls, often for as long as two to three years” (1987:127). It might be assumed that in ancient times a similar practice prevailed, especially if the nursemaid was the boy’s mother who knew, once the boy was returned to “Pharaoh’s daughter,” she might never see him again. From this information it is conceivable that Moses may have lived with his natural Hebrew family for more than three years. This could help explain why Moses had empathy for the victim when he saw an Egyptian abusing a fellow Hebrew (Ex 2:11–12; Acts 7:25–27).

We have already concluded that if Hatshepsut was “Pharaoh’s daughter” she was six or seven when Moses was found. Following this scenario, Moses would have been introduced into the royal house three or four years later and adopted by Hatshepsut when she was ten or eleven years of age.

Assuming Moses was the adopted son of “Pharaoh’s daughter,” he would have been raised in the Dynasty 18 royal harem along with other children of royal blood. Acts 7:22 states that “Moses was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians.”

The dynastic Egyptian harem-palace served as...the ‘Household of the Royal Children’, the most prestigious school in the land. Here the young male royals...received the instruction which would prepare them for their future lives as some of the highest-ranking nobles in the land...Childhood networking in the royal harem must have been of crucial importance to those living in a state where everyone’s career was dependent upon their relationship with the king (Tyldesley 1996:54–55).

Charles Aling (1981:73–74) has a description of the educational curriculum for royal children in Dynasty 18. He writes that teachers were selected from officials of the land who were favorites of the reigning king. Students would study hieroglyphic and other scripts, copying and memorizing lengthy lists of words and names. They studied the foreign languages of their world. Public speaking was considered important so it “received heavy attention during the years of formal education.” The ability to write well was also highly valued. If young Moses was Hatshepsut’s adopted son he was educated in the royal harem of Dynasty 18. That would corroborate the Biblical description of his education, competency to dialogue before a Pharaoh even though he claimed he was not a gifted speaker (Ex 4:10) and his capability to record the first five books of the Old Testament.



Chisled out and destroyed image of Hatshepsut. Tyldesley, J.

Hatshepsut died ca. 1483 BC and Thutmose III reigned alone for another 33 years. Whether Hatshepsut died a natural death, or was murdered, is disputed by Egyptologists. What is known is that many of Hatshepsut’s monuments and statues were defaced or destroyed after her

departure. Her name was erased from cartouches across the land and replaced with the names of her father or husband/half-brother (LoMusio 1989:87). This would indicate that Thutmose III acquiesced to removing her memory, understandable if he had had to play a secondary role to her during the first 22 years of his reign. Davis agrees with this interpretation and writes that, the vengeance sought upon Moses was not due only to Moses' murder of an Egyptian official, but also to his possible association with Hatshepsut (1986:42).

A Chronology of Moses and Dynasty 18

Chart 2 is a chronology of this period and it reveals some interesting information. The Bible reports Moses fled from Egypt when he was 40 years old (Acts 7:23). Based on the chronology depicted in Chart 2, Moses would have been 40 years old in the year 1486/5 BC. This was two or three years prior to the time Hatshepsut disappeared from the scene. If Hatshepsut was "Pharaoh's daughter," it could well be that God provided an excuse for Moses to leave Egypt prior to Thutmose III's reprisals. Another possibility is that Moses and Thutmose III may well have known each other while growing up in the royal harem. Perhaps, if Moses had been in Egypt at the time of Hatshepsut's death, Thutmose III would have feared Moses might have contested the throne and taken revenge on him.

Another interesting aspect of the period is that Thutmose III continued his father's and grandfather's agenda of expansive construction efforts. As Tyldesley reports, Thutmose I's reign "saw extensive and innovative building programmes at all major Theban sites" (1996:71). Aling is even more direct: "Thutmose III was a great builder...." (1983:98). Of the monuments that attest to Thutmose III's deeds are two obelisks found at Heliopolis. One of these, popularly known as "Cleopatra's Needle," can now be seen in Central Park, behind the Metropolitan Museum of Art, in New York City (why this obelisk is associated with Cleopatra, ca. 50 BC or 1800 years after Thutmose III, is not clear). From the tomb of Rekhmire, vizier or a high officer under Thutmose III, paintings show foreign slaves making bricks. Aling contends these are the only depictions of brickmaking in all the hundreds of tomb paintings from the New Kingdom period, a time that includes the reign of Ramses II of the next dynasty, 19 (1983:71). If Hatshepsut was "Pharaoh's daughter," then these building programs were ongoing at the time Moses was raised in Egypt; another element that supports the Biblical story.

AHMOSE I	1576-1551	
AMENHOTEP I	1551-1530	
THUTMOSIS I	1530-1517	
THUTMOSIS II	1517-1504	
HATSHEPSUT	1504-1483	MOSES IS BORN
THUTMOSIS III	1504-1450	MOSES GOES TO MIDIAN
AMENHOTEP II	1452-1417	EXODUS
THUTMOSIS IV	1417-1390	CONQUEST
AMENHOTEP III	1390-1352	
AKHENATON	1352-1336	
SMENHARE	1338-1336	
TUTANKHAMON	1336-1327	
AYE	1327-1323	
HOREMHAB	1323-1295	

Dates are those found in P. Ray (1997:4)

Moses and the Pharaoh

Moses fled Egypt at age 40 (ca. 1486 BC) and lived in Midian for 40 years (Acts 7:30) until God called him to return to Egypt. “Moses was 80 years old...when they [he and Aaron] spoke to Pharaoh” (Ex 7:7). Therefore, Moses returned to Egypt to speak with Pharaoh to “let my people go” (Ex 5:1; 7:16; 8:1, 20, 21; 9:1, 13; 10:3) ca. 1446 BC, the date we derived for the Exodus from a literal reading of 1 Kings 6:1.

Thutmosis III died ca. 1450, and his son, Amenhotep II, had ascended the throne. It is interesting that God told Moses, “Go back to Egypt for all the men who wanted to kill you are dead” (Ex 4:19). If the chronology proposed in this article is correct, Moses would have returned to Egypt in 1446 BC, about three or four years into the reign of the new pharaoh, [Amenhotep II](#). If this was the case, how were Moses and Aaron able to gain face-to-face access to the new Pharaoh? From the reconstruction of Hatshepsut’s family presented above, it can be seen that Moses, the adopted son of Hatshepsut, was Amenhotep II’s step-uncle! In addition, it is possible that royal men and women who were raised in the palace harem remembered Moses and facilitated his access. As has already been pointed out, political “net-working” among the young men educated in the harem was common (Tyldesley 1996:54–55). At that time the upper tier of society was limited, being no more than two or three thousand people (Tyldesley 1996:41). Therefore, the extended family raised in the royal harem were well acquainted and undoubtedly remembered Moses as a young man. Exodus 11:3 seems to confirm that possibility when it says that when Moses returned he, “was highly regarded in Egypt by Pharaoh’s officials...”



Statue of the great Pharaoh Thutmosis III. D. Hansen.

At this point, it is interesting to put my proposal for Moses’ life over Dynasty 18 and correlate the dates to various Egyptian personages. A careful review of Chart 3 shows that the Biblical account and the Pharaohs of Dynasty 18 fit very neatly.

Dynasty 18 and Dynasty 19 Compared

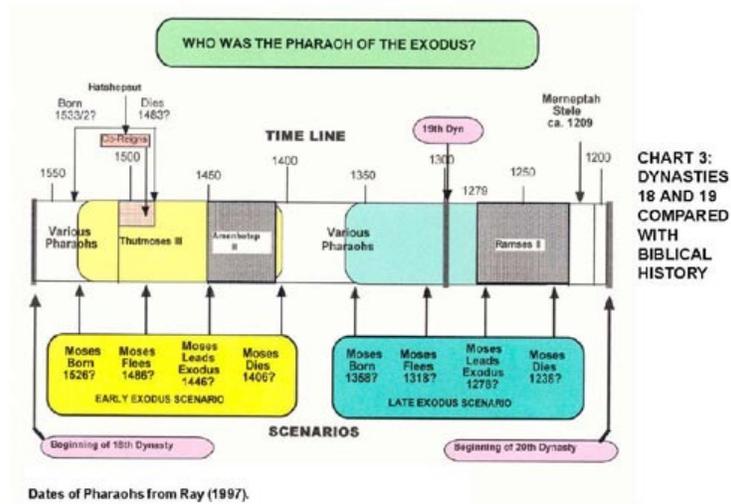
Chart 3 contrasts two Exodus theories, the 15th century/18th Dynasty (“early”) and 13th century/19th Dynasty (“late”) scenarios. The Biblical events discussed above fit very well into Dynasty 18, the 15th century. However, the reader may recall that most scholars date the Exodus to Dynasty 19 and Ramses II is reputed to have been the Pharaoh of the Exodus. A literature review will reveal an immediate problem with the Dynasty 19 proposal in that there are no records of a strong-willed woman, like Hatshepsut, to meet the criteria to be titled “Pharaoh’s daughter.”

A quick look at Chart 3 reveals that there is a more significant problem with the Dynasty 19/13th century model: timing. For example, if Ramses II was the Pharaoh of the Exodus, as most proponents of this theory contend, Moses was born 80 years earlier than Ramses II’s reign. However, doing so puts Moses’ birth in the previous dynasty, 18. There is little to commend a theory that Moses, raised in a Dynasty 18 royal harem, would have been welcomed into the palace of a Dynasty 19 Pharaoh.

To try to overcome that problem and make all 80 years of Moses’ life fit into Dynasty 19 (which began in 1295 BC), the Exodus would have to be dated to 1215 BC ($1295 - 80 = 1215$). However, in 1215 BC Ramses II would have reigned for 64 years. This does not comport with the Biblical description of God telling Moses that those who seek Moses’ life are dead (Ex 4:19). In this construction, Moses would have fled to Midian during the reign of Ramses II. This then begs the question of who was seeking Moses’ life?

An attempt to fit the first 80 years of Moses’ life into Dynasty 19 introduces an even bigger problem. Ramses II was succeeded in ca. 1213 BC by his son, Merneptah, who ruled for ten years. In the third or fourth year of Merneptah’s reign he campaigned in Palestine. [Merneptah left a stele](#) recording his military successes. On this stele he referred to the defeat of Israelites and implied that Israel was an important society/nation already settled in Canaan. In order to compute the date of the Exodus if Israel had been settled in Canaan by the time of Merneptah’s campaign, it is necessary to add the 40 years the Israelites were in the desert to a date of about 1209 BC. Then, another seven years must be added to the 40 years in order to account for the period of the conquest (Jos 14:7, 10). Thus, the time from Merneptah’s victory over the Israelites in Canaan (ca. 1209 BC) to the time of the Exodus was, at a minimum, 47 years. This would place the Exodus in 1256 BC and, 40 years prior to that in 1296 BC, would have been when Moses fled to Midian. This date is during Dynasty 18. If this scenario is followed, Moses was born 40 years before, ca. 1336 BC, which is squarely in the previous dynasty, 18. This returns us to the question of how did Moses have access to the throne? So, in spite of how one attempts to harmonize the Biblical description of Moses’ life with Dynasty 19 Pharaohs, problems abound.

In constructing the scenario in Chart 3 for Dynasty 19, it was assumed that Ramses II was the Pharaoh of the Exodus and Moses spoke with him in the first year of his reign. This was necessary to account for the 40 years the Israelites spent in the desert and the seven years necessary for the conquest, all to have occurred prior to Merneptah’s reign.



Summary

Although Aling (1983:73) cautions his readers that care must be exercised in identifying the famous Hatshepsut with “Pharaoh’s daughter,” the parallels between the Biblical account and Egyptian Dynasty 18 history and culture are very attractive. The fact that the title “Pharaoh’s daughter” is a title reserved for very few women narrows the number of persons to whom the Bible could refer, and Hatshepsut is one of the few who meets those criteria. Other facts and customs of Dynasty 18 seem to support the Biblical description of everyday life during the time the Bible infers the Exodus took place. We may never know for sure if our conclusions are correct; however, I find more compelling evidence that the Exodus occurred in the 15th century during the Egyptian Dynasty 18, ca. 1446 BC, than for any theory of a later, 13th century date.

Recommended Resources for Further Study

Footnote:

1. There are many different systems used by historians and archaeologists to date Egyptian History. The basis for the dates of Egyptian Pharaohs in this article are presented in P. Ray's (1997.4) excellent article that compares and analyzes most options. His conclusion is that the higher chronology, the one used in this article, best fits the evidence.

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