

The Time of the Oppression and the Exodus

John Rea
Moody Bible Institute

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The problem of the date of the Exodus of the Israelites from Egypt is an old one. Yet it is an extremely important one in Biblical studies, for, as Edwin R. Thiele has said, chronology is the one sure basis of accurate historical knowledge.

Scholars have wrestled for over 2000 years with the question of Hebrew chronology in the O.T. Many dates have long since been firmly fixed to the satisfaction of all; others remain unsettled. With respect to any date still in question new evidence demands new investigation of the problem, in the hope that the new insight gained by intensive study may furnish a more reasoned solution.

The chronology of Israel in the first millennium B.C. has been quite accurately determined on the basis of its relationships with Assyrian history. For the chronology of Israel in the second millennium B.C., however, comparison may best be made with Egyptian history, for which scholars have determined dates with the greatest degree of certainty of any nation in the Near East in that millennium. Yet even Egyptologists differ with regard to their dates about ten or fifteen years for the period in which we are interested, so one cannot yet arrive at dates with absolute finality. At any rate, a knowledge of Egyptian history is essential to the O.T. scholar, for the key to the chronology of events throughout the entire 2nd mil. B.C. in the O.T. is the date of the Exodus.

VARIOUS SOLUTIONS OF THE PROBLEM

The early date.—At present among O.T. scholars there are two main views concerning the date of the Exodus. One is that the Israelites left Egypt during the 18th Dynasty around the middle of the 15th century B.C., and the other is that they did not leave until the 19th Dynasty during the 13th century. The early date view best accords with certain data in the Bible, such as the 480 years between the Exodus and the beginning of Solomon's temple (1 Ki. 6:1) and the 300 years from the conquest of Transjordan to the time of Jephthah (Jud. 11:26).

A late date.—The view for the date of the Exodus which has been held by a majority of scholars during the past century, and hence which has become more or less "traditional," is the one which places that event at some time in the 13th century B.C. The most persuasive arguments are those of Albright and others who place the Exodus early in the reign of Rameses II, about 1280 B.C. As one surveys the literature of those who support a late date of the Exodus, he soon discovers that very few of the writers believe in a unified movement of all twelve tribes from Egypt and into Canaan under the leadership of Moses and Joshua. In order to handle certain extra-Biblical evidence, such as the date of the destruction of Jericho around 1400 B.C. and the mention of Asher as a territory in southern Phoenicia in the inscriptions of Seti I (c. 1310 B.C.), the proponents of a late date are obliged to imagine either a two-fold exodus and entry into Palestine in different centuries or that some of the tribes of Israel never sojourned in Egypt at all. While such theories may attempt to handle all the bits of external evidence, they obviously run contrary to the great body of Scripture which presents the Exodus and the Conquest as an episode which involved all twelve tribes of Israel.

Since the Pentateuch and the book of Joshua clearly teach that the Exodus was a united movement from Egypt, all twelve tribes departing at once, and that the en-

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trance into Canaan was an invasion of the fighting men of all the tribes at the same time; and since the Exodus was of primary importance as the event which gave the Israelites their freedom from bondage and welded them together into a nation under the hand of God; since it was the event most often appealed to by the prophets and psalmists as an example of the mighty working of their God in the affairs of men on earth; and since incidents in the Exodus and Wilderness journey are often spoken of in the N. T. as authentic; then the problem of the Exodus is not merely that of one date versus another date. Rather the problem is doubly serious, for it involves the doctrine of the inspiration of the Scriptures and one's views of the origin of the religion of Israel. As H. H. Rowley says in his book regarding the date of the Exodus, "Much more than chronology is really involved, since the view that we take of Israel's religious development is materially affected by the solution we adopt."¹

It is my belief that only an early date for the Exodus agrees with the Biblical data and allows for a unified Exodus and Conquest, and that only a unified Exodus and Conquest are in harmony with the clear statements of the divinely-inspired Scriptures and with the true nature of the religion of Israel.

THE OPPRESSION OF THE ISRAELITES

In any discussion of the dates of the Exodus it is necessary to deal also with certain events which actually took place during the time of the oppression of the Israelites. By approaching the record of Exod. 1 & 2 in a superficial manner many writers have arrived at unbiblical conclusions regarding the setting of that greatest of all events in the history of the nation of Israel. Largely on the basis of the names of the two store-cities in Ex. 1:11, Pithon and Raamses, scholars have been quick to place the bondage of Israel and her leader Moses in the time of the Ramesside kings, i.e., in the 19th Dynasty. In so, doing, they apparently have not cared how many other passages of Scriptures were contradicted or tossed aside.

So far, no inscriptions or documents of any kind have been found in Egypt which bear witness to the occurrence of the Exodus, for the mention of Israel on the stele of Merneptah refers to the later time when Israel was already in Palestine. Yet the absence of external evidence to confirm the Biblical record need not destroy confidence in its historicity. Comparatively little excavation has been done in the Delta of the Nile, in which area the Israelites resided. Furthermore, the pharaohs were not given to telling about their defeats and times of public disgrace. Rather their inscriptions were cut on temple walls with the purpose of exalting themselves as the living Horus, the son of the god Amun-Ré. And if the pharaoh of the oppression or the pharaoh of the Exodus had mentioned the Israelite slaves or their leader Moses in some public inscription, it would not be out of keeping with the known practice of some of the rulers of Egypt for a later king to have chiseled out the record.

¹ Harold Henry Rowley, *From Joseph to Joshua* ("The Schweich Lectures of the British Academy," 1948; London; Oxford University Press, 1950), p. 2.

OPPRESSION BY THE HYKSOS

The king who knew not Joseph.—The verse Ex. 1:8, "Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who knew not Joseph," perhaps indicates a change of dynasty in Egypt. To what dynasty he belonged, at any rate, is in question. Because of the name Raamses of one of the store-cities, many who hold to a late date for the Exodus believe that Rameses I (1315-1313 B.C.) or his son Seti I (1313-1301), the father of Rameses II (1301-1234), is the king involved (e.g., G. E. Wright, *Biblical Archaeology*, p. 60). Others who also take the late date think, however, that the 18th Dynasty Egyptians enslaved the foreign Israelites, who did not flee from Egypt with the

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Hyksos, as soon as the latter had been driven out of the Delta (e.g., H. N. Orlinsky, *Ancient Israel*, p. 34). Unger (*Arch. & the O.T.*, p. 144) and many others who subscribe to the early date of the Exodus (in the 18th Dynasty) also interpret Ex. 1:8 in the same way.

Neither of these views, however, takes into consideration all the facts in the context of Ex. 1:1-12. The Joseph narrative in Genesis seems to indicate that Jacob and his sons descended into Egypt to sojourn there before the Hyksos period and in the middle of the illustrious 12th Dynasty, around 1850 B.C. Now if Ahmose I (1570-1545 B.C.), the founder of the 18th Dynasty, were the "new king," then nearly 300 years passed before the Israelites began to be oppressed. Or, to state the problem in another way, many more generations than the one specified in verse 6 intervened between Joseph's death about 1775 B.C. and the beginning of the time of bondage. In Gen. 15:13, however, God told Abraham: "Know of a surety that thy seed shall be sojourners in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they *shall afflict them four hundred years*" (italics mine). Yet if the enslavement of the Israelites began around the middle of the 16th century B.C., and if the Exodus took place around 1447 B.C., 480 years before Solomon began the Temple (I Ki. 6:1), then there was only a century of actual affliction.

A second thing to notice carefully is the exhortation made by the "new king" in Ex. 1:9, 10:

And he said unto his people, Behold, the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we: come, let us deal wisely with them, lest they multiply, and it came to pass, that, when there falleth out any war, they also join themselves unto our enemies, and fight against us, and get them up out of the land.

Several questions may be asked. If the "new king" belonged to the native Egyptian 18th Dynasty, would he, or could he truthfully, say that the Israelites were more and mightier than the Egyptians? Perhaps yes, if only the native Egyptians in the Delta were in mind; but certainly not if the whole nation of Egypt were meant by "his people" to whom he addressed himself. Let it be remembered that at the time when the "new king" arose, the children of Israel had not yet finished multiplying to their eventual complement at the time of the Exodus. Another question: would the victorious Egyptians who had just driven out the armed Hyksos feel that these Semitic shepherds were mightier than the proud, strong Egyptian armies? A third question: what enemies did the Egyptians fear who might be expected to ally themselves with the Israelites and wage war against the Egyptians? The Hyksos had been expelled, pushed back into Palestine, and their fortress at Sharuhén had been captured by the Egyptians

after a three year siege. There does not seem to be any enemy strong enough to invade the Delta anywhere on the horizon by the middle of the 16th century B.C.

The logical answer to these problematic questions would seem to be that a Hyksos king was the "new king" of Ex. 1:8. The text says he "arose over Egypt." *wayyaqam... al Mitsrayim*. In Hebrew the verb *qum* plus the preposition 'al often have the meaning "to rise against" (e.g., Deut. 19:11; 28:7; Jud. 9:19; 20:5; II Sam. 18:31; II Ki. 16:7); but they never have the meaning of assuming the throne of a nation in a peaceful, friendly manner. It is certainly true that the Hyksos arose against Egypt. Furthermore, the Hyksos may well have had reason to hate the descendants of Jacob because of the episode at Shechem (Gen. 34) and Jacob's later

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fighting with the Amorites (Gen. 48:22), Amorites being one of the main elements of the Hyksos people (Albright, *From the Stone Age to Christianity*, p. 202, n.4).

If the "new king" was a Hyksos ruler, the oppression could have begun soon after 1730 B.C., for the Israelites were very near the Hyksos center in the northeastern section of the Delta. From 1730 until 1447 B.C. is not quite 300 years. This is not the full 400 years of affliction of Gen. 15:13, but it is a lot closer than the 100-120 years of bondage if the Israelites were not enslaved until the 18th Dynasty. If the "new king" is a Hyksos ruler, there is no need to say that his complaint that the Israelites were more and mightier than his own people is an exaggeration. The Hyksos filtered into Egypt gradually and were not strong enough at first to capture much of the country. If the "new king" is a Hyksos ruler, he had real reason to expect war with his enemies the Egyptians at any time in the near future. Since Joseph and his people had gotten along so well with the Egyptians, it was only natural for the Hyksos to suspect that the Israelites might join themselves unto the Egyptians.

There is one more logical reason why the Hyksos must have persecuted the children of Israel rather than favor them. If the two peoples had been friendly with each other, why did not the Israelites choose to leave Egypt along *with* the Hyksos when the latter were expelled? For surely the Jews could see clearly the hatred which the Egyptians had for Semitic peoples and would have fled from possible bondage or torture, had they been at one with the Hyksos and not already afflicted and hated by the latter. The question can be put in another way: if the Israelites were associated with the Hyksos, why did the Egyptians distinguish between the two Semitic groups and not drive out the Jews along with the hated Asiatics? But if the Hyksos enslaved the Israelites, then certainly the Jews would have had no desire to depart with the Hyksos, and the Egyptians could have easily seen that there was a distinction between the two peoples. We can surmise that after a brief relaxation of the oppression started by the Hyksos, the Egyptians found it to their liking also to enslave the children of Israel, for both economic and nationalistic reasons. The Jews furnished a source of manpower needed to reconstruct the buildings and cities in Lower Egypt, and being semi-nomadic shepherds they were fit to be the objects of the stirred-up hatred on the part of the Egyptians for all Asiatics. That the Egyptians did afflict the Israelites may be seen in the latter half of Ex. 1, beginning with verse 13.

Pithom and Raamses.—The manner in which the enslavement of the children of Israel was carried out is started as follows in Ex. 1:11, 12:

Therefore they did set over them taskmasters to afflict them with their burdens. And they built for Pharaoh store-cities, Pithom and Raamses. But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and the more they spread abroad. And they were grieved because of the children of Israel.

The holders of the late date of the Exodus become extremely positive in their assertions concerning this passage. Finegan, e.g., says:

The basis of the theory now to be considered is the statement in Exodus 1:11 that the Israelites "built for Pharaoh store-cities, Pithom and Raamses." Raamses hardly can be other than Per Ramesese, the "House of Ramesses (II)," which has been identified with Avaris-Tanis....

Unless we are to regard Exodus 1:11 as an *erroneous or anachronistic statement*, we must conclude that Ramesses II was the Pharaoh of the oppression.² (Italics mine.)

George Ernest Wright is much more dogmatic in his statements:

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Now the point which must be stressed is this: if the Israelites worked in labor battalions on the construction of the city of Rameses, it must have been during the reign of Rameses II... and perhaps that of his father, but not before.... We now know that if there is any historical value at all to the store-city tradition in Exodus (and there is no, reason to doubt its reliability), *then Israelites must have been in Egypt at least during the early part of the reign of Rameses II.* After much digging at Tanis by the archaeologists Mariette, Petrie, and Montet, not a single object of the Eighteenth Egyptian Dynasty has been found there. The city was destroyed by Pharaoh Amosis I (1570-1546), and was probably not reoccupied before the end of the 14th century.³ (Italics his.)

While the identification Zoan=Tanis-Avaris=Per Ramesese may not yet be absolutely certain, it may be assumed to be correct. Whether this city was at the site of San el-Hagar or at Qantir twelve miles to the south makes little difference, for apparently at neither site have remains of the 18th Dynasty been uncovered. Thus it must be recognized that if Biblical Raamses was Tanis, *the Israelites could not have been forced to build Raamses in the 18th Dynasty.* Yet the orthodox defender of the early date cannot admit of an anachronism. Furthermore, if there is a better possible explanation of the occurrence of the name Raamses, it would be preferable than to claim that it is the modernization of an obsolete place name by some later scribe, as Unger does (*Arch. & O.T.*, pp 149f). In not one of the passages where the name Raamses occurs (Gen. 47:11; Ex. 1:11; 12:37; Num. 33:3) is the more ancient name given. One Scriptural method of explaining an archaic name may be illustrated by the case of Zoar: "...the king of Bela (the same is Zoar)" (Gen. 14:2, 8).

If those who insist on the late date of the Exodus believe that Ex. 1:11 is reliable, they certainly have to overlook or discount many other interrelating passages of Scripture. If there is any sense of order and continuity in the narrative in the early chapters of Exodus, then the beginning of the enslavement and the building of Pithom and Raamses took place *before* the birth of Moses. Certainly chap. 2 with its account of Moses' birth during the time of oppression necessarily follows chronologically the early stages of the oppression described in

² Jack Finegan, *Light from the Ancient Past* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1949), p. 107.

³ George Ernest Wright, *Biblical Archaeology* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1957), p. 60.

chap. 1; and the building of Pithom and Raamses was one of the *first* tasks given to the enslaved Israelites. But Moses was eighty years old at the time of the Exodus (Ex. 7:7); he was 120 at his death. Thus even if the late date of the Exodus (about 1290-1280 B.C.) were correct, Moses would have been born about 1370-1360 back in the 18th Dynasty (1570-1315 B.C.). Therefore it is impossible to hold that Raamses II was the Pharaoh who ordered the Israelites to build for him the store-cities of Ex. 1:11, and at the same time to do justice to the rest of Scripture.

Notice that according to the early date of the Exodus (c. 1447 B.C.) Moses would also have been born in the 18th Dynasty, around 1527 B.C. But the first chapter of *Exodus* clearly indicates that there was quite an interval of time between the beginning of the oppression and the birth of Moses at the time of the order to kill all the male babies born to the Hebrew women. Certainly several generations of Israelites may be indicated by the words of Ex. 1:12. Another period of perhaps a generation may be implied in the blessing which God bestowed on the midwives in giving them families and descendants (Ex. 1:20f). The result of combining the Biblical data and the archaeological evidence concerning the Egyptian site of Tanis-Per Ramesese where Hyksos remains were found is that it would seem that the Hyksos were the ones who first enslaved the children of Israel and used them in building their store-

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cities. This is the conclusion of the French scholar, R. Dussaud, according to Rowley, From *Joseph to Joshua*, p. 25n.

The question then will be asked, if the Hyksos were the oppressors in Ex. 1:11, how are we to explain the appearance of the name "Raamses" in an age prior to the 19th Dynasty? It is my opinion that the name "Raamses" may actually have been used during the Hyksos era, and then discarded by the reactionary Egyptians of the 18th Dynasty. The following 19th Dynasty apparently witnessed antagonism against the domination of the Theban priests and their violent suppression of the theology of Aten, by bringing about a return to Hyksos traditions and to the cult of the despised god Seth. Note the startling conclusions of W. F. Albright:

The Ramesside house actually traced its ancestry back to a Hyksos king whose era was fixed 400 years before the date commemorated in the "400-year Stele" of Tanis. The great-grandfather of Rameses II evidently came from an old Tanite family, very possibly of Hyksos origin, since his name was Sethos (Suta)... Rameses II established his capital and residence at Tanis, which he named "House of Rameses" and where he built a great temple of the old Tanite, later Hyksos, god Seth (pronounced at that time Sutekh).⁴

Now if the Ramesside dynasty may be traced back to the Hyksos rulers, and if the dynastic name Seti or Sethos is a Hyksos name, then it is equally possible that the name Rameses or Raamses was a Hyksos name or at least was used by them in Lower Egypt where few records from that period have been found. Since certain Hyksos kings did use the name of the god Ra or Ré combined with other words in their throne names, it would not be illogical to find such a name as Ra-meses in that era.

⁴ William Foxwell Albright, *From the Stone Age to Christianity* (2d ed. with a new introduction; Doubleday Anchor Books; Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1957), p. 223.

THE PHARAOH OF THE OPPRESSION

According to the early date of the Exodus Thutmose III (1504-1450 B.C.) was the so-called Pharaoh of the Oppression. He was one of the greatest, if not the greatest, of all the pharaohs of Egyptian history. After he actually gained control of the throne about 1483 B.C. following the death of his hated aunt-stepmother-mother-in-law Queen Hatshepsut (perhaps the pharaoh's daughter of Ex. 2:5, while she was still a teen-age princess), Thutmose III reorganized the army of Egypt; he made seventeen campaigns in the space of nineteen years into Palestine and Syria to subdue these lands and to exact tribute from them. For such military exploits Dr. J. P. Free has termed him the "Napoleon of Egypt" (ABH, p. 89).

Thutmose III is the ruler whose death is recorded in Ex. 2:23. He reigned alone for about 34 years (1483-1450 B.C.). This long period agrees well with the Scriptural statement that the pharaoh died after oppressing the Israelites for "these many days." God's command to Moses, "Go, return into Egypt; for all the men are dead that sought thy life" (Ex. 4:19), implies that the same king from whose Moses fled into Midian is the one who died in Ex. 2:23. Since Moses was in Midian and Horeb for more than 30 years,⁵ the reign of the Pharaoh of the Oppression had to be a lengthy one. The only pharaohs in the 18th and 19th Dynasties who ruled more than 30 years were Thutmose III, Amenhotep III (1410-1372), Horemheb (1349-1315), and Rameses II (1301-1234). The evidence of Merneptah's Stela that Israel was already in Palestine by his reign prevents our considering his father Rameses II as being the Pharaoh of the Oppression. Horemheb could not have been that ruler because he was the last king of the 18th Dynasty, and Rameses I, first king of the 19th Dynasty,

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ruled only a year and four months and was too old to bear the burdens of kingship and thus to have been the Pharaoh of the Exodus. Nor could Amenhotep III very well have been the Pharaoh of the Oppression, for his son, Akhenaten (1380-1363), the "heretic king" who tried to install the worship of Aten as the religion of Egypt, could hardly have been Pharaoh of the Exodus. Akhenaten moved to the site of Amarna and built a new city there for a new capital of Egypt, 200 miles up the Nile from the Delta and the Land of Goshen. He was so engrossed in this task and in his religious views that he neglected international affairs and took little interest in building in the Delta region. Also, the character of Akhenaten, who apparently was a sickly, effeminate man who died before he was thirty, does not agree with the strong, cruel nature of the Pharaoh of the Exodus. Thus the only pharaoh of the four who enjoyed long reigns who could have been the predecessor of the Pharaoh of the Exodus and thus himself the Pharaoh of the Oppression was Thutmose III.

⁵ The ruler from whom Moses fled was a man—"he sought to slay Moses" (Ex. 2:15); thus it could not have been Hatshepsut. But Thutmose III ruled alone only 34 years. Moses may have been slightly older than 40 when he broke with the Egyptian court, and yet near enough to that age so that he could be said to be (approximately) 40 years old. Compare Luke's statement that Jesus was about 30 years old at the time of His baptism (Lk. 3:23); yet our Lord must have been closer to 33. The only passage which states Moses' age at the time of his escape to Sinai is Ac. 7:23; literally it says: "And when a time of forty years was being filled for him, it came into his heart to visit his brethren, the sons of Israel." Instead of the "forty years" referring to his age, it is possible that the length of Moses' training in all the wisdom of the Egyptians after being weaned and taken from his mother, is what is meant. Thus Moses may have been 43 or more when he fled to Sinai and 77 when Thutmose III died, for the Exodus probably occurred in the 4th year of Amenhotep III's reign.

One more detail which may indicate that Thutmose III corresponds to the Pharaoh of the Oppression may be noted: if Moses were a favorite of Hatshepsut, whom Thutmose hated with a vengeance, then we can easily imagine that Moses was also the object of the wrath of Thutmose. Thus when Moses killed the Egyptian and brought himself in that way before the attention of the new monarch, he was obliged to remain in exile as long as that great pharaoh lived.

THE EXODUS FROM EGYPT THE LOCATION OF PHARAOH'S COURT

The Biblical date.—The entire context of Ex. 5-14 reveals that the place where the pharaoh was residing during the time of the ten plagues and the Exodus itself was not far from the land of Goshen where the Israelites were living. The land of Goshen almost certainly lay in and to the north of the fertile valley which links the Delta region with Lake Timsah and the Bitter Lakes of the Suez Canal area. This valley is now called Wadi Tumilat. Near its western end lies Tell Basta, the site called Bubastis in the Hellenistic Age, which was situated on the royal canal leading to the Gulf of Suez at the junction of the canal with the easternmost or Pelusiac arm of the Nile. Tell Basta is a mile or two southeast of the present-day town of Zagazig.

Ex. 5:6, 10 and 12:31 force one to conclude that Pharaoh's residence was no more than one to three hours away from the center of the land of Goshen. On the other hand, the phenomena of the plagues of the flies and the hail (Ex. 8:22; 9:25f) falling upon all the land of Egypt but not on the land of Goshen furnish evidence that Goshen was on the very edge of Egypt at that time, removed to some extent from the territory which the native Egyptians settled. In the time of the 19th Dynasty, however, when the capital was at Tanis-Rameses, many of the principal building projects of Rameses II were in the Wadi Tumilat or Goshen region itself. At that time the Egyptians lived all around and in the midst of Goshen, not excluding that area as though a despised captive people were dwelling there.

Pharaoh's residence was in a city (Ex. 9:33) and it was in sight of the river (7:20-23), *ye'or*, which almost invariably means the Nile River or one of its branches in the Delta. Cities like Memphis and Heliopolis, while in the Nile Valley, were several miles from the channel of the Nile at normal stage, too far to see the river through the palms.

The problem of the Eighteenth Dynasty capital.—Since I Ki. 6:1 places the Exodus about 1447 B.C., the Biblical date means that the Exodus occurred in the

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18th Dynasty. The capital of all the kings of that dynasty, however, was at Thebes, over 400 miles away from the land of Goshen up the Nile Valley. Obviously, the ruler who did all he could to prevent the Israelites from leaving Egypt was not at Thebes at the time of the Exodus. Rowley delineates the problem for those who hold the early date of the Exodus when he says: "No known building operations of this Pharaoh [Thutmose III] took place in the Nile Delta region, and he is not known to have had a royal residence in that district" (FJU, p. 24). I shall attempt to show that the first half of this statement is incorrect, and that there is a fair amount of evidence that his son, if not Thutmose himself, did have a royal residence in the Delta.

The fact of two viziers in the Eighteenth Dynasty.—The vizier of Egypt was the prime minister, the highest administrative official and the chief justice. Up to the reign of Thutmose III all of Egypt came within the sphere of one vizier's authority. But to handle the greatly increased business of government that pharaoh divided the labors of the viziers office between two men; one resided at Thebes; the other was in charge of all regions north of Assiut and resided at Heliopolis, six or eight miles northeast of the center of modern Cairo. The very fact that Thutmose III appointed a separate vizier for Lower Egypt proves how important in his estimation was the proper execution of the royal commands in the Delta and the lower reaches of the Nile. If the vizier of the North lived at Heliopolis, it is quite likely that the pharaoh had a secondary residence for himself to stay in on his tours of inspection, in Heliopolis or in a nearby city.

Archaeological evidence of 18th Dynasty buildings in the Delta.—There is much evidence that Thutmose III, Amenhotep II, and other pharaohs of the 18th Dynasty did build extensively in Lower Egypt. It is a matter of common knowledge that two magnificent red Aswan granite obelisks erected by Thutmose III in front of the Temple of R Ré in Heliopolis now adorn the Thames Embankment in London and Central Park in New York City. In the inscriptions on these obelisks Thutmose called himself "Lord of Heliopolis." It is evident, then, that Thutmose III *did* conduct building operations at Heliopolis, which is in the Delta. Also it is possible that Israelite slaves could have been employed in the building operations known to have been carried out at Memphis by 18th Dynasty rulers.

But the most pertinent evidence of all comes from Tell Basta, the site of ancient Bubastis, the Pi-beseth of Ezek. 30:17. This city was the key to the Delta, on the route of all travel to and from Asia, whether by the northern road through Tanis, Daphne, and Polusium, or by the southern road through Heliopolis at the then extended head of the Gulf of Suez. It was an important position to hold. So strategic was it that the first of the Libyan kings of the 22nd Dynasty, Sheshong I (the Biblical Shishak, I Ki. 14:25), transferred his residence to Bubastis. The Egyptologist Naville worked this site in 1887-1889. Several important discoveries of his came from the 18th Dynasty. The earliest of these was a stone of Amenhotep II. It is a red granite slab with two panels. In each panel the king is seen standing and making offerings to the god Amun-Ré who sits on his throne, and is spoken of as "he who dwells in Perunefer."⁶ Seti I of the 19th Dynasty rebuilt the structure from which this stone had come. Naville gave his explanation of Seti's motive as follows: "I believe that when he renewed the monuments of Amenophis II he was actuated by a religious motive, by the desire to propitiate Amen, perhaps at the moment when he entered on his Asiatic campaigns, for which Bubastis must have been the starting point" (*ibid.*, p. 31). Scarabs and remains of a temple built by Amenhotep III have also been found at Bubastis.

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Records from the life of Amenhotep II.—Clinching evidence appears in the records about his life that Amenhotep II often resided in or near the Delta, so that it would not be out of place for him, the Pharaoh of the Exodus according to the early date view, to be staying nearby the "ghetto" of his rebelling slaves. First of all, we know from a scarab that Amenhotep II was born at Memphis; thus the court must have resided at Memphis at some times in his father's reign (the reign of Thutmose III). Then we know that as a youth he would often ride from the

⁶ Edouard Henri Neville, *Bubastis* ("Eighth Memoir of the Egypt Exploration Fund"; London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1891), p. 30.

royal stables in Memphis to such interest spots as the Sphinx at Giza (*ANET*, pp. 244f). Furthermore, he also built largely at Heliopolis and gave himself the title "Divine Ruler of Heliopolis." Best of all, William C. Hayes states in his recent book, *The Scepter of Egypt*, concerning Amenhotep II:

In his youth he had been appointed by his father a commandant of the principal base and dockyard of the Egyptian navy at Peru-nefer, near Memphis, where he seems to have maintained large estates and in the vicinity of which he and his successors appear to have resided for extended periods of time.⁷

Peru-nefer, according to John Wilson of the Oriental Institute, now seems to have been a district near Memphis which had among its population Semitic elements with Phoenician connections. Thus Amenhotep II does not seem to have been averse to residing near Semitic peoples in the Delta area. As the god incarnate he could have stayed in the guest house of the temple he had erected at Bubastis, for Egyptian temples always had guest houses for the convenience of the divine Pharaoh.

Other records indicate that Amenhotep II made three military expeditions into Asia, which came in the third, the seventh, and the ninth years of his reign. If the Exodus occurred in 1447 B.C., that would have been the fourth year of Amenhotep's kingship. He then would have had about three years to, rebuild his army after the disaster, suffered by his crack troops in the engulfing waters of the Red Sea (Ex. 14: 6-28). Bubastis, in the east-central part of the Delta, would have served well as the military base or staging area for the Asiatic campaigns of Amenhotep and his father Thutmose III. Thus I conclude that it was at Bubastis at the western end of the land of Goshen that Amenhotep, an 18th Dynasty king whose capital was Thebes, resided during the months of the ten plagues in order to be in close contact with his insubordinate Hebrew slave laborers.

CHRONOLOGY OF ISRAEL Second Millennium B.C.

<i>Patriarchal Age</i>		2000-1730
Abraham	His birth	c. 2075 or 2133
	Arrival in Canaan	c. 2000
	Visit to Egypt (Gen. 12)	c. 1990
	Campaign of the kings (Gen. 14)	c. 1985
	Destruction of Sodom, etc.	c. 1976
Isaac	His birth	c. 1975
Jacob	His birth	c. 1915
	Flight to, Haran	1897
	Birth of Joseph	1883
	Return to Canaan (430 years before Exodus, Ex. 12:40 Sam & LXX)	1877
	Trouble at Shechem; move to Hebron	1868
Joseph	Sold to traders at age 17	1866
	Judah, age 21, marries—(Gen. 38)	1866

⁷ William C. Hayes, *The Scepter of Egypt* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press for the Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1959), II, 141.

	Rise to power at age 30	1853	
	Jacob and family go to Egypt	1843	
	His death at age 110	1773	
<i>Bondage, Exodus, and Wilderness</i>			1730-1407
Oppression	Rise of hostile king (Ex. 1:8) building of Pithom and Raamses under the Hyksos	c. 1730	
	Birth of Moses	1527	
	Flight of Moses from Thutmose III (Ex. 2:15)	c. 1482	
	Death of the king of Egypt, Thutmose III (Ex. 2:23)	c. 1450	
Exodus	480 years before 4th year of Solomon's reign (I Ki. 6:1)	1447	
Wilderness	Giving of the Law at Mt. Sinai	1447	
Journey	Arrival at Kadesh-barnea	1446	
	Departure from Kadesh-barnea	1408	
	Encampment at Abel-shittim	1407	
<i>Conquest of Canaan and Era of Joshua</i>			1407-1380
Campaigns of Joshua	Central (Jericho, Ai, Mt. Ebal)	1407	
	Southern (Gibeon, Amorite League)	1407	
	Northern (Merom, Hazor)	1406	
Tribal Allotments	Calculated from the ages of Caleb (Josh. 14:7, 10)	1400	
Era of Joshua	Death of Joshua	c. 1390	
	Death of the elders (Josh. 24:31)	c. 1380	

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Prepared for the Web in December 2007 by Robert I. Bradshaw

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