

# PART TWO: THE EXODUS

## CHAPTER 4: THE EXODUS AND THE WILDERNESS

### A) EGYPT AND ISRAEL'S SOJOURN

#### 1) THE COLLAPSE OF THE MIDDLE KINGDOM

It is very difficult to determine the extent to which the Israelites interacted with the Egyptians in the early phase of their Egyptian sojourn.<sup>1</sup> Language and cultural differences would have isolated them somewhat, although the patriarchs spoke West Semitic which had been the language of trade in the northeast Nile delta for many years. So it was widely understood. The Israelites lived in the eastern delta which had for some time been organized into carefully administered political and geographical regions called nomes.<sup>2</sup> It is highly questionable that there was enough room in the delta for any Asiatic group to hide from the political and religious currents washing through the land.<sup>3</sup> The Israelites were far more likely to have been involved in the religious and political turmoil, than they were to have somehow survived in an isolated Egyptian cocoon.

In the century after Joseph's death, Egypt's power went into a slow decline. Nile flood levels remained unstable producing periods of economic difficulty. Egyptian culture slowly descended into the 2nd Intermediate Period. The disintegration of Egyptian power at the end of the 12th Dynasty can be seen in the Egyptian *Execration Texts*. During these years, Egyptian pharaohs relied on magic rather than military power to influence events in the Levant.<sup>4</sup> The Egyptians would write the names of their enemies on pottery and smash the pottery. They hoped by doing so to smash their enemies as well. Many of these broken pottery fragments contained the names of West Semitic city state rulers in Palestine. These may have been the city states that gave Egypt the most trouble. MacDonald noted that the *Execration Texts* never mentioned the cities of Megiddo, Ugarit, Qatna, or Byblos. MacDonald noted that these were exactly

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Morenz pointed to the national exclusiveness at the heart of Egyptian religion. He noted that foreigners were denied access to the House of Life where sacred writings were kept, and were denied access to the temple of Khnum before the feast of Opet. Siegfried Morenz, *Egyptian Religion*, trans. Ann Keep, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1973), 53.

Henry Fisher, "Some Notes on the Easternmost Nomes of the Delta in the Old and Middle Kingdoms," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 18 (1959): 129-42.

Redford argued, "From the XVIIIth through XXth Dynasty, one notes the total absence in LE 8, 13, or 14 of any evidence of a substantial resident population of Asiatics living in large measure unto itself." Donald B. Redford, "Observations on the Sojourn of the Bene-Israel," 57-66 in Ernest S. Frerichs and Leonard H. Lesko, eds. *Exodus: The Egyptian Evidence*, (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1997), 62. Redford made this point to argue against the accuracy of the Biblical text. Redford argued that the Asiatics in the delta had little or no interaction with the native Egyptian population. Donald B. Redford, *Egypt, Canaan, and Israel in Ancient Times*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 114.

Various dates have been suggested for these texts. Katzenstein suggested a date near the middle of the 19th century BC. S. Horn dated them around 1785 BC. Albright dated them between 1850 and 1825 BC. H. Jacob Katzenstein, *The History of Tyre*, (Jerusalem: The Schocken Institute for Jewish Research, 1973), 19. George Mendenhall, *The Tenth Generation*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1973), 183.

the city states in the Levant where Egyptian influence had been strongest during the Middle Kingdom.<sup>5</sup> So perhaps they had not opposed Egyptian interests when the *Execration Texts* were being written.<sup>6</sup>

Säve Söderbergh claimed that central government broke down for a generation between the 12th and 13th Dynasties as weak kings ruled Egypt.<sup>7</sup> Political unity was restored by the 13th Dynasty, but Egypt continued to slide downhill.<sup>8</sup> The 13th Dynasty had several rulers who reigned for only a short time. There were several interruptions in dynastic succession and the rulers were generally less able than their predecessors. Steindorff and Seele suggest that the Egyptian throne even lost its hereditary character during the 13th Dynasty, and elected kings of common origin ruled for brief periods. At least two of these kings had West Semitic names.<sup>9</sup>

During the 13th Dynasty, erratic flood levels continued to call into question each Pharaoh's right to rule. Barbara Bell suggested that this constant change of rulers may have been prompted by continued instability of the Nile flood levels. The Pharaohs all claimed to be the god Horus incarnate and claimed to be in control of the Nile flood levels.<sup>10</sup> Bell noted that a very high flood level was recorded during the reign of the 13th Dynasty Pharaoh Sekhemkare. This high flood level was recorded in a text at Askut which was located between Semna and Mirgissa. Bell also noted a 13th Dynasty famine text recorded at the temple of Korher-Khoutef at Edfu. This southern Egyptian official claimed that he had given grain to save the population from famine. Bell noted that famine texts were written around 1750 BC at el Kab, although the famine was not severe.<sup>11</sup>

Despite political and economic instability, the 13th Dynasty rulers attempted to exercise influence in Palestine and Syria especially at sites like Byblos, Gaza, and Beth-Shan. Egyptian sculptors and scribes worked at Byblos until a decade before the Hyksos rose to power. For example, a wall relief has been recovered that pictured a prince of Byblos named Yantin. The hieroglyphic text that accompanied the relief mentioned the 13th Dynasty Pharaoh Neferhotep I who ruled around 1723 to 1712 BC.<sup>12</sup> Yet Egypt's attempts to dominate the north were largely futile. Hayes argued that Egypt's prestige in Palestine

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Another surprising omission in the *Execration Texts* was the name of the West Semitic god Baal. Rulers in the Levant often combined the names of their gods as theophoric elements in their names. The Syrian storm god Hadad was included in several rulers' names, but not Baal. This may suggest either that Hadad had not yet morphed into Baal, that Baal was not yet as important a deity, that Baal had only limited support from rulers in the Levant, or that Baal worshipers had not opposed Egyptian interests. Baal's association with sailors trading with Egypt might make the last option above a possibility. Of course, there is no way to know if the name Baal was already part of names in the Levant. The *Execration Texts* recorded only a few of the names of people in the Levant. It was not a comprehensive list of available names.

John MacDonald, "Egyptian Interests in Western Asia to the End of the Middle Kingdom: An Evaluation," *Australian Journal of Biblical Archaeology* 2 (1972): 92.

<sup>8</sup> Torgny Säve-Söderbergh, "The Hyksos Rule in Egypt," *The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 37 (1951): 53-7.

<sup>9</sup> K. A. Kitchen dated the 13th Dynasty 1786-1633 BC. Hayes dated it 1778-1625 BC. Breasted suggested 1788-1625 BC.

George Steindorff and Keith Seele, *When Egypt Ruled the East*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), 23. See also William Hayes, *The Scepter of Egypt*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1953). I:351.

Joel F. Drinkard Jr. "The King as God in the Ancient Near East & Israel," *Biblical Illustrator* 34 (2007): 47-51. As late as the 19<sup>th</sup> dynasty, a stela at Beisan justified Rameses II's right to rule with these words, "that you might cut off the heads of those which have rebelled against you, since you are Horus, in charge of the Two Lands." John D. Schmidt, *Rameses II: A Chronological Structure for His Reign*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), 178. Egyptologists debate what the Pharaohs understood this to mean. Barbara Bell, "Climate and the History of Egypt: The Middle Kingdom," *American Journal of Archaeology* 79 (1975): 223-69. Hans Goedicke, "Cult-Temple and 'State' during the Old Kingdom in Egypt," in Edward Lipinski, ed, *State and Temple Economy in the Ancient Near East I: Proceedings of the International Conference organized by the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven from the 10th to the 14th of April 1978*, (Leuven: Departement Oriëntalistiek, 1979), 115. Hayes, *The Scepter of Egypt*, 1:341.

<sup>11</sup> Bell, "Climate and the History of Egypt," 224. Kitchen argued for dates of 1723 to 1712 BC for Neferhotep I. K. A. Kitchen, "Egypt, History of," David Noel Freedman, ed. *The Anchor Bible Dictionary Volume 2 D-G*, (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 329.

<sup>12</sup> William S. Smith, *Interconnections in the Ancient Near East*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965), 16. From this same time period, Byblos has produced a hieroglyphic inscription in an obelisk temple and a gilded bronze sphinx that was made in Syria.

remained unshaken until the end of the 18th century BC even though Egypt's actual power in the region was very limited.<sup>13</sup>

As in any weak period, the 13th Dynasty was a time of great Asiatic immigration into Egypt. W. S. Smith suggested that this Asiatic immigration was fueled partly by a general movement of peoples in western Asia.<sup>14</sup> Donald Redford suggested that this massive immigration began with a policy change by Amen-em-het III who was the last strong 12th Dynasty ruler.<sup>15</sup> Before Amen-em-het III, the Egyptians consciously limited Asiatic immigration. After Amen-em-het III, the Egyptians opened up foreign lands to trade.<sup>16</sup> This openness to trade also opened Egypt's own borders, and a substantial foreign element became a part of the Egyptian culture. These Asiatics by and large came to Egypt by choice rather than through conquest.<sup>17</sup> Many of them were employed at skilled positions in the Sinai mines. Others worked in Egyptian households. The most famous example of this Asiatic presence in Egypt comes from the Brooklyn Papyrus.<sup>18</sup> This text describes 95 servants of Senebtisi's household. 48 of these servants were Asiatics, including domestics, cooks, shopkeepers, weavers, and infants.<sup>19</sup> At least some of these Asiatics probably worshiped Baal. The name Baal first appeared in Egyptian texts in this papyrus. William F. Albright understood names 35 and 64 of this list as Baalat and Baal.<sup>20</sup> These Asiatics did not completely give up their own culture when they entered Egypt. During the 13th Dynasty, foreign ceramic ware even began to show up in Egyptian tombs.<sup>21</sup> However, 18th and 19th century administrative documents did

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<sup>14</sup> Hayes, *The Scepter of Egypt*, I:341.

<sup>15</sup> Smith, *Interconnections in the Ancient Near East*, 22. Smith argued that the same general movement of peoples: influenced the rise of the Hittite kingdom, brought the Hurrians and Mitanni into northern Mesopotamia, and brought the Kassites into Babylon. (The Hurrians may have been an Indo-European group that moved south into the Levant at different times. The Hittite Empire may have resulted from the fusion of Indo-European immigrants with an indigenous population in Anatolia.) Bietak suggested that Hammurabi's conquest of Mari and the destruction of Qatna by Aleppo damaged the trade routes used by Byblos. This may have resulted in massive immigration of people from Byblos south to their southern harbor town at Tell el-Dab'a in Egypt. Manfred Bietak, "Canaanites in the Eastern Nile Delta," 41-55 in Anson F. Rainey, ed. *Egypt, Israel, Sinai: Archaeological and Historical Relationships in the Biblical Period*, (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, 1987)."

<sup>16</sup> Redford, *Egypt, Canaan and Israel in Ancient Times*. Amen-em-het IV and Sebekneferure reigned for only a few years.

<sup>17</sup> Donald B. Redford, *A Study of the Biblical Story of Joseph (Genesis 37-50)*, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1970), 196-97.

<sup>18</sup> Many of them may have been forced to move south by drought in Palestine as Joseph's family would later. Shehadeh argued that climatic conditions in Palestine were drier than present 2500-1000 BC, with maximum aridity 1800-1300 BC. Numan Shehadeh, "The Climate of Jordan in the Past and Present," in Adnan Hadidi, ed., *Studies in the History and Archaeology of Jordan II*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985), 27.

<sup>19</sup> This text has been dated at various points in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Dynasties. Albright suggested that it was written in the 1st or 2nd regnal year of Sebekkhatpe III, which Albright dated at 1740 BC. This would date it only a decade before the rise of the Hyksos dynasties. William F. Albright, "Northwest-Semitic Names in a List of Egyptian Slaves from the Eighteenth Century B.C.," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 74 (1954): 222-33. See also James B. Pritchard, ed. *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Related to the Old Testament*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1955), 553-54.

<sup>20</sup> Ann Rosalie David, *The Pyramid Builders of Ancient Egypt: A Modern Investigation of Pharaoh's Workforce*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986), 189, 190. Pritchard, ed. *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, 553-54. Albright, "Northwest-Semitic Names in a List of Egyptian Slaves from the Eighteenth Century B.C.," 223.

<sup>21</sup> Albright argued that the names Ba'al and Ba'alat were spelled with archaic consonantal orthography instead of the syllabic spelling used for Semitic words transcribed into hieroglyphic after the beginning of the Middle Kingdom in Egypt. Albright argued that these names were ancient and common enough to have achieved a fixed spelling. Albright, "Northwest-Semitic Names in a List of Egyptian Slaves from the Eighteenth Century B.C.," 223-24, 231. William F. Albright, *The Vocalization of the Egyptian Syllabic Orthography*, (New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1934). See also David, *The Pyramid Builders of Ancient Egypt*, 189-91. Pettinato argued that Baal was already worshiped as a recognizable deity in the texts of Abu Salabikh which he dated around 2600 BC. Pettinato argued that Baal was also mentioned in texts from Mari, Ebla, and Ur III. Giovanni Pettinato, "Pre-Ugaritic Documentation of Ba'al," in Gary Rendsburg, et al, eds. *The Bible World: Essays in Honor of Cyrus Gordon*, (New York: KTAV, 1980), 203-09. There are problems with some of these claims. Early texts like the Ebla texts are notoriously difficult to translate. It is also hard to know when the word *ba'al* first became a proper name for a deity.

Säve-Söderbergh, "The Hyksos Rule in Egypt," 54.

record Asiatics serving in Egyptian temples as porters and dancers.<sup>22</sup> At least some of these Asiatics probably began to worship the gods of the temples that they served.

Steindorff and Seele suggested that the Egyptian throne even lost its hereditary character during the 13th Dynasty. They suggest that elected kings of common origin ruled for a short time. At least two of these kings had Semitic names.<sup>23</sup> This 13th Dynasty rise of Asiatics to Egypt's throne set the stage for the beginning of the darkest era in Egypt's history, the Hyksos Dynasties. The Asiatics who immigrated into Egypt during the 12th and 13th Dynasties often immigrated south in organized groups of various sizes and various nationalities. These Asiatic groups were by and large well organized, well equipped, and warlike.<sup>24</sup> As these Asiatic groups settled into the eastern delta, they retained much of their original social and political structure. The same princes who had ruled city states in Palestine continued to rule the same people in the delta.

Despite Joseph's involvement in the Egyptian government, the Israelites developed a relatively independent tribal structure in Egypt that continued the family relationships from Palestine. This can be seen in passages like Exodus 4:29 that referred to Israel's elders. In Egypt, Israel was divided into thirteen tribes ruled by tribal elders, who were each the head of a father's household. This was seen in Exodus 3:16-18, 4:29, and 6:14. The distinction between the various Syrian and Palestinian groups was maintained in Egypt. This can be seen in Exodus 6:15. This verse notes that one of Simeon's sons named Shaul was the son of a Canaanite woman. The implication is that such a birth was unusual, and unacceptable. Israel shared the eastern Nile delta with several other rather well organized cultures from Palestine and Syria that lived side by side with the Egyptian population.

## 2) THE HYKSOS RULE IN EGYPT

As the 13th Dynasty ended, the West Semitic groups in the delta gradually seized control of Egypt and became Egypt's Hyksos rulers.<sup>25</sup> The Hyksos were a loose confederation of peoples from Palestine and Syria.<sup>26</sup> Few Egyptian texts remain from this time.<sup>27</sup> The only literary source that describes in some detail the Hyksos rise to power was written by Manetho in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC. Manetho claimed that the Hyksos were foreign invaders, although that is today a highly controversial claim.<sup>28</sup> The Turin papyrus named several of the Hyksos rulers. The Turin papyrus was written in the Ramesside Age, so it may have had credible literary sources. Manetho and the Turin papyrus are supported by a large number of scarabs

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<sup>23</sup> Redford, *Egypt, Canaan, and Israel in Ancient Times*, 78.

<sup>24</sup> Steindorff and Seele, *When Egypt Ruled the East*, 23. See also Hayes, *The Scepter of Egypt*, I:351.

Aharoni suggests that the Hyksos drew their military strength from a radical innovation in warfare, the use of the horse-drawn chariot. Yohanan Aharoni, *The Land of the Bible: A Historical Geography*, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962), 136.

<sup>25</sup> West Semitic and Hurrian tribal leaders were called Hik-khoswet, "princes of the uplands," or "rulers of foreign countries." Manetho shortened this name to "Hyksos." Hayes, *The Scepter of Egypt*, I:351.

<sup>26</sup> Kempinski argued that the 15th Dynasty originated in Syro-Palestine because a Hyksos name was found in an earlier Canaanite royal household in central Palestine. Aaron Kempinski, "Some Observations on the Hyksos (XVth) Dynasty and its Canaanite Origins," in Sarah Israelit-Groll, ed., *Pharaonic Egypt: The Bible and Christianity*, (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1985), 130, 134. Hayes argued that the Hyksos rulers were Semitic. Hayes, *The Scepter of Egypt*, II:3-4. Wilson argued for a large Hurrian presence among the Hyksos instead of simply a Semitic identity. John A. Wilson, *The Culture of Ancient Egypt*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1951), 160-61.

The Egyptians may have destroyed evidence that the Hyksos were in the land. That was rather common practice during the 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty. Hatshepsut, Amenhotep III, and Akhenaton had their names and images carved out of monuments after their deaths. Hatshepsut did mention the Hyksos on her Speos Artemidos inscription. She referred to the "Asiatics" and their city "Avaris of the Northland." Hatshepsut bragged that she had repaired the damage done to Egyptian temples by the Hyksos. She claimed that the Hyksos had ruled in ignorance of Re. While that was clearly an overstatement, it could support claims that the Hyksos stressed the worship of Canaanite gods like Baal, Anat, and Astarte. James Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt: Historical Documents*, 5 vols. (New York: Russell & Russell, 1962 reprint), II:296.

<sup>28</sup> The library at Alexandria might have had historical records from this period, although that is simply speculation.

in Egypt and the Levant. A limited number of brief texts have also survived although most were outside of Egypt.<sup>29</sup>

Aharoni suggested that the Hyksos were able to seize control because they used horse drawn chariots, body armor, and strongly fortified encampments which were radical military innovations at the time.<sup>30</sup> Hayes noted that the Hyksos conquest occurred in two stages.<sup>31</sup> First the Asiatic, or Hyksos, princes seized control of the northeast delta around 1720 BC, and they made Avaris, or Tell el-Dab'a, their capital.<sup>32</sup> Tell el-Dab'a had been the center of Middle Bronze Canaanite culture in the delta since the beginning of the Middle Kingdom because it was the southern anchor for the sea trade with Palestine.<sup>33</sup> For 45 years, the northern princes consolidated their power. Then in 1675 BC, the Hyksos prince Salatis captured Memphis and occupied Middle Egypt.<sup>34</sup> The Hyksos ruled all of Egypt roughly from 1730 to 1570 BC. The Hyksos were able to control Egypt from the delta because they formed a strong alliance with the Nubians, Egypt's traditional enemies on their southern border. So the Egyptians were sandwiched between two powerful allied armies.<sup>35</sup> The Hyksos ruled the Nile delta with a firm hand,<sup>36</sup> although their control of southern Egypt may have been rather tenuous.

The Hyksos were also allies of the city states in Palestine and carried on extensive trade relations with them. The exact nature of this relationship has been debated.<sup>37</sup> There was certainly a great deal of trade between Hyksos Egypt and the Levant. There was also a remarkable homogeneity in the art of Egypt and the Levant at this time.<sup>38</sup> It was once popular to speak of a Hyksos empire in the north, though most recent writers claim only a Hyksos sphere of influence.<sup>39</sup> A close relationship between the Hyksos and Canaanite tribes may be suggested by the ease with which the Hyksos found refuge at Sharuhin when they were driven out of Egypt. Yet there is also no evidence that the Canaanites in the Levant tried

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Säve-Söderbergh noted a monument at Abydos that showed a sphinx with a Semite head massacring an Egyptian. He also noted a stela by Kamose who began the battle against the Hyksos. He complained that no one could rest because of their servitude to the Asiatics of Avaris. Kamose declared his intention to deliver Egypt. Säve-Söderbergh, "The Hyksos Rule in Egypt," *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 37 (1951): 66-9.

<sup>30</sup>Aharoni, *The Land of the Bible: A Historical Geography*, 136.

One of the earliest surviving references to the Hyksos can be seen in Hatshepsut's inscription of the Speos Artemidos. Hatshepsut claimed, "I have restored that which was ruins, I have raised up that which was unfinished since the Asiatics (*"mw*) were in the midst of Avaris of the Northland, and the barbarians were in the midst of them." Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt: Historical Documents*, II:125.

<sup>32</sup>Manfred Bietak, *Avaris and Piramesse: Archaeological Exploration of the Eastern Nile Delta*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), 232.

<sup>33</sup>When the early 18th Dynasty ruler Kamose besieged the Hyksos at Avaris, he found 300 ships from Retenu, or Palestine, anchored at Avaris. Marianne Lubban noted this in a discussion of pottery from Avaris in an EEF discussion on July 30, 2003.

<sup>34</sup>Hayes suggested 1675-1600 BC.

<sup>35</sup>Steindorff and Seele, *When Egypt Ruled the East*, 30-33.

<sup>36</sup>Manetho claimed in *Aegyptiaca* frag. 42, 1.75-79.2 that the Hyksos garrison at Avaris included 240,000 well trained and well armed troops. This was, of course, quite a late text. The numbers of soldiers recorded here have recently been questioned by some authors. The Hyksos control of Egypt may have ended partly because its alliance with Nubia fell apart. A text in the tomb of a 17th Dynasty governor named Sobekhakt described a Kushite attack on southern Egypt that reached as far north as Al-Kab. This text was debated on EEF between July 28 and July 30 by Aayko Eyma, Marianne Luban, J. J. Castillo, Chris Bennett, and Steve Harvey.

<sup>37</sup>The Middle Bronze IIB and IIC periods may have become increasingly dangerous in Palestine. Large fortifications were built in several cities. For example, Gezer had been unfortified until the MB IIC period when a strong wall was erected. William G. Dever, "Relations between Syria-Palestine and Egypt in the 'Hyksos' Period," 69-87 in Jonathan N. Tubb, ed. *Palestine in the Bronze and Iron Ages*, (London: Institute of Archaeology, 1985), 71. The relationship between these fortifications and Egypt's Hyksos rulers has been debated at some length.

<sup>38</sup>Raphael Giveon, *The Impact of Egypt on Canaan*, (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1978), 11.

<sup>39</sup>See Redford, *Egypt, Canaan, and Israel*, 121.

to help the Hyksos when they were besieged at Avaris. So a Hyksos northern empire of some kind may be unlikely, even though Hyksos domination of Palestine is still defended by some authors.<sup>40</sup>

### 3) ISRAEL AND THE HYKSOS

Israel's relationship with the Hyksos has been understood in several different ways. Authors who defend a 19<sup>th</sup> Dynasty exodus often suggest that Joseph and Jacob may have entered Egypt during the Hyksos era. If so, Joseph may have had an important role in the government of a Hyksos ruler. Kitchen argued that Joseph may have lived only a century before Kamose of Thebes.<sup>41</sup> Kamose began the struggle that drove the Hyksos from Egypt at the start of the Middle Kingdom.

An 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty exodus date suggests a less certain relationship between the Israelites and the Hyksos. When the Israelites saw Hyksos groups worshiping mountain deities from Palestine, they might have been reminded of their own theological roots. They could have associated the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob with mountain gods like Baal because the Patriarchs had worshiped God on mountain top shrines like Bethel.<sup>42</sup> This was reflected in Genesis 12:6-8, 13:18, and 35:1-6. Patriarchal worship at Bethel was especially problematic since Bethel had been a place of sacrifice since the Chalcolithic Age.<sup>43</sup>

Throughout Israel's Egyptian sojourn, Israel's perception of their Patriarchal worship would have been reinforced by the Egyptians. The Egyptians viewed people from the Levant as mountain people, and viewed their religion as a mountain religion.<sup>44</sup> In keeping with this perspective, the Egyptians described travel to and from Egypt as "going down" to Egypt, and "coming up" from Egypt.<sup>45</sup> This Egyptian perspective was reflected in the Mosaic Pentateuch in passages like Genesis 12:10 and 13:1.

Were individual Israelites tempted to worship Canaanite deities in Egypt? The Biblical evidence is rather ambiguous about the identity of the idols that Israelites worshiped in Egypt. Ezekiel 20:5-10 stated that Israel fell into idolatry although Ezekiel did not spell out the nature of that idolatry.<sup>46</sup> However, it is reasonable to believe that Canaanite idolatry would have been a great temptation because of the nature of Israel's patriarchal history. Israel may have been prone to Canaanite idolatry because some aspects of her Patriarchal traditions could have been misunderstood as supporting this idolatry. First, God gave Abraham and his descendants the land of Palestine. When Israelites looked north to the land of their heritage, it would have been natural for them to have associated that heritage with Canaanite idolatry.

Several events in the Patriarchal tradition would have tended to reinforce this identification. For example, when Abraham entered Palestine, he settled in sites like Hebron and Bethel. These towns were located along the mountain chain which formed the backbone of Ephraim and Judah. In Genesis, Moses described several Patriarchal altars in these mountains including ones at Shechem, Bethel, Hebron, and Moriah.<sup>47</sup> When the Israelites finally re-entered Palestine, they reaffirmed the Patriarchal assessment that these high places were proper worship sites. With the exception of Gideon's family shrine at Ophrah, all of

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Redford suggests that Hazor's continued strength would have blocked Hyksos attempts to expand their control northward. Redford, *Egypt, Canaan, and Israel*, 121.

<sup>41</sup> Kenneth A. Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament*, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2003), 348.

<sup>42</sup> There were a variety of holy mountain worship sites in the Levant. One of the most interesting maybe Mount Nebo where Moses was buried. Nebo was already in use in the Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age. Ancient settlements cover the hills and mounts around Nebo, and hundreds of dolems were constructed in the area. Dolems were manmade structures formed from huge stones with an opening toward the east. Dolems were often used as tombs. See the discussion of dolems at Nebo in Amy Dockser Marcus, *The View from Nebo*, (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 2000), 8-9.

<sup>43</sup> When Kelso excavated the northwest gate of Bethel, he found a high place at the bedrock level. Sections of the rock still contained blood stains from sacrifices. In another section, he found a pottery jar made around 3500 BC. James L. Kelso, *The Excavation of Bethel*, (Cambridge: The American Schools of Oriental Research, 1968). 20-1.

<sup>44</sup> When the Egyptians wrote the hieroglyphic names of cities and ethnic groups in Palestine, they sometimes ended the spelling of the names with a mountain determinative sign.

<sup>45</sup> Miriam Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature: A Book of Readings*, 3 vols. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), I:170-71.

<sup>46</sup> See also Ezek. 23:19; Josh. 24:14; 5:9; Lev. 18:3.

<sup>47</sup> Gen. 12:6-8; 13:18; 35:1-6.

Israel's recorded early worship sites were concentrated in one continuous block in the mountains of Judah, Benjamin, and Ephraim.<sup>48</sup> So Israel knew that God should properly be worshiped in the mountains of Palestine. When Israelites in Egypt remembered their Patriarchal roots and their promise of a return to Palestine, they would also have remembered that they were a people of the northern mountains.

Another element of Israel's Patriarchal history that could have tempted Israel into idolatry was reflected in Genesis 31:31; 35:2, and Joshua 24:14. Even the Patriarchs tolerated idolatry in their households. Rachel stole Laban's household idols,<sup>49</sup> and Jacob required the members of his household to bury their gods beneath a tree before journeying to Bethel. There is no way to determine the identity of the idols that were buried in this text. The idols might have included early forms of Hadad, Baal, Astarte, or Anat,<sup>50</sup> although Moses took pains not to mention the names of the idols buried there.<sup>51</sup> Israelites in Egypt could have interpreted these elements of their tradition in two ways. They may have recognized in Jacob's requirement of Genesis 35:2 a claim that only Jacob's God was to be worshiped, or they may have used these elements of their tradition as justification for tolerating Canaanite idolatry in their own households.<sup>52</sup>

Even Jacob's journey to Bethel could itself have been somewhat problematic. Bethel was a common worship site for Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.<sup>53</sup> Jacob's dream at Bethel had several similarities to holy mountain theology in Mesopotamia, and it had a few similarities to the Old Kingdom forms of solar theology in Egypt.<sup>54</sup> Bethel itself was apparently an ancient mountain top sanctuary. Kelso argued that it had been a place of sacrifice since the Chalcolithic Age.<sup>55</sup> As an ancient worship site, it is unlikely that only Israel's God would have been worshiped there. So Abraham's worship at Bethel might have influenced Israel to tolerate syncretism in Egypt. This could be why Moses stressed in Genesis 35:1-4 that Jacob buried the foreign gods in his household as he went up to Bethel to worship Yahweh. All of these suggestions are speculative possibilities, but there seems to be an inherent logic to them.

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<sup>48</sup>

See also Menahem Haran, *Temples and Temple-Service in Ancient Israel*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), 41.

<sup>49</sup> She may have done so to support any claim that Jacob may make on leadership and inheritance in the family.

<sup>50</sup> H. T. Frank claimed that Baal worship was co-extensive with Canaanite culture. He also described the numerous small Canaanite idols which have been found at every Syrian and Palestinian site. Harry T. Frank, *Bible, Archaeology and Faith*, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1971), 81.

<sup>51</sup> In Genesis, Moses avoided mentioning the names of deities who were rivals to Yahweh.

<sup>52</sup>

The whole question of Patriarchal Age idolatry continues to cause confusion today. Moses commanded that the names of foreign gods should not be mentioned. So he avoided naming other gods, their worship sites, or the nature of their cults. Moses did mention several inhabitants of Canaan who worshiped the true God under the name of El. These texts have also caused confusion because of the important position which El played in the Ugaritic myths. It has been suggested that the Patriarchs worshiped the Canaanite god El. However, the noun *el* simply means "god," and there is no reason that the examples noted by Moses could not have referred to worship of the true God rather than worship of a Canaanite idol. The origin of both true belief and idolatry in Palestine can not be traced clearly at this time.

<sup>53</sup> See Gen. 12:8; 13:3; 28:9; 31:13, and 35:1-16.

<sup>54</sup>

C. Houtman, "What Did Jacob See in his Dream at Bethel?" *Vetus Testamentum* 27 (1977): 337-51. E. A. Speiser, *Genesis*, (New York: Doubleday, 1979), 219. J. Gwyn Griffiths, "The Celestial Ladder and the Gate of Heaven (Genesis xxviii.12 and 17)," *Expository Times* 76 (1964/65): 229. The "stairway to heaven" motif was quite common in Egyptian texts. See Faulkner's Pyramid Text Utterances 267 and 271.

<sup>55</sup>

Kelso, *The Excavation of Bethel (1934-1960)*, 20-1, 45.

It is impossible to determine the extent to which the Israelites interacted with the Hyksos culture.<sup>56</sup> If the Biblical account is correct, Israel multiplied enormously in the eastern Nile delta at a time when the delta was ruled by West Semitic nobles.<sup>57</sup> Exodus 1:8 is quite interesting in this context. It states that Israel was oppressed by a new king who did not "know" Joseph. This could suggest an earlier vassal treaty between Israel and the Hyksos.<sup>58</sup> "Knowing" did carry this meaning during the Egyptian New Kingdom. An 18th Dynasty text from Karnak of Amenhotep II noted that "the country which 'knew' not Egypt beseeched the good god."<sup>59</sup> A 19th Dynasty Karnak text of Seti I described captives from "countries that knew not Egypt."<sup>60</sup>

While the Israelites maintained their own cultural identity, it was not impossible that the Israelites and Canaanites may have worked together toward common goals. Just as Joseph served in Pharaoh's court, it is not impossible that Israelites might have served in the Hyksos court. Since the Hyksos government was an amalgamation of several northern groups, it would have been easy for the Hyksos to assimilate a few individual Israelites as well. Since the Israelites had been important in Egyptian politics before the Hyksos came to power, it may have been easy for some Israelites to transfer their loyalty to the new Hyksos rulers. The appeal of the Hyksos culture would have been enormous. Both groups spoke West Semitic. Both had come from Palestine which was the land that God had promised Israel. One Hyksos ruler was even named Jacob-El which had a clear Biblical ring.<sup>61</sup> The Hyksos life style in Egypt remained at least partly Canaanite, and Israel could have identified with this lifestyle.<sup>62</sup> Josephus even recorded a tradition of association with the Hyksos when he referred to the Hyksos as "our ancestors."<sup>63</sup> At least in part, the Hyksos worshiped Canaanite gods with a theology that may have had superficial similarities to the worship of Israel's El. Since Ezekiel 20:5 claimed that Israel worshiped idols in Egypt, it is quite possible that many of the Israelites did worship the syncretistic merger of Canaanite and Egyptian deities common in the eastern delta during their sojourn.<sup>64</sup>

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Frank Eakin Jr. even suggested that the account of Israel's sea crossing had its roots in the expulsion of Egypt's Hyksos rulers by Ahmose I. Eakin suggested that Ephraim and Manasseh had left Egypt with the Hyksos, and they had interpreted their departure from Egypt with imagery drawn from Baal worship. Eakin argued that the sea crossing was a northern account which was mixed with the southern account of a Mosaic exodus. Frank E. Eakin Jr., "The Reed Sea and Baalism," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 86 (1967): 383. For a survey of the issues raised for the exodus by the documentary hypothesis, see two C.T.C.R. studies: Horace D. Hummel, *Critical Study and the Exodus Pericope*, Biblical Studies Series #3, (St. Louis: The Commission on Theology and Church Relations, the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, 1973), and Eric Kiehl, *A Case Study in Contemporary Biblical Interpretation: The Exodus Account*, Biblical Studies Series #2, (St. Louis: The Commission on Theology and Church Relations, the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, 1973). Academic interest in the Hyksos has come partly from proponents of a 19th Dynasty Exodus since Joseph could then have entered Egypt under the Hyksos rulers. See for example, G. Ch. Aalders, *Genesis 2*, trans. William Haynen, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 197-201. Harry O. Thompson, *Mekal: The God of Beth-Shean*, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1970), 173.

Redford argued that the Asiatic occupation of the delta in the 17th and 16th centuries BC was confined to the eastern Bubastite branch of the Nile and Wadi Tumilat. Redford, *Egypt, Canaan, and Israel in Ancient Times*, 114.

<sup>58</sup>"Karnak relief of Amenophis II," Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt*, II:317; III:54

<sup>59</sup>Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt*, II:317.

<sup>60</sup>Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt*, III:54.

Hayes suggested that this was the second of the "Great Hyksos" rulers. Hayes noted that several scarabs have been found that contained the name Jacob-El. He noted that each time, this name was preceded by the title "Son of Ra." Hayes, *The Scepter of Egypt*, II:4-6. Rowe noted also an Egyptian scarab found by Albright at Tell Beit Mirsim which is 45 miles west of the Dead Sea. The scarab contained the name of a Hyksos ruler "Son of Ra, Y[a]qeb given life." Rowe noted that the name Y[a]qeb on this scarab was "Jacob." Alan Rowe, "The Famous Solar-City of On," *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* 94/95 (1962/63): 135.

<sup>61</sup>Note here Manfred Bietak's excavations at Tell el-Dab'a.

<sup>62</sup>Redford called this a curious half truth. Redford, *Egypt, Canaan, and Israel*, 99.

<sup>63</sup>Il Sam. 7:23 noted that Yahweh redeemed Israel both from Egypt and from their gods. Patton discussed Ezek. 20:5 and argued that it was unique in the Old Testament. Patton argued that this passage depicted the worship of Egyptian gods as one of the things that led to the captivity. Corrine Patton, "I Myself Gave Them Laws that Were Not Good": Ezekiel 20 and the Exodus Traditions," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 69 (1996): 76-7.

While Hyksos culture may have appealed to many Israelites, there is circumstantial evidence that the Israelites as a group did not have close ties with the Hyksos.<sup>65</sup> There is no evidence that the Israelites assisted the Hyksos as Avaris was besieged by the 18th Dynasty Pharaoh Ahmose I.<sup>66</sup> The Israelites did not leave Egypt with the Hyksos when they fled from Avaris. When Israel entered Palestine, they had a strong antipathy against the nations of Palestine. This antipathy may have begun in Egypt. There were also important religious differences between the Israelites and the Hyksos.<sup>67</sup> Both the Israelites and the Egyptians practiced circumcision of some sort, while the Hyksos did not. The Israelites worshiped El, El Shaddai, or El Elyon. These were different names for the same God instead of being rival deities. There is no clear evidence that the Israelites as a group worshiped Seth of Avaris, Anat, Astarte, Hadad, or Baal, although many individuals within Israel may well have fallen into these forms of idolatry. From Israel's perspective, both the Egyptians and the Hyksos might have been seen as rebels against God and strangers to His covenant promises.

## **B) THE RISE OF AN EGYPTIAN EMPIRE**

### **1) THE RISE OF A NEW EGYPTIAN DYNASTY**

The Hyksos had been hated by Kamose who was a local Egyptian ruler at Thebes. He argued that the Hyksos should be driven from Egypt.<sup>68</sup> Kamose began a campaign against the Hyksos. Kamose defeated the Hyksos in a battle at Nefusi north of Hermopolis. In the process, he seized much booty and took many captives.<sup>69</sup> Kamose died and left the war to his brother Ahmose I. He was the first ruler of Egypt's great 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty. He came to the throne as a terrible flood swept through Egypt bringing death and destruction to the land.<sup>70</sup> He besieged the Hyksos capital at Avaris with an army that Manetho numbered as 480,000 Egyptians.<sup>71</sup> When it became obvious that the Canaanites in Palestine and the Nubians on Egypt's southern frontier were not going to break the siege of Avaris, the Hyksos negotiated their surrender.<sup>72</sup> The Hyksos agreed to leave Egypt if the siege was lifted. The Hyksos opened the gates

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Ray even argued that the Hyksos rulers were the Pharaohs who oppressed Israel. P. J. Ray, Jr. "The Duration of the Israelite Sojourn in Egypt," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 24 (1986): 245.

<sup>67</sup> Authors often use the Greek form of his name, and spell it Ahmosis.

<sup>68</sup> There maybe an interesting hint at this animosity in Ex. 12:19. The Feast of Unleavened bread would celebrate forever Israel's exodus from Egypt. For seven days, every crumb of leavened bread was to be cleaned from each Israelite's house. It is interesting that unleavened bread had been eaten from the beginning of agriculture in the ancient Near East. The use of leavened bread seems to have appeared first in Egypt around 1650 BC during Israel's Egyptian sojourn. So the Israelites were commanded to remove completely from their houses the corruption of Egypt reflected in their bread.

<sup>69</sup> Säve-Söderbergh noted that a text from Kamose's 3<sup>rd</sup> year depicted Avaris, Kush, and Thebes as different centers of government. It claimed that no one could rest because the Hyksos controlled the land. It noted that Kamose was opposed by his officials because the Hyksos were not abusing them. Säve-Söderbergh suggested that this text may only have been intended to make Kamose look strong and decisive in contrast to his officials. T. Säve-Söderbergh, "The Hyksos Rule in Egypt," *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 37 (1951): 69. Hayes noted that Kamose's struggle against the Hyksos was recorded on two large stelae at Karnak. Hayes, *The Scepter of Egypt*, II:9-10.

<sup>70</sup> Steindorff and Seele, *When Egypt Ruled the East*, 30.

<sup>71</sup> For a discussion of the flood, see Malcolm H. Wiener and James P. Allen, "Separate Lives: the Ahmose Tempest Stela and the Theban Eruption," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 57 (1998): 1-3.

<sup>72</sup> The Autobiography of Ahmose Son of Abana, Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, II:12. Hans Goedicke, "The End of the Hyksos in Egypt," *Egyptological Studies in Honor of Richard A. Parker*, (Hanover: Brown University Press, 1986), 39.

The only contemporary record of this battle was written by a naval officer named Ahmose, son of Ebana. He served Pharaohs Ahmose I, Amenhotep I, and Thutmose I. His record was written on the walls of his cliff tomb at El Kab. Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt*, II:5.

of Avaris and 240,000 Hyksos men, women, and children left Egypt forever.<sup>73</sup> Ahmose I drove the Hyksos north from Avaris into southern Palestine.<sup>74</sup> The Hyksos traveled north to Sharuhén.<sup>75</sup> Steindorff and Seele suggested that the Hyksos were welcomed by a confederation of Semitic princes who hoped to regain control of Egypt. Ahmose I followed the Hyksos north and besieged Sharuhén for three years, plundering the city.<sup>76</sup> As he besieged Sharuhén, Ahmose I plundered Palestine to supply his army.<sup>77</sup> He may also have destroyed other Canaanite cities in the Levant, though this is a difficult question.<sup>78</sup> The date for the Hyksos departure from Egypt has also been debated. The "high" chronology would date the Hyksos expulsion around 1550 BC while the "low" chronology would date it around 1529 BC.<sup>79</sup>

After the Hyksos left Egypt, Ahmose I feared that Semitic peoples could return to power in the Nile delta. This was a reasonable fear. Not only may the princes of Palestine have been plotting a return to the delta, but the Hyksos' Nubian allies continued to threaten Egypt's southern provinces.<sup>80</sup> Ahmose I showed his continual rage by attempting to destroy every sign of the Hyksos presence in Egypt. After Ahmose I defeated the Hyksos at Sharuhén, he was prevented from further conquests in Palestine because of unrest in Egypt and Nubian threats to Egypt's southern border.<sup>81</sup> Ahmose I was followed by his son Amenhotep I who was forced to fight the Nubians once more.

Egypt's victory over the Hyksos may have begun the 18th Dynasty persecution of Israel. This persecution may have been the divine judgment on Israel's idolatry remembered in Ezekiel 20:7-8. Ahmose I and his successor Amenhotep I had hated the Hyksos, and they were naturally afraid of a renewed Semitic threat to Egypt. This wrath may have led to the fear and hatred of Israel reflected in Exodus 1:9-10. This verse depicted Egypt's new rulers as arguing that the Israelites might join Egypt's enemies and fight against Egypt. The Egyptians were worried about three things. First, they were worried about Israel's size. Exodus 1:9 claimed that the Israelites were mightier and more numerous than the Egyptians.<sup>82</sup> This may not have been far from the truth. When the Israelites left Egypt, the nation may have included over 600,000 men, although that number has been debated at length.<sup>83</sup> If 600,000 was an

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Wilson argued that this number may have represented 240,000 warriors instead of a total Hyksos population. Wilson, *The Culture of Ancient Egypt*, 159. Recently, claims about the size of the Egyptian army have been called into question by several authors.

<sup>74</sup> Dates for the start of the 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty are difficult and controversial. Arguing for a "low" chronology, K. A. Kitchen suggested that Ahmose reigned from 1550 to 1525 BC. Kitchen, "Egypt, History of," 329.

<sup>75</sup> Goedicke, "The End of the Hyksos in Egypt," 37-47.

<sup>76</sup> The extent of destruction at Sharuhén has been debated at length. Hans Goedicke argued that the siege actually ended in a negotiated settlement much like that at Avaris. Goedicke, "The End of the Hyksos in Egypt," 42.

<sup>77</sup> The extent of Egyptian destruction in Palestine has been debated. Hayes, *The Scepter of Egypt*, II:42.

<sup>78</sup> Hayes, *The Scepter of Egypt*, 2:42. Hoffmeier argues that Ahmose I was not responsible for the broad destruction of cities in Palestine at the end of MB IIC. James K. Hoffmeier, "Reconsidering Egypt's Part in the Termination of the Middle Bronze Age in Palestine," *Levant* 21 (1989): 181-93

<sup>79</sup> J. Weinstein, "The Egyptian Empire in Palestine: A Reassessment," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* #241 (1981): 1-27. Goedicke argued that Sharuhén negotiated a settlement like Avaris instead of being destroyed. Goedicke, "The End of the Hyksos in Egypt," 47.

<sup>80</sup> Steindorff and Seele, *When Egypt Ruled the East*, 32.

<sup>81</sup> The Hyksos may have controlled Egypt by forming an alliance with the Nubians. While the Nubians did not help the Hyksos defend Avaris, it is interesting that part of Ahmose I's military forces left the Hyksos battle to deal with a problem in the south. After the Hyksos were driven from the delta, Ahmose led his army south to defeat the Nubians who again threatened Egypt's southern border. He returned from this conflict to find a nation in turmoil. The rulers of local "nomes" were attempting to assert their authority over against the central government at Thebes. So Ahmose had to fight a civil war in the delta. See the discussion in Steindorff and Seele, *When Egypt Ruled the East*, 32-3.

<sup>82</sup> Ps. 105:24 echoed that God had made His people stronger than the Egyptians.

<sup>83</sup> Num. 2:32 claimed that there were 603,550 men in Israel at the exodus. This would lead to a total Israelite population of perhaps two million. There has been endless debate about this number. In Hebrew, the same word can mean 1,000 or chief. So the debate has partly been over how the text should be translated. It is fair to ask whether this many people could have passed through the sea in one night, or if they could have marched around Jericho seven times in one day.

accurate translation, Israel's population was substantially larger than the Egyptian army. Ahmose had besieged Avaris with only 480,000 men (if Manetho's number should prove correct). Later, Thutmose III dominated Palestine with less than a half million soldiers and perhaps much less than that number. Egypt's second reason for fearing Israel was that the Israelites might join Egypt's enemies and fight against Egypt. Egypt's enemies at that time were the Hyksos who had just been driven out of the delta, the Libyan tribes west of the delta, and the Nubians south of Egypt who had been strong allies of the Hyksos. With Israel's help, it was quite possible that any of these groups could have gained control of Egypt. Egypt's third concern was that the Israelites might leave the land as the Hyksos had left before them. If the Israelites left Egypt, the Egyptians would lose the largest part of their slave work force. This seems to be the idea behind Exodus 5:5. This was a reasonable fear. The Egyptians may have remembered God's promise to Abraham in Genesis 15:13-14 that He would bring Israel back to the Promised Land after 400 years. The promised time period had largely passed, and Pharaoh was intent on preventing such a promised return to Palestine. In order to prevent Israel from growing stronger, either Ahmose I or Amenhotep I placed taskmasters over Israel, requiring them to build store cities like Pithom and Raamses.

Amenhotep I tried to cope with the threat from Israel by limiting Israel's growth. Exodus 1:22 noted that he commanded all Israelite male babies to be thrown into the Nile. Throwing children into the Nile was not unusual in Egypt at the time. Middle class and Upper class people were buried at great expense. They were placed in clay coffins or in stone tombs. The very wealthy were mummified, but the poor received no such honors. The poor were sometimes thrown into the Nile for the crocodiles to consume.<sup>84</sup>

Knowing this command, Levi's descendants Amram and Jochebed had a son whose Egyptian name would be *msi* or Moses.<sup>85</sup> His Hebrew name is unknown.<sup>86</sup> Amram and Jochebed may have been surprisingly old when Moses was born. According to Exodus 6:16-20, Moses' father Amram was Levi's grandson. The MT of this passage claimed that Levi, Kohath, and Amram all lived for 137 years. The LXX

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At the same time, it is fair to ask if all of the related Biblical passages can be integrated successfully by assuming smaller numbers. The census numbers recorded in Num. 2:4-32 may require accepting the 603,550 man total. This is a difficult problem and the last word may not yet have been spoken about it. A useful parallel to this claim can be seen in Herodotus' description of Xerxes' invasion of Greece. Herodotus was a surprisingly accurate recorder of events for which he had first hand knowledge. He lived both in Persia and Greece. He was four years old when this invasion occurred. Herodotus claimed that all Asia had been in turmoil for three years preparing for the campaign. Herodotus estimated that a total of 517,610 were on Xerxes' ships. He claimed that 1,700,000 soldiers marched overland from the East, for a total of 2,317,610 people. Herodotus noted that this number did not include the additional soldiers gathered in Europe. Herodotus noted that these could have totaled 300,000 men. So Herodotus' estimated total for Xerxes fighting men was 2,641,610 people. Herodotus noted that even this number did not include the camp followers or the men on supply ships. George Rawlinson, trans. *The History of Herodotus*, (New York: Tudor, 1928), 355, 414. If Herodotus' numbers were even roughly correct, the number of people on the move would have greatly exceeded Israel's size. Of course, Herodotus' claims have often been treated with skepticism for some of the same reasons that the number 603,550 for Israel has been questioned. For a discussion of the problem, see Herbert Wolf, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Pentateuch*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1991), 148-51.

An interesting reference to this can be found in an Egyptian Wisdom text called *The Admonition of an Egyptian Sage*. This text was written during Israel's patriarchal age, and it described events during the 1st Intermediate Period. This text noted that during the 1st Intermediate Period, the Nile crocodiles were glutted with the dead bodies that had been thrown into the river. The text also noted that many people committed suicide by walking into the Nile to face the crocodiles alive. Alan H. Gardiner, *The Admonitions of an Egyptian Sage from a Hieratic Papyrus in Leiden*, (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1969). A similar claim was made in the tomb text of Sehetep-ibre, a high official of Sesostris III. He claimed that those who rebel against the ruler would be given no tomb when they died. They would be cast into the waters instead. Bell, "Climate and the History of Egypt," 259. M. A. Murray suggested that the bodies of poor people may already have been placed in the river in predynastic Egypt. M. A. Murray, "Burial Customs and Beliefs in the Hereafter in Predynastic Egypt," *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 42 (1956): 86.

The name "Moses" in Egypt was usually only a part of a name. It was linked with the names of gods or souls. It appeared in names like Ahmose, Kamose, Ptahmose, and Thutmose. It could also rarely appear alone, although only one example of that has been found. See G. A. Gaballa, *The Memphite Tomb - Chapel of Mose*, (Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 1977), 1-7. Against this explanation, Sasson noted that several authors have derived the name Moses from the Egyptian word *ms* which can mean "child." Sasson argued that it is unlikely that the Egyptian hieroglyph for *s* in the names Ahmoses, Thutmoses, and Ramoses would become a Hebrew *sh* in the Hebrew name *Moshe*, or Moses. Jack Sasson, "Bovine Symbolism in the Exodus Narrative," *Vetus Testamentum* 18 (1968): 380.

Moses may not have been given a Hebrew name since a community naming ceremony could not have been held.

of this passage read somewhat differently. It claimed that Levi lived for 137 years. However Caath (Kohath) lived for 133 years while Amram (Amram) lived for 132 years.<sup>87</sup> According to the MT, Amram's wife Jochebed was his father's sister. The LXX claimed instead that she was the daughter of his father's brother. By an 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty model, Israel would have been in Egypt for 350 years when Moses was born.<sup>88</sup> If these ages for Levi, Kohath, and Amram are taken literally, Moses' parents would have been at a very great age when he was born. If Amram was Levi's grandson, he and Jochebed would probably have been older at Moses' birth than Abraham and Sara had been at Isaac's birth. This may be why they did not fear the Egyptians as Hebrews 11:23 claimed. If Moses' parents were that old, Exodus 2:2 may be interesting. This verse recorded that they saw Moses and judged him to be *tov*. This is one of the most common words in the Old Testament. It means in general "good." It can mean "beautiful," and Exodus 2:2 has often been translated that way. However, *tov* is also sometimes a technical treaty term. The term can describe a vassal who serves God as the great sovereign. If taken this way, perhaps Amram and Jochebed believed that the child of their old age was the promised deliverer who would bring Israel from Egypt. Genesis 15:16 had promised that Israel would be brought back to Palestine in the fourth generation. Within Amram's lineage, Moses was the fourth generation, and he might have been the only person left alive who was still in the fourth generation. Among Jacob's other sons, more generations than this had already passed. Stephen claimed in Acts 7:25 that Moses knew as a 40 year old man that God had chosen him to lead Israel from Egypt. Perhaps Moses understood this because of his parents' beliefs.

After hiding the child for three months, Amram and Jochebed set the child adrift in a tar lined basket. The Biblical text does not indicate why they chose to set Moses adrift in the reeds, but it is not hard to speculate about reasons why they may have been forced to do so. By putting Moses in a basket in the reeds, they obeyed Pharaoh's command without taking the life of their son. They may have gotten the idea for this from Semitic history. Mesopotamia's East Semitic empire had been founded around 2300 BC by Sargon of Akkad. He was one of the most famous Semitic rulers of the ancient world. Sargon claimed that in his infancy, he had been set adrift on the Euphrates River in the same way. Sargon claimed that he had been rescued by the god Enki.<sup>89</sup> Sargon's story included the following lines.

She laid me in a basket of rushes, sealed my covering with asphalt (and) cast me on the river, which did not rise over me. The river bore me to Akki, the drawer of water. Akki, the drawer of water, lifted me out as he dipped his ewer. Akki, the drawer of water, (took me) as son and reared me.<sup>90</sup>

While there is no way to know if Amram and Jochebed knew this story, it is not impossible that they hoped that Yahweh would rescue their son in a similar way.<sup>91</sup>

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Such long time periods would be unusual today, but they were not unknown in the Biblical text. Both Joseph and Joshua lived for 110 years. Moses lived 120 years. Sarah lived 127 years. Ishmael lived 137 years. Abraham lived 175 years. Isaac lived 180 years. The striking thing about Moses' lineage was not the great age of his immediate ancestors. The striking thing was the great age at which they must have had children for an 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty model to work. It is shocking to think that Moses may have been Levi's great grandson if he was born roughly 350 years after Jacob and Levi moved to Egypt. Of course, it is not impossible that there may have been unnamed people in the genealogical line just as the genealogies of Genesis seem to have included unnamed people. However, that possibility could call into question the accuracy of God's promise in Gen. 15:16 that Israel would return to the Promised Land in the fourth generation. Perhaps God intended Abraham to understand that Israel would return in the fourth generation of the preserved genealogical record, but that suggestion seems rather unattractive.

Some models used to explain Biblical chronology suggest that the 400 years promised in Gen 15:13 included both the Patriarchal Age and the Egyptian sojourn. By these models, Israel would have been in Egypt much less than 200 years when Moses was born. This would fit more easily with the ages of Amram and Jochebed, and Moses' parents would not necessarily have been as old when he was born.<sup>89</sup>

For a discussion of this text and its possible interactions with the Exodus narrative, see Alan Millard, "How Reliable is Exodus?" *Biblical Archaeology Review* 26 (2000): 51-3.

<sup>90</sup> Walter Beyerlin, ed. *Near Eastern Religious Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, (London: SCM, 1978), 99.

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There is no way to know if Moses' parents were aware of this story. Thompson and Irving claimed that this was a specifically Mesopotamian element in the story, and they claimed that it was drawn from the Gilgamesh Epic. Thomas L. Thompson and Dorothy Irving, "The Joseph and Moses Narratives," 149-212 in John H. Hayes and J. Maxwell Miller, eds. *Israelite and Judaean History*, (London: ACMPress, 1977), 155. Thompson and Irving are minimalists. They believe that most of the Old Testament was simply religious fiction. Hoffmeier noted that some authors have also appealed to

Steindorff and Seele claimed that Amenhotep I was followed to the throne by Thutmose I in 1525 BC.<sup>92</sup> Egyptologists debate New Kingdom dates, and Thutmose I may have come to the throne a few years earlier or later. Kitchen argued that his reign started in 1504 BC.<sup>93</sup> Steindorff and Seele's proposed date is rather interesting. If correct, Moses could have been born in the same year.<sup>94</sup> The princess who took Moses from the reeds could then have been Hatshepsut who was the daughter of Thutmose I. Hatshepsut was the only daughter of queen Ahmose to survive, although Moses' deliverer might possibly have been a daughter of a minor wife.<sup>95</sup> It has often been suggested that Hatshepsut may have been the princess who brought Moses into the court.<sup>96</sup> This was the kind of obnoxious thing that Hatshepsut might have done. She was strong willed enough to prove her position in the court by raising a despised Hebrew child as her son.<sup>97</sup> Depending on how the chronology of this period is understood, Hatshepsut may have

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an Egyptian myth about Horus. He was born in the marshland. His mother hid him in the marsh from Seth. James K. Hoffmeier, *Israel in Egypt: the Evidence of the Exodus Tradition*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 137-38. Millard noted that Brian Lewis collected 71 tales about heroes who were cast away at birth. One of these was a Hittite tale from the 16<sup>th</sup> century BC. A. R. Millard, "Story, History, and Theology," 37-64 in A. R. Millard et al, eds. *Faith, Tradition, and History: Old Testament Historiography in Its Near Eastern Context*, (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1994), 44.

Steindorff and Seele, *When Egypt Ruled the East*, 274. Many authors use the Greek form of these names and spell them as Amenophis, and either Thutmosis or Tuthmosis. Recently P. Ray argued for a date of 1530 BC for the beginning of his reign. Petrovich offered a different approach to the evidence. He noted that the dates for Amenhotep I are calculated both from Sothic cycle data and from the comparison of inscriptions on Egyptian monuments. He noted that the Ebers Papyrus records the heliacal rising of the star Sothis in Amenhotep I's 9<sup>th</sup> year, 3<sup>rd</sup> month, 3<sup>rd</sup> season, and 9<sup>th</sup> day. Dates were calculated by recording the first day of the year that the star Sothis appeared above the horizon. Unfortunately, the first appearance of a star could be hidden behind clouds. The first day that it appeared also changed according to the distance north of the equator that it was observed. So the day of its first rising would have been different at Thebes and Memphis, and the Egyptian texts do not mention where an observation was recorded. If this observation was made at Memphis, Amenhotep I would have begun his reign around 1550 BC. If it were made at Thebes, his reign would have started around 1523 BC. Egyptologists debate the accuracy of Sothic Cycle dates. Chronology is also based on a comparison of claims made on Egyptian monuments. In general, dated for the middle rulers of the 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty are much firmer than dates for its first rulers. See the discussion in Douglas Petrovich, "Amenhotep II and the Historicity of the Exodus-Pharaoh," *Masters Seminary Journal* 17 (2006): 86. William A Ward, "The Present Status of Egyptian Chronology," *American Schools of Oriental Research Bulletin*, #288 (1992): 58-9.

<sup>93</sup> Kitchen, "Egypt, History of," 329.

<sup>94</sup> Both the chronology and the succession of rulers at the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty are difficult. Breasted offered a different explanation for this period. He argued that the 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty began in years of conflict. He argued that the supporters of Thutmose I, Thutmose II, Thutmose III, and Hatshepsut were all struggling for power at the same time. Breasted argued that Thutmose III ruled alone for a brief time. Then Hatshepsut's supporters forced Thutmose III to accept her as a coregent. Breasted argued that around Thutmose III's 6<sup>th</sup> year, Thutmose I and Thutmose II regained the throne for a brief coregency. When Thutmose I was killed, Thutmose III regained the throne. Breasted argued that Thutmose III ruled as coregent with Thutmose II until the latter's death in the 8<sup>th</sup> year of Thutmose III. After this, Thutmose III and Hatshepsut reigned together. Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt*, II:53-4. This reconstruction of history seems too complex to be probable. For a recent Evangelical discussion of the chronology of this period, see David G. Hansen, "Moses and Hatshepsut," *Bible and Spade* 16 (2003): 16-20. See also Petrovich, "Amenhotep II and the Historicity of the Exodus-Pharaoh," 106-07.

Hatshepsut's only recorded sister died in infancy. Joyce Tyldesley, *Hatshepsut: The Female Pharaoh*, (London: Viking Press, 1996), 75. If a 19<sup>th</sup> Dynasty date is defended for Israel's sea crossing, the identity of Moses' princess would be impossible to determine. Ramesses II had quite a few daughters. These included Wert-hekau-nebet-tawi, Ta-qedet-mert, Nebet-iwnt, Wer-nu-ra, Nefertari, and others. Mark Crouch provided a list of his daughters in his EEF note "Ramesses II Daughters," EEF, May 25, 2004.

<sup>95</sup> Siegfried Horn, "What We Don't Know about Moses and the Exodus" *Biblical Archaeology Review* 3 (1977) 23, 24.

If Israel left Egypt during the 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, Hatshepsut would have ruled Egypt while Moses served in the Egyptian court. This would have been true whatever his exact relationship with her may have been.

been only a young girl at the time.<sup>98</sup> She may have seen Moses as a new toy, and then she may have kept him to prove that she could do it.<sup>99</sup>

Shortly after he was crowned, Thutmose I campaigned against the Nubians on Egypt's southern border. He carved his exploits on a cliff wall near the third Nile cataract. He claimed to dominate the islands of the sea and the whole world.<sup>100</sup> Unrest continued in the south after this victory. Thutmose I led his army against Nubia repeatedly throughout his reign. Thutmose I's claims to rule the world were proven false as he faced a new threat in the northwest. The Libyan tribes west of the Nile delta had invaded Egypt and had seized several cities in the western delta. Thutmose I was eventually able to drive them out of the delta.

## 2) THUTMOSE III

With the reign of Thutmose I, Egypt entered one of its greatest periods of strength, wealth and power. Thutmose I followed the example set by Ahmose I and invaded the Levant. His army reached the Euphrates and returned with much booty and many captives.<sup>101</sup> Thutmose I forced the city states of Palestine to become Egyptian vassals. Thutmose I was followed by the brief reign of Thutmose II. He was the son of a minor wife of Thutmose I. To strengthen his claim to the throne, he married his half sister Hatshepsut. If Hatshepsut was Moses' adopted parent, Moses became the son of Egypt's queen. Stephen claimed in Acts 7:22 that Moses grew up to be a man of power in words and deeds in the Egyptian court. He was educated in all the learning of Egypt. Thutmose II only reigned for five years and died. He was followed by his son and co-regent Thutmose III. He was the son of a minor wife instead of Hatshepsut.<sup>102</sup>

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In a rather odd academic development, Pellegrino tried to upset the chronology of the 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty rather completely. Pellegrino began by equating the ten plagues with the eruption of Thera in 1628 BC. Pellegrino then redated Egyptian chronology to make Hatshepsut and Thutmose III rule the Egyptian throne at this time. Charles Pellegrino, *Return to Sodom and Gomorrah: Bible Stories from Archaeologists*, (New York: Random House, 1994). While an interesting model, few Egyptologists today would believe it possible to date the 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty this early.

David Hansen argued that Hatshepsut may have only been 6 or 7 years old when Moses was born. If Steindorff and Seele's dates for Thutmose I are accepted instead, Hatshepsut may have been a young teenager. For Hansen's arguments, see Hansen, "Moses and Hatshepsut," 16. The chronology of this period is a notorious problem. William Petty even argued that Hatshepsut and Thutmose III may have used different methods for describing the lengths of their reigns. He argued that Thutmose III may eventually have been forced to adopt the system used by Hatshepsut. Luban described Petty's position in an EEF posting on 3/10/07.

Steindorff and Seele, *When Egypt Ruled the East*, 34. In his tomb text, Thutmose I even claimed to be beloved of Seth.  
<sup>101</sup> M. Stewart, *Egyptian Stelae, Reliefs and Paintings*, (Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 1976), I:1.

<sup>102</sup> Hayes, *The Scepter of Egypt*, II:74. Steindorff and Seele, *When Egypt Ruled the East*, 33.

Proposed dates for the reigns of Hatshepsut and Thutmose III have included: Steindorff and Seele, 1504 BC to 1450 BC, John Wilson, 1486 BC to 1436 BC, James Breasted, 1501 BC to 1447 BC. Redford noted that the three main dates defended today for the beginning of Thutmose III's reign are 1504 BC, 1490 BC, and 1479 BC. Redford, *Egypt, Canaan, and Israel*, 104. Kitchen argued that Hatshepsut's reign should be dated 1479 to 1457 BC, and Thutmose III's reign from 1479 to 1425 BC. Kitchen, "Egypt, History of," 329. If an 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty exodus is assumed, this would place the exodus in the middle of Thutmose III's reign. This would require some explanation for Ex. 2:23 which claimed that the reigning Pharaoh died very shortly before the exodus. The evidence for this is somewhat complicated. It begins with the assumption that there was exactly 200 years between the accession years of Thutmose III and Ramesses II. The accession of Ramesses II occurred in the 19<sup>th</sup> year of the Babylonian king Kadashman-Enlil. Proposed dates for his 19<sup>th</sup> year include 1304, 1290, and 1279 BC. Kitchen argued that lunar observations make a 1279 BC accession for Ramesses II, so Thutmose III must have come to the throne in 1479 BC. K. A. Kitchen, "The Basics of Egyptian Chronology in Relation to the Bronze Age," *High, Middle or Low? Acts of an International Colloquium on Absolute Chronology Held at the University of Gothenburg 20<sup>th</sup>-22<sup>nd</sup> August 1987: Part I*, (Gothenburg: Paul Åströms, 1987), 39-40. K. A. Kitchen, "The Chronology of Ancient Egypt," *World Archaeology* 23.2 (1991), 204. Ward noted that all proposed chronologies for Babylon are speculative and dates for Kadashman-Enlil can not validly be used to date events in other cultures. Ward, "The Present Status of Egyptian Chronology," 55-6. Wentz and van Siclen argued that all three commonly proposed dates for the accession of Ramesses II face serious problems with lunar dates. They also questioned the common claim that exactly 200 years separated the accessions of Thutmose III and Ramesses II. They argued that 225 years actually separated these events. Edward F. Wentz and Charles C. van Siclen III, "A Chronology of the New Kingdom," in *Studies in Honor of George R. Hughes*, (Chicago: Oriental Institute, 1976), 223.

To strengthen his claim to the throne, Thutmose II had arranged a marriage between Thutmose III and Hatshepsut's daughter Merytre.<sup>103</sup> There may have been great resentment between Thutmose III who was the son of a minor wife and Moses who was the adopted son of Queen Hatshepsut.<sup>104</sup>

Thutmose III came to the throne somewhere between 1504 and 1479 BC depending on whether a "high" or "low" chronology is used for his reign. From that time forward, Thutmose III was at least in theory the Pharaoh. However, he was only a youth, and he was not able to prevent Hatshepsut from ruling Egypt in his place.<sup>105</sup> Steindorff and Seele noted that Hatshepsut was officially no more than the royal widow. Pictures from the period depict her standing behind Thutmose III since he was the real ruler. They noted a quotation from a contemporary official that described her reign in these words.

Thutmose II went forth to heaven and mingled with the gods. His son [Thutmose III] advanced to his place as King of the Two Lands and ruled on the throne of him who had begotten him. His sister [really Thutmose II's half-sister], the "God's Wife" Hatshepsut governed the land; the Two Lands were at her will and served her. Egypt was in submission....for she was a dictator excellent of plans who reassured the Two Regions by her speaking.<sup>106</sup>

She ruled with an iron hand. On the southern pylon at Karnak, Hatshepsut claimed that Thutmose I had intended her to rule Egypt. Hatshepsut also declared that the Egyptian gods had appointed her to rule many nations. She claimed that the gods had directed her to attack Palestine and to seize many captives from Palestine. She promised to give thousands of captives to the Egyptian temples as slaves.<sup>107</sup> Hatshepsut needed slaves to rebuild the Egyptian temple estates like Pithom that had been neglected during the Hyksos rule. Hatshepsut claimed in the inscription of the Speos Artemidos that she had rebuilt the ruins that had been caused by the barbarians who ruled at Avaris.<sup>108</sup> Hatshepsut also expanded them. John Wilson argued that the enlarged temples marked a change in Egyptian theology that began during the 18th Dynasty. Wilson argued that the 18th Dynasty rulers believed that Egypt's gods directed the nation's affairs much more directly than they had been thought to do in the past.<sup>109</sup>

Near the end of Hatshepsut's reign,<sup>110</sup> Moses recognized his calling from God. Hebrews 11:24-25 claimed that Moses refused to be called the son of the pharaoh's daughter. Instead, Hebrews claimed that Moses thought the reproach of Christ to be greater riches than the treasures of Egypt. Hebrews claimed that Moses was looking to his eternal reward instead of the pleasures of this life. Stephen claimed in Acts 7:25 that Moses knew God would grant the Israelites deliverance through him. When Moses visited the Israelites, he saw an Egyptian beating an Israelite. Stephen claimed that Moses tried to defend the Israelite. He took vengeance on the Egyptian and killed him. Stephen claimed that Moses assumed the Israelites would understand that God would deliver them through him, but they did not.<sup>111</sup> When the

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<sup>104</sup>For a discussion of the Egyptian succession, see Steindorff and Seele, *When Egypt Ruled the East*, 34-41.

<sup>105</sup>Horn, "What We Don't Know about Moses and the Exodus," 23-4.

<sup>106</sup>It is interesting that Exodus consistently called Egypt's ruler Pharaoh. The name Pharaoh did not mean king. It meant the palace. It was used already in the Old Kingdom as an indication of authority. Currid noted that the name only came to be used as an appellation for the king in the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty. John D. Currid, *A Study Commentary on Genesis: Volume 2: Genesis 25:19-50:26*, (Darlington, UK: Evangelical Press, 2003), 234. It may be that Hatshepsut issued decrees in the name of the palace since she was not the king of the land. Akhenaton may then have repeated this custom toward the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty as he built his new city in Amarna.

<sup>107</sup>Steindorff and Seele, *When Egypt Ruled the East*, 40. See also "When a Woman Ruled Egypt," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 32 (2006): 64-70.

<sup>108</sup>Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt*, II:91

<sup>109</sup>Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt*, II:123-25. Wilson, *The Culture of Ancient Egypt*, 160.

<sup>110</sup>Wilson, *The Culture of Ancient Egypt*, 170.

<sup>111</sup>Depending on how the chronology of the period is understood, Hatshepsut may have died a few years before or after Moses fled from Egypt.

An inscription by Hatshepsut on the Speos Artemidos may shed light on this period of Moses' life. Hatshepsut claimed that Bedouin immigrants had disregarded the tasks assigned to them and had rebelled against the sun god. Hatshepsut claimed that these Asiatics were abominations to the gods. Hatshepsut claimed that she had allowed them to leave Egypt

Israelites rejected him,<sup>112</sup> Moses was forced to flee from Egypt and from the royal court.<sup>113</sup> Moses had been called to deliver Egypt and bring them to the Promised Land, but he had lost his calling by pride and violence. When Moses fled Egypt, Hatshepsut was reaching the end of her reign. Although Biblical and Egyptian chronologies are difficult to synchronize with precision, it may have been roughly three years after Moses fled that Hatshepsut died.<sup>114</sup> Her death left Thutmose III on the throne.<sup>115</sup>

### 3) THE BEGINNING OF AN EGYPTIAN EMPIRE

For seventeen years, Thutmose III's rage may have grown against Hatshepsut and perhaps Moses.<sup>116</sup> Thutmose III became a strong, bitter, and violent ruler. As soon as Hatshepsut died, he had her name and picture erased from temples and monuments.<sup>117</sup> He may also have been enraged at West Semitic peoples like the Israelites because of his ongoing fear and rage at the Hyksos. It is easy to believe that he would have treated the Israelites with great brutality. His oppression of Semitic people was not limited to the Semitic peoples of the Nile delta. To guarantee Egypt's security, he established a policy of ruling Syria and Palestine with an iron hand. With his reign, Egypt's northern empire came into full bloom.<sup>118</sup>

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and the earth had swallowed up their foot steps. Hans Goedicke suggested that this text might refer to the exodus, but the chronology does not work very well for this to be true. The exodus had to be decades after Hatshepsut died. For a discussion of this text, see Hershel Shanks, "The Exodus and the Crossing of the Red Sea According to Hans Goedicke," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 7.5 (1981): 42-50. While this text could not have described the exodus, it is not impossible that some Israelites may have been included among the Asiatics who left Egypt at the time. The name "Asiatic" was a general term for people from Egypt's northeast. This passage suggests that the topic of leaving Egypt was an important issue near the time that Moses killed an Egyptian and fled from the land. It would be interesting to know if Rahab could have been a part of this group. Could it be that she was Jewish and could have found only prostitution in the land? There is no way to know, but it could explain her claims.

Olinger pointed out the contrast between Moses' rejection by the Israelites and his acceptance by the Midianites. Danny Olinger, "Moses in Egypt and Midian," *Kerux* 13 (1998).

Hoskins argued that Hatshepsut's supporters may have been forced to flee when she died. Hoskins suggested that Moses may have been forced to flee from Egypt partly because he had been associated with Hatshepsut. Franklin E. Hoskins, *From the Nile to Nebo: A Discussion of the Problem and the Route of the Exodus*, (Philadelphia: The Sunday School Times Co., 1912), 83. This suggestion is difficult to evaluate.

Hatshepsut may have been buried with servants. Depending on the mummy identified as Hatshepsut, she may have died of bone cancer. Redford argued that Hatshepsut may have died in the 22nd year of Thutmose III. Donald B. Redford, "The Northern Wars of Thutmose III," in Eric H. Cline and David O'Connor, eds. *Thutmose III: A New Biography*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006), 330.

Steindorff and Seele, *When Egypt Ruled the East*, 40-1.

The relationship between Hatshepsut and Thutmose III has been a topic of recent debate. Thutmose III served as a general in the army, and it is unclear whether this would have been possible if Hatshepsut had not trusted him.

There has been a debate about who erased Hatshepsut's name, images, and texts. It may or may not have been Thutmose III. Pellegrino argued that Thutmose III tried to remove all traces that Hatshepsut had lived. Thutmose III buried the obelisk that Hatshepsut had created to depict her deification. Pellegrino noted that this obelisk was dug up in 20 BC and erected once more. When it was raised, it was the tallest monument in the world of its day. Pellegrino, *Return to Sodom and Gomorrah*, np. Doug Petrovich argued in an EEF posting on 9/19/05 that it may have been Amenhotep II. See also Petrovich, "Amenhotep II and the Historicity of the Exodus-Pharaoh," 107-08. Bryan argued that Thutmose III defaced Hatshepsut's monuments near the end of his reign instead of the beginning of it. Betsy M. Bryan, "The Eighteenth Dynasty before the Amarna Period (c.1550-1352 BC)," 218-71 in Ian Shaw, ed. *The Oxford History of Ancient Egypt*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 242. If this was correct, perhaps Thutmose III did so from political concerns as he established his two year coregency with Amenhotep II. Defacing Hatshepsut's monuments was a common Egyptian pattern. The 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty rulers removed all evidence that the Hyksos rulers governed Egypt. Later after the death of Akhenaton, Seti I and Ramesses II defaced all of his monuments as well.

It is interesting that during his reign, *Habiru* served as wine makers in the Theban tombs of the prophet of Amun Puyemre. A *Habiru* also served as the herald of Intef. Petrovich noted that these *Habiru* served in Egypt before any Egyptian text recorded *Habiru* being taken to Egypt as captives. Petrovich, "Amenhotep II and the Historicity of the Exodus-Pharaoh," 1-5. These *Habiru* could have been Israelites in Egypt during the reign of Thutmose III. However, they

Soon after Hatshepsut died, the king of Kadesh moved his army to Megiddo to resist Egyptian rule. Thutmose III led his army into Palestine to put down the revolt.<sup>119</sup> Thutmose III defeated a confederation of Canaanite city states at Megiddo that included Hyksos who had escaped from Avaris and Sharuhin. Thutmose III described his northern campaigns in his *Annals* at substantial length. In his first campaign, Thutmose III claimed to have conquered 119 cities in the lowlands of Palestine. His list of conquered cities has generated quite a bit of academic debate. It included cities from the following areas: the Beqa valley of Lebanon and the Damascus district, Bashan, the northern Jordan valley, the plains of Jezreel and Acco, the southern coastal plain and Sharon, Galilee, the northern Shephelah, the Beth-Shean valley, the Carmel slopes, and a few sites that can not be identified.<sup>120</sup> For fifteen of the next eighteen years, Thutmose III spent summers campaigning in the north. While Moses hid from Egyptian officials in the wilderness, Thutmose III formed an empire in Palestine that would last for over two hundred and fifty years and would give Israel enormous problems in the future. Thutmose III conquered all of the territory south of the Euphrates. During his eighth campaign, he crossed the Euphrates and set up a victory stela on the east bank.<sup>121</sup> Thutmose III depicted his conquests as gaining domination of the whole world. Thutmose III described his Euphrates campaign at Gebel Barkal. He claimed that he had no opponent in the southern lands and the northlands bowed before him. Thutmose III claimed that the sun god Ra had given him the whole earth including North Africa and the islands in the north Mediterranean basin.<sup>122</sup> In another text from Gebel Barkal, courtiers were depicted as praising Thutmose III with the words,

These couriers [said] ... [Amon-Ra, Lord of] Karnak, the great god of the first time, the primeval god, the creator of thy beauty. He has given thee all of the earth. Bring it as an offering to him, knowing that thou hast come forth from him.<sup>123</sup>

In each campaign, Thutmose III brought captives south to Egypt. Between the 23rd and 42nd years of his reign, Thutmose III brought south about 5,000 captives.<sup>124</sup> The tomb of his vizier Rekhmire described these Semitic captives making bricks for the Karnak temple.<sup>125</sup> Rekhmire wrote,

King Menkheperre (Thutmose III) who builds the sanctuary of [the gods], may they grant to him a reward therefor (sic.) with myriads of years. The taskmaster, he says to the builders, "The rod is in my hand, be not idle."

*By Brickmakers*

759. Captivity which his majesty brought, for the works of the temple of Amon.

*By Bricklayer*

Laying the brick, in order to build the storehouse anew, [in the temple of Amon] of Karnak.<sup>126</sup>

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could also have been captives taken during his northern campaigns.

William J. Murname, "Rhetorical History? The Beginning of Thutmose III's First Campaign in Western Asia" *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt* 27 (1989) 183-89.

<sup>120</sup>Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt*, II:169-70. Aharoni, *The Land of the Bible*, 143-53.

<sup>121</sup>Raymond O. Faulkner, "The Euphrates Campaign of Thutmose III," *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 32 (1946): 39-42. Killibrew argued that Egyptian domination of Canaan was a key factor in the Late Bronze Age. Ann E. Killibrew, "New Kingdom Egyptian-Style and Egyptian Pottery in Canaan: Implications for Egyptian Rule in Canaan during the 19<sup>th</sup> and Early 20<sup>th</sup> Dynasties," 309-43 in Gary N. Knoppers and Antoine Hirsch, eds. *Egypt, Israel, and the Ancient Mediterranean World*, (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 309.

<sup>122</sup>G. A. Reisner, "Inscribed Monuments from Gebel Barkal," *Zeitschrift für Ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde* 69 (1933): 29-30.

<sup>123</sup>Reisner, "Inscribed Monuments from Gebel Barkal," 37.

<sup>124</sup>Shemuel Ahituv, "Economic Factors in the Egyptian Conquest of Canaan," *Israel Exploration Journal* 28 (1978): 93-105.

<sup>125</sup>For a survey of Egyptian texts that described brick making, see K. A. Kitchen, "From the Brickfields of Egypt," *Tyndale Bulletin* 27 (1976): 137-47.

<sup>126</sup>Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt*, II:292-93.

This text described how captives were used as slaves to make bricks and rebuild temple storehouses. The Egyptians provided them with food, but also enforced hard work with the rod. This parallels closely the Israelites' life in the northeast delta. Unfortunately for both these captives and the Israelites, the reign of Thutmose III was a time of enormous construction. Thutmose III rebuilt many temples. One of these was Pithom, or Per-Atum, the temple estate of the high god Atum. While Moses hid, the Israelites suffered under their grievous burdens.

Thutmose III established the Egyptian empire with limited goals. The Egyptians had no interest in incorporating foreigners into the Egyptian culture as anything other than slaves. Since Thutmose III was primarily concerned with Egypt's security, he did not care very much about what happened in Palestine on a day by day basis.<sup>127</sup> Thutmose III refrained from becoming involved in the affairs of his vassal rulers in Syria and Palestine. He only insisted that his vassals in Palestine do four things: pay tribute annually to Egypt, treat Egyptian officials with respect, swear allegiance to no one else, and do nothing to fortify their cities against the Egyptian army.<sup>128</sup> This was essentially all that the Egyptians ever wanted from their vassals in Palestine. While Thutmose III did require annual tribute from his northern territories, he did not primarily seek riches from Palestine. The tribute demanded from Palestine would increase greatly during the 19th Dynasty. The number of Egyptian administrators and soldiers in Palestine would increase greatly, as would the cost of provisioning them. Tel Sera in southern Palestine has produced tax records from the 19th Dynasty. Inscriptions recorded 33,500 and 145,000 liters of grain delivered to Egypt in different years. Yet in many years, the taxes raised in Palestine may have done little more than pay the expenses incurred in maintaining the empire.<sup>129</sup> Timber was one of the few commodities in the Levant that the Egyptians needed.

Thutmose wanted to control Syria and Palestine to guarantee Egypt's security and to control the flow of trade across the region. Redford suggested that Thutmose III wanted Palestine primarily because of its strategic value.<sup>130</sup> Controlling Syria and Palestine would prevent an invasion of Egypt from the north and would limit the constant "Asiatic" attacks against Egypt's northeastern frontier. Controlling the trade routes could make Egypt rich. To control the north, Thutmose III established a chain of fortresses along the road north to Gaza, and a network of administrative centers in the coastal plains. These cities included Gaza, Joppa, Beth Shean, and Aphek.<sup>131</sup> These cities were often renamed by the Egyptians to show that they had taken control of the region. For example, Thutmose III renamed Gaza as "That-Which-the-Ruler-Seized."<sup>132</sup> The administrative centers of Beth-Shean and Yeno'am were located on the trade routes between Mesopotamia and the Levant to control the east/west trade through Palestine.<sup>133</sup> Redford noted that the fortress of Deir el-Balah near Gaza has been excavated. It was found to contain an elaborate, Egyptian style residence that was built during the Amarna Age. Later, Seti I built a fortress tower at Deir

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Ahituv argued that Egypt's main purpose in forming a northern empire was to insure the nation's security and to control the trade routes. Ahituv, "Economic Factors in the Egyptian Conquest of Canaan," 105.

<sup>128</sup> Redford, *Egypt, Canaan, and Israel in Ancient Times*, 198-99.

<sup>129</sup> David C. Hopkins, "Pastoralists in Late Bronze Age Palestine: Which Way Did They Go?" *Biblical Archaeologist* 56.4 (1993): 204.

<sup>130</sup> Ahituv "Economic Factors in the Egyptian Conquest of Canaan" 96, 104-05. Redford, *Egypt, Canaan, and Israel in Ancient Times*, 148. Steindorff and Seele suggest that the main goal of the Egyptian northern conquests was Syria instead of Palestine. Steindorff and Seele, *When Egypt Ruled the East*, 47.

<sup>131</sup> Beth-Shean was called Scythopolis in Roman times. Today, it is Tell el-Husm. Beth Shean was watered both by the Jalud and several springs. Its fertile soil produced rich crops. The site was first settled in the Chalcolithic Age around 3500 BC. Charles F. Pfeiffer and Howard F. Vos, *The Wycliff Historical Geography of Bible Lands*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1967), 124.

<sup>132</sup> Ahituv, "Economic Factors in the Egyptian Conquest of Canaan," 94. Steindorff and Seele, *When Egypt Ruled the East*, 105.

<sup>133</sup> Nadav Na'aman, "Economic Aspects of the Egyptian Occupation of Canaan," *Israel Exploration Journal* 31 (1981): 172-85. Amihai Mazar, "The Excavations at Tel Beth Shean during the Years 1989-94," 144-64 in Neil A. Silberman and David Small, eds. *The Archaeology of Israel*, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 144-64 Mazar pointed out that Beth Shan was already a very old city before it was fortified by Thutmose III.

el-Balah that was 20 meters square. Beside the fortress was a large reservoir five meters deep.<sup>134</sup> While Egypt lost most of its influence in the north after the end of the 19th Dynasty, Beth-Shan remained under Egyptian influence until the time of King David. Many inhabitants of Beth-Shean were Canaanites who served the Egyptians, so the Old Testament referred to Beth Shean as a Canaanite city.

James Weinstein discussed the archaeological evidence for the Egyptian presence in Palestine. He noted that quite a bit of Egyptian style pottery has been found at Beth Shean from levels occupied during the Egyptian empire. He noted that the kind of pottery found was the kind produced for ordinary daily use. It was not the kind of pottery produced for commercial purposes. So the pottery showed that a number of Egyptians lived and worked at Beth Shean during the Egyptian empire. Beyond that though, few large Egyptian objects have been found in Palestine from the time of Thutmose III. Far more Egyptian objects have been found in Palestine from the 19th Dynasty. Weinstein argued that fewer Egyptians were stationed permanently in Palestine during the 18th Dynasty than during the 19th Dynasty.<sup>135</sup>

While Thutmose III thought himself the world's proper ruler, he had no interest in forcing foreigners to worship Egyptian gods. The Egyptians did build temples in Palestine and Syria, but these temples were centers for collecting tribute rather than worship centers intended for evangelism.<sup>136</sup> The Egyptians viewed foreign gods as misunderstood manifestations of Egyptian gods. This led to the toleration of northern gods in Egypt, and to a high degree of religious syncretism both in Egypt and the Levant. The 18th Dynasty Mekal Stela from Beth-Shean was a good example of this religious syncretism. It depicted a composite deity who merged features of the Egyptian god Seth with the Canaanite god Baal.<sup>137</sup> During the Egyptian empire, several Canaanite gods found a home in Egypt. Baal was seldom mentioned during the 18th Dynasty because of Egyptian anger against the Hyksos, but Baal would even be accepted into the royal court during the 19th Dynasty.

Thutmose III lived to quite an old age. He launched his last campaign into Palestine when he was already seventy years old. He died somewhere between 1450 BC and 1425 BC depending on the chronology used. If he died around 1450 BC, this would be only a couple of years before a 1445 BC date for the exodus. Exodus 2:23 claimed that Egypt's ruler died very shortly before Moses led Israel from Egypt. Thutmose III's empire may have caused quite a problem for Moses as he hid in the wilderness. Egyptian officials and vassals dominated Palestine with an iron hand. Both the officials and the vassals served a violent Pharaoh who was looking for Moses. Exodus 4:19 assured Moses that those who had been seeking his life were now dead. This may imply that they had continued to seek for him until their death. Moses may have been unable to enter Palestine itself. The evidence for this may be Deuteronomy 34:1 which noted that Yahweh showed Moses the Promised Land shortly before his death. This passage seems to suggest that Moses had not seen the land before this. Moses may have been forced to stay away from settled areas to avoid detection. Moses had lived as a shepherd following the "Hebrew" life style that he had learned to despise as a youth. His staff of office had become a shepherd's rod.<sup>138</sup> After 40 years hiding in the wilderness, Moses had become one of the meekest men on earth.<sup>139</sup>

<sup>134</sup>

Redford, *Egypt, Canaan, and Israel in Ancient Times*, 204.

<sup>135</sup>

Weinstein, "The Egyptian Empire in Palestine," 14.

<sup>136</sup>

The role of Egyptian temples in Syria and Palestine can be seen in a 20th Dynasty temple text in Palestine. In this text, Ramesses III claimed that he had built a mysterious temple in the land of Djahi (or Canaan). He had built a great cult image in it. Ramesses III claimed that foreigners of Retenu come to it, bearing their tribute because it was divine. Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, 260-61. Givon noted that Egyptian temples were built at Gaza, Ashkelon, and Timna. Givon, *The Impact of Egypt on Canaan*, 22.

<sup>137</sup>

Thompson noted that the temple at Beth Shan may have been identified with the underworld since recent transliterations of the name resemble Beth-Sheol. (Sheol is a West Semitic term for the underworld.) Thompson argued that the god Mekal at Beth Shan resembled the Egyptian god Seth/Sutehk. Thompson noted that an Egyptianized sanctuary and cult existed in the 15th century. Inscriptions from Byblos named Sutekh and other Egyptian deities. Thompson argued that the Hyksos inherited Seth because of his importance at Avaris and Seth's role as a god of foreign lands. Thompson, *Mekal: The God of Beth-Shean*, 123-31.

<sup>138</sup>

Egyptian officials were given a staff of office by the Pharaoh. An example of this can be seen in a 12th Dynasty stela written by Sebek-Khu, an official of Sesostris III. Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt*, I:305. Ex. 4:20 called Moses' shepherd's staff the "staff of God."

<sup>139</sup>

Rogers suggested that the Hebrew word usually translated "meek" in this verse should instead be translated as "bowed down with care," or "miserable." Cleon Rogers, "Moses, Meek or Miserable," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological*

## C) ISRAEL'S EXODUS FROM EGYPT

### 1) SETH, HORUS, AND THE BURNING BUSH

Exodus 2:15-22 noted that Moses had fled from Pharaoh and had become a shepherd in Midian. He had become what he had been taught to despise as a child in the Egyptian court. Exodus 2:23 noted that Pharaoh died after many days. Then God heard Israel's groaning and remembered His covenant with the Patriarchs. Thutmose III was followed to the throne by Amenhotep II.<sup>140</sup> Shortly after Amenhotep II took the Egyptian throne, Moses was finally allowed to join the tradition of Yahweh's messengers who stood in God's presence and heard His voice.<sup>141</sup> Moses encountered Yahweh in a burning wilderness bush. Exodus 3:1-13 recorded Moses' encounter with Yahweh. At first glance, this appears to be a very strange passage. Nowhere else in the Old Testament did Yahweh appear within a wilderness bush. The closest parallels to this passage would be Yahweh's Shekinah glory of Exodus 25:22 and Yahweh's filling of the tabernacle and temple with His glory in Exodus 40:35 and II Chronicles 7:1-3. The burning bush was something rather like a mountain top temple. In Deuteronomy 33:16, Moses claimed that Yahweh had dwelt in the bush.<sup>142</sup> Moses encountered Yahweh on Mount Sinai.<sup>143</sup> Exodus 3:1 and 4:27 specifically identified Horeb as the mountain of God. These passages may suggest that Sinai had been a holy mountain before Moses arrived there.<sup>144</sup>

It is fair to ask why Yahweh would appear to Moses in this unique way. The answer may come from Egyptian theology. Yahweh may have been using an Egyptian myth to communicate with him. The oldest surviving copy of this myth was written over two centuries after the exodus in Late Egyptian, but the myth was much older than this. The Old Kingdom Pyramid Texts already mentioned it.<sup>145</sup> Coffin Spell 335 from the Middle Kingdom mentioned the "Eye of Horus" that Seth pulled out when they fought for kingship. The Egyptian myth may have grown from Egypt's age old border wars with semi-nomadic peoples who lived beyond Egypt's northeast frontier. The myth described a struggle between Horus and Seth over which was to be regarded as the chief deity. Pharaoh claimed to be the incarnation of the god Horus. So the myth described Pharaoh's conflict with Seth. The Egyptian god Seth was in general a trouble maker. Among other things, Seth was identified with the bedouin northeast of Egypt's frontier and with Semitic peoples in general. This association appeared in many ways. For example, many Semitic words adopted into the Egyptian language were written with the Seth animal as a determinative. In this myth, Seth was offered the

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<sup>140</sup> *Society* 29 (1986): 257-63.

Proposed dates for the reign of Amenhotep II include: John Wilson - 1439 BC to 1406 BC, Steindorff and Seele - 1452 BC to 1425 BC, James Breasted - 1447 BC to 1420 BC, and K. A. Kitchen - 1427 to 1400 BC.

<sup>141</sup> Almost nothing is known about Moses' relationship with God in the wilderness. It is not known if Moses saw or heard God speak either in Egypt or during 40 years in the wilderness. Ex. 3:6 does seem to have the character of an introduction. It sounds as if Moses is first being allowed to see the One of whom he had previously heard. However, that can not be proven.

<sup>142</sup> Alfred Jeremias even associated God's glory fire in the bush with the flaming sword that guarded the entrance to Eden. Jeremias suggested that the thorn bush on Sinai was God's throne. He suggested that the bush could not be separated from the mountain of God. Jeremias noted that Deut. 33:16 had claimed that God dwelt in the bush. Jeremias also suggested that the same fire had appeared in Gen. 3:24 where the cherubim's flaming sword prevented Adam from returning to Eden, and from approaching God's dwelling place. Alfred Jeremias, *The Old Testament in the Light of the Ancient East*, (New York: Putnam's, 1911).

<sup>143</sup> Beit-Arieh argued that the south central region of the Sinai Peninsula contained enough ground water and grass to support goats. The region was also geologically cut off from Egypt's area of control. Itzhaq Beit-Arieh, "The Route through Sinai: Why the Israelites Fleeing Egypt Went South," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 15 (1988): 36-7.

<sup>144</sup> Ronald E. Clements, *God and Temple*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1965), 20.

<sup>145</sup> Faulkner's Pyramid Text Utterance 54 reads, "O King, take the Eye of Horus, which was wrested from Seth and saved for you." R. O. Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), 11. It is hard to say how old the earliest Pyramid Texts were. The earliest surviving texts were written in the Pyramid of Unis. These texts were written with a kind of grammar that had gone out of popular usage 50 years earlier. So the earliest texts were written at some point earlier than the Pyramid of Unis. See the discussion in George T. Allen, *The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts*, (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005), 4.

Canaanite goddesses Anat and Astarte if he would recognize Horus' right to rule. So on one level the struggle between Horus and Seth was a mythical representation of the struggle between Pharaoh and Semitic groups like the wilderness bedouin. It is very interesting to note where this struggle occurred. Horus and Seth had fought each other within a unique bush that was located in the wilderness on Egypt's eastern horizon.

This mythical battle was described by Jan Zandee. He noted that part of the conflict between Horus and Seth involved a conflict either "for" or "in" a unique bush, or *hmm* plant. This bush had been created by the god Geb. It was located in the fiery, spiritual realm northeast of Egypt. The conflict between Horus and Seth was mentioned as early as the Pyramid Texts and as late as the New Kingdom. The conflict between Horus and Seth in the bush was won by Seth who harmed the Eye of Horus.<sup>146</sup> Both Moses and the Israelites would have known this myth because fractions were written in hieroglyphic by writing parts of the divided eye of Horus.<sup>147</sup> Thutmose III may even have alluded to it on an obelisk at Karnak.<sup>148</sup> Moses would have known its implied claim that Egypt's Pharaoh could be defeated by wilderness Bedouin and Asiatic groups like the Israelites through divine conflict in a wilderness bush. So Yahweh may have chosen to appear to Moses in a burning bush as a promise that the God of Horeb could make him victorious over Pharaoh.

## 2) EL SHADDAI AND YAHWEH, THE GOD OF THE MOUNTAINS AND THE WILDERNESS

The Lord's appearance to Moses on Sinai was interesting in another way as well. Moses had become a Hebrew of the wilderness. From the burning bush, God identified Himself to Moses as the Patriarchs' God, and He promised to fulfill His promise to the Patriarchs. He would finally bring the Israelites to the Promised Land. Moses predicted that the Israelites would ask him the name of the God who had sent him to them. Moses asked God what name he should give. In Exodus 3:13-15, God gave His name as "I AM," and "I AM WHO I AM."<sup>149</sup> God declared this to be His eternal name, and His memorial name to all generations. The name "I AM" was Yahweh. When Moses later wrote Genesis to teach the Israelites who they were before God, Moses used the name Yahweh for God 162 times. Later, God told Moses in Exodus 6:3 that He had made Himself known to the patriarchs as El Shaddai, but not as Yahweh. This has been one of the most problematic and debated verses in the Old Testament.<sup>150</sup> The names Yahweh and El Shaddai have generated quite a bit of discussion, and they have been explained in several ways.<sup>151</sup>

The traditional translation of the name El-Shaddai used to be God Almighty. Yet a number of recent studies have questioned this translation. The most popular new positions have generally built on a suggestion made by Friedrich Delitzsch and W. F. Albright.<sup>152</sup> This suggestion linked the name Shaddai

<sup>146</sup>

Jan Zandee, "A Site of the Conflict between Horus and Seth," *Ex Orbe Religionem*, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1972), 72.

H. Te Velde, *Seth, God of Confusion: A Study of His Role in Egyptian Mythology and Religion*, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1967), 46-9.

<sup>148</sup> Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt*, II:133.

<sup>149</sup> As has often been noted, the words "I Am" here are echoed in the Old Testament only in Hos. 1:9. God commanded Hosea to name his child *lo ammi* because they were not His people, and He was no "I Am" to them.

<sup>150</sup> Anation come out of Egypt would have appreciated the fact that Yahweh could have a name which had been unknown. In Egyptian religion, Re had an unknown name. When Isis forced him to reveal it to her, she gained substantial power over him. When Yahweh voluntarily revealed His unknown name to Israel, He implied the existence of a very strong relationship of trust and commitment between Himself and His people. Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, 12.

<sup>151</sup> For the history of the discussion, see David Biale, "The God with Breasts: El Shaddai in the Bible," *History of Religions* 21 (1981): 240-56. Biale understands Shaddai as "the god with breasts." Lloyd Bailey takes Shaddai as a lunar deity. Lloyd R. Bailey, "Israelite 'El Sadday and Amorite Bêl Sadê," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 87 (1968): 434-38. Walter Wifall defends "God of the Fields," Walter Wifall, "El Shaddai or El of the Fields," *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 92 (1980): 24-32.

<sup>152</sup> Albright held that Shaddai was originally an Amorite god brought to Syria where he became the Canaanite Baal-Hadad, the mountain storm-god. Albright may have been correct in suggesting that the worship of El-Shaddai was becoming involved with Baalism. William F. Albright, "The Names Shaddai and Abram." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 54 (1935): 180-

with an East Semitic word for mountain *shadu*. This word was used in several contexts. In one context, the *Amurru*, "Amorites," or "Westerners" worshiped on a holy mountain named *Shadu*. This explanation has taken several forms through the years, but the general meaning maintained for El-Shaddai has been "the Mountain God."<sup>153</sup> When the patriarchs worshiped El Shaddai on mountain top altars, they worshiped the God of Mount Eden, Mount Bethel, and Mount Moriah.

The name Yahweh has received substantial academic attention in recent years. Raymond Abba argued that the name "Yahweh" was a very ancient name. The name retained the letter *vav* which was replaced by a *yod* in the verb "to be" before Moses' time. Abba suggested that the revelation of the name Yahweh in Exodus was not the giving of a new name for God, but it was the disclosure of the true significance of an old name. He defended this by pointing to the Hebrew idiom in Exodus 3:13 where *mah* is used instead of *miy*. *Mah* requested the characteristics of someone instead of the identity of someone. Abba interpreted Exodus 6:3 to mean that Yahweh had appeared to the patriarchs in the capacity or role of Shaddai instead of the capacity or role of Yahweh. Abba suggested that the name Yahweh should be interpreted with the verb "to be" and be translated as "Here I Am." Abba saw the name Yahweh as a reference to Yahweh's coming to redeem Israel.<sup>154</sup>

It may be important that a place name etymologically related to the name Yahweh was associated in Egyptian topographical texts with nomadic groups called Shasu Bedouin. The name Shasu was a generic term for ethnic groups like the Midianites, Ammonites, and Amalekites who lived in the semi-arid regions around Palestine. Astor described an Amarna Age list of places that was copied from Amenhotep III's onomasticon from his temple at Soleb. The list included areas controlled by Egypt in Syria and Palestine. Astor noted that the divine name Yahweh was included in six place names for sites ruled by the Shasu Bedouin who lived south and east of Edom in Palestine. These names were preceded by the words *t3 s3sw* or "the Shasu Land." One of the names was simply *yhw3*. The presence of the name Yahweh among the Shasu Bedouin has led to much speculation about whether Moses may have learned the name Yahweh from either the Kenites or the Midianites who lived in the same region. After all, Moses' father in law Jethro was a priest of Yahweh in Midian.<sup>155</sup> Since Amenhotep III held the Egyptian throne during Joshua's conquest, his list of names at Soleb demonstrated the use of the name Yahweh in Palestine as Israel entered the land.

It has long been popular to seek examples of the name Yahweh in the ancient Near East.<sup>156</sup> When the Ebla texts were first translated, it was popular to suggest that the name Yahweh may have appeared in the Ebla texts.<sup>157</sup> That suggestion is far less popular today. It is also possible that the name Yahweh might be suggested in the Ugaritic texts, although that is far from certain. There is an interesting line in the Canaanite myth of Baal and Yam. In column iv lines 12-24, the Canaanite god El decreed a new name for

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93. See also the discussion in Biale, "The God with Breasts," 241, and Eric Burrows, "The Meaning of El Shaddai," *Theological Studies* 41 (1940): 152-61. Burrows suggested that Shaddai was Hadad the storm god.

Frank Moore Cross Jr. "Yahweh and the Gods of the Patriarchs," *Harvard Theological Review* 55 (1962): 244-50. Herbert G. May, "The Patriarchal Idea of God," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 60 (1941): 121. Burrows, "The Meaning of El Saddai," 152-60. Albright, "The Names Shaddai and Abram," 182.

<sup>154</sup> Raymond Abba, "The Divine Name Yahweh," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 80 (1961): 320-28.

<sup>155</sup> Michael Astour, "Yahweh in Egyptian Topographical Lists," 17-33 in *Festschrift Elmar Edel*, (Bamberg: Kurt Urlaub, 1979), 22.

<sup>156</sup> As early as 1909, Clay argued the name Yahweh occurred in the cuneiform texts in the form *Yâwu(m)*. Clay noted that the Canaanite deity *Jâhû* might have been identified with the god Yahweh, although Clay argued that such an identification was problematic. Clay argued that the divine name Yahweh may have already appeared in the name *Ja-u-bâni* from the Cassite period and in *Jaum-El* from the time of Hammurabi. Albert T. Clay, *Amurru: The Home of the Northern Semites*, (Philadelphia: The Sunday School Times Co., 1909), 202-06. Clay's suggestions have not gone unchallenged.

<sup>157</sup> Dahood noted that there has been a lot of academic debate about whether a god named *ya* was known at Ebla around 2300 BC. For example, Dahood claimed that the name *iadamu* was found at Ebla and Dahood translated it as "ya is perfect." Dahood noted that *ya* or *yo* appeared as a part of personal names associated with Edom and Arabia in Gen. 10:29; 36:33; Josh. 11:1 and 12:19. Dahood argued that no one knew the meaning of the name *yobab*, but it resembled Biblical names like *yoab* (*yo* is father), *yoah* (*yo* is brother), *yoel* (*yo* is El), and *yotam* (*yo* is perfect). Mitchell Dahood, "The God Ya at Ebla?" *Journal of Biblical Literature* 100.4 (1981): 607-08. Dahood's understanding of Eblaite grammar has been questioned.

the god Yam, the god of the sea. Yam's new name was "the Beloved of El." This text at least provided a historical context for El Shaddai's giving Israel a new name for Himself. Line 14 of this passage is especially interesting. In it, El apparently referred to Yam saying "the name of my son is yaw."<sup>158</sup> The name yaw in this text was clearly the name of a god, although the fragmentary nature of the text leaves the details about this god somewhat unclear. The context of this line suggests that yaw was a personal name for Yam, and this is how the academic community has usually understood it. The name yaw in this passage is identical to yah, the abbreviated form of the name Yahweh. This abbreviated form of Yahweh appeared often in the Old Testament. If taken in this context, Exodus 6:3 may have noted that the Israelites had known God as the God of the northern mountains, but now they would also learn that He was also the God of the sea. They would learn this by their miraculous passage through the Red Sea.

It is important to note when and where the Canaanite texts were written. The Canaanite texts were found at Ras Shamra. This was the site of the ancient city of Ugarit in Syria. Most of the texts were written between 1400 BC and 1200 BC. If Israel left Egypt during the 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, these texts were written between Joshua's conquest and the Sea Peoples' invasion of Palestine. The Sea Peoples' invasion occurred half way through Israel's period of the Judges. The myths recorded on the Ugaritic tablets were probably earlier than the tablets themselves. So they could reflect the kind of Baal theology that Israel encountered in Egypt, in the wilderness, and in the conquest. There may also be another link between Syria and the name yah. The Egyptian story of Sinuhe was written during the Middle Kingdom, which was Israel's Patriarchal Age. Sinuhe fled from the Egyptian court and traveled north to Palestine and Syria. There, the king of Byblos made him ruler of a very fruitful region called the land of yaa. So at least in Israel's Patriarchal Age, there was a distinct region in either Syria or Palestine that was known as the land of yaa.<sup>159</sup> This land was a region of wine, olives, honey and figs. There may well be a connection of some kind between the name yaa in Sinuhe, the god yaw at Ugarit, the name yhw3 among the Shasu bedouin, and the name of Israel's covenant God Yahweh. Yet at this point, it is hard to pin down exactly what that connection may have been.<sup>160</sup>

The name Yahweh has also been interpreted in a variety of ways.<sup>161</sup> Why would God augment the name El-Shaddai with a new name for Himself? The answer may be that God's name of El-Shaddai had become a justification for syncretism. Who was the northern mountain god, Yahweh, Yam, or Baal? Decreeing a new covenant name for God may have served to differentiate Yahweh from the Canaanite gods before Yahweh delivered His people from bondage.

Exodus 6:3 may also reflect God's promise to Moses and Israel that He would also be the God of the wilderness wanderers. The patriarchs had known God as El Shaddai, the God of Bethel and the high places of the Levant. They would learn that the Lord was also the God of the desert places. Moses had become a wandering Hebrew in the wilderness, and Israel was about to adopt this lifestyle. When Moses confronted Amenhotep II, Moses demanded that he bow before the God of the Hebrews, not the God of the northern mountains.<sup>162</sup> Moses demanded repeatedly that Israel be freed to worship Yahweh in the wilderness, not that they be freed to return to Palestine.<sup>163</sup> So an association of the name Yahweh with the wilderness would seem to fit the Biblical context rather well.

<sup>158</sup>

J. C. L. Gibson, *Canaanite Myths and Legends*, (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1977), 39. Gordon discussed this line. He noted that UT ntpl.xIV:13 includes the line *shm.bny.yw.il* which means "the name of my son is Yaw-El." Gordon used this line to suggest an interpretation for Genesis 1-2. Gordon claimed that the creator god was El. When El's creation proved to be inadequate, El's son Yahweh-Elohim created Adam and Eve. Cyrus H. Gordon, "Gnostic Light on Genesis 1 and 2 via Massa," 197-98 in Cyrus H. Gordon and Gary A. Rendsburg, eds. *Eblaite: Essays on the Ebla Archives and Eblaite Language 4*, (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2002).

It is also interesting that Hatshepsut's inscription of the Speos Artemidos mentioned a land called either *yu* or *yww*. It is unclear where this region was located. Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt*, II:124.

James B. Pritchard, *The Ancient Near East: An Anthology of Texts and Pictures*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1958), 7.

See for example, Charles R. Gianotti, "The Meaning of the Divine Name YHWH," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 142 (1985): 38-51. Abba argued for the great antiquity of the name. Abba, "The Divine Name Yahweh," 322.

<sup>162</sup> Ex. 3:18; 5:3; 7:16; 9:1; 9:13; 10:3.

<sup>163</sup> Ex. 5:1; 5:3; 8:28.

### 3) AMENHOTEP II AND THE EXODUS

Yahweh commanded Moses to return to Egypt and deliver His people from Egyptian bondage. In an 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty model, Moses returned to the court of Amenhotep II. While the chronology of this period is difficult to reconstruct with precision, Moses would have appeared in the Egyptian court rather shortly after Amenhotep II came to the throne. Moses the Hebrew warned Pharaoh that the God of the Hebrews demanded that His people be set free to worship Him. Amenhotep II responded as might be expected of any Pharaoh. In Exodus 5:2, Amenhotep II declared that he did not "know" Yahweh, and he would not let Israel go free. Amenhotep II was not claiming to be unaware of the existence of a god named Yahweh. The name Yahweh was known in Egypt at the time.<sup>164</sup> Amenhotep II claimed that he did not "know" Yahweh because he did not serve Yahweh.<sup>165</sup> The word "know" was a technical treaty word. Sovereigns "knew" their vassals, and were "known" by them.

Moses stood in the ancient line of Yahweh's royal messengers. As Yahweh's messenger, Moses carried on a dialogue with Amenhotep II that lasted through ten terrible plagues against Egypt and her gods.<sup>166</sup> Through the course of this dialogue, Yahweh as the great sovereign demanded repentance from Pharaoh. Through the course of the dialogue, Pharaoh gradually came closer to real repentance, and closer to submitting to the heavenly high king who he had not "known." When Moses first returned to court, Amenhotep II was simply unconcerned about his demands. Exodus 5:4-9 noted that Pharaoh responded by increasing the Israelites daily work load into a crushing burden. Pharaoh was unimpressed when Moses' staff became a serpent. He overlooked the symbolism of the event. The serpent goddess Uatchet was one of the great gods of the Nile delta. It was represented on Pharaoh's crown as a Uraeus serpent whose head jutted out in the front of his crown. Pharaoh claimed to have the deadly power of the serpent goddess.<sup>167</sup> How could he miss the significance when the "staff of God" became a great serpent that swallowed the serpent staves of his magicians?<sup>168</sup>

Amenhotep II had declared that he did not "know" Yahweh. Dorian Coover Cox noted that the word "know" in this verse was treaty usage. Coover Cox noted that the book of Exodus depicted pharaoh as a vassal who was rebelling against Yahweh, his rightful ruler.<sup>169</sup> God warned through Moses that he

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Astor, "Yahweh in Egyptian Topographical Lists," 17-33. John Gray, "The God YW in the Religion of Canaan," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 12 (1953): 278-83. Dahood, "The God Ya at Ebla?" 607-08. Abba, "The Divine Name Yahweh," 320-28.

<sup>165</sup> An interesting parallel can be found in Faulkner's Pyramid Text Utterance 262 which was written 1,000 years before Moses. In this text, the deceased prayed to a variety of gods asking that they would "know" him. The deceased promised that he would "know" the gods if they would "know" him. It is impossible to determine if Moses was aware of this text.

<sup>166</sup> Ex. 12:12, Num. 33:4.

<sup>167</sup> Richard D. King, "The Symbolism of the Crown in Ancient Egypt," 133-52 in Ivan Van Sertima, ed. *Nile Valley Civilizations*, (Journal of African Civilizations, 1985). J. W. Lee argued that Pharaoh was associated with the serpent and vulture goddesses. Lee argued that these two goddesses represented all strength, power, and authority in Egypt. Jeong Woo (James) Lee, "A Paradigm for the Exodus Conflict," *Kerux* 12 (1997).

<sup>168</sup> Scott B. Noegel, "Moses and Magic: Notes on the Book of Exodus," *The Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society* 24 (1998): 45-59. John D. Currid, "The Egyptian Setting of the 'Serpent' Confrontation in Exodus 7, 8 -13," *Biblische Zeitschrift* 39 (1995): 203-16. Currid noted that the Egyptian magicians took pride in being able to turn inanimate objects into living creatures. John D. Currid, *A Study Commentary on Exodus: Volume 1: Chapters 1-18*, (Darlington, UK: Evangelical Press, 2000), 101. Currid noted that the word used to describe the Egyptian magicians was an Egyptian loan word that referred to a chief lector priest. Currid, *A Study Commentary on Genesis: Volume 2: Genesis 25:19-50:26, 252*. This kind of Egyptian detail in the story testifies to the historical accuracy of the account.

<sup>169</sup> Coover Cox argued that Yahweh had issued commands to pharaoh with the expectation that they be obeyed. God had sent His messenger proclaiming His commands. Yahweh's messenger warned pharaoh that the curses of the covenant would follow from continued rebellion and the land would suffer from God's plagues. Coover Cox also argued that Yahweh's description of Israel as His "son" should also be understood in a treaty context. The sovereign king commonly called both his heir and his favorite vassal his "son." The Exodus account identified Israel as Yahweh's favored vassal and relegated pharaoh to the role of a rebellious vassal. Dorian G. Coover Cox, "The Hardening of Pharaoh's Heart in its Literary and Cultural Contexts," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 163 (2006): 302.

and his people would come to know Yahweh's power and would finally bow before His authority.<sup>170</sup> As Egypt's plagues grew in intensity, Amenhotep II gradually approached repentance and submission to God. In Exodus 8:28, Amenhotep II asked Moses to pray for him that the swarms of insects be removed. In Exodus 9:27, Amenhotep II confessed that he had sinned and Yahweh was righteous. He admitted that his people were wicked, which is an amazing admission for any Egyptian in the ancient world. In Exodus 10:3, Yahweh asked Amenhotep II how long he would refuse to humble himself before God and let Israel go. For Pharaoh to humble himself before a Hebrew God would have been an incredible humiliation. Yet in Exodus 10:16-17, Pharaoh confessed that he had sinned against Yahweh and against Moses. He asked Moses to forgive his sin and pray that Yahweh would remove the locusts from Egypt and the death that they brought. Yet Pharaoh's heart remained as hard as a stone heart scarab.<sup>171</sup> His heart was hardened until his will was broken when the Angel of the Lord killed every first born not covered by the Lamb's blood as God promised in Exodus 4:21-23.<sup>172</sup> Amenhotep II was forced to bow before Yahweh and allow Israel to leave Egypt.<sup>173</sup> Exodus 12:35-36 noted that many Egyptians gave them gold and possessions as the Israelites had requested. Moses interpreted this as plundering the Egyptians.

Israel could have walked out of Egypt. Overland traders walked in and out of Egypt in a continual stream. Exodus 13:17 noted that God did not lead Israel past Egypt's northeastern frontier because they were not prepared to wage war. While Moses had hidden in the wilderness, Thutmose III had built a string of fortresses along the coastal road north to Palestine.<sup>174</sup> The first of these fortresses was the ancient migdol of Tjeru. This fortress was recently excavated. It was a massive fort 400 yards wide by 800 yards long. This fort had been in use since around 1700 BC. The fortress at Tjeru guarded the narrow strip of land between two vast swamps. To leave Egypt by the northern route, Israel would have been forced to

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Ex. 7:5; 9:14. Archie argued that the plagues echoed Gen. 1-3 and were on one level a judgment on creation itself. C. Lee Archie, "Genesis 1 and the Plagues Tradition of Psalm CV," *Vetus Testamentum* 40 (1990): 256-63.

<sup>171</sup> Currid, "The Egyptian Setting of the 'Serpent' Confrontation in Exodus 7, 8-13," 216-24. Shupak argued that a hard heart was a positive trait in Egypt. The word hard meant that a man retained self-control in the face of troubles. Nili Shupak, "HZQ, KBD, QSH LEB, the Hardening of Pharaoh's Heart in Exodus 4:1-15:21 - Seen Negatively in the Bible but Favorably in Egyptian Sources," 189-403 in G. N. Knoppers and A. Hirsch, eds. *Egypt, Israel, and the Ancient Mediterranean World*, (Leiden: Brill, 2004). Assmann noted that scarabs represented the whole concept of becoming in Egyptian thought. Jan Assmann, *The Mind of Egypt*, (New York: Henry Holt, 2002), 18. Perhaps the hardening of Pharaoh's heart reflected what he was becoming as his determined rebellion doomed his land. There could also be unrecognized significance in the Hebrew text. Two Hebrew words are usually translated as hardened in the Exodus account. Both words are used in the text to describe Pharaoh's determination and God's actions. The first word is *chazaq*. This is a very common Hebrew word. While it is translated in several ways, it has the general meaning of "be strong." When this word is used, the text may have in mind the strengthening of Pharaoh's will. The second Hebrew word that is often translated hardened in the Exodus text is *kabed*. This is a very common word, and it is translated many ways. The range of meaning of *kabed* revolves around two ideas: weight, and glory. When describing Pharaoh, the Exodus text may point to the weight of his heart that made him deserve condemnation at the underworld scales. However, it could also mean something else. It could point to Pharaoh's pride and the glory that he claimed for himself. When God responded in judgment, God's judgments were often described with the same word. God showed that he had the true glory instead of Pharaoh. Then at the end of Exodus, both *chazaq* and *kabed* were used to describe the heavenly conditions on the top of Mount Sinai.

<sup>172</sup> Petrovich noted that none of Amenhotep II's sons claimed to be his firstborn son, and his firstborn may have died in childhood. Petrovich, "Amenhotep II and the Historicity of the Exodus-Pharaoh," 110.

<sup>173</sup> This must have been a terrible blow to the Pharaoh. More than any other Egyptian ruler, Amenhotep II filled Egypt with monuments to his bravery as a warrior. Petrovich, "Amenhotep II and the Historicity of the Exodus-Pharaoh," 102-03. It is fair to ask if these monuments could have been an attempt to compensate for his defeat by the despised *Habiru* and their God. Amenhotep II also recorded that the rulers of Naharim and Hatti, the northern extremes of Egypt's empire, heard about his victories and sent tribute. Petrovich suggested that his second campaign may have been intended partly to demonstrate that Pharaoh was still able to wage war after his devastating defeat by Israel.

<sup>174</sup> Four of these fortresses were depicted in a 19th Dynasty text on the walls of the Hypostyle hall at Karnak. These can be seen in Alan H. Gardiner, "The Ancient Military Road between Egypt and Palestine," *The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 6 (1920): 99-116.

pass very close to the walls of this fortress.<sup>175</sup> The danger in doing so was reflected in Exodus 14:6-7. Pharaoh led his chariots from his frontier mighdols to attack Israel. When Amenhotep II led his chariots against Israel, the Jews were trapped between the desert, the impenetrable swamps, and the Migdol of Baal Zaphon.<sup>176</sup> Yahweh delivered His people with a great miracle that provided one more dynamic polemical argument against Egyptian idolatry.<sup>177</sup>

No direct Egyptian evidence has survived for Israel's exodus from the land. This should not be surprising. Egyptians did not normally record their failures. Instead, the Egyptians tended to remove the evidence for them. Amenhotep II may have destroyed any reference to Israel in the Egyptian texts. While no direct Egyptian evidence for the exodus has survived, there may be indirect evidence for it in descriptions of Amenhotep II's conquests. In his second year, Amenhotep II had put down revolt against Egyptian rule in Syria. This campaign would have happened only a few years before an 18th Dynasty date for the exodus. Amenhotep II captured 800 captives in Palestine. Egypt's campaigns in Syria and Palestine usually brought less than a thousand captives back to Egypt. Amenhotep II led his army into Palestine again in his 9th year. This campaign would have been after 1446 BC, which was the traditional date for an 18th Dynasty exodus. Amenhotep II had a different goal for this attack. Amenhotep II only led his army to Sharon and the Jezreel plain while bringing south to Egypt an amazing number of captives. He listed the following as captives:

princes of Retenu: 127; *brothers* of princes: (30) 179; *Apiru*: 3,600; living *Shasu*: 15,200; *Kharu*: 36,300; living *Neges*: 15,070; the *adherents* thereof: 30,652; total: 89,600 men; similarly their goods, without their limit.<sup>178</sup>

This list totaled 89,600 captives which was a hundred times the number normally taken in Egyptian northern campaigns.<sup>179</sup> Yet the detailed listing of captives suggests that it may have been an accurate accounting of his captives. Egypt's Pharaohs never brought south to Egypt anything remotely like this total of captives. The Pharaohs did sometimes make grandiose claims about their conquests. For example, Thutmose III claimed in a text at Karnak, "I fettered Nubia's bowmen by ten thousand thousands, The northerners a hundred thousand captives."<sup>180</sup> This was simply empty bragging. The detailed character of Amenhotep II's list sounds more like a literal account than a grandiose claim. If Amenhotep II actually seized this number of captives, he may have done so to replace the work force that he lost when Israel left Egypt. While this does not prove that the exodus occurred, such a campaign would be difficult to explain in any other context.<sup>181</sup>

## D) THE LOCATION OF ISRAEL'S SEA CROSSING

### 1) THE SEA CROSSING DEBATE

<sup>175</sup>

For a discussion of this border fortress, see James K. Hoffmeier, "The Evangelical Contribution to Understanding the (Early) History of Ancient Israel in Recent Scholarship," *Bulletin of Biblical Research* 7 (1997): 77-89.

G. I. Davies noted Cairo Papyrus 31169. This Ptolemaic era text listed four mighdols near Wadi Tumilat, including the mighdol "of Baal-Zaphon." This text was written a thousand years after the Mosaic age, so it might refer to a different place. G. I. Davies, *The Way of the Wilderness*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 81, 116.

Currid discussed the presence of anti-Egyptian polemic in the Exodus account. He argued that Exodus was saturated with Egyptian cultural and religious elements that were used to polemicize against Egyptian practices. Currid, *A Study Commentary on Exodus: Volume 1: Chapters 1-18*, 24-25.

<sup>177</sup> Pritchard, ed. *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, 247.

<sup>178</sup> Petrovich noted that adding the numbers in this list actually gave a total of 101,128 captives. Petrovich suggested that this may have reflected an error in addition by the Egyptian scribes. Petrovich, "Amenhotep II and the Historicity of the Exodus-Pharaoh," 102-03. Other explanations are also possible. Perhaps it marked the difference between the number of captives first seized and the number who survived to reach Egypt.

<sup>179</sup> Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, II:36

Rodger W. Dalman, "The Captives of Amenhotep II," *Bible and Spade* 16 (2003): 52-3. William Shea, "Amenhotep II as the Pharaoh of the Exodus," *Bible and Spade* 16 (2003): 41-51.

One of the more highly debated topics in Exodus studies has been the location of Israel's sea crossing.<sup>182</sup> The exodus occurred at some point along the Isthmus of Suez. The isthmus stretches roughly 70 miles from north to south. Around 40 miles of the isthmus is covered by lakes, and the rest can be crossed. A series of Egyptian forts protected the isthmus, although not all of these forts can now be located. There have been three main theories about where Israel crossed the sea. The first theory about the location of Israel's sea crossing suggested that Israel traveled north from Wadi Tumilat. They then traveled across a sand ridge that forms a thin arc stretching out into the Mediterranean Sea between the Nile River and Palestine. This ridge of sand formed the outer edge of Lake Sirbonis. After arriving at the east end this sand highway in the sea, they would have crossed directly to Kadesh-barnea. According to this theory, the sea crossing actually happened either in Lake Sirbonis itself or further east in lake Menzaleh.<sup>183</sup> This theory is strengthened by the fact that a Baal shrine was present much later on the sand ridge around Lake Sirbonis.<sup>184</sup>

There are several problems with this route. In Exodus 13:17-18, God specifically warned Israel not to travel north by the Way of the Philistines. By traveling north around Lake Sirbonis, the Israelites would still have faced the Egyptians when they arrived at the east end of the lake. The greatest problem with this theory is that there is no archaeological evidence that the sand ridge around Lake Sirbonis existed in the Mosaic Age.<sup>185</sup> The earliest artifacts on the ridge were made almost a thousand years later.<sup>186</sup> A variant form of this position suggests that Israel traveled along the southern shore of Lake Sirbonis. Israel would then have taken the coastal road north into Palestine. This theory is nearly as difficult to sustain as the earlier one. The southern shore of Lake Sirbonis was very heavily populated. The coastal road north into Palestine was fortified by Thutmose III. Its forts had hardly been finished at the exodus. They were strong and well fortified. So it is unlikely that Israel could have traveled along the coastal road into Palestine.<sup>187</sup>

While a northern route has rarely been very popular in the evangelical orbit, a different form of the argument has gained popularity in recent years. Gary Byers discussed this proposed route. Byers suggested that Israel began near the old Hyksos capital of Avaris. Then they traveled southeast to Succoth in Wadi Tumilat. They then traveled east to Lake Timsah. Then Byers suggested that the Israelites turned north and traveled further north than Avaris. Eventually they reached Tell Abu Sefeh. Byers suggested that the exodus then occurred across part of the El-Ballah lakes in that region. Israel then traveled directly south past Lake Timsah and the Bitter Lakes to the Red Sea's eastern shore.<sup>188</sup>

The second main theory about the location of Israel's sea crossing suggests that Israel left Egypt by crossing either lake Timsah directly east of Wadi Tumilat or the Bitter Lakes which were slightly south. This may be the most popular exodus location in the academic literature. Both Lake Timsah and the Bitter Lakes did have reeds. The water in Lake Timsah was deep enough to drown Egypt's army, although whether it could be blown dry by a strong wind may be problematic. Both Timsah and the Bitter Lakes

<sup>182</sup>

A recent evangelical discussion based on Egyptological evidence can be seen in John D. Currid, *Ancient Egypt and the Old Testament*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1997), 123-34. A theologically based discussion of the Red Sea/Reed Sea problem can be seen in Scott Lanser and Erich D. Schwartz, "The Red Sea in the NT," *Bible and Spade* 21 (2008): 3-11.

<sup>183</sup> A tongue of Lake Menzaleh did extend far enough south to make a possible *yam sùph* crossing along Egypt's northern border. This is the position assumed in Pfeiffer and Vos, *The Wycliffe Historical Geography of Bible Lands*, map 2.

<sup>184</sup> Henri Cazelles, "Données géographiques sur l'Exode," *Revue d'Histoire et de Philosophie Religieuses* 35 (1955): 51-8.

<sup>185</sup> Scolnic noted that the Mediterranean Coast was further south in the Mosaic age. Lake Sirbonis only appeared in the 8<sup>th</sup> century BC, and no archaeological artifacts have been found in the area before the Persian era. Benjamin Edidin Scolnic, "A New Working Hypothesis for the Identification of Migdol," 91-120 in James K. Hoffmeier and Alan Millard, eds. *The Future of Biblical Archaeology: Reassessing Methodologies and Assumptions*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 97.

See the discussion in: Tommy Briscoe, "The Sinai Peninsula and the Exodus," *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 20 (1977): 23-32. Gispen noted that there is no evidence that Lake Sirbonis was ever called the Red Sea. William H. Gispen, *Exodus*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), 136-37.

<sup>187</sup> Davies, "The Way of the Wilderness."

<sup>188</sup> Gary A. Byers, "New Evidence From Egypt on the Location of the Exodus Sea Crossing: Part 2," *Bible and Spade* 19.2 (2006): 34-40. Byers noted James Hoffmeier's discussion of Papyrus Anastasi III. This fragmentary papyrus mentioned "the waters of Baal" somewhere in the region.

were also close enough to Goshen for the Israelites to reach them in the time allowed by any estimation of their travel rate. Most versions of the central exodus crossing require the Israelites to cross the desert region of Et Tih. This would have been difficult. The best argument for a central route may be Exodus 15:22. This verse noted that Israel traveled from the Sea of Reeds into the wilderness of Shur. It has often been argued that the wilderness of Shur was located northeast of the Bitter Lakes. If that location for the wilderness of Shur is accurate, the Israelites must have crossed near the Bitter Lakes. Unfortunately, the location of Shur is no more certain than the location of other places named in the Exodus account. Genesis 25:18 seemed to locate Shur further south than this.

The third theory for the location of Israel's sea crossing placed it further south across the Red Sea itself. This position is certainly more easily consistent with the New Testament which claimed that Israel crossed the Red Sea instead of the Reed Sea.<sup>189</sup> Several arguments have been raised against a southern crossing. There are no reeds in the Red Sea since reeds do not grow in salt water. So how could it be a *yam sūph*? It may be too far south for the Israelites to have been able to reach in the time allowed.<sup>190</sup> A southern crossing would have forced the Israelites to pass near the Egyptian Sinai mines, and it is assumed that they would have been hesitant to do so. These are weak arguments. Jonah 2:5 demonstrates that the word *sūph* in the name *yam sūph*, sea of reeds, can be used to describe salt water plants as well as fresh water reeds.<sup>191</sup> The rate of Israel's travel toward the Red Sea can not be determined. There is no way to know how strong a force the Egyptians had at the Sinai mines, or if they were even in use at the time. Mining activity in the Sinai was rather sporadic. So a southern crossing is not an impossible option.

## 2) AN OLD BUT USEFUL SUGGESTION

One location deserves more attention than it has received. That location is the vast dry basin stretching from the Shalūf near the Bitter Lakes to the current Red Sea shoreline. A century ago, it was common for authors to locate Israel's sea crossing in this basin because they assumed that Red Sea waters had filled it in the Mosaic Age.<sup>192</sup> The nature of this basin suggests that this was not an unreasonable assumption. Since the Suez Canal has changed the whole character of this region, its geology can best be appreciated by reading descriptions of it written before the Suez Canal was dug.<sup>193</sup> One of the most interesting accounts of this region was written by Edward Robinson. In 1838, he traveled north of the current Red Sea shoreline and described it in detail. He noted that the ground gave every sign of being occasionally flooded. The sand was packed hard by water action, and was covered in places by the kind of saline efflorescence produced by sea water. He noted that this kind of flood packed sand extended a great distance to the northeast. Above the narrows at Suez, he noted that this flood packed floor opened out into a very large bay stretching far north of the present water line. Observing this, he concluded that the gulf originally stretched much further north than its current shoreline.<sup>194</sup> In 1905, Albert

<sup>189</sup>

Carnazzo argued that the sea resembled conditions in Gen. 1:2 and that the sea crossing symbolized a new creation. This perspective maybe more consistent with a Red Sea crossing. Sebastian Carnazzo, "Genesis and Salvation History: Part 3," *Eastern Churches Journal* 10 (2003): 74-6.

<sup>190</sup> There has been endless debate about the rate at which Israel could have traveled with their young children and livestock. See for example the debate on the ANE list serve in the fall of 2005.

<sup>191</sup> On the other hand, Jonah might have been using ancient Near Eastern underworld imagery. Jonah did claim to be at the bottom of the sea. Egyptian underworld motifs would have associated this region with the field of reeds. If so, the *sūph* in Jonah's prayer might not have been seaweed.

<sup>192</sup> Nibbi argued that the Red Sea extended 30 miles further north in the Mosaic age. Alessandra Nibbi, "The Lake of Reeds of the Pyramid Texts and Yam Sūph," *Göttinger Miszellen* 29 (1978): 96. Nibbi footnoted G. Posener, "Le Canal du Nil à la Mer Rouge avant les Ptolomées," *Chronique d'Égypte* 13 (1938): 260-62.

<sup>193</sup> When the Suez Canal was dug, the ancient fresh water canal was also reopened to provide drinking water for canal workers. Fresh water from this canal has allowed over 70,000 acres of land to be irrigated for farming, and has made possible a farming population in the region of over 35,000 people. For a discussion, see Glen E. Edgerton, "An Engineer's View of the Suez Canal," *National Geographic Magazine*, 111 (1957): 124. Hoskins, *From the Nile to Nabo*, 50-3

<sup>194</sup> Edward Robinson, *Biblical Researches in Palestine, and in the Adjacent Regions*, 2 vols. (Boston: Crocker and Brewster, 1860), I:60-1. Hoskins noted that shoals near Suez were uncovered at low tide. He noted other areas near Suez that were

Ungard wrote a study of the geology of the Suez Canal. He argued that the Red Sea shore originally was located north of its current position. Ungard claimed that the Red Sea shoreline was located in 1500 BC about half way between the two Bitter Lakes. Unger argued that by 500 BC, the Red Sea shore had retreated to a point about half way between the southern Bitter Lake and Arsinoe.<sup>195</sup> If the Red Sea stretched north of Lacus Amarus in the Mosaic Age, the sea crossing could have occurred at any point between the Bitter Lakes and the current Red Sea shoreline.

Robinson's observation is plausible. The area south of the Shalûf is a very low clay basin with sand dunes blown in from the east.<sup>196</sup> The average height of this basin's clay floor is only about four feet above the current Red Sea high tide level. Since the basin is this close to sea level, the whole region is occasionally flooded by storm surges from the Red Sea.<sup>197</sup> Menashe Harel notes that in stormy weather, sea water sometimes spreads north five or six miles and reaches a depth of six feet.<sup>198</sup> About once every twenty years, a storm sweeps north enough water to flood the whole plain south of the Shalûf. S. C. Bartlett observed such a storm in 1879. He traveled five miles north of Suez several days after the storm. He found that pools of water six and a half feet deep had stood behind the canal station even at that distance from Suez, and great plains of water still stretched far north of his position.<sup>199</sup>

If this basin was flooded in the Mosaic Age, it certainly could not have been crossed. The basin had such a deep clay floor that when the Suez canal was dug through the region, earth moving machines could not budge it. The clay had to be broken up with pick axes and removed with baskets.<sup>200</sup> Sea water covering this clay floor would have turned it into a quagmire. An interesting parallel can be drawn here to Egyptian Field of Reeds theology. The Egyptian Pyramid Texts stressed repeatedly that Pharaoh could only cross the Field of Reeds when the marshes were flooded. Then he could float across the marsh on a reed float.<sup>201</sup> The problem of crossing such a region can be seen in a text from Israel's Patriarchal Age. Egyptian Coffin Spell 622 noted that those who tried to cross the Field of Reeds when it was not flooded sank into the quagmire and died.<sup>202</sup> This text read in part,

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covered with water in the winter because of the season's storms but were uncovered in the summer. Hoskins, *From the Nile to Nebo*, 100. This occurred because the region was very close to sea level.

<sup>195</sup> Albert Ungard, *Der Suez Kanal*, (Wien und Leipzig: A. Hartleben's, 1905), map 1.

<sup>196</sup> Driver described this region in 1911. He noted that the soil north of Suez consisted of sand blown in from the eastern desert. S. R. Driver, *The Book of Exodus*, (Cambridge: The University Press, 1955), 125.

<sup>197</sup> Rady et al studied storm surges in the Gulf of Suez and concluded that storms accompanied by strong winds from the northwest would lower gulf water levels but not create higher storm surges. M. A. Rady, et al. "Tide-Surge Interaction in the Gulf of Suez, Egypt." *Marine Geology*, 17 (1994): 45-62. However, their study did not discuss storms whose winds blew from the opposite direction. It should not be surprising that such a large tract of land stood within two meters of sea level. If it were not for the coastal dunes, a sea level rise of only one meter would flood parts of the northern delta up to 30 km inland. On the northern coast, see G. Sestini, "Implications of Climatic Changes for the Nile Delta," in L. Jetic, J. D. Milliman, C. Sestini, eds., *Climatic Change and the Mediterranean*, (New York: United Nations Environmental Program, 1992), 535.

<sup>198</sup> Menashe Harel, "The Route of the Exodus of the Israelites from Egypt and their Wanderings in the Sinai Desert: A Geographic Study," (Dissertation New York University, 1964), 87.

<sup>199</sup> S. C. Bartlett, *From Egypt to Palestine*, (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1879), 152. A. P. Schick noted an example of such wind blown high water in the Gulf of Aqaba. A. P. Schick, "Tiran: the Straits, the Island, and its Terraces," *Israel Exploration Journal* 8 (1958): 127.

<sup>200</sup> John Murray, *A Handbook for Travelers in Egypt*, (London: John Murray, 1873), 227. Clyde T. Francisco, "The Exodus in its Historical Setting," *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 20 (1977): 236.

<sup>201</sup> See for example Faulkner's Pyramid Text Utterances 263 and 265. For a recent translation of the Pyramid Texts, see Allen, *Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts*.

<sup>202</sup> This may be supported by Moses' claim in Ex. 15:12. Moses claimed that God had stretched out His hand, and the earth swallowed Pharaoh's army. This claim would be quite accurate if Pharaoh's forces sank into the marsh slime and died there. Of course, the *eretz* of Ex. 15:12 is often taken to be the underworld, and is paralleled with Num. 16:1-32; 1 Sam. 28:13, and Is. 29:4. See J. Philip Hyatt, *Exodus*, (London: Oliphants, 1971), 165.

Your uproar will pass to the Field of Rushes, and you shall travel therein to Him who is on his *k3dt*-plant, ... You sink into the earth to your thickness, to your middle, to <your> full span.<sup>203</sup>

This mythological motif described Nile delta marshland soil quite accurately. Marsh muck was very dangerous. It could not be crossed on foot because it was too waterlogged to support a man's weight. Those who stepped into it sank in the muck.<sup>204</sup> It could be crossed when it is dried. An interesting historical example of this can be seen in a pre-Mosaic Egyptian work called *The Admonition of an Egyptian Sage*. This text recorded that the Egyptian priests were appalled to find that a drought had so dried the marsh that commoners could cross it on foot. The priests were appalled by this because all of the secret Egyptian marshland shrines were open to public inspection.<sup>205</sup> If the region south of the Shalûf was a tidal basin in the Mosaic Age, its marshland could have been blown dry in a similar way allowing Israel to cross.<sup>206</sup> A Red Sea storm surge could then have drowned the Egyptians. Contemporary examples suggest that waves of sea water between six and ten feet high could have roared north from the Red Sea. Such a storm surge would also have restored the marsh muck's natural viscosity and would have made the trap inescapable. This model for Israel's sea crossing would require different miracles than are often suggested for the exodus. God's winds would have been both more focused and more intense than is normally seen. The swamp mud would also have dried much faster than would normally be expected.

### 3) CLIMATE CHANGE AND THE SEA CROSSING

The really critical question is whether this long basin was actually covered with water in the Mosaic Age. Was the sea level high enough in that region to flood the basin?<sup>207</sup> It has become fashionable among Old Testament scholars to answer that question in the negative and to justify this answer by citing one of William F. Albright's articles. For example, John J. Davis claimed that the Bitter Lakes region could not have been connected to the Gulf of Suez in the 15th century BC. Davis' evidence for this claim was Albright's conclusion that the sea level in the Gulf could not have been very much higher in the 15th century BC, if it was higher at all.<sup>208</sup> The problem with this argument was in Albright's article itself. Albright's expedition had toured the Sinai for a month. The expedition had stopped briefly at a coastal site near Merkhah. Albright identified this site as a small temporary settlement formed in the 15th century BC as a landing and embarkation point for mining expeditions. Albright noted that the edge of this settlement was only five meters above the mean Red Sea level and only two meters above the high tide line. Albright concluded from this that the Red Sea level could not have been more than two meters higher than present

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<sup>204</sup> Raymond O. Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Coffin Texts*, 3 vols. (Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 1973), II: 205.

S. C. Bartlett described an example of this. He recorded an interview with M. de Lesseps who designed and dug the Suez Canal. De Lesseps noted that while riding his horse near the Bitter Lakes, he became entangled in such a morass. De Lesseps' horse walked into marsh muck and its feet sank into the mud. De Lesseps had great difficulty escaping from it. Bartlett, *From Egypt to Palestine*, 149.

<sup>206</sup> Gardiner, *The Admonitions of an Egyptian Sage from a Hieratic Papyrus in Leiden*, 38.

Against this interpretation, it could be argued that Ex. 15:4, 5 and Neh. 9:11 associate Israel's sea crossing with the abyss. These verses are sometimes taken as evidence for a deep water crossing. See on this, Gispén, *Exodus*, 147, 148. However, if Israel's sea crossing mimicked Field of Reeds theology, the marshes would have been associated with Nun, the abyss, and the underworld Field of Reeds locations. S. drowning in the Field of Reeds was also drowning in the great primal abyss. Faulkner's translation of Coffin Spell 279 is quite interesting here. This spell promised that Pharaoh will "bathe in the basin of the abyss." If the "abyss" here is Nun, the great deep, it contains a shallow basin for bathing in the Field of Reeds.

<sup>207</sup> S. R. Driver discussed this question at some length. He noted a claim by a geologist named J. W. Dawson. He noted that the ground level south of Lake Timsah was largely below the level of the Red Sea. This region contained Red Sea shells. Driver noted that the geology of this region led to the suggestion that Israel may have crossed this region at a time when it was filled with water. Driver noted another geologist named Th. Fuchs. He argued that the Bitter Lakes could have been connected to the Red Sea as late as historic times. He argued that the land south of Lake Timsah has gradually risen and this rise has caused the Red Sea waters to recede. Driver, *The Book of Exodus*, 126-27. Changes in sea level <sup>208</sup> may be a better explanation than this.

John J. Davis, *Moses and the Gods of Egypt*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1986), 170, 71.

in the past 3,500 years.<sup>209</sup> Albright's article was correct as far as it went. Yet it did not address the question of whether the region south of the Shalûf was a tidal basin in the Mosaic Age. It is not surprising that a temporary settlement intended as an embarkation point would have built its lowest structures close to the high tide line. An additional meter or two of sea water in the Mosaic Age would have turned the whole basin into either a tidal or salt marsh. So Albright's observation did not settle the question at all.

This point has not been missed completely by recent Old Testament scholarship. For example, G. I. Davies wrote in his book *The Way of the Wilderness* that several authors have used the evidence from Tell el-Kheleifeh and Abu Zenima to argue that the sea level could not have been higher than present norms in the Mosaic Age. Tell el-Kheleifeh and Abu Zenima were the sites that Albright visited on the Red Sea shore. Davies argued that the evidence from these sites was compatible with a sea level two meters higher than present norms, and that was all that proponents of a northern extension of the Red Sea actually envisaged.<sup>210</sup>

Beyond Albright's article, there is also a large body of evidence bearing on this question that is often overlooked in Old Testament academic discussions.<sup>211</sup> That body of evidence comes from the fields of Climatology and Marine Archaeology. The last three decades have seen the growth of quite a large literature on the topic of global climate change.<sup>212</sup> A significant part of this discussion has centered on sea level change. There are dozens of books and articles in print that deal with sea level change either directly or indirectly. Unfortunately, none of this new data gives a clear and certain picture of Red Sea levels in the Mosaic Age. While this data can not now pin down the site of Israel's sea crossing, it does provide one arena in which future discussions of the Exodus must take place.<sup>213</sup>

Climatological studies analyze sea level changes by looking for fossil shorelines and then using a variety of dating techniques to date the shoreline. Fossil shorelines point to a long period of stable sea level at that point. Almost every sea shore in the world contains a series of such fossil shorelines both above the sea surface and below it. Tracing and dating these fossil shorelines can reveal much about the history of the site.<sup>214</sup> Sea level changes in the Holocene Era have been reconstructed in a variety of ways. It may be convenient to divide these studies into two groups. The first group has claimed that the world

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William F. Albright, "Exploring the Sinai with the University of California African Expedition," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, #109 (1948): 14-5.

<sup>210</sup> Davies, *The Way of the Wilderness*, 73-4.

<sup>211</sup> Arguing from a strictly archaeological context, Hans Nissen argued in 1986 that the Persian Gulf sea level was approximately 3 meters higher in the middle of the 4<sup>th</sup> millennium BC than it is today, and the sea level fell to 3 meters below current levels by the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium BC. Hans J. Nissen, *Mesopotamia Before 5000 Years*, (Rome: Universita Degli Studi di Roma, 1986), 40. Few climatologists would support this great a sea level change in this time period. If Nissen's interpretation of changing sea levels is accepted, the sea crossing location proposed in this study is unlikely because the basin south of the Bitter Lakes would probably be dry.

<sup>212</sup> There are several ways to research this topic. One way is to check the "Climatology" subheading in each annual subject index volume of Physical Abstracts. It is also useful to read journals like *Climate Change*, and *Pollen et Spores*. There are good multi-author works like P. M. Masters, N. C. Flemming (eds.), *Quaternary Coastlines and Marine Archaeology: towards the Prehistory of Land Bridges and Continental Shelves*, (London: Academic Press, 1983). E. J. Cushing, H. E. Wright, Jr. (eds.), *Quaternary Paleocology*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967).

<sup>213</sup> A climatological explanation for the sea crossing will not convince everyone. There is in the world of Biblical Studies a latent skepticism about the validity of climatological conclusions. The science is still in some ways in its infancy. Hopkins argued that the correlation of various kinds of data only multiplies probable error. David C. Hopkins, *The Highlands of Canaan*, (Decatur: Almond Press, 1985), 106. See also his discussion of climate change on pages 99-108 of his book.

<sup>214</sup> Unfortunately, there are a number of factors which influence where these shorelines are cut. The interplay of these factors limit how firmly conclusions can be drawn from any site despite the high degree of confidence which many authors display when reporting their findings. These factors include variations in the global sea level, rising and sinking continental plates, and localized ground movement due to water loading and similar forces. Given these complicating factors, it is not surprising that climate change studies often disagree with each other. One of the better surveys of the question comes from S. Jelgersma, "Sea-Level Changes during the Last 10,000 Years," in *World Climate from 8000 to 0 B.C.: Proceeding of the International Symposium Held at Imperial College, London, 18 and 19 April 1966*, (London: The Royal Meteorological Society), 34-71.

"eustatic" sea level has not been higher than present at any time since the last ice age.<sup>215</sup> If authors in this group are correct, it is quite unlikely that seawater could have flooded the basin south of the Shaluf in the Mosaic Age. If so, the site of Israel's crossing probably must be sought elsewhere.

The second group consists of a large number of writers who hold that the world sea level rose so far during the post-glacial climate optimum (roughly 7000 BC to 4000 BC) that it passed the current sea level and rose to a higher sea stand. Evidence for the post-glacial climate optimum can also be seen in the fact that 4000 BC, boreal forests extended north of the current tree line.<sup>216</sup> Climatologists who argue for a higher sea level in antiquity differ from each other on how much higher the sea level rose. They differ on when the highest sea level was reached. They differ especially on the rate at which this high sea level fell to current norms.<sup>217</sup> A few of these writers would suggest that the sea level had already fallen to the present level, or even below it, by the Mosaic Age.<sup>218</sup> Others would affirm that there was indeed a higher sea stand in the second millennium BC.<sup>219</sup>

<sup>215</sup>

Stanley claimed that the Mediterranean Sea level rose between 5500 BC and 500 BC. Stanley claimed that the sea level was about ten feet lower in 5500 BC than it was in 500 BC when it arrived at its current sea level. As a general rule, climatologists working in the Americas tend to deny that the sea level stood higher in the Mosaic age than it stands today. D. J. Stanley, et al., "Nile Delta," *Research and Exploration*, 8 (1992): 34. Douglas Inman claims that the majority of coastal sites in the world follow this pattern. Douglas L. Inman, "Application of Coastal Dynamics to the Reconstruction of Paleocoastlines in the Vicinity of La Jolla, California," 2-49 in P. M. Masters and N. C. Flemming, eds. *Quaternary Coastlines and Marine Archaeology*, (London: Academic Press, 1983), 8. This is also the pattern implied by D. Prigent, et al., "Human Occupation of the Submerged Coast of the Massif Armoricain and Postglacial Sea Level Changes," in P. M. Masters, N. C. Flemming, *Quaternary Coastlines and Marine Archaeology: Towards the Prehistory of Land Bridges and Continental Shelves*, (London: Academic Press, 1983), 303-24.

Foley attribute this to warmer temperatures caused by variations in the Earth's orbit. See on this, J. A. Foley, et al., "Feedbacks between Climate and Boreal Forests during the Holocene Epoch," *Nature* 371 (1994): 52-4. As a general rule, climatologists working in Europe and the Near East tend to support this perspective. The current debate over climate warming has brought new attention to this group since sea levels are already rising world wide. A rise of twenty feet would be possible if the Ross Ice Shelf melted in Antarctica. The whole ice shelf has been moving toward the sea by a few inches a year.

These differences result from the particular characteristics of the sites at which each author has worked. It is striking that there is so much difference between sites. It is also striking that evidence for a higher sea stand comes largely from Europe and the Near East. There is almost little evidence for a higher sea stand in the Americas. It may be that the higher shorelines were caused by chaotic geological conditions after the end of the ice age as the small European crustal plates and fragments balanced themselves after the weight of the ice was removed.

Wreschner suggests that the sea level may have been up to three meters above its current stand between 8000 and 6500 B.C. He then suggests that the sea level fell to five meters below its current stand by 4000 BC. Ernst E. Wreschner, "Sea Level Changes and Settlement Location in the Coastal Plain of Israel during the Holocene," *Eretz-Israel* 13 (1977): 277-82.

Sirri Erinç analyzed sea shore levels along the Black Sea and the Mediterranean coast of Turkey in 1978. He concluded that the sea level along Turkey's coast stood two to three meters higher near the post-glacial climatic optimum than it stands at present. He offered as proof of this conclusion widespread and well developed coastal terraces, old beach-rock formations, and coastal caves filled with marine sands and related objects. He concluded that the sea-level off the coast of Turkey has slowly regressed until the present level was reached sometime between 1000-0 BC. Sirri Erinç, "Changes in the Physical Environment in Turkey since the End of the Last Glacial," in William C. Brice (ed.), *The Environmental History of the Near and Middle East Since the Last Ice Age*, (London: Academic Press, 1978), 96. Ronald Pearson surveyed the question of sea level change in 1978. He noted authors who argued both for and against a higher sea stand in the post-glacial period. He noted that Buddemeier's dating of coral reefs pointed to a higher global sea level. Buddemeier argued from his study of coral reefs that the world sea level stood significantly more than one meter above its present height from 1500-0 BC. Ronald Pearson, *Climate and Evolution*, (London: Academic Press, 1978), 204. In 1985, A. Raban and E. Galili wrote an article on recent marine archaeological finds off the coast of Israel. They described a retaining wall at Tel Dor 2.5 meters above the current sea stand that had layers of wave deposited sea shells behind it. They concluded that the sea level must have stood higher than it presently does for the first half of the second millennium BC. A. Raban, Ehud Galili, "Recent Maritime Archaeological Research in Israel - A Preliminary Report," *The International Journal of Nautical Archaeology*, 14 (1985): 335. C. E. Larsen and G. Evans surveyed sea level changes in the Persian Gulf in 1978. They noted evidence for a post-glacial sea level in the Persian Gulf approximately a meter higher than present levels, though the date of that higher level is unclear. This is interesting because the Persian Gulf and Red Sea water levels may have been comparable. Curtis W. Larsen, Graham Evans, "The Holocene Geological History of the Tigris-Euphrates-Karun Delta," in William C. Brice (ed.), *The Environmental History of the Near and Middle East*

A key part of the sea level discussion is the rate at which glaciers formed after the post-glacial climate optimum.<sup>220</sup> Glacial ice can be dated with some confidence. Its formation lowers the world sea level. So the age of glacial ice gives strong evidence for the rate at which the sea level fell to its current stand. A number of authors have commented on the age of glacial ice, and there is among them general agreement to the position which H. H. Lamb presented in his book *Climate: Present, Past and Future*.<sup>221</sup> Lamb noted that after the last ice age, the course of deglaciation necessarily lagged behind the warming trend in global temperature. He noted that the highest sea level was actually reached 4000 years ago at the end of the period of highest global temperature. He noted also that the glaciers and ice sheets were at their post-glacial minimum between 2000 and 1500 BC. After that time, there was a major re-advance of glacial ice. In 1982, H. H. Lamb published another book surveying the history of global climate change entitled *Climate, History and the Modern World*. In this volume, he tied the higher post-glacial Red Sea level to Israel's exodus from Egypt. He claimed that the sea level should have been close to its highest level during the Mosaic Age. He claimed that Israel's exodus from Egypt could be explained by a short term fluctuation in the Red Sea level caused by a storm surge or a tidal wave in conjunction with the higher sea levels of that age.<sup>222</sup>

The second problem with this position has rather more substance. If this region was a tidal basin in the Mosaic Age, it is not completely clear what kind of vegetation would have grown in it. This fact raises a problem pointed out by Maurice Copisarow. He noted that the field of reeds could resemble the marshes of Egypt. Yet the Red Sea shore is a very different kind of place. It is arid and saline so no reeds grow there.<sup>223</sup> Reeds grow in fresh water but not in salt water. If the region south of the Shalûf was covered with sea water in the Mosaic Age, the salt in this water would have prevented the growth of reeds. If there were no reeds south of the Shalûf, how could this area have been the *yam sûph*, whatever its water level?<sup>224</sup> However, authors like Copisarow assumed that reeds were not present south of the Shalûf in the Mosaic Age because they are not present on the Red Sea shore today. This assumption is not at all safe. In marginal areas, even slight changes in precipitation can cause great changes in ecosystems. It is not clear whether fresh water plants were present south of the Shalûf when Israel left Egypt.<sup>225</sup>

*Since the Last Ice Age*, (London: Academic Press, 1978), 232. T. Al-Asfour described fossil shorelines along the coast of Kuwait. He noted that material from the most recent fossil shoreline above the current sea level was carbon dated roughly between 2570 and 1250 BC. Unfortunately, he did not describe the height of this fossil shoreline above sea level. Taiba Al-Asfour, "The Marine Terraces of the Bay of Kuwait," in William C. Brice (ed.), *The Environmental History of the Near and Middle East Since the Last Ice Age*, (London: Academic Press, 1978), 245.

For a discussion of the post-glacial climate optimum, see Foley, et al., "Feedbacks between Climate and Boreal Forests during the Holocene Epoch," 52-4. M. Schwarzbach, "The Climatic History of Europe and North America," in A. E. M. Nairn, ed., *Descriptive Palaeoclimatology*, (New York: Interscience Publishers Inc., 1961), 255-91.

H. H. Lamb, *Climate: Present, Past and Future*, 2 vols. (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1977), II:363. Felix G. Sulman, *Short- and Long-Term Changes in Climate 2*, (Boca Raton: CRC Press, 1982), 107.

H. H. Lamb, *Climate, History and the Modern World*, (New York: Methuen, 1982), 118-19.

Maurice Copisarow, "The Ancient Egyptian, Greek and Hebrew Concept of the Red Sea," *Vetus Testamentum* 12 (1962), 10.

It may not matter whether or not there were reeds south of the Shalûf. It makes little difference whether Israel crossed a fresh or salt water marsh. The conditions of Israel's sea crossing would have been quite similar either way. Either kind of marsh would have created an impassible quagmire preventing Israel's passage and drowning anyone attempting to cross. It is very interesting that there were no roads or caravan routes across this region in antiquity. All caravan routes passed north by the Bitter Lakes, even routes heading south into Sinai. The implication of this may be that the region south of the Bitter Lakes was impassable. See on this, Bartlett, *From Egypt to Palestine*, 162. Either kind of marsh could have been blown dry by God's wind, and could have been flooded by a returning storm tide. It is fair to ask whether a salt marsh could have been called a *yam sûph*, and whether such a quagmire would have met the event's polemical purpose. The theological implications of this must be considered. Would a salt quagmire have made an appropriate polemic against Field of Reeds theology? It probably would not. Throughout Egypt's history, pictures and sculptures using this imagery always depicted fresh water plants.

There are several possible ways that enough fresh water could have been present in this region to grow reeds. Rainfall may have been higher at that time since Moses lived so much closer to the post-glacial climate maximum. If Sesostrius III dug a Red Sea canal down to the basin, a substantial amount of fresh Nile water could have flowed into the north end of the basin. After the ancient fresh water canal was reopened in the last century, over 70,000 acres of land were irrigated with its water. Edgerton, "An Engineer's View of the Suez Canal," 124. So such a canal could have created

The name *yam sûph* also had a wider range of meaning than his position suggested. Several scholars have pointed out that the name *yam sûph* was clearly applied to the Red Sea in Numbers 33:10 and to the Gulf of Aqabah in 1 Kings 9:26.<sup>226</sup> It is possible that these references could either describe wadis where the influx of fresh water made small marshes possible or shallow seashore areas where salt tolerant plants once lived. It is also possible that they point to a use of the term to describe salt water plants. Several authors have noted that Jonah 2:5 used the word *sûph* to describe salt water sea weed.<sup>227</sup> G. I. Davies noted that some 19th Century authors identified the *yam sûph* in terms of the great quantities of vegetation observed in the Gulfs of Suez and Aqabah.<sup>228</sup>

It is fair to say that H. H. Lamb's observation in *Climate, History and the Modern World* is well taken. It can not be proven that the Gulf of Suez saw a higher sea level in the Mosaic Age than it sees today. However, there is ample evidence that such a higher sea level might have existed. If sea level in the gulf was a meter or two higher in the Mosaic Age, the Red Sea would have flooded the great basin south of the Shalûf. This basin would have been a clay quagmire that could not have been crossed on foot. It may have been a "Sea of Reeds," though the basin's actual vegetation is difficult to determine. It could have been blown dry by a strong east wind, enabling Israel to cross. Then a Red Sea storm surge could easily have drowned Pharaoh's forces. While this sea crossing location can not be proven to be correct, there is much to commend it. It is consistent with the Old Testament's description of the region as a "Sea of Reeds." It is also consistent with claims by both the LXX and the New Testament that Israel crossed the Red Sea. This explanation also requires only a limited appeal to the miraculous. While God can do very unusual things, He does seem to work through natural means more often than not. It is therefore appealing to see this event as a miracle of timing rather than a gross violation of the natural physical laws which God has written into His creation.

quite a large area of fresh water marsh plants. Karl Butzer noted that Egypt saw a period of unusually high Nile floods between 1800 and 1150 BC. Karl W. Butzer, *Early Hydraulic Civilization in Egypt*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), 33. So if a canal did exist down to the north end of this basin, it could have created an unusually great amount of water. The higher sea levels covering the south end of this region would have limited fresh water drainage from the north end. While the amount of fresh ground water in the Mosaic age is very difficult to estimate, a dozen fresh water wells can still be found near this basin. Harel, "The Route of the Exodus," 40. This suggests that more water may have been present at an earlier time. The thick clay floor of this basin points to abundant vegetation which must have grown in periods of increased moisture in the region. Clay deposits can result from sediments in standing water, either fresh or marine. They can also result from the breakdown of soil feldspars by the acids resulting from rotting vegetation. Clay deposits are quite stable and hard to date. Ralph E. Grim, *Clay Mineralogy*, (New York: McGraw-Hill), 528-51. Jean-Claude Gall, *Ancient Sedimentary Environments and the Habitats of Living Organisms*, (Berlin: Springer, 1983), 48-54. The crocodile and hippopotami bones found in the Shalûfsands suggest marsh conditions at some point in the past, although there is no reason to believe that the clay and bones date to the Mosaic age. Karl Baedeker, *Egypt and the Sudan*, (Leipzig: Karl Baedeker, 1908), 182. At the height of the last ice age, hippopotami were common both in the Nile delta and in the rivers of Palestine. It is not clear how long they survived in the Isthmus of Suez. See on this, Llorra Kolska Horwitz, Eitan Tchernov, "Cultural and Environmental Implications of Hippopotamus Bone Remains in Archaeological Contexts in the Levant," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 280 (1990): 67-76. So it is not impossible that there may have been enough fresh water in the region to support salt tolerant varieties of reeds. That would be especially true if Sesostri III actually did dig a Red Sea canal in the 12th Dynasty as Herodotus claimed. While the accuracy of Herodotus' history has often been debated, Anthony Sakovich noted in an EEF posting on 8/2/06 that Herodotus was the first historian to record: the mortuary purpose of the pyramids, the dimensions of the pyramids, the correct pharaohs buried in the pyramids, and details of the meals eaten by the workers who built the pyramids. He learned these things by asking the Egyptian priests to translate ancient texts for him. While Herodotus was not always right, this suggests a significant concern for historical accuracy. So Herodotus' claims of a Red Sea canal dug by Sesostri III should not be discounted out of hand. Such a canal would have been much easier to dig during the Middle Kingdom if the sea water was high enough to fill the basin south of the Bitter Lakes. A Red Sea canal would only have had to reach this marsh land.

Davis, *Moses and the Gods of Egypt*, 169. James Montgomery suggested that the LXX translation of "End Sea" in 1 Kngs. 9:26 may point to a Hebrew original of *sôph* instead of *sûph*. James A. Montgomery, "Hebraica: (2) Yam Sûp ("the Red Sea")=Ultimum Mare?" *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 58 (1938): 131-32. J. Simons suggested that *yam sûph* may have also been used to describe the Gulf of Aqabah in Num. 21:4, Deut. 2:1, and Deut. 1:40. J. Simons, *The Geographical and Topographical Texts of the Old Testament*, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1959), 258, 259. It is unclear in the text whether these references refer to the Red Sea or the Gulf of Aqabah, though one or the other must be in view.

<sup>228</sup>Francisco, "The Exodus in its Historical Setting," 17.

Several kinds of water plants have been suggested as *sûph*, and the shallow marsh north of Suez may well have been a sea of such *sûph* in the Mosaic age. Davies, *The Way of the Wilderness*, 70.

