

CHAPTER 7: ISRAEL'S ORIGIN AND THE ACADEMIC DEBATE

A) CLAIMS OF A 19TH DYNASTY EXODUS IN THE ACADEMIC COMMUNITY

One of the most important debates in Old Testament studies has centered on the date and character of Israel's origin in Palestine. While students have at times seen the debate as an arcane scholarly conflict with little practical value, the debate over Israel's origin is really of enormous importance. It is at the heart of the conflict between higher critical and conservative views of Scripture. Within the evangelical camp, this debate has also been a watershed for understanding the Pentateuch, Joshua, and Judges. The date for Israel's sea crossing has great significance for understanding the nature and historical validity of events recorded in these books. Unfortunately, the date of Israel's exodus from Egypt has been a hotly contended point since the beginning of modern Egyptology. Two time periods have been defended for Israel's sea crossing. Some authors have dated Israel's sea crossing during the Egyptian 18th Dynasty either during or shortly after the reign of Thutmose III. Other authors have dated Israel's sea crossing during Egypt's 19th Dynasty either during or near the reign of Ramesses II.

Defenders of an early exodus date usually claim that Israel's sea crossing happened in 1446 BC, and Israel's conquest of Palestine in 1406 BC. The strongest evidence for this was I Kings 6:1. This verse claimed that Solomon began to build the Jerusalem temple 480 years after the exodus. This required a date around 1446 BC for the exodus. Exodus 4:19 was then traditionally understood as a claim that the Pharaoh of the oppression had reigned for at least 40 years. Exodus 4:19 did not actually make such a claim. It spoke of a group of people who had sought Moses. In theory, this could have included a series of rulers. Since only Thutmose III and Ramesses II ruled for over 40 years, Thutmose III was identified as the Pharaoh of the oppression and Amenhotep II as the Pharaoh of the exodus. Often this argument was coupled with the claim in Judges 11:26 that Israel had already been in the land for 300 years by Jephthah's time.¹ 19th Dynasty dates for the exodus and conquest would make Israel's whole period of the Judges less than 300 years long.

The 19th Dynasty option for Israel's sea crossing rose to academic dominance in the 1930's when Nelson Glueck performed a survey of Transjordan. Glueck argued that there was a 600 year break in occupation of Transjordan. Glueck argued that no one lived in Transjordan before the 19th Dynasty. He argued that Moab, Edom and Ammon were founded after 1275 BC. Since Israel encountered Edom and Moab in Transjordan before the conquest, Glueck concluded that Israel could not have entered Palestine before the 19th Dynasty. While Glueck argued against the traditional 18th Dynasty date for the exodus, he was a rather conservative author.² Glueck argued that no archaeological discovery had ever proven any Biblical passage incorrect.³ Glueck's study became the most important evidence for a 19th Dynasty date for the exodus. For about three decades, a 19th Dynasty date was declared to be the G.A.D., the "Generally Accepted Date," for the exodus and/or Israelite entrance into Palestine. However, the academic tide slowly began to turn. Sean Warner argued that Glueck had misunderstood the kind of pottery that he found. Glueck's case "died the death of a thousand exceptions." By the end of his life, Glueck himself admitted that his survey had been incorrect.⁴

Archaeological evidence has been used in other ways as well in the debate over the date of Israel's sea crossing. Many authors have noted that Merenptah's stela was the first ancient Near Eastern text to mention Israel. Merenptah was a 19th Dynasty pharaoh, and his stela was carved around 1210 BC. It has

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Kitchen responded to this argument by noting that the basis for Jephthah's claim is not known. Kitchen suggested that Jephthah may have given a total figure for concurrent time periods. K.A. Kitchen, *Ancient Orient and the Old Testament*, (London: InterVarsity, 1966), 74-5.

² Glueck was a Jewish rabbi who loved the Scriptures.

³ See the discussion of Glueck in G. Ernest Wright, "Is Glueck's Aim to Prove that the Bible is True?" 14-21 in G. Ernest Wright and David Noel Freedman, eds. *The Biblical Archaeologist Reader*, (Garden City: Doubleday, 1960).

⁴ Sean M. Warner, "The Dating of the Period of the Judges," *Vetus Testamentum* 28 (1978): 455-63.

often been assumed that Israel must have entered Palestine shortly before this text was carved,⁵ although the stela itself would actually allow for any entrance date before 1210 BC. Archaeological evidence has been used in a number of other ways as well. Those who support a 19th Dynasty exodus point out that Bethel, Lachish, Hazor, and Tell Beit Mirsim were all burned between 1250 BC and 1220 BC. Archaeologists like William F. Albright argued that these burn layers were caused by Israel as they invaded Palestine. This assumed a 19th Dynasty exodus and conquest.⁶ Without the assumption of a 19th Dynasty exodus, the burn layers can not be proved to have been caused by Israel.⁷ The period between 1250 and 1220 BC occurred within the reign of Pharaoh Ramesses II. A 19th Dynasty exodus would identify either Ramesses II or Merenptah as the Pharaoh of the exodus. Merenptah was also the first Pharaoh to encounter the Sea People. The Sea People invasion of the Levant and Egypt began during Merenptah's reign although that battle was fought mainly during the reign of Ramesses III. The burn layers in Palestine could have been caused by Ramesses II's campaigns in the Levant, Merenptah's campaign, the Sea People invasion of the Levant, or Israel's continued conflict with the inhabitants of the land. The archaeological evidence could be understood as supporting or denying either proposed date for the exodus

Kitchen noted another kind of archaeological evidence for a 19th Dynasty exodus. He noted that surface surveys by Finkelstein and Zertal found a marked increase in settlements in the highlands of Palestine after 1200 BC. In Western Manasseh, there were 39 settlement sites in the Late Bronze Age, but over 200 settlement sites in the Iron Age I period. Other regions showed a similar increase in population. Kitchen argued that this great increase in population represented Israel's entrance into the region.⁸ However, the archaeological remains give little clear evidence for the ethnicity of the population. At the same time that this new highland population appeared, the Sea People were passing through the Levant. The Sea People devastated cities and cultures wherever they passed. It seems at least possible that the new populations in the highlands represented people who fled from the Sea People. Many of these may have been Israelites living among the Canaanites on the coastal plains.

Petrovich noted another archaeological argument that has been raised against an 18th Dynasty exodus. There is no archaeological evidence for Israel's presence in Palestine between 1400 and 1200 BC. Petrovich argues that this is not strong evidence because Israel's presence in Palestine between 1200 and 1000 BC was also almost archaeologically invisible.⁹ While cisterns, pottery, building style, and burn layers have all been suggested as evidence for Israel's entrance into the land, it can not be proven that any of these were related to Israel. Petrovich noted an analogy offered by A. R. Millard. He noted that the Amorites' presence in Babylonia had a marked impact on that nation in the early 2nd millennium BC. However, only ancient texts give testimony to their presence. While no surviving archaeological evidence proves that they were in Babylon, their presence is not doubted in the academic world.¹⁰

Kitchen also argued for a 19th Dynasty exodus on the basis of the treaty pattern found in Exodus-Leviticus, Deuteronomy, and Joshua 24. Kitchen argued that the treaty pattern required an exodus date after 1400 or 1360 BC but before 1200 or 1180 BC. Kitchen argued that the treaty pattern came into use only with king Suppiluliuma I who ruled from 1360 to 1320 BC. Suppiluliuma I was a contemporary of Amenhotep III and Ay in Egypt. Kitchen argued that Moses would not have known this pattern if he had stood on Mount Sinai in 1447 BC. The treaty pattern would only be invented half a century later.¹¹ One

⁵ Kenneth A. Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament*, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2003), 159.

J. A. Callaway, "Ai (ET-Tell): Problem Site for Biblical Archaeologists," in L. G. Perdue, et al, eds., *Archaeology and Biblical Interpretation*, (Atlanta: John Knox, 1987), 89.

⁷ During the Egyptian New Kingdom, Hazor was captured by Thutmose III, Amenhotep II, Joshua, Seti I, and perhaps Ramesses II. Hazor was no longer a significant city after this time.

⁸ Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament*, 226-29

Douglas Petrovich, "Amenhotep II and the Historicity of the Exodus-Pharaoh," *Masters Seminary Journal* 17 (2006): 84. William A. Ward, "The Present Status of Egyptian Chronology," *American Schools of Oriental Research Bulletin*, #288 (1992): 58-9.

A. R. Millard, "Amorites and Israelites: Invisible Invaders-Modern Expectation and Ancient Reality," in J. K. Hoffmeier and A. R. Millard, eds. *The Future of Biblical Archaeology: Reassessing Methodologies and Assumptions*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 152-53. See the discussion of this article in Petrovich, "Amenhotep II and the Historicity of the Exodus-Pharaoh," 84.

¹¹ Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament*, 309.

problem with this argument is that it implies that Suppiluliuma I originated the treaty pattern seen in Deuteronomy? It is one thing to claim that the full treaty pattern can first be seen in the Hittite texts. It is something very different to claim that the treaty pattern could not have existed earlier in a text that has not been preserved. Most elements of the treaty pattern can be seen in earlier treaties. Even in the Biblical texts, the treaty pattern was already a key idea in the book of Job. While the composition of Job has been dated in many time periods, the story line in Job was clearly pre-Mosaic.¹² So Kitchen's position may be an argument from silence.

Kitchen argued that Israel built the store city of Raamses. Kitchen argued that this was the old Hyksos capital at Avaris. It had been neglected before the reign of Horemhab around 1320 BC. Seti I built a palace there and Ramesses the Great was responsible for vast projects for his new capital of pi-Ramesse. Kitchen argued that Israel's oppression would then have been around 1320 to 1260 or 1250 BC. The city was abandoned around 1130 BC and it was replaced by Tanis. Kitchen argued that there was no Egyptian capital in the delta before this time.¹³ The 18th Dynasty rulers had built forts in the eastern delta but not a capital. So Kitchen argued that a 13th century exodus date is the least problematic position from all of the evidence.¹⁴ If Israel entered Palestine around 1210 BC as Kitchen suggested, then Moses would have been born around 1330 BC when Avaris was being rebuilt.

Of course, there are problems with this position as well. Avaris was Tell el-Dab'a/Qantir. Quite a bit of archaeological evidence has come from this site. It was occupied until the reign of Amenhotep II. Since he was Pharaoh of the exodus by an 18th Dynasty model, Israel could have built a store city there. The name Raamses may not require that the store city be associated with Ramesses II. Genesis 47:11 suggested that the name may already have been associated with the northeast delta in the Middle Kingdom. This possibility is strengthened by the fact that the name Ramose appeared in two texts from the 18th Dynasty. Hatshepsut's vizier Senmut was "beloved of Ramose," and Akhenaten's vizier was named Ramose. Gleason Archer argued that Ramose and Ramesses were the same name. Ramose was spelled in a way similar to the 18th Dynasty names Ahmose, Kamose, and Thomose. Archer argued that the 19th Dynasty used the geminating form of this name. The spelled it with a second S29 hieroglyph and the chick sign for a vowel. The second S29 sign gave the name the second "s" sound in the name Ramesses.¹⁵ So the name of the store city Raamses may not require a 19th Dynasty context.

While a 19th Dynasty date for Israel's sea crossing was the dominant understanding of Biblical history for several decades, the Evangelical community has slowly distanced itself from it. A 19th Dynasty date for the sea crossing has been questioned partly because it has morphed into something quite different in the academic world. Within the field of ancient Near Eastern archaeology, few authors today believe that there ever was an exodus from Egypt in any real sense. At most, some would concede that a small group of people left Egypt at some point and added their traditions to the melting pot that became Israel. An exodus of Biblical proportions is commonly ruled out in the field. Instead of defending an exodus per se, most archaeologists today claim that Israel's history began in Palestine during the Egyptian 19th Dynasty when various groups entered Palestine and formed a new ethnic group called Israel. A wide variety of suggestions have been offered for the origin of these groups and the process by which they became the ethnic group called Israel.

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Kitchen noted that almost a dozen treaties have been found at Mari and Tell Leilan. These treaties contained lists of deities as witnesses, stipulations, and curses. Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament*, 323.

The Exodus account does not require that Pharaoh ruled in the delta. It only requires that Pharaoh was present in the delta when he encountered Moses. Several explanations could be offered for his presence. Hoskins offered one explanation that is no longer popular. He noted that Amenhotep constantly referred to himself on his monuments as the "Ruler of Heliopolis." 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), 84. An association of Amenhotep II with Heliopolis in the delta could explain why he was in the region, although that is rather problematic. While James Hoffmeier defended a 19th Dynasty exodus date, he noted that the remains of a palace have been found at Avaris that was occupied between 1500 and 1450 BC. James K. Hoffmeier, "Out of Egypt: The Archaeological Context of the Exodus," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 33 (Jan./Feb. 2007), 32. The purpose of this palace may be impossible to determine, and it may have been used by a nomarch. Yet its presence suggests that Avaris was occupied during the reign of Thutmose III and that Moses might have encountered him there. Amenhotep II could have been at that palace for any number of reasons.

¹⁴ Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament*, 309-11.

¹⁵ Gleason L. Archer, "An Eighteenth Dynasty Ramesses," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 17 (1974): 49.

Adam Zertal's study of Manasseh provides a good example of a study that assumes a 19th Dynasty origin for Israel. Zertal studied the highlands of Canaan between the Middle Bronze IIB period and the Iron Age I. So his study covered roughly 1550 to 1000 BC. He studied 136 sites in this region. Zertal argued that the Iron I settlers in Manasseh used the land in a different way than the Middle Bronze and Late Bronze inhabitants of the land. Zertal noted that 43% of the MB and LB sites in Manasseh were located in the valleys while only 19% of the Iron Age I settlements were located there. Zertal noted that only 13% of MB and LB sites farmed the red mountainous soil while 38 % of the Iron Age I sites were found there. When other soil types were taken into consideration, 53% of the Iron Age I settlements were located in hilly land while only 15% of the MB and LB population had lived in the hills. Zertal argued that something must have happened to make people use the soil in a different way. Zertal suggested that the new inhabitants of the hill country could have been Israelites. They could have been forced to use the high lands because the Canaanites controlled the valleys. Zertal noted, "Despite this, we now believe that the Israelites must have lived in a kind of coexistence with the Canaanites. The Canaanites apparently allowed the Israelites to utilize some of the valley, but this was limited."¹⁶ While this is a possible interpretation of the evidence, "must" seems to be a rather strong term. Zertal noted that cooking pots in Palestine were made in different ways in the 13th, 12th, 11th, and 10th centuries. Zertal associated these changes with different populations entering the region. Zertal noted that collar-rimmed jars first appeared in the 13th and 12th centuries BC in the Jordan valley and along the eastern rivers of Palestine. Then in the 12th century BC, collar-rimmed jars appeared in the eastern and inner valleys of Manasseh. They appeared in valleys like Dothan, Tubas, Sanur, Zebabdeh, and Shechem. Collar-rimmed jars next appeared at the end of the 12th and the 11th centuries BC in the hills around the valleys. Zertal argued from this that Israel first entered Palestine from the north instead of the region around Jericho as the Bible claims.

It may be fair to note that there are quite a few assumptions behind this explanation of the evidence. First, Zertal's claims about the ethnic identity of the population are difficult to prove. Second, Zertal assumed that the growth of a highland culture demonstrated an ethnic change. The difference between 13% and 38% is significant but not conclusive. This difference could be explained by different land usage by the same population. Third, the appearance of collar-rimmed jars in the region is not conclusive evidence for an ethnic change. Water storage was clearly needed in the highlands. A new solution to the water storage problem does not prove that a new people moved into the region. It is quite possible that a potter invented a new solution to the problem and that his solution slowly became popular. Fourth, the association of collar-rimmed jars with Israel is somewhat problematic. Finally, Zertal's assumption that the collar-rimmed jars were used for water storage may or may not be right. So Zertal's case for Israel's appearance in Palestine could be valid, or it could be mistaken. If it is assumed that Israel appeared in the Levant during the 19th Dynasty, and if it is assumed that the Biblical text need not be correct, his case may seem compelling. If it is assumed that Israel entered Palestine during the 18th Dynasty, and if it is assumed that the Biblical account is correct, his evidence will not be seen as very persuasive.

Part of the archaeological evidence for Israel's origin has been sought in the use of pigs in Palestine. Since Israel considered the pig unclean, an archaeological level that avoided pigs may demonstrate Israel's appearance in the Levant. Pigs were avoided partly for religious reasons because they were declared to be unclean.¹⁷ Amy Marcus discussed the use of pigs to trace Israel's origin in the Levant. Marcus noted that the results of this research were inconclusive. Marcus noted that few people in the ancient Near East ate pigs because they were difficult to raise in that culture. Pigs required more water than other animals, and they were impossible to raise by a semi-nomadic population. Marcus noted that

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¹⁶ Adam Zertal, "Following the Pottery Trail: Israel Enters Canaan," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 17.5 (1991): 32.

¹⁷ Pigs eat almost anything including dead animals. Most carrion eating animals were classified as unclean. Pigs may also have been thought unclean as a response to Baal worship. In Egypt, the Canaanite god Baal was thought to be a manifestation of the Egyptian god Seth. In one of the most famous Egyptian myths, Seth defeated Horus by taking the form of a black pig. In that disguise, he was able to destroy one of Horus' eyes. So the pig became an abomination to the gods and their followers. The worship of Seth/Baal did not share this Egyptian abomination of the pig. For one version of this myth, see James B. Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1955), 10.

across the ancient Near East, poor people ate pigs while the upper classes rarely ate them. So it is impossible to identify an Israelite population by the absence of pigs in their diet.¹⁸

Under the influence of authors like Thompson and Lemche in the Copenhagen school, Israel's appearance in the Levant during the 19th Dynasty has increasingly been questioned. In 1998, Israel Finkelstein delivered a speech to the Israel Exploration Society that demonstrated a seismic shift within the field of Biblical Archaeology. Before this time, Israel's appearance in Palestine was sought in the material culture of the Levant. Israel's appearance had been seen in the use of collar-rimmed jars, four-room houses, and the refusal to eat pigs. Finkelstein noted that the Israelites had not brought a change in agriculture, pottery, and architecture. Finkelstein noted that four-room houses had been in use in Ammon across the Jordan, and collar-rimmed jars had been in use in the 13th century BC. Finkelstein argued that the material culture associated with Israel was all in place before Israel appeared in the land.¹⁹

It may be fair to argue that the search for an Israelite horizon in the archaeological record may be unnecessary. It is often assumed that Israel's appearance in the Levant should be marked by a change in artifacts. This may be misleading. A careful study of the Pentateuch may suggest that Israel entered Canaan with a material culture that closely resembled the material culture of Canaan.²⁰ Exodus 12:32-36 noted that the Egyptians feared their own destruction and urged Israelites to leave the land. In this climate of fear, the Israelites demanded payment for their years of service in Egypt. The Israelites left Egypt with their own flocks and herds. They also left Egypt with Egyptian gold, silver, and clothing. Moses claimed that they had plundered the Egyptians as God had promised in Exodus 3:21-22. What became of the gold and silver? Much of it was used to build both the golden calf at Sinai and the tabernacle with its fixtures. It is impossible to know how much bronze, gold and silver were still available among Israel's tribes as they left Sinai. Deuteronomy 29:5 noted that Israelites clothing and shoes had not worn out in the wilderness, but was this a miracle of preservation or provision? Israelites would have made clothing from the wool of their flocks and shoes from the hides of their herds. Deuteronomy 2:1-3 noted that Israel had circled Mount Seir for many days before moving north into Canaan.²¹ Mount Seir was Edomite territory, and Deuteronomy 1:44 noted that Israel had fought the Amorites in Seir.²² Mount Seir was southeast of settled regions of Palestine, but it was not impossibly far from those regions. So Israel lived for many days within reach of the trade routes and traders. It is impossible to determine how many traders sold their wares to the Israelites in the wilderness, but there could easily have been a lively commercial exchange. If so, Israel may have entered Canaan with a material culture that came at least partly from the Levant. While Canaanite trade with Israel can not be proven, its lack would seem rather surprising. Why would traders avoid such a large potential market? If such trade did occur, it may be difficult to find a uniquely Israelite horizon in the archaeological evidence.²³

Aharoni suggested an unusual solution to the problems associated with Israel's origin in Palestine. Aharoni suggested that there were two Israelite immigrations into the land. Aharoni suggested that the first wave of Israelite immigrants entered the land in the 14th century BC. This group passed peacefully through

¹⁸ Amy Dockser Marcus, *The View from Nebo: How Archaeology Is Rewriting the Bible and Reshaping the Middle East*, (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 2000), 23-6.

¹⁹ See the discussion of Finkelstein in Marcus, *The View from Nebo*, 21.

²⁰ While Finkelstein would not agree with the suggestion made here, even he noted that immigrants into Palestine may have had similar pottery to the Canaanites. Finkelstein noted that groups undergoing sedentarization could absorb traditions from the well-developed cultures in their areas. That would be especially likely if the new group had contact with the settled population before they entered the region. I. Finkelstein, *The Archaeology of the Israelite Settlement*, (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1988), 313. See the discussion in Edwin Yamauchi, "The Current State of Old Testament Historiography," 1-36 in A. R. Millard, et al, eds. *Faith, Tradition, and History: Old Testament Historiography in its Near Eastern Context*, (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1994), 34-5.

²¹ Hoskins suggested the Israelites spent 11 months at Sinai and 37 years around Kadesh. Hoskins also noted that Israel's itinerary is scattered through several books and that Israel changed its location over a hundred times. Hoskins, *From the Nile to Nebo*, 91-4. This could place Israel near a trade center at least periodically.

²² Gen. 33:14-16; 36:8-9

²³ Alan Millard paralleled Israel's appearance in Palestine with the Amorites appearance in Babylon around 1900 BC. Millard noted that a number of texts from Mesopotamia record the arrival of the Amorites in the region even though the archaeological record gives no evidence for them. Millard, "Amorites and Israelites: Invisible Invaders - Modern Expectation and Ancient Reality," 148-60.

the region that would later be occupied by Edom and Moab. This group was the house of Joseph. It captured Jericho and Bethel. Aharoni argued that a second wave of Israelites then entered the land in the 13th century BC. This group faced opposition from the Edomites and Moabites who had also entered the region around the same time.²⁴ Needless to say, this is quite a different picture of Israel's origin than the account recorded in the Biblical text.

B) THE 18TH DYNASTY EXODUS REVIVAL

While belief in a 19th Dynasty exodus dominated Old Testament scholarship for several decades, the last few years have seen a tidal surge back toward an 18th Dynasty date in the Evangelical world.²⁵ This change in direction can be seen in an article published by Bryant Wood in the *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*. Wood concluded with this summary.

With new discoveries and additional analysis, the arguments for a 13th-century exodus-conquest have steadily eroded since the death of its founder and main proponent William F. Albright in 1971. Although Kenneth A. Kitchen has made a determined effort to keep the theory alive, there is no valid evidence, biblical or extra-biblical, to sustain it. Biblical data clearly place the exodus-conquest in the 15th century BC, and extra-biblical evidence strongly supports this dating. Since the 13th-century exodus-conquest model is no longer tenable, evangelicals should abandon the theory.²⁶

Wood's article introduced rather little new evidence into the discussion, but it characterized a new evaluation of the evidence among evangelical scholars. While some of the leading conservative Old Testament scholars like K. A. Kitchen and Alan Millard still defend a 19th Dynasty date for Israel's sea crossing, much of the Evangelical world is moving in another direction. This new defense of an 18th Dynasty exodus can be seen in John Bimson's book *Redating the Exodus and Conquest*. Bimson first summarized the positions taken by a number of authors on the question. He noted that one argument raised in support of a 19th Dynasty exodus was that the book of Judges did not mention the campaign of Seti I and Ramesses II. Bimson noted that Merenptah's stela did record a clash with Israel, but the book of Judges made no mention of the conflict.²⁷ Bimson noted that Ramesses III also campaigned in Palestine without being mentioned in Judges. Bimson noted that Garstang had argued in 1931 that the book of Judges did give indirect references to Egypt. Garstang suggested that the periods of peace in Judges reflected periods of effective Egyptian control of the land. Garstang argued that the author of Judges gave God all of the credit for peaceful conditions instead of Egypt. Bimson noted that Israel did not in fact suffer from Egyptian control of the land. Bimson also noted that the purpose of Judges was not to record every detail of Israel's history. Judges was only intended to record Israel's rebellion against Yahweh and the chastisement that followed.²⁸

Bimson discussed K. A. Kitchen's argument that Israel's exodus must have occurred during the reign of Ramesses II. Kitchen noted that Ramesses II led either one or two expeditions north of the Arnon into Moab's territory. Kitchen argued that if Israel was already in the region, Israel would have been

²⁴ See the discussion of Aharoni's position in Yamauchi, "The Current State of Old Testament Historiography," 15.

²⁵ Charles H. Dyer, "The Date of the Exodus Reexamined," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 140 (1983): 225-43. John J. Bimson and David Livingston, "Redating the Exodus," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 13 (1987): 40-53. P. J. Ray Jr., "The Duration of the Israelite Sojourn in Egypt," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 24 (1986): 231-48. Harold W. Hoehner, "The Duration of the Egyptian Bondage," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 126 (1969): 306-16. William H. Stiebing Jr. "Should the Exodus and the Israelite Settlement be Redated?" *Biblical Archaeology Review* 11 (1985): 58-69.

²⁶ Bryant G. Wood, "The Rise and Fall of the 13th Century Exodus-Conquest Theory," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 48 (2005): 489.

Gabriel Barkay argued that Merenptah was the only Egyptian Pharaoh to express an interest in the highlands of Palestine. Barkay surveyed New Kingdom Egyptian artifacts from the Jerusalem area, and argued that Merenptah may have built an Egyptian temple a mile north of Jerusalem. Barkay noted that even during the Amarna Age, Egypt had placed only a small Egyptian garrison at Jerusalem. He noted that the Egyptians showed little interest in the hill country and they engaged in only minimal activity in the highlands. Gabriel Barkay, "A Late Bronze Age Egyptian Temple in Jerusalem?" *Israel Exploration Journal* 46 (1996): 23-43.

²⁸ John J. Bimson, *Redating the Exodus and Conquest*, (Sheffield: JSOT, 1978), 74-8.

mentioned in Ramesses II's texts along with Se'ir and Moab. Bimson replied that Number 23:21-26 did record that Hebrews settled north of the Arnon, but Moabites lived there as well. Bimson noted that Moabites still lived in the region in Judges 3:12-4, although Judges 3:28-30 noted that they were routed when they penetrated the region west of the Jordan. Bimson suggested that Ramesses II did not mention the Israelites because the Moabites were still the dominant population in the region.²⁹ Bimson's case could be strengthened by noting that the Egyptian texts usually mentioned cities and ethnic groups that opposed Egyptian interests. In the middle years of Israel's period of the Judges, Israelites in the highlands had limited interaction with Egypt's domination of the city states in the lowlands. If the Israelites did not threaten Egypt's control of the coast and the trade routes, Ramesses II would have had no reason to fight them or mention them in his annals.³⁰

Bimson discussed at some length the interpretations that have been offered for I Kings 6:1. This verse claimed that Solomon began building the Jerusalem temple 480 years after the exodus. If Solomon began building the temple in 966 BC,³¹ the exodus would have occurred in 1446 BC. Bimson noted that this verse involves a number of problems. The number may be incorrect. The LXX gives 440 years for the same period. The number 480 might also be artificial. It could represent 12 generations of 40 years. Bimson noted that this option has been defended in several forms. It has been suggested that the 480 years of I Kings 6:1 could be an artificial parallel to a period of 480 years from the building of the first temple to the founding of the second temple after the return from captivity. However, as Bimson noted, the suggestion of a second 480 year period is both artificial and controversial. The 480 years could represent the total ministries of selected people who were contemporaries.³² However, this can not be proven correct. Bimson argued that it is difficult to add numbers in the Biblical text and arrive at a figure of 480 years. He concluded that the number 480 might not be exactly correct, and the author of Judges clearly had no intention of creating a period of 480 years for his account. Yet the 480 year date should also not be dismissed as valueless.³³

Bimson also noted that the Philistines only entered Palestine around 1200 BC. A 19th Dynasty date for Israel's sea crossing would suggest that the Philistines entered Palestine only a few years after Israel's entrance into the region. The fact that Israel only struggled with the Philistines late in the period of Judges then becomes very hard to understand. The entire period of the Judges should have reflected a constant struggle against the Philistines. Yet after a brief mention in Judges 3:31, the Philistines did not become an important power in Judges until just before the time of Jephthah. The Philistines did not become the dominant power in the region until the time of Samson, the last story in the main series of the book. Bimson argued that the greater part of the Judges should then have occurred before 1200 BC.³⁴

Bimson also discussed at length the chronological problems associated with genealogies during the Judges period. Bimson noted that I Chronicles 6:33-37 gave the genealogy of Heman the singer. He served before the tabernacle in David's time. Bimson noted that this genealogy claimed 18 generations between Korah at the exodus and Heman in David's time. Bimson noted that it is difficult to explain 18

²⁹ Bimson, *Redating the Exodus and Conquest*, 78-9.

³⁰ Redford rejected the historical validity of an exodus and conquest accounts. However, his comments about the highlands of Palestine are well taken. He noted that the highlands were partly emptied of population during the 18th Dynasty. He also noted that the highlands had little interest for the Egyptians who didn't even want to police it. Redford argued that the Egyptians did want to deny use of the highlands to anyone who might threaten their interests. Redford noted that during the Amarna Age, the highlands of Palestine were divided into two areas: the lands of Jerusalem, and the hill country of Shechem. Redford noted that these areas were thinly populated, and Egypt left control of the regions in the hands of local rulers. Donald B. Redford, *Egypt, Canaan, and Israel in Ancient Times*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 269.

³¹ In I Kngs. 14:25, Sheshonq I invaded Judah in Rehoboam's 5th year. Sheshonq I ruled from 945 to 924 BC, and he invaded Judah in 925 BC. Solomon reigned for 40 years. So Solomon's 4th year would be 966 or 967 BC. For a defense of Israel's chronology based on a 19th dynasty exodus, see the discussion in James K. Hoffmeier, "What is the Biblical Date for the Exodus? A Response to Bryant Wood," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 50 (2007): 230.

³² Bimson noted that Kitchen argued for a similar position. Kitchen paralleled this view of Judges to the Egyptian Turin Papyrus where a similar pattern can be seen. Bimson, *Redating the Exodus and Conquest*, 89-90.

³³ Bimson, *Redating the Exodus and Conquest*, 81-6. For a recent discussion of the evidence for understanding 480 years, see Rodger C. Young and Bryant G. Wood, "A Critical Analysis of the Evidence from Ralph Hawkins for a Late-Date Exodus-Conquest," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 51/2 (2008): 225-39.

³⁴ Bimson, *Redating the Exodus and Conquest*, 93-4.

generations in one family during a period of 170 years. This suggests that the sea crossing must have happened much earlier than the 19th Dynasty.³⁵

Roger Young and Doug Petrovich raised a different argument for an 18th Dynasty exodus. They noted that the book of Jubilees mentioned two Jubilees. Drawing on Ezekiel 40:1, the book of Jubilees described a Jubilee that would have occurred in 574 BC. The Talmud also mentioned a Jubilee 49 years earlier during Josiah's era. Jubilees were at least supposed to occur every 49 years. Counting 49 year time periods backward from this year would produce an exodus at 1446 BC and an entrance into the land in 1406 BC.³⁶

Another argument that could be raised in favor of an 18th Dynasty exodus is that the 19th Dynasty ruler Ramesses II does not fit the Biblical description of the exodus ruler very well. Exodus 1:8 claimed that a new king rose who did not "know" Joseph. This would seem to fit better with the rise of the 18th Dynasty than a mid-19th Dynasty ruler like Ramesses II. Did the 18th Dynasty rulers "know" Joseph? Did Seti I "know" Joseph? Beyond that, Exodus 2:23 claimed that the pharaoh of the oppression had died. After his death, Israel called to God for deliverance, and God met Moses in the wilderness. In Exodus 4:19, God sent Moses back to Egypt. God promised Moses that all the men who were seeking his life were dead. If the exodus occurred during the reign of Ramesses II, how could Ramesses II have died before Moses returned to Egypt? If the Pharaoh of the exodus was Merenptah, how could he have encountered Israel in Palestine in his 5th year? The chronology does not seem to work very well at all.

C) THE NATURE OF EARLY ISRAEL

Alongside the chronological debate over Israel's origin in the land, there has been a substantial debate for the nature of Israel's entrance into the land. Three main models have dominated the academic discussion. The first model drew heavily on the Old Testament text. It assumed that ancient Israel entered Palestine in a military conquest. In the mainstream academic orbit, this perspective was defended by W. F. Albright. He used the assumption of an Israelite conquest to interpret the archaeological evidence from the Levant.³⁷ Archaeological evidence has been arranged both for and against early and late conquest dates. J. Maxwell Miller expressed a conclusion that has become common in the mainstream orbit. He wrote the following.

It appears to the present writer that the archaeological evidence available at the moment neither supports, nor is easily accommodated with, any particular date for the Israelite conquest. In fact, the situation with regard to the conquest is not unlike that of the patriarchs. Were we dependent upon archaeological and other nonbiblical evidence alone, we would have no reason even to suppose that such a conquest ever occurred.³⁸

While this statement reflects a common assumption in the mainstream orbit, it is not widely supported in the Evangelical community.

The second model for understanding Israel's appearance in Palestine was proposed by Albrecht Alt. He read the book of Joshua in a different way. He argued that Israel entered Palestine by a peaceful

³⁵ Bimson, *Redating the Exodus and Conquest*, 95-7.

³⁶ Roger Young, "The Talmud's Two Jubilees and Their Relevance to the Date of the Exodus," *The Westminster Theological Journal* 68 (2006): 71-83. Roger Young, "Evidence for Inerrancy from a Second Unexpected Source: The Jubilee and Sabbatical Cycles," *Bible and Spade*, 21.4 (2008): 109-122. Douglas Petrovich, "Amenhotep II and the Historicity of the Exodus-Pharaoh," *The Master's Seminary Journal* 17 (2006): 83-4.

³⁷ Zertal noted that archaeologists today no longer understand the evidence from the Levant in the same way that Albright interpreted it. It is no longer though easy to associate a series of destructions with Israel's entrance into the land. Zertal, "Following the Pottery Trail: Israel Enters Canaan," 30. Of course, that should not be surprising if the date defended for Israel's appearance in the region was incorrect by two centuries. Assuming a 19th Dynasty exodus and conquest requires that the archaeological evidence from Palestine be interpreted in that context, and the archaeological evidence may or may not comfortably work in that context.

³⁸ J. Maxwell Miller, "Israelite History," in D. A. Knight and G. M. Tucker, eds. *The Hebrew Bible and Its Modern Interpreters*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 11. See the discussion of this quotation in Yamauchi, "The Current State of Old Testament Historiography," 17.

infiltration instead of a military conquest. Alt's model described the settlement of Israel's central highland, and little archaeological evidence has been found to support or refute his suggestion for the history of that region. Yohanan Aharoni surveyed the archaeological evidence for upper Galilee. He argued that the region saw centuries of peaceful settlement.³⁹ Aharoni suggested that two waves of Israelites entered Palestine. He suggested that the first wave came in the 14th century BC. Aharoni suggested that this first wave was made up on the house of Joseph. It passed through Edom and Moab to capture Jericho and Bethel. Aharoni suggested that a second wave of Israelites entered Palestine in the 13th century BC. Aharoni suggested that some Canaanite cities were captured by the first wave of Israelites, but the Israelites also peacefully infiltrated parts of Galilee, the hill country of Ephraim, the hill country of Judah, and the Negev. Aharoni suggested that a peaceful immigration into these areas was possible because they were only sparsely settled.⁴⁰

The third model for understanding Israel's appearance in Palestine was first suggested by George Mendenhall. He argued that archaeological evidence was of only limited value in understanding Israel's origin. He claimed that sociological research provided a better model than archaeology. He argued that the Israelites were not immigrants into Palestine. They were Canaanites who revolted against the oppression by the rulers of the Canaanite city state rulers. According to Mendenhall, Israel's origin occurred in a revolt against feudal oppression in Palestine. Mendenhall's position was then adapted by Norman Gottwald into a view that resembled a Marxist revolution. While Mendenhall's position resembled Gottwald's position, the two were very critical of each other.⁴¹ A. J. Hauser argued that Mendenhall read into the past socio-economic and religious perspectives that are common in the modern world. Hauser argued that this should not be surprising. Mendenhall emptied the Biblical account of historical content. Hauser argued that this created a vacuum that had to be filled by something. So it was filled with current sociological perspectives.⁴²

³⁹

Zertal, "Following the Pottery Trail: Israel Enters Canaan," 30. If an 18th Dynasty exodus date is assumed instead of a 19th Dynasty date, it is fair to ask if Aharoni's evidence for peace and stability around Galilee might reflect conditions in the region for the first few centuries after Israel entered Palestine.

⁴⁰ See the discussion in Yamauchi, "The Current State of Old Testament Historiography," 16.

⁴¹ Discussing Israel's origin in Palestine, Yamauchi noted the following. "Though scholars are united in their lack of confidence in Scripture and supremely confident in their own theories, they are highly critical of each other's views. Mendenhall is rebuked by Ahlström and Lemche for overgeneralization. Gottwald, who acknowledges that he derived the original inspiration for his 'revolt' model from Mendenhall, is nonetheless scathingly attacked by Mendenhall. Gottwald is criticized by Lemche for having assumed a tripartite system for ancient Near Eastern society, rather than a socio-economic continuum." Yamauchi, "The Current State of Old Testament Historiography," 31.

⁴² A. J. Hauser, "Israel's Conquest of Palestine: A Peasants' Rebellion?" *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 7 (1978): 9. See the use of Hauser's position in Yamauchi, "The Current State of Old Testament Historiography," 18-9.