

# ORIGINS <sup>OF</sup> THE HEBREWS

*NEW EVIDENCE OF ISRAELITES IN EGYPT  
FROM JOSEPH TO THE EXODUS*



**DOUGLAS PETROVICH**



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*of the*  
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INTRODUCTION BY WILLIAM D. BARRICK

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by Douglas Petrovich

First published in 2021 by  
New Creation, Nashville

Cover illustration: Joseph (as newly-appointed vizier, left) and Moses (as leader of the exodus, right),  
drawn by Dawid Pieterse

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Photo sources:

Annales du Service des Antiquités de l'Égypte: Figure 7

Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften: Figures 34, 36

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ISBNs: 978-0-9990409-5-9 Hardback | 978-0-9990409-7-3 Ebook

New Creation  
Nashville, Tennessee, USA

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**newcreation**

NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE | 2021

This book is dedicated to Professor Manfred Bietak and the entire team from the Austrian Archaeological Institute of Cairo, whose indefatigable efforts and passion for their work at ancient Avaris have led to an amazing array of results and a plethora of outstanding published materials, and without whom the majority of the contributions presented here would not have been possible.

“Truth is unkillable!” – Balthasar Hübmaier

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# INTRODUCTION

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AS A UNIT OF TEXT, GENESIS 37–EXODUS 19 of the Hebrew Bible provides a history of the Hebrew people from the nineteenth century BC through the mid-fifteenth century BC. The narrative takes place mainly within the geographic and cultural context of Egypt (Fig. 1). The Joseph narrative initiates the detailed history already prophetically revealed to Abraham in Genesis 15:13–14. As with any living history, the narrative gets interrupted by events unrelated to the Hebrews' time in Egypt, but significant for understanding the internal tensions among the descendants of Jacob which later impact their history, even in Egypt. For example, Genesis 38 focuses on Judah and Tamar, while Genesis 48–49 centers more on Jacob. The first of these interruptions demonstrates that God did not choose Judah because he was less a sinner or more righteous than his brothers, but because of God's own grace and sovereign purpose. The second of these interruptions reveals significant facts regarding the future of Jacob's descendants when they return to Canaan, the land promised to Abraham's descendants.

A specific 430-year period (1876–1446 BC) in Egyptian history and culture ought to receive intense examination by biblical scholars. One question asked by scholars should be whether the author of the biblical narrative writes with firsthand knowledge and experience. Readers of the Joseph story inevitably inquire about any evidence from Egyptian literature, official correspondence, inscriptions, monuments, or cultural remains uncovered in archaeological excavations that might offer confirmation of the biblical account. This inquisitive spirit desires knowledge about the relationship of the biblical account to actual persons and events in Egyptian history. In other words, everyone tests (at least within their own minds) the factuality of the Genesis narrative.

Most of the scholarly and academic community tend to preoccupy themselves with a comparison of the historiography of ancient Near Eastern peoples with the historiography manifested by modern histories. No matter who wrote Genesis, the book is ancient and arose within the cultures of the ancient Near East. Therefore, it seems logical to assume that its historiography would follow the model of other ancient Near Eastern historical writings. Since many of the ancient histories mix factual accounts with fiction and myth, why not find the same within the pages of the Hebrew Bible? The typical cop out, however, is to claim that it does not really matter whether the Genesis narrative includes both factual history and fictional stories — all that matters is that the theological and moral message the text conveys represents what God and his chosen authors and editors intended. Such an approach is unsatisfactory, because it convicts the text of inaccuracy and untrustworthiness without directly confronting the text with the careful examination it deserves. After all, if someone were to question my ownership of my home, I am going to present verifiable documentation of historical facts as proof of my ownership. If any part of the documentation ends up being demonstrably inaccurate, mythical, or merely “word of mouth,” I stand to lose possession of my home. The Bible deserves to have its witnesses heard before its contents are demoted to historical fiction.

In *Origins of the Hebrews*, Petrovich calls witnesses to stand before the jury in the attempt to establish beyond reasonable doubt that the Joseph and exodus narratives qualify as accurate history rather than

fiction. Refusal to give serious consideration to this evidence would be tantamount to violating legal precedent by abolishing witnesses from the courtroom just to allow lawyers to argue their case solely on the basis of their personal opinions and prejudices rather than arguing on the basis of the evidence. No doubt some lawyers hope that the judge and jury will ignore the lack of solid evidence and reward them for their eloquence and creativity. The witnesses in this case involving the biblical narrative include the archaeological (physical and cultural artifacts including statues, figurines, monuments, and buildings) and written (documents and epigraphical items, including inscriptions) evidences.

Typically, Bible believers understand that the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt took place, but they have no idea why the date of that event remains problematic for a majority of biblical scholars. Historiographers and Bible interpreters must accept the challenge of distinguishing fact from fiction. Archaeologists uncover the remains of the past in order to reconstruct life and history as it was. However, such a task considers that those remains comprise the evidence, but that evidence still must be interpreted. In other words, scholars well might agree upon what the evidence is, but disagree completely on what that evidence actually means. Evidence means nothing unless we rightly understand it, relate it correctly to other evidence (including relevant written documents like the Hebrew Bible), and rightly interpret it. For both lay persons and scholars to reach a correct interpretation of the evidence, they must have access to all the available evidence.

Petrovich meticulously presents the available evidence. Some of it either has been previously unknown or purposely has been ignored by many scholars. For example, he surveys the chronological synchrony and inscriptional evidence for the potential mention of Joseph as Sobekemḥat, treating readers to a rich survey of the evidence epigraphically, linguistically, historically, and biblically. His discussion of the jubilent-man determinative in Middle Egyptian represents a possible solution to a long-standing question about its meaning. In addition to identifying Joseph, Petrovich proposes that the large Egyptianized Asiatic Residence excavated at Avaris, which was built on top of the foundations of what may have been Jacob's four-room house, was the residence of Joseph's two eldest sons, Manasseh and Ephraim.

No matter what one might think of the hypothesis in *The World's Oldest Alphabet* regarding the invention of the Proto-Consonantal Hebrew (PCH) script by Manasseh (perhaps together with his brother, Ephraim), inscriptional evidence offers intriguing parallels to the biblical record within the Egyptian setting. In *Origins of the Hebrews*, the author builds upon that prior volume and adds a treasure trove of pertinent evidence regarding the presence of the Hebrew people in Egypt. By means of a variety of evidential types, Petrovich offers an interpretation that harmonizes with the biblical record. Although a few of his interpretive solutions might invite challenges and criticisms, the overall support for the historical authenticity and accuracy of Scripture remains the outcome.

His interaction with the scholarly community will advance everyone's awareness of the available evidence. We all stand to gain much — especially a more accurate understanding of the historicity of the biblical text itself. *Origins of the Hebrews* presents a body of evidence that must be read, not just cited, reviewed, or debated. Laying aside preconceptions and assumptions, as well as one's favored position on the historicity and dating of Genesis 37–Exodus 19, readers must study this carefully constructed case meticulously and objectively. I also would recommend a careful and objective reading of that textual unit

within the Hebrew Bible before launching into any response (positive or negative) to this volume. No matter where the reader ends up, the read will prove quite worthwhile.

William D. Barrick

# PREFACE

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AS WITH ITS COMPANION VOLUME, *The World's Oldest Alphabet: Hebrew as the Language of the Proto-Consonantal Script* (Carta 2016), this monograph represents the culmination of an enormous amount of research and synthesization of historical events and archaeological artifacts that center around the plight of the Israelites in Egypt before the exodus. Evidence of Hebrew residence in this foreign land has been so elusive that such a discovery could be viewed as stumbling on the holy grail of biblical archaeology. Hoffmeier (2014: 48) once wrote that in the case of the Israelite sojourn and exodus, no clearly identifiable support has come to light in Egypt until now. Ironically, few scholars have engaged in any serious pursuit of potential evidence, even among those who have published on the subject.

Instead, an extensive portion of the scholarly world has abandoned the picture presented by the historical record in the Bible, which indicates that Jacob's descendants grew into a nation within the comfort of a divinely prepared incubator (Paul Benware 1988: personal communication), namely Egypt. In lieu of this time-honored account, many scholars have turned to speculative theories about how Israelite origins should be connected to Transjordan and/or locations even further to the east, as Mullins (2015: 520–521) has documented. Are these alternative options appropriate when such minimal effort has been devoted to examining carefully and objectively whether Egypt, in fact, might be the correct location of their origins?

In *The World's Oldest Alphabet* (Petrovich 2016b: 186–187), I noted that among the scholars who participated at the conference Thomas Levy held in 2013 on the topic of the exodus, not one of them even commented about personal research that was or is being conducted to determine if such tangible evidence of Israelite origins in Egypt exists. Bietak (2015: 17) conceded that the storyline of the exodus suggests elements that are historical, but even he offered no signs of having searched intently for historical evidence connected to the biblical narrative. Apparently, from the time that this book was published until now, no other findings have been announced or published by any of these scholars, or by other credentialed scholars who did not participate in Levy's conference, for that matter.

The reason, of course, is that contemporary, academic ideology casts the sojourn-exodus events as unhistorical or mythical. As one author concluded, “[T]here is not a word in a text or an archaeological artifact that lends credence to the biblical narrative as it now stands. Egypt remains silent, as it always has. From the Egyptian viewpoint, the Old Testament narrative records a series of earthshaking episodes that never happened” (Ward 1997: 105). A later author boldly asserted that the Egyptian and ANE (ancient Near Eastern) textual and archaeological evidence does not corroborate later biblical accounts of a sojourn and exodus (Mumford: 2018: 267).

Yet another author even vilified those who would engage in this type of research. “Since the rise of humanism in the Renaissance and the development of modern literary and historical methods of criticism, few events have been as controversial for historians as the exodus. The traditional approach to the historicity of the exodus gave large weight to the assertions of the biblical narrative, even when that narrative itself provided acknowledged ambiguities or even seeming contradictions. . . . The challenge to explain

the exodus and to affirm its historicity has encouraged a rationalizing of biblical texts, leading to ‘wishful thinking or special pleading’” (Frerichs 1997: 11, 12).

The present volume steers its readers directly into the eye of the storm that was stirred up by such scholars as these, claiming to present—for the first time in history—the unexpected discovery of interconnecting archaeological, epigraphical, and iconographical evidence that attests to the presence of Israelites in Egypt over almost the entirety of the 430 years (Exod 12:40–41) that the Bible requires for their inhabitation of Egypt during the second millennium BC (Petrovich 2019: 21–41). This evidence is vital to the present volume’s title, because one of ancient Israel’s creeds (Deut 26:5–8) emphasizes the sojourn and exodus from Egypt as foundational to Israel’s origins as a people (Hoffmeier 2014: 46).

In Dorothea Arnold’s article (2010: 184) that attempts to identify the Asiatics encountered in Egypt of the late MK (Middle Kingdom, *ca.* 2025–1674 BC), she noted that in addition to her contribution of examining images to address this question, archaeological and written sources also must be taken into account to reach her stated goal. This very approach is followed in the present volume. Contrary to the dismissive admonitions of Frerichs quoted above, this book documents Egyptian texts and archaeological artifacts that *do* lend credence to the biblical narrative about Israelites in Egypt for 430 years, all without wishful thinking or special pleading. I have complete confidence that the objective reader will find this evidence to be both powerful and persuasive.

From my experience as a professional scholar and researcher in this field, I am convinced that finding objective and open-minded readers is a far greater challenge. A case in point is the reaction related to the publication of *The World’s Oldest Alphabet*. While the official year of its publication is 2016, the book did not exit the printing press until January of 2017. Therefore, apart from Prof. Eugene Merrill, the man who graciously wrote the introduction, no one had access to the manuscript before this. However, two renowned scholars wrote public denunciations of the book’s thesis *before* the book was available to read: Christopher Rollston (23 Nov 2016 and 10 Dec 2016), a Semitics scholar who specializes in the epigraphy of the Iron Age (after 1200 BC), but not the Bronze Age (before 1200 BC), and Thomas Schneider (23 Nov 2016), an Egyptologist.

A third scholar, Alan Millard (14 April 2017), wrote a public condemnation of the thesis after the book already was in publication. However, before I sent the final version to Carta for publication, I had invited Prof. Millard to read my manuscript for critical suggestions for improvement. In a personal reply to me, he wrote, “My understanding of the alphabet’s origins and early history would make it awkward for me to write an Introduction to your volume, as you kindly suggest. . . . I fear I shall not be comfortable reading more of your work and so ask you to excuse me.” In other words, he declared in advance that he would not read the book. After I read his negative review from April 2017, it was abundantly clear that he indeed did not read the book, based on statements in his review that would not be made by anyone who had read the book. How can experts in the field denounce the book’s thesis without even viewing the evidence?

Three world-class scholars who are obligated professionally to read new works in their fields before drawing any conclusions about them, let alone commenting on them publicly, instead chose to condemn this book’s thesis without ever seeing the evidence or evaluating its argumentation. How is this possible? One of the hallmarks of sound scholarship is objectivity. Another hallmark is an approach to research



that includes the willingness to explore all possible options and to change one's view if enough evidence exists to overturn it. If a credentialed scholar in one of my fields of expertise claims to have gained fresh insights or conclusions after completing groundbreaking research, I am obligated to read and study these claims before formulating an opinion or advising others on their validity. However, this clearly is not the approach that these scholars followed. If anyone is interested in reading their critiques and my responses, all of them are available to download from my academia.edu webpage without cost.

Some will criticize the present writer in ignorance for presenting major, field-altering discoveries and theories in the form of a book, rather than in a series of journal articles. The truth is that I actually attempted to publish them piecemeal in scholarly journals. However, with each of the discoveries standing alone, the editors of these unnamed journals and their peer reviewers refused to take my research seriously, due to their biases against a favorable view of the historicity of the applicable biblical events. One journal's editor told me that he could not find any problem with my scholarship, but that he was rejecting my work solely because the archaeological data and the corresponding biblical text allegedly stand 1000 years apart, which is no more than mere speculation based on unproven presuppositions. Only when the discoveries documented in this volume are woven together do they have the power and persuasiveness to break the bonds of presuppositions so ingrained that they inhibit objectivity and genuine scholarly integrity.

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Ph.D., M.A., Th.M., M.Div.  
Katy, Texas  
May 2021

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

---

THE AUTHOR IS INDEBTED TO MANY PEOPLE for the completion of this volume, not all of whom can be recognized here, but the book and its findings certainly could not be presented without their contributions. I will begin by noting some of the amazing and impactful professors I had as a student who has completed four postsecondary degrees with their help and encouragement: H. Dennis Fisher, Paul Benware, Gregg Quiggle, Rupert Simms, Donald McDougall, Robert L. Thomas, William Barrick, David C. Deuel, Timothy Harrison, Ronald Leprohon, Clemens Reichel, and Douglas Frayne.

Far too many people who have a lot to say about interaction between the ancient Israelites and Egyptians never studied Egyptology formally, a reality that is difficult to comprehend. For example, the question of the timing of the exodus is not solved with the archaeology of Canaan, but the archaeology of Egypt, even though most literature on the topic does not reflect this reality. The timing of the conquest is what the archaeology of Canaan solves. Therefore, I chose to focus the first minor of my Ph.D. degree on ancient Egyptian language. Accordingly, both I and this book are indebted permanently to Ronald Leprohon, who taught me ME (Middle Egyptian) and LE (Late Egyptian) language, and to Mary-Ann Pouls Wegner, who taught me Egyptian archaeology. Without this foundation and the extraordinary training I received at the University of Toronto, I never would have stumbled into virtually any of the discoveries documented in this book or its companion volume, and I would remain unqualified to write either volume.

Given that *Origins of the Hebrews* focuses on a Levantine-Asiatic community that resided in Egypt, equal importance falls on the archaeology of the land of Canaan, and especially on its various people groups. For this reason, the fact that Syro-Palestinian archaeology is the major of my Ph.D. program has paid huge dividends toward what is documented within the book. Therefore, sincere thanks go to Timothy Harrison, my former advisor at the University of Toronto, who always pushed me to study the history and archaeology of more time periods and geographical areas of the ANE than I would have chosen to study for myself. Hopefully, he would be happy to know that I push my students to do the very same thing.

Thanks also are owed to Bryant Wood, my archaeology mentor, who has maintained his passion for the Bible and for illuminating the accuracy of its historical narratives while investing a great deal of time and energy into learning about the pottery and material culture of the ancient people who resided in Egypt and the southern Levant. He guided me through the challenges of my Ph.D. studies, even when they seemed overwhelming and insurmountable, and for this he always will have a special place in my heart. I am especially grateful for his help in understanding many of the nuances related to the identity of the initial Asiatics at Avaris as being Hebrews, and how the artifactual record reinforces this reality. I sowed seed and reaped a glorious harvest in the very soil that he strenuously plowed.

Speaking of Avaris, a large portion of this volume is devoted to the ancient Egyptian site that is known to students of the Bible as *Rameses*, which toponym actually can be rendered into English with several spellings. The Austrian excavators at Avaris, with whose publications I interact at length in the present volume, always were extremely helpful and willing to answer my questions fully. I especially am grateful

to the following members of their highly professional team of archaeologists and specialists: Manfred Bietak, Irene Forstner-Müller, Robert Schiestl, Bettina Bader, Ernst Czerny, and David Aston. Their dig is recognized throughout the archaeological community involved at sites around the ANE not only as one of the most prolific at producing data but one of the most highly respected, professionally.

As many people have noted, the strength of a volume with technical information such as this can be enhanced heavily by strong visual aids. For this reason, this volume and I are deeply indebted to those who have granted permission for me to publish photos, maps, and other images, including the Egypt Exploration Society (for Oxford University Press), the Austrian Academy of Sciences, Taylor and Francis PLS, Kei Yamamoto, and Dieter Arnold. I also am extremely grateful for the laborious work of David E. Graves, who created numerous images that relate to several Egyptian sites. His eye for detail and ability to bring images to life has served to provide the reader with a far more enjoyable experience than I could have accomplished merely with words.

I am grateful to my publisher, New Creation, for their enthusiastic support and willingness to allow me to publish with them. Specifically, I am thankful for Thomas Purifoy, who oversees their operations. He has been a cherished friend for a number of years, and I long have appreciated and respected his work ethic, artistic acumen, and managerial abilities. His input has made the book a better product, and his ongoing belief in me as a biblical scholar and an archaeologist is something I always will treasure. I also am extremely grateful for their typesetter, Benjamin Kelley, who has shown great patience and kindness to me. He provided many excellent ideas and improved the layout in ways that I never would have considered. Benjamin turned a raw product into a beautiful piece of work, and he knows his craft well.

Finally, I would like to express my gratitude for the students whom I have had the opportunity to influence. This includes a large number of people, at various institutions, in several countries, over a considerable period of time. In fact, influencing them in the greatest possible ways continues to be my highest priority as a professor. One of my goals has been to share with many of them my passion about the confluence of Egyptian and Israelite history in ancient times and how exciting it is to see what can be learned when properly synchronizing these two cultures. My enthusiasm became their enthusiasm, and their enjoyment of learning about these matters has filled my heart and given me the desire to learn even more. I hope that this mutual reciprocity continues to spur us all to love and further good deeds.

D. N. P.



## CHAPTER 1

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# BACKGROUND MATTERS FOR THE ORIGINS OF THE HEBREWS

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### MISCELLANEOUS NOTES TO ASSIST THE READER

While this section may be an unimpressive way to begin the book, it seems best to prepare the reader immediately for what lies ahead, especially as it relates to the conventions used here. Numerous abbreviations appear in the text, so the reader always should be ready to refer to the Abbreviations list, which is positioned near the end of the book, between the List of Figures and the References. Regarding the appendices, the reader should consult Appendix 2 whenever the discussion delves into the stratigraphy of Avaris, as this phasing scheme for the Asiatic occupational phases at the site provides valuable perspective. Figures related to this volume are cited in upper case and abbreviated, while figures from other books are abbreviated and cited in lower case. Chapter numbers related to this book also are cited in upper case, but they are left unabbreviated.

Unless stated differently, all translations of BH (biblical Hebrew) and ME (Middle Egyptian) texts are those of the present writer, with italics used for words that do not appear in the text but are added either because they are implied in the original language or deemed useful to smoothen the text for English-speaking readers. In anticipation of a question that might be asked, which actually occurred in a previous teaching setting, the reason must be given as to why the author offers his own translation of these texts. As a teacher of ancient languages for over 25 years, his forte is translating ancient texts. Perhaps a better answer comes from a statement made by his final ancient Greek professor, Dr. Robert L. Thomas: “The danger with standing on someone else’s shoulders is that you both may fall.” The precision needed for such an important task as this one cannot be built on a potentially imprecise foundation.

If a capitalized year appears (e.g., Sesostri III’s Year 2), this denotes the specific year of a given monarch’s reign, not life. The dates listed in this volume for kings and rulers—unless otherwise noted—are regnal years that signify the exact or estimated years during which they ruled. Since these regnal years will not be listed every time a king’s name is mentioned, the reader should consult Appendix 1 for a chronology of relevant Egyptian kings, complete with regnal years included. The present writer prefers the traditional terminology for the Levantine archaeological period known as MBA IIA (1900–1750 BC). The newer Israeli terminology for the MBA IIA is MBA I (Bietak 1997: 126). According to the Israeli scheme, Bietak (2010b: 150) dated the transition from MBA I to MBA II (= MBA IIA to IIB by the standard system) in the Levant to *ca.* 1700 BC, represented by Phase F at Tell el-Dab’a.

## CONTEXT FOR THE ORIGINS OF THE HEBREWS IN EGYPT

One of the most polarizing topics in all of ANE studies is the identity of the Israelite people before they relocated into Canaan, although the timing of their presence there and the extent of their kingdom once they did arrive has created its own set of disputes. Specifically, there is no consensus on Israel's alleged sojourn in Egypt or the famous exodus from Egypt that was popularized in the United States by Cecil B. DeMille (*The Ten Commandments*, 1956) and The Walt Disney Company (*The Prince of Egypt*, 1998) in two blockbuster motion pictures.

Late in the 20th century, Dever (1997: 82–83) declared that the Israelite people never resided in Egypt before their eventual entry into Canaan, and he decried the outright non-historicity of the biblical events, suggesting that the exodus account is not so much history as it is *haggadah* (i.e., purely traditional Jewish literature). Another author stated that while Israel is the people whom He-who-is (the covenant name of God, which often appears in English writings in the transliterated form *Yahweh* but is a poor and inert option for 'translation') brought out of Egypt, the usage of this symbol is not to be traced to a time before the rise of the northern kingdom of Israel, but instead the exodus is based on historical experiences that arose out of the particular needs of the northern kingdom (Mayes 2011: 143).

One skeptical scholar proposed that were it not for the Bible, anyone looking at the archaeological data from the Holy Land would conclude that whatever the origin of the Israelites is, Egypt is not that place (Weinstein 1997: 98). Ultimately, this dogmatic and presuppositionally-charged position is based on an argument from silence, meaning that the lack of evidence presented until now led its proponents to conclude that the biblical narrative is not a historical account of actual events. Israeli archaeologists have confirmed this dearth of archaeological attestation to Israel's supposed sojourn in Egypt. As Amihai Mazar (2007: 59) stated confidently, "No direct evidence on the Israelite sojourn in Egypt and the Exodus can be extracted from archaeology."

Israel Finkelstein (2007: 52) concurred with Mazar when he wrote that "there is no trace of the early Hebrews in Egypt." One reason for these archaeologists' pessimism is that until now, no direct evidence has been presented to make a case for the historicity of Israel's time in Egypt or the riveting account of the exodus. The Israelite exodus from Egypt must not be viewed as an independent incident, because as Redford (1997a: 57) correctly stated, this event cannot be considered without examining the sojourn, as well. By anyone's view, the Bible clearly indicates that the early Israelites spent multiple centuries in Egypt during the second millennium BC (Exod 12:40–41) before migrating to Canaan (Josh 3:14–17) and forming a geopolitical nation that was led by a monarchy (1 Sam 11:14–15) and eventually christened Jerusalem as its capital city (2 Sam 5:6–9). Essentially, this is the point where the agreement ends.

Thankfully, not every archaeologist or biblical scholar is so pessimistic, as many take the text as recounting authentic people and genuine events. Even so, for those who accept the historicity of the narrative, disagreement abounds over the dates and details. The most profound disagreements are over the length of the Israelite sojourn in Egypt and the date of the exodus. The two major views on the length of the sojourn are exactly 430 years and roughly 215 years. A representative list of ancient and modern advocates of each view is provided elsewhere (Petrovich 2019: 24), so there is no need to repeat it here.

However, since the difference amounts to a whopping 215 years in length, a few thoughts on the subject should be offered. The conflict is due to a textual variation in the reading of Exod 12:40, with some ancient witnesses stating that the Israelite sojourn in Egypt lasted 430 years, while other witnesses suggest that the sojourn of 430 years describes the time that the patriarchs lived in Canaan plus the time that their progeny resided in Egypt. The present writer has demonstrated beyond reasonable doubt that the latter variant is spurious, and that the view of its early adherents led to the textual variation that improperly added “in the land of Canaan” to the text (Petrovich 2019: 23–30). Other scholars have evaluated the evidence that was presented in this article, become persuaded by it, and built upon it to prove other theses as a result of its chronological precision (Turpin 2021: 45–59). The Israelites departed from Egypt 430 years—to the very day—after Jacob and his household relocated there from Canaan (Exod 12:41).

The second profound disagreement among scholars who accept a residency in—and an exodus from—Egypt is the date of the exodus. According to the early exodus view, the exodus took place precisely in 1446 BC, while the late exodus view proposes that it transpired in the first half of the thirteenth century BC, in or around 1267 BC. Proponents of the early exodus view include Merrill (2003: 94), Wood (2005: 477), Young (2006: 82; 2003: 601), Aling (1979: 98), Steinmann (2011: 46), Stripling (2021: 52; 2017: 82–84), and Hiebert (2004: 198–199). Supporters of the late exodus view include Kitchen (2003: 310), Millard (2000: 50), Hoffmeier (2021: 108; 1996: 124), Yurco (1997: 57–75), Hawkins (2008: 263), Falk (2018: 198), and Ortiz and McKinny (2022: forthcoming).

A radical version of the early exodus view connects the exodus to Egypt’s SIP (Second Intermediate Period), equating it to the last phase of the MBA (Middle Bronze Age) in Canaan (Rohl 2015: 44), but this unreliable position requires unsubstantiated and unjustified revision of Egyptian history. While this volume is not the place to delve deeply into the debate over the timing of the exodus, it can be said that there is no archaeological or epigraphical evidence whatsoever to support the late exodus view, which must come from Egypt/Sinai to possess any form of legitimacy. Moreover, from the middle of Dynasty 18 through Dynasty 20, L.E.’s (Lower Egypt) nomes 8, 13, and 14 feature a total absence of any evidence of a substantial resident population of Asiatics living in an independent community (Redford 1997a: 62).

The reality of these problems with the late exodus view prompted Bryant Wood (2005: 475) to title a journal article, “The Rise and Fall of the 13th-Century Exodus-Conquest Theory.” More recently, in a documentary film called *Patterns of Evidence: The Moses Controversy* (2019), filmmaker Timothy Mahoney bemoaned how the scholarly community criticizes the biblical story of the sojourn and exodus, when in fact its advocates have endorsed a view that offers no actual proof of its validity. Seemingly, critical scholars are perfectly content for those with a high view of biblical historicity to embrace a view that offers absolutely no support whatsoever from the archaeological or inscriptional record.

## THESIS AND STRUCTURE OF THE PRESENT WORK

Why has the scholarly community not embraced the historicity of the account of Israelites in Egypt for 430 years during the second millennium BC? The problem is that until the publication of the present volume, no scholar has presented any direct archaeological evidence of Egyptian origins of the Hebrews (Dever 1997: 83), which prompted Weinstein (1997: 98) to declare that unless new and better evidence for this

event is forthcoming, the story of the exodus cannot be considered as a topic for productive archaeological research. Weinstein should be happy to know that now—thanks to productive archaeological, epigraphical, and iconographical research detailed here—new and better evidence of Hebrew origins in Egypt is available.

Therefore, the purpose of the present volume is to persuade any and every objective enthusiast of ancient history that the biblical account of the Israelite sojourn in Egypt (from 1876–1446 BC) and subsequent exodus are sufficiently verifiable as historical, based on the archaeological, epigraphical, and iconographical evidence that is brought to light within this volume. As for the structure of the present volume, eight more chapters follow this one, the balance of which provides the reader with historical background of ancient Egypt from its earliest attested communities until the time of the exodus, during Dynasty 18.

Chapter 2 provides the foundation for the entire project by establishing Israelite chronology, Egyptian chronology, then a proper synchronization of the two chronologies. Chapter 3 identifies Avaris as the Egyptian site in the eastern Nile Delta where Jacob settled his family and illuminates the parts of the excavations performed there that are relevant to the present study. Chapter 4 offers evidence of Israelites living at Avaris during the lifetime of Joseph, including the identification of at least Joseph, Ephraim, Manasseh, and one of Manasseh's obscure sons in ME inscriptions dating to Dynasty 12. Chapter 5 delves into the life of Joseph more deeply by illuminating signs of his administration in Egypt as the vizier, second in command under the king.

Chapter 6 explores the signs of Israelite presence in Egypt during the long period of time between the death of Joseph and the new king who arose but did not know of Joseph. Chapter 7 examines the evidence for Israelites in Egypt during Dynasty 18, which encompasses the Israelite oppression and the entire lifetime of Moses, including the events of the exodus. Chapter 8 focuses directly on the biography of the exodus pharaoh, proving why Amenhotep II is the only candidate who fits all of the biblical requirements of this historical figure. Chapter 9 summarizes the evidence presented throughout the book by means of an annotated chronological timeline and offers some concluding thoughts.

## SYNOPSIS OF EGYPT'S HISTORY BEFORE DYNASTY 12

The English word “Egypt” derives from the Greek word (a ms noun) *Αἴγυπτος* (*Aiguptos*), while the Egyptian word for Egypt (a fs noun) is *kmt* (*kemet*), which means, “the black land.” The Hebrew word for Egypt is *מִצְרַיִם* (*miṣrayim*, a dual noun), which communicates an accurate understanding that Egypt consisted of two parts: U.E. (Upper Egypt, the southern half) and L.E. (Lower Egypt, the northern half). Egypt's altitude ranges from 133 m below sea level in the Libyan Desert to 2,629 m above sea level in Sinai. The nation's outstanding topographical feature is the Nile River, but the bulk of the land is covered by desert. U.E. is a tableland that rises to 460 m above sea level, while the Nile Valley is enclosed by cliffs as high as 500 m above sea level, as the river flows about 900 km from Aswan to Cairo. East of the Nile, the Arabian Desert extends to the Red Sea (or more literally if translating the BH term, “Sea of Reeds”). West of the Nile, the Western Desert consists of low-lying sand dunes and many depressions in the rock formations.

If there is anything on which those who take seriously the biblical account of the Israelite sojourn and exodus from Egypt agree, it is that the Israelite enclave in Egypt is located within L.E.'s eastern Nile



Delta. Thanks to many decades of excavations at the most prolific Asiatic settlement in all of Egypt, the principal Israelite settlement in the Nile Delta will constitute a large focus of this volume. North of Cairo, the Nile's course no longer is enclosed by cliffs, so it spreads out into a huge triangle, due to its multiple branches, which led to the designation *Nile Delta*. The easternmost and westernmost points are 250 km apart, while the shortest distance between Cairo and the sea is about 160 km (Mieroop 2011: 8).

Typically, the work of Egyptologists is supported by a diverse number of sources, but when the topic centers on Pre-Dynastic Egypt, the situation changes suddenly, due to a drastic decrease in accessible information (Medici 2015: 123). Human existence was present in Egypt before the societal characteristics that mark the culturally distinct societies of U.E. and L.E. Incipient cattle-herding is attested in the Western Desert at about the time and place when and where pottery appeared in Egypt. The emergence of village life occurred sometime later, roughly when Egypt's climatic pattern partially began to resemble that of today. Archaeological data has revealed that the societies of the Delta evolved independently from those of U.E. (Lesur 2018: 59).

The oldest known northern Pre-dynastic culture is that of Fayyum A (or Fayyum Neolithic), whose people represent the earliest known fully agricultural economy in Egypt. They used mat or reed huts and built underground communal granaries and storage pits for food, while superstructure granaries did not come until later. Their pottery was coarse and roughly made, and they also possessed domesticated animals, composite tools, and chip-stone tools. Wild resources, especially fish from the Nile, played an important part in the human diet, while the Delta provided favorable conditions for agriculture and herding, especially pigs and cattle (Lesur 2018: 59). The domestication of cattle during the Neolithic Period in the Fayyum may have been inspired by practices to Egypt's west, and the other early domesticated animals of this time were sheep and goats. The first cultivated cereals were emmer wheat and barley, which were imported from Asia. The adoption of agriculture had different consequences in U.E. and L.E. (Mieroop 2011: 21–22).

Therefore, residents in the Delta and the Fayyum adopted a sedentary lifestyle, as did their Levantine neighbors. At this time in U.E. and Nubia, people primarily engaged in pastoralism: the herding of sheep and goats. Although this made them mobile, there are no signs of settlements within the Nile Valley during this period. These people spent more time in the desert, which was far more fertile than the Egyptian desert of today. Their settlements contain ash and debris, and the only permanent remains are tombs, with no traces of architecture. However, the graves reveal that they produced nicely polished pottery and human figurines. They also placed valuable minerals and metal objects with the dead (Mieroop 2011: 21–22).

The first fully sedentary village in the western Nile Delta was at the site of Merimde, which featured a rich material culture. The pottery and stone objects there are similar to those of the Fayyum's Neolithic settlements. Initially, the settlers lived in sparsely scattered huts. Over time, denser occupation became the norm, and they built granaries. Every hut had its own granary, and the upper terraces were more populated than the lower ones. The site of El-Omari was contemporary with the final occupation at Merimde. El-Omari featured oval shelters, lined pits, granaries, animal pens, and burials with few grave-goods. There is evidence of flint-working, and burials occurred within the settlement, with the deceased buried on their left sides, facing southward.

The site of Buto, which came along soon after, survived for an extended time. Located 95 km to the east of (later) Alexandria, this Delta site featured ovular huts, storage jars and pits within houses, and two rectangular structures that differed from huts. A series of subterranean chambers, domestic in nature, was cut, which included hearths, along with post-holes designed to support a roof. Basaltic vessels were found in the storage pits, and fortifications were found, suggesting that the inhabitants felt the need to defend themselves. The final pre-historical layer contained artifacts from Naqada III.

During the unification of U.E. and L.E., the Buto culture of L.E. was replaced with an influx of southerners into the Delta. The growth of Egyptian culture is clear toward the end of the prehistorical period, such as a shift in subsistence from hunting and gathering to farming, and the evolution of a social and political structure with a clear hierarchy of power and wealth that culminated in the Egyptian state. Throughout this time, abrupt cultural changes are not visible, nor is the sudden appearance of populations that brought new practices with them, so most of the changes must have been indigenous. The processes leading toward state formation accelerated late in Naqada II (Mieroop 2011: 21).

The material culture along the border between M.E. (Middle Egypt) and U.E. is called Badarian, after the archaeological site of el-Badari. The Nile Delta experienced the extensive use of agriculture with permanent settlements near the end of the Badarian Period, to the north of the First Cataract (Mieroop 2011: 22). Badarian culture featured simple, sedentary settlements. There is no evidence of domestic structures, but pits used for grain were detected during excavations. These people domesticated animals (sheep, goats, cattle), farmed, and hunted (Savage 2001: 119).

Their pottery was sophisticated: black-topped pots were fired in a kiln, then the tops of the pots were blackened. Evidence of trade includes ivory, copper items, precious stones, turquoise, pine, and cedar. Typical graves were ovular or rectangular pits, which were roofed with sticks or matting. Marble figurines often accompanied Badarian graves. The remains from the tombs reveal a lack of wide-ranging social stratification. Social distinction existed between elites and non-elites, with the ivory in elites' graves suggesting a two-tiered social structure (Savage 2001: 119).

The Naqada I Period, also called the Amratian Period, boasted larger sites and more prosperous inhabitants. The principal sites are Naqada and Hierakonpolis. The few housing structures excavated are usually ovular huts made of sandstone and wattle-daub (i.e., a material consisting of a network of interwoven sticks/twigs covered with mud or clay, used in building walls). The inhabitants enjoyed a self-sufficient village economy. Barley and wheat were grown, and pigs were added to the list of domesticated animals. Doorways on buildings were positioned above ground-level. Stone tools were found, and potters continued the tradition of black-topped ceramics, although over time it eventually declined. Red-painted ceramics replaced black-topped pottery and became the norm. The graves and burials of these people were similar to those of the Badarian Period (Savage 2001: 116).

The Naqada II Period, also called the Gerzean Period, is one of rapid change. These people both acquired and imitated foreign pottery, especially the forms of the Uruk Expansion that originated in southern Šumer, demonstrating contact with people of distant locations. This period in Egypt thus coincides with the final phase of pre-historical times in Mesopotamia (Graham 2002: 207–227). There was an increase in craft specialization, with mass production, plus a chipped-stone tool industry that was highly developed.

The pottery reveals the introduction of the slow-moving potter's wheel. Metal objects also were found in the settlements, but only in graves.

The site of Naqada of this period featured rectangular houses. Communal kilns were used for drying grains. Monumental architecture appears at this time, including a retaining wall at the temple of Horus at Hierakonpolis. This phase of the Pre-Dynastic Period, during which state-formation had become visible, produced a series of ceremonial slate palettes with extremely complex scenes of the hunt, animals, and battles. Some were found deposited in temples for the chief to convey gratitude to his deity (Hallo and Simpson 1998: 188). According to Simpson, a cylinder seal of a type well attested in Mesopotamia of the Late Uruk Period was found in a grave of Naqada II.

The Naqada III Period was far more sophisticated than either of its two predecessors. A cylinder seal from a tomb at Naga el-Der (near Abydos, U.E.), probably dating to Naqada III, has strong parallels in those of the Jemdet Nasr Period in Mesopotamia (Kantor 1952: 250). Naqada III attests to the first royal cemeteries, the first small city-states, the first Egyptian settlements in southern Canaan, and possibly the first use of irrigation in Egypt. Before the dynastic era, petty states existed in Egypt, although they are understood better as chiefdoms, rather than “nomes”—which appeared only later in time—as once was thought. During pre-dynastic times, a line of kings supposedly arose northward from the First Cataract at Aswan to the apex of the Delta, just south of Memphis.

This line of kings was designated by the title *ny-swt* (*ny-sut*), meaning “one belonging to the sedge plant.” This sedge-title is translated, “King of U.E.” Their characteristic headdress was a tall, white crown with a bulbous terminal at the top, and their patron goddess was Nekhbet, the vulture-goddess of Hierakonpolis (Nekhen), the religious and political capital at the time (Hallo and Simpson 1998: 199). A line of kings ruled *To-mehu*, the northland, or Nile Delta, in parallel with the line that was ruling in U.E. The word they chose for their title is *bity*, “the one of the bee” (i.e., the symbol of the north). This title is translated, “King of L.E.” Their characteristic crown was a red wickerwork headdress with a tall element in the back and a curious, fiddle-headed curve in front (Hallo and Simpson 1998: 200). The Palermo Stone (*ca.* Dynasty 5) lists pre-dynastic kings wearing the Red Crown of L.E., which may elude to a time before Egypt's unification.

The early part of Egypt's dynastic period, consisting of Dynasties 1 and 2, saw the unification of U.E. and L.E., with the establishment of Memphis as the national capital. This period featured a strong central government under the authority of the crown. Ancient tradition credits Menes with unifying Egypt (Hallo and Simpson 1998: 199), and many Egyptologists identify him with either Narmer of Naqada III or Hor-Aha of Dynasty 1. The word *mnj* (*menej*) is found enclosed in a cartouche on the Turin Royal Canon and the Abydos King List. The writing of Manetho, an Egyptian priest and historian who lived in the third century BC, is the oldest source in which the name *Menes* appears.

The notion that Menes and Narmer are two names for the same person derives from the virtual absence of Menes in the archaeological record, plus the wealth of archaeological and literary-historical evidence for Narmer. The Narmer Palette features a crowned king who is striking down enemies and displays a falcon—the patron god of Hierakonpolis—with a leash. The fact that the falcon is standing over papyrus

leaves has suggested to many that L.E. had been conquered by this time. If this is true, the palette contains signs that the unification of Egypt had taken place.

Egypt achieved a formal union only with the establishment of Dynasty 1, as the archaeological evidence does not support a centralization of power before then. The iconographical representations depicting how Egypt's unification resulted from the conquest of L.E. by an U.E. king is not supported by the evidence. At least there is no indication of this from L.E. The area that incorporated Abydos, Naqada, and Hierakonpolis probably grew into a territorial unit first, then expanded rapidly into other areas to its north and south. Narmer was buried in Abydos, but his most significant monuments are in Hierakonpolis, showing the connection of these power-centers (Mieroop 2011: 35).

Dynasty 1 seemingly originated at Hierakonpolis and later shifted northward to Thisis, near Abydos. The third major site is Saqqara, the necropolis of Memphis in L.E. Archaeologically, Dynasty 1 is attested fairly well. At Abydos, the rulers built small tombs below the desert cliffs, at some distance from the cultivated land. Dynasty 1 is well represented in the north, with a series of tombs at Saqqara (most significantly), Abu Rawwash, Giza, Helwan, and Tarkhan (Hallo and Simpson 1998: 204–205).

All evidence points to an abrupt change during the transition from Dynasty 1 to Dynasty 2. This includes an end to the series of great tombs of the nobles at Saqqara after Qa-a's reign. No royal tombs at Abydos can be assigned to Dynasty 2. Even though the Turin Royal Canon records no break between the first two dynasties, the likelihood is great that a new royal family came to the throne after a period of unrest or some major event. Plus, there is evidence of a political reorganization, as well as a new emphasis on the state's religious structure. Egypt's subjugation of Nubia, their often-exploited neighbors to the south, is reflected on a fragmentary relief from Hierakonpolis that depicts Egypt's king, Khasekhem(wy), kneeling on top of a prostrate enemy, who represents Nubia (Hallo and Simpson 1998: 208–210).

Egypt's OK (Old Kingdom) consists of Dynasties 3–8. The transition indicated by Manetho and the Turin Royal Canon from Dynasty 2 to Dynasty 3 appears in the archaeological record to have been smooth. Perhaps the lack of a male heir at the end of Dynasty 2 resulted in the marriage of Khasekhem(wy)'s daughter to a northerner, or maybe the first kings of Dynasty 3 were the sons of the queen, Ny-maat-hap. Judging from the royal tombs, the kingship was centralized at Memphis from the beginning of Dynasty 3 to the end of the OK. The earliest kings of Dynasty 3 launched full-scale operations at the turquoise mines in Sinai (Hallo and Simpson 1998: 216), specifically at Wadi Maghara and Wadi Kharig (Bietak 2021: 66).

Dynasty 3 is overshadowed by the monuments and accomplishments of Netjeri-khet ("The one whose body is divine"), known best as Djoser ("The sacred one") (Hallo and Simpson 1998: 216; Leprohon 2013: 32). King Djoser's crowning achievement is his Stepped Pyramid at Saqqara, which his architect, Imhotep, built for him. The Stepped Pyramid may represent the first form of monumental architecture in Egypt that was built out of limestone, bearing witness to a complex and functioning bureaucracy that could muster the manpower needed to quarry the stone, transport it to the site, then feed and house the workforce that would build the pyramid (Leprohon 2013: 31).

The first king of Dynasty 4, Sneferu, is the earliest ruler to appear on inscriptions from Serâbît el-Khâdim (Valbelle and Bonnet 1996: 6), the site of Egyptian expeditions of various periods that mined for turquoise in Sinai. The apex of Egypt's pyramid-building age was reached during Dynasty 4. From

Dynasties 4–6, each king built a pyramidal complex (Sneferu, Khufu, etc.). Sadly, the majority of what can be known about these kings and their reigns comes only from the pyramids. Scanty evidence exists for the major architectural achievements at other OK sites such as Abydos, Hierakonpolis, Elephantine, Bubastis, Heliopolis, and Memphis during this period (Hallo and Simpson 1998: 219).

Sneferu was popular in tales from the MK, dating to centuries later, as the patron of advisors who could predict the future. In the *Prophecy of Neferty*, the priest entertained Sneferu by telling him how King Amenemhat I of Dynasty 12 would reunite the nation. The tale calls Sneferu an excellent king. A story in the Westcar Papyrus, written in Dynasty 13 or 15, features the court of King Khufu, the second king of Dynasty 4, as its setting (Mieroop 2011: 74).

With the advent of Dynasty 5, a new line of rulers ascended the throne. Yet Egyptian civilization continued uninterrupted, and there was no drastic upheaval in the bureaucracy. Religiously, a greater emphasis was placed on the royal cult of Re (Hallo and Simpson 1998: 223), one of Egypt's great solar deities. Later tradition presented the first three kings of the dynasty as the physical sons of Re, which possibly was an attempt to explain the special status of the sun god (Mieroop 2011: 70). Manetho wrote that the kings of Dynasty 5 ruled from the city of Elephantine, but archaeological evidence clearly confirms that their palaces were located at Memphis, which by this time was known as *inbw-hd* ("the white walls").

Sneferu had marched into Lower Nubia and established firm Egyptian control. Yet by the end of Dynasty 5, the Nubians gradually had reasserted themselves and ended Egyptian dominance in their lands (Mieroop 2011: 71). The pyramid of Sahure, whose activities are recorded on the Palermo Stone, is the classic example for Dynasty 5. The mortuary temple's reliefs depict the king while hunting, fishing, and catching birds. The significance is not just in what he pursued in life, but what he anticipated in the afterlife. A major section of the reliefs portrays the king on an expedition to Syria and his successful return with bears and jars of oil, as well as his conquest of the Libyans and the recording of booty he confiscated (Hallo and Simpson 1998: 224).

King Sahure mentioned a divine barge in Year 5, which includes offerings of bread and beer to Re, Hathor, and several other gods. Sahure established trading contact with Byblos during his reign, and excavations at the temple of Ba'alath-Gebal ("The lady/queen of Byblos," whom the Egyptians equated with their goddess, Hathor [Petrovich 2016b: 75–80]), even yielded an alabaster bowl with his name inscribed on it. This temple was the largest and most complex shrine in Byblos during the EBA (Espinel 2002: 105). A stone relief of Dynasty 6 includes the inscription, "beloved of Hathor, mistress of Byblos" (Espinel 2002: 106), and later Egyptian texts even referred to "Hathor, mistress of Byblos" (Bader 2015a: 2). In Sahure's last year, he commissioned a turquoise-mining expedition to Maghara.

The Turin Royal Canon notes a break at the end of Dynasty 5, so evidently the beginning of Dynasty 6 represents more of a change in the ruling family than a national upheaval. The already-crowded area of Saqqara was the site of the dynasty's first royal tomb, where its founder, Teti, was buried. The rulers of this time depended heavily on the loyalty of the nomarchs, as evidenced by Pepy I's marriage to two daughters of an Abydos official named Khuy. Their brother, Djau, was the vizier. Pepy II reportedly experienced the longest reign in Egyptian history, as the Turin Royal Canon attributes him with upwards of 90 years on the throne (Hallo and Simpson 1998: 227–228).

After Dynasty 6, a series of ephemeral rulers reigned for a generation or so. Manetho's Dynasty 7, which he later described as "70 kings of Memphis, who reigned 70 days," largely is considered not to have existed. Few of the kings ascribed to Manetho's Dynasty 8, also said to have ruled in Memphis, are attested in contemporary records (Leprohon 2013: 44). Dynasties 7 and 8, if Dynasty 7 even existed, became extremely weak. Dynasty 8, along with the entire OK, ended abruptly in *ca.* 2170 BC with the absence of unification and the loss of central authority leading to the FIP (First Intermediate Period).

While Manetho numbered Dynasties 9 and 10 separately, they actually represent one family. They certainly are treated as such in the Turin Royal Canon. Therefore, some have lumped them together as one dynasty (Leprohon 2013: 49). Dynasty 9 was centered at Herakleopolis, and Dynasty 10 retained this site as its capital. Only five kings from the combined dynasties are attested on contemporary monuments in Egypt: Meryibre Khety, Merykare, Nebkaure Khety, Neferkare, and Wahkare Khety (Leprohon 2013: 49), listed alphabetically. All of the other kings are known only from the kinglists, which further validates the weakened state of central authority in Egypt during the FIP. The Turin Royal Canon notes that 18 kings ruled during the combined dynasties, while other sources suggest that nine kings reigned in Dynasty 9 and six kings in Dynasty 10, meaning that at least ten kings are unattested on the monuments.

There are no traces of any of these kings south of Asyut (Leprohon 2003: 49), suggesting that this city may have been the southern extent of their kingdom. Most of the names of the 18 kings on the Turin Royal Canon are either damaged, unidentifiable, or lost. The phrase *k3 r* (*ka ra*) "the spirit-essence of Re," which appears extensively in the titularies of the kings of Dynasty 10, harkens back to the throne name of Pepy II (Nefer-ka-re), indicating that the rulers during the FIP attempted to emulate one of their venerable predecessors who ruled during the OK, a time when Egypt still enjoyed the unification of U.E. and L.E. (Leprohon 2003: 49).

Dynasty 11 essentially is divided between the FIP and the MK, due to the return of national unification. In southern Egypt, the rulers of a family from Thebes challenged the supremacy of the Herakleopolitans, adopting Horus names and inscribing them in royal cartouches. Various local nomarchs declared their allegiance to one or the other faction, and eventually a civil war broke out. The first four rulers of Dynasty 11 were contemporary with Dynasty 10 (Leprohon 2003: 52). While all of these kings of Dynasty 11 ruled from Thebes, only the first four are known to be buried there. Intef II claimed to have united the entire nation, but the MK is considered to have begun only when Mentuhotep II, probably the fifth king of Dynasty 11, defeated the Herakleopolitans of Dynasty 10 to end the civil war. For this reason, Intef III can be considered as the last king of Dynasty 11 to have ruled during the FIP, assuming that Mentuhotep II indeed united U.E. and L.E. after Intef III.

## CONTEXT FOR JOSEPH'S ERA: EGYPT'S DYNASTY 12

The kings of the first part of Dynasty 11 harkened back to pre-dynastic times, but the kings of the second part of the dynasty looked back to the glorious days of the OK by repeating the concept chosen for their Horus names. Mentuhotep II, who relocated the capital to Thebes and ruled from there, probably reduced the number of the nomarchs, although the ones at Beni Hasan and Hermopolis retained the same level of control as their predecessors (Callender 2000: 152; Grimal 1992: 155). He changed his royal titulary

several times, with the final alteration to his Two Ladies name being *sm³ t³wy* (*sema tawy*) “Uniter of the Two Lands,” which reflects his act of unifying U.E. and L.E. (Leprohon 2013: 54).

Mentuhotep III, Mentuhotep II’s son, was advanced in years when he ascended the throne, so his reign lasted only about 12 years. He revived the practice of sending expeditions to Punt, located along the southern extremity of the Red Sea, in order to obtain incense. These trips were depicted long before at the First Cataract on the OK tombs of Elephantine’s nomarchs (Smith 1969: 277). Mentuhotep III attempted to protect Egypt’s northeastern border by fortifying the eastern Delta (Callender 2000: 156; Grimal 1992: 157). His Horus name is *sⁿḥ t³wy.f(y)* (*sankh tawy-fy*) “The one who has sustained his Two Lands,” reflecting the sovereignty he maintained over U.E. and L.E., which his father had acquired (Leprohon 2013: 55).

The royal names from this period mostly are attested well in contemporary records. The Turin Royal Canon assigns a total of 70 years to the reigns of the last three kings who ruled in Dynasty 11, if Mentuhotep IV’s reign represents the seven years in which an unnamed king ruled. After Mentuhotep III died, the country evidently remained in turmoil (Grimal 1992: 158), so clearly establishing the transition from Dynasty 11 to Dynasty 12 is difficult. Although Mentuhotep II is credited with successfully reunifying the nation, the man who launched Egypt into an unparalleled era of greatness—known as the golden age of the MK—was his advisor, Amenemhat, who founded Dynasty 12.

Amenemhat I (*ca.* 1979–1950 BC), who apparently served as Mentuhotep IV’s vizier, was forced to fight pockets of resistance in order to maintain the throne. He reorganized Egypt’s administration, and during a period of strife (Saretta 2016: 67, 69), he moved the capital from Thebes to Itj-tawy (“Seizer/Grasper of the Two Lands”). He built this city that was located between Memphis and Lisht, but it remains undiscovered (Callender 2000: 158; Grimal 1992: 160). The Turin Royal Canon properly identifies the monarchs of Dynasty 12 as *nyswt nt ḥnw It-t³wy* “kings of the Residence of Itj-tawy” (Allen 2010: 1). Amenemhat I announced a new beginning by means of his titulary, declaring with his first Horus name that he is, “He who has propitiated the mind of the Two Lands.” His second Horus name, “He who has repeated births,” suggests a renaissance of sorts (Leprohon 2013: 57–58), and it probably implies that he was the first of a new family line (Grimal 1992: 158).

This was no empty phrase, as the kings and court of Dynasty 12 (see Appendix 1) modeled themselves after the glorious days of the OK, using the pyramid for the king’s tomb and the same styles of artistic decoration. This period also resulted in an improved standard of living, which is reflected by exponential growth in the mineral wealth of the king, to which their burial caches attest (Callender 2000: 159). Amenemhat I was the first king of Dynasty 12 whose name appears on a monument in the MK temple at Serâbît el-Khâdim (Valbelle and Bonnet 1996: 7).

Sesostris I (*ca.* 1960–1916 BC) was campaigning in Libya when his father, Amenemhat I, died. According to Manetho’s Fragment 34, a conspiracy occurred at the end of his father’s reign, while a writing called *The Teaching of Amenemhat I* hints at a dispute over the royal succession. Amenemhat I almost certainly was murdered (Callender 2000: 160), but history has left no evidence of whether or not Sesostris I participated in the event. He must have been coronated in an atmosphere of suspicion and mistrust (Lorand 2015: 206). Nonetheless, he reassured his subjects of the continuity between himself and his father by using, “He who has lived the (re)birth,” as his Horus name (Leprohon 2013: 56–57).

Sesostris I initiated a vast building program at 35 sites throughout Egypt, with construction or renovation performed at Elephantine, Karnak, Abydos, and Heliopolis. On the military front, he led campaigns into Nubia, Libya, and the southern Levant. He made Buhen Egypt's new southern border, where he established a garrison. This allowed him to exploit Nubia for its gold, and he increased the number of mining expeditions to procure far greater amounts of amethyst, turquoise, and copper (Callender 2000: 161; Grimal 1992: 164). His burial pyramid was built near his father's, at Lisht.

Information about the reign of Amenemhat II (*ca.* 1919–1884 BC) is scarce. However, an official set of records known as the *Day Books*, partly preserved in a temple at Tod, contains information about the donations he offered to various temples, reports of military and trading expeditions, and royal activities such as hunting (Callender 2000: 163). A long inscription at Memphis describes an account of military raids that he led into the southern Levant, during which large quantities of booty were confiscated, even though his reign is characterized as peaceful (Grimal 1992: 165). He built his pyramid at Dahshur, which is located even further to the north than Itj-tawy and Lisht, the two sites where his two immediate predecessors each built pyramids and mortuary complexes.

Sesostris II (*ca.* 1887–1878 BC) ruled for at least eight years, as a sandstone stele from a quarry at Toshka refers to his Year 8. Egyptologists usually assign anywhere from eight to eleven years for his reign, though some believe that he is in view in the Turin Canon's designation of an anonymous king who reigned for 19 years. All agree that his regnal length is extremely difficult to determine precisely. Callender (2000: 164) described the king's reign as a time of peace and prosperity, when trade with western Asia was particularly prolific and no military campaigns were recorded.

Sesostris II's reign is virtually untraceable, in contrast to those of most kings of Dynasty 12, with few inscriptions in the mining region attributed to him. Only six dated private stelae of his have surfaced. The best-known monument attesting to his reign is his pyramid and mortuary complex at Lahun. Of great importance to the present work, he was the first king to exploit the Fayyum extensively—including farming, hunting, and fishing—with Crocodilopolis as its regional center. The Fayyum was a huge “oasis” located about 80 km to the southwest of Memphis, offering the prospect of a completely new area of cultivatable land for Egypt's exceedingly arid climate (Grimal 1992: 166).

Lahun's rebuilding during Dynasty 12 had nothing to do with its subsequent function as a pyramidal city, but rather as a kind of royal estate to exploit the Fayyum for agricultural purposes (Moeller 2014: 194). A dike was built at Lahun to connect the Bahr Yusef waterway, an offshoot of the Nile (to its west) that flows parallel to it, to the desert valley known as the Fayyum. Lahun's very name is *Rḥn.t*, which means, “the mouth of the canal” (Willems 2013: 345). In conjunction with this dike, drainage canals were dug in the Fayyum, creating a complex irrigation system (Grimal 1992: 166) and demonstrating state intervention in the Fayyum's water regime during the MK (Willems 2013: 345). These canals siphoned off some of the water that would have flowed into the Fayyum in an uncontrolled fashion during the inundation season and greatly extended the amount of cultivatable land, which was reclaimed and farmed. This project was a far-sighted scheme, even unique for its time in the ANE (Callender 2000: 164).

Sesostris III (*ca.* 1878–1840 BC) most likely ascended the throne unexpectedly, as there is no evidence of coregency with his father (Callender 2000: 166). However, the possibility of one does exist, due



to the discovery of a scarab with both kings' names inscribed on it, a dedicatory inscription celebrating the resumption of rituals they jointly began. Sesostri III launched four military campaigns into Nubia, subduing the Nubians to the Second Cataract, and one Levantine campaign. The long period of military inactivity in Nubia during the two preceding reigns had encouraged the Sudanese tribes to move gradually into an area to the north of the Third Cataract (Grimal 1992: 168).

Sesostri III's reign rightly is regarded as a crucial watershed in the MK's history (Callender 2000: 167), as it is the turning point that divides the MK into early and late phases, based on major changes in material culture, societal structure, and administrative operations (Quirke 2004: 7). He is renowned for establishing a new governmental system, in which national leadership organized the control of three main administrative divisions, or *warets* (Leprohon 2013: 57): a northern department, a southern department, and a department of the head of the south (Mieroop 2011: 106). Each ministry was led by one official, with the help of an assistant and a council. Orders were issued to various officials, who in turn instructed scribes to fulfill them (Hallo and Simpson 1998: 246).

Amenemhat III (*ca.* 1859–1813 BC) enjoyed a long coregency with his father, which extended into his own Year 20. The major project of his reign was the reclamation of more arable land in the Fayyum by manipulating the water level of Lake Moeris, which led to his veneration in the Fayyum. His long and peaceful reign is viewed as the time when the MK reached its cultural peak. He also strengthened the border at Semna and enlarged some of the fortresses, in addition to constructing a large temple to Sobek at the site of Crocodilopolis, in the Fayyum (Callender 2000: 167–168; Grimal 1992: 169).

Numerous inscriptions recorded his extensive mining activities, which included expeditions to sites such as Maghara, Serâbî el-Khâdim, Wadi Hammamat, Tura, and Aswan. During his reign, journeys to the turquoise mines at Serâbî el-Khâdim became regular, with around 28 attested expeditions (Valbelle and Bonnet 1996: 10). Thanks to these mining operations and what the crown accrued through foreign trade, Egypt reached its peak in prosperity (Grimal 1992: 170). All of this industrial activity and construction symbolizes the wealth that Egypt enjoyed during Amenemhat III's reign, but these efforts may have exhausted the economy and—combined with a series of low Nile floods, late in his reign—resulted in political and economic decline (Callender 2000: 168–169).

Amenemhat IV (*ca.* 1814–1805 BC) continued to treat the Fayyum as a high priority, perhaps having built the temple at Qasr es-Sagha, which was 8 km north of Lake Qarun (Grimal 1992: 170). However, few of his monuments were preserved, and little is known of events during his reign beyond the continued expeditions to the turquoise mines in Sinai, further trade with the Levant, and the completion of construction on the temple that his father began at Medinet Maadi (Callender 2000: 170; Grimal 1992: 170). By the end of Amenemhat IV's reign, Egypt once again had sunk into major decline.

Dynasty 12 ended abruptly during the reign of Sobekkare Sobekneferu (*ca.* 1805–1801 BC), the sister of Amenemhat IV. Only a handful of her records have survived, but some of them offer interesting clues about her reign. Nile graffiti at Fort Kumma (Nubia) that dates to Year 3 lists the height of the Nile's inundation at 1.83 m. Usually this ruler used feminine titles in her records, but occasionally she used male titles, which one scholar considered to be a deliberate attempt to pacify those who criticized her for being a

female king (Callender 2000: 170–171). Dynasties 13–17, which include the periods of the end of the MK and the SIP, need not be treated here, but they will be discussed to some extent in Chapter 2.

### CONTEXT FOR MOSES’S ERA: EGYPT’S DYNASTY 18

Egypt’s Dynasty 18 consists of 14 kings who ruled U.E. and L.E. for a total of about 253 years (*ca.* 1560–1307 BC). Their regnal lengths are known from a variety of sources, mostly contemporary writings and inscriptions. The kinglist for Dynasty 18 of the NK (New Kingdom) can be found in Appendix 1. The same ruling family of Dynasty 17 centered in Thebes, Egypt’s religious hub during the NK (Haring 2013: 607), is credited with founding Dynasty 18. In other words, the transition from one dynasty to the other is merely the arbitrary changing of a number.

Ahmosé’s reign typically is considered the last one (*ca.* 1575–1560 BC) of Dynasty 17 and the first one (*ca.* 1560–1550 BC) of Dynasty 18. Bietak’s (2013: 100) preference of 1550 BC for the year of transition into the NK, which begins with Dynasty 18, is only 10 years later than the date preferred here. With Ahmosé’s accession, the expulsion of the Hyksos (*i.e.*, foreign rulers who relocated to Egypt from the Levant) during his reign, and the reunification of U.E. and L.E., the stage was set for Egypt’s involvement in the destinies of her neighbors and the initiation of a radically new era. In fact, national reunification best marks the moment for the launching of Dynasty 18, which occurred about 15 years after Ahmosé ascended the throne.

Ahmosé must have resumed the struggle against the Hyksos in about Year 11, a conflict that lasted for several years in the Delta, leading to the eventual capture of Memphis, and then Avaris (Grimal 1992: 193). In early July of *ca.* 1560 BC, Ahmosé entered Heliopolis, bypassed Avaris, and in mid-October proceeded to Sile, the frontier fort to the east-northeast of Avaris. His strategy was designed to cut off support from Asia, and then to blockade the Hyksos capital, which eventually was captured by the native Egyptians (Redford 1992: 128–129). The autobiography of Ahmosé, son of Ibana, notes that the surviving Hyksos regime fled into Asia and holed up at a site in southern Canaan called Sharuhén (Bryan 2000: 218), which is located close to Gaza.

The Egyptian army marched across Sinai and assaulted them in their new stronghold, eventually capturing the fort, destroying the city (Sethe 1927: 4), then eradicating all of the remaining Hyksos from the earth (Redford 1992: 129). Therefore, the NK and Dynasty 18 began with the native Egyptian restoration of order in their land and the removal of the foreign invaders. Dynasty 18 represents a zenith in Egypt’s history, notably in respect to international status and imperialistic ventures. Never before or after were Egypt’s borders extended as far as they were during the height of their expansionism under the glorious pharaohs of the middle of the dynasty, namely Thutmose III and his son, Amenhotep II.

Amenhotep I (*ca.* 1550–1529 BC) probably ascended the throne after Ahmosé’s death, although the possibility of a brief coregency does exist. From all appearances, he was a child at his father’s death (Bryan 2000: 223). For this reason, Amenhotep I’s mother, Nefertari, evidently assumed control temporarily (Kuhrt 1995: 190). When he reached adulthood, he turned his attention to the problem of the resiliency of the Nubians, Egypt’s age-old rival on their southern border, as he completed the mission of conquest that Ahmosé had begun (Bryan 2000: 218). Amenhotep I’s campaigns into Nubia, beginning in about Year

8 (Bryan 2000: 224), attest to his desire not only to secure what Ahmose had gained, but to expand Egypt's southern border even further up the Nile River. His efforts resulted in extending Egypt's border as far as Semna, and in confiscating a rich booty that included slaves and cattle.

Amenhotep I then installed Turi in the newly-created office of "King's son of Cush and Overseer of the southern foreign lands" to administrate the region (Kuhrt 1995: 190; Brugsch [1902] 1996: 132–133; Grimal 1992: 194–195). Amenhotep I later directed a campaign to the northwest in Libya, where the Aamu-Kahak people had shown hostilities toward the Egyptians. These people belonged to the great tribe of the Thuhen, known in classical times as the Marmarica, who had control over the northern coast of Africa. In western Asia, Amenhotep I advanced even further northward than Ahmose did, venturing down the Orontes River as far as Tunip, where he probably participated in some campaigning (Redford 1992: 149; Kuhrt 1995: 190; Brugsch [1902] 1996: 133).

Within Egypt, the inscriptions prove that Amenhotep I erected a great temple at Thebes and sanctuaries for individual gods in the western part of the great Theban plain. Overall, his reign is documented poorly, but he was revered for centuries by the workmen at Deir el-Medina. This shows how deep the impression was that he made on at least one part of the realm, although it is not known just what prompted this devotion (Kuhrt 1995: 190; Brugsch [1902] 1996: 133). Amenhotep I's interest in Delta sites remains unverified, but his jubilee-festival decorations of the limestone gateway at Karnak reflect how this site figured prominently in his designs (Bryan 2000: 225).

Thutmose I (*ca.* 1529–1516 BC) was a middle-aged general whom Amenhotep I personally chose as his heir to the throne. The consensus has been that this succession was not from father to son (Bryan 2000: 230). Scott Woodward, a professor at Brigham Young University who extracted DNA samples of NK pharaohs for study, concluded in a 2001 PBS documentary that a minute variation in DNA sequence exists between Amenhotep I and Thutmose I, suggesting that if indeed they are father and son, an intermarriage with a second (non-royal) family could have occurred (Pope 2002).

Thutmose I's noteworthy internal accomplishments include the appointment of a house steward at the Road of Horus (Fig. 2), the overland highway that led from the southern Levant to Egypt via the northern Sinai coast (Bader 2015a: 8). The entire MK city of Thebes was destroyed gradually by a series of massive building programs, which included moving Thebes across to the western bank of the Nile. The provincial shrine of Amun, Karnak, was converted into a state-temple of increasingly grander proportions (Kuhrt 1995: 191). This upheaval at Thebes coincides with Thutmose I's decision to move the capital from Thebes to Memphis, where his successors used his new palace for the next 150 years (Redford 1967: 79).

The shift in the location of the royal residence signaled the greater value of L.E. to the king than U.E., from where all of the kings of Dynasty 17 had ruled. However, this choice was not arbitrary or the mere preference for the north over the south. Instead, the ultimate goal in moving the capital northward to Memphis was the anticipation of conquest and expansion of Egypt's scope of exploitation into foreign lands, beginning with the Levant. On the international scene in Africa, Thutmose I not only destroyed the Cushite Kingdom of the SIP, but he expanded the frontier to Egypt's remotest southern point (Redford 1992: 153). His armies struck eastward into the desert behind Kerma, eventually reaching the Fourth Cataract, around Kurgus and Kenisa, where he carved an inscription (Bryan 2000: 233).

This pattern of conquest continued with a major Asiatic campaign to the northeast that Thutmose I launched by Year 5 or 6 (Redford 1992: 153), which is commemorated on a fragmentary inscription at Deir el-Bahri and mentions elephants, horses, and the site of Niy. His expedition to Syria opened new horizons that later led to Egypt's important role in the trade and diplomacy of the LBA in the ANE (Bryan 2000: 230, 234). After all, the lands of Asia possessed untold wealth that was waiting for Egypt to seize, and the shift to Memphis as the new capital was due to his belief that Asia was the highest political priority for Egypt, above both Libya (to the west) and Nubia (to the south).

Thutmose II (*ca.* 1516–1504 BC) was the son of Thutmose I by a lesser queen, Mutnofret, and his reign was neither long nor illustrious. One reason for asserting its brevity comes from the writings of Ineni, the official who supervised the construction of some splendid buildings at Karnak, including two obelisks—one of which still stands today—and the quarrying of Thutmose I's tomb. Ineni's career spanned from Thutmose I, whose mummy and possessions he kept out of the reach of robbers, to Hatshepsut (Kuhrt 1995: 191; Gardiner 1976: 179–181). A second reason for asserting a short reign is that Thutmose II's highest preserved regnal year is Year 1 (Bryan 2000: 235).

A third reason for asserting a brief reign for Thutmose II is his virtual lack of military involvement in Asia. The only known military excursion into Asia was a successful punitive expedition into the Negev against the Shasu, his neighbors on the eastern frontier who had attacked the Egyptian lowlands. He certainly did not follow up the conquests of his father by consolidating the territory that was gained in the Levant, as Mitanni roamed freely in Syria and Mesopotamia (Redford 1992: 153). Mitanni was the Hurrian civilization whose empire consisted of the remains of Hammurabi's earlier domain and was centered in the Khabur triangle (Hallo and Simpson 1998: 261).

Due to Thutmose II's failure to act, Aleppo became a principality that Mitanni ruled directly, and Niy, through its subservience to Alalakh, was subjugated indirectly under Mitanni's control. Alalakh, ruled by a survivor of the civil war in Aleppo named Idrimi, became a tribute-paying vassal of Mitanni that was allowed to sign independent treaties with cities such as Ugarit and to raid Hittite towns without retribution (Gardiner 1976: 180). This expansion of Mitanni's sphere of influence allowed the northern Levant to be a Mitanni-controlled buffer zone between the Hurrians and the Egyptians, and it set the table for future conflict between the two powers when Egypt would advance into the Levant for conquest.

Thutmose II enjoyed a stable southern border, as the Nubian Kingdom of the Hyksos era completely had ceased to exist, with an administration that was overseen by a viceroy. However, this stability came only after a hard-fought victory. The principal monument of Thutmose II's reign, a triumphal, rock-cut stele at Sehel that dates to Year 1, describes in great detail how the Egyptians endured an insurrection in Nubia. Having heard of this rebellion, Thutmose II apparently swore that he would not leave a single man alive among them. His army then slaughtered the Nubians so thoroughly that they spared only one child of the Nubian chieftain. This royal heir then was taken to Thebes as a captive (Redford 1992: 153; Gardiner 1976: 180; Brugsch [1902] 1996: 140; Bryan 2000: 236).

The Thutmosid succession entered into an extraordinary phase after Thutmose II died. His son, Thutmose III (*ca.* 1504–1450 BC), officially received the throne as a young child when his father died, probably suddenly and unexpectedly. Since Thutmose III was a young child, Hatshepsut (*ca.* 1504/2–1483 BC), his

aunt/stepmother, led the nation on his behalf. Sometime between Year 2 (Grimal 1992: 209) and Year 7 (Laboury 2014: 62) of his rule, she became coregent and served as the *de facto* ruler, which continued until she abdicated the throne in Year 22. The textual and iconographic information on the monuments of contemporary officials reveal that Hatshepsut gradually transformed herself from queen to king (Shirley 2014: 174). The evidence indicates that she initially dated her reign from the year of her coronation. Between her second and seventh year in this role, however, she began to backdate her reign to coincide with her young coregent's regnal years, a practice she continued for the balance of her reign.

Senenmut, a foreigner who became Hatshepsut's chief advisor, was responsible for many of the building projects during her reign, the amount of which surpassed those of her predecessors (Bryan 2000: 238) and are some of the most tasteful, complete, and brilliant creations ever fashioned by Egyptian hands. Their matchless splendor is due to the manipulation of the stone, the form and manner of the execution, and the effect of the richly-colored decoration. Dominating every inscription attributed to this female king is her preoccupation with a vast project to rebuild Egypt, and for such an effort, peace was required. Hatshepsut explicitly stated, "I ordained tranquility throughout the townships; all the cities were at peace" (Brugsch [1902] 1996: 142–143; Redford 1992: 151).

Memphis may have received attention from Hatshepsut, as attested by a fragmentary alabaster jar found near the temple of Ptah and a colossal alabaster sphinx that was reused by the Ramessides in their temple precinct. Apart from evidence of quarrying at Hatnub, there is no record of construction in M.E. before her rule. Her Speos Artemidos inscription documents how she was the first to restore temples in the area since the destructive days of the Hyksos. No site received more of Hatshepsut's attention than Thebes, where the temple of Karnak grew once more under her supervision (Bryan 2000: 239).

Hatshepsut's commercial expedition during which she dispatched five ships to Punt was promoted in Egypt as a major diplomatic coup (Smith 1969: 277). Militarily, she mounted successful campaigns into Nubia to deal with local uprisings (Bryan 2000: 242), but if she campaigned in the southern Levant, no conclusive evidence of it has survived. On at least one occasion, she took to the field, herself. Nonetheless, her campaigns are few in number and were undertaken on a limited scale. Military ventures obviously were not a major priority for Hatshepsut, and Egypt's acquisition of foreign assets diminished as a result (Redford 1992: 153; Kuhrt 1995: 191).

In central Syria, Tunip and Kadesh expanded, having taken advantage of the relative calm provided by Hatshepsut's non-aggressive foreign policy. Whether Tunip and Kadesh acted as protégés of Mitanni is unclear, but they began to exert their influence among the coastal towns to the north of Byblos. Kadesh's king turned to the south, and at the end of her coregency, he proclaimed himself to be the *de facto* ruler of Syria and northern Canaan. He confiscated property in Galilee and the northern Jordan Rift Valley, which validates how the towns of Canaan became characterized as "those that are loyal to him." His mustering of other rulers and militia at Megiddo demonstrates not only his firm grip on Egypt's vassal states, but also his intent to move southward and annex more territory. Egypt scarcely could concede control of Canaan to such an expansionistic power as Kadesh (Redford 1992: 155–156).

Thutmose III assumed the role of sole ruler when Hatshepsut vacated the throne in Year 22 (*ca.* 1483 BC) for reasons that are not attested in Egyptian sources. He eventually carried out extensive building

programs, put Egypt on a sound administrative basis, and transformed the kingdom into an empire. He wasted little time in establishing a reputation both for himself and for Egypt that would be remembered and recounted a millennium later, even if somewhat imperfectly. Since Nubia already had been conquered and Hatshepsut had reaped the windfall from her expedition to Punt, the new locale for quick gains was the Levant, where lucrative trading routes awaited (Bryan 2000: 243).

The king's first order of business was to quell the Levantine rebellion that the King of Kadesh had sparked, as Thutmose III intended to wrest control of numerous Canaanite city-states and towns from their new overlords, who were backed by Mitanni. The king moved his army to Gaza, which had been under Egyptian control since at least Ahmose's reign. *The Annals of Thutmose III*, which were inscribed on the walls of his Karnak temple at Thebes, record that in Thutmose III's first Asiatic campaign (Year 23), he left Gaza in order to meet the rebels at Megiddo (Bryan 2000: 245; Grimal 1992: 213). After the army arrived at Yehem, the king consulted with his advisors about which of the three routes to Megiddo through the Carmel Mountain Range would be best for the Egyptian advance.

He rejected the advice of his conservative counselors, who encouraged him to use either the Taanach Pass or the Jokneam Pass, instead choosing to march the army through the Aruna Pass: a narrow, less-favored route into the Jezreel Valley. He was convinced that the opposing coalition would not expect him to use the riskiest path into the valley. The king's brilliant strategy succeeded, as he surprised the coalition's armies and routed them so thoroughly that the remaining troops were forced to retreat into Megiddo for safety (Redford 1992: 157; Hallo and Simpson 1998: 261; LaSor 1982: 41; Wilson 1950: 235). The Egyptians then besieged Megiddo for seven months, and when the city fell in December of *ca.* 1483 BC, all of the Canaanite leaders—with the exception of the King of Kadesh, who had fled—fell in one stroke.

Once these petty kings were in Egyptian hands, they were required to vow that never again would they rebel against Egypt or act evilly against Thutmose III. *The Annals* record Megiddo's fall with the timeless phrase, "He who captures Megiddo captures a thousand cities." Thutmose III captured 3,400 prisoners of war, 894 chariots (including two made of gold), 502 bows, 200 coats of mail, 2,041 horses, and 24,816 other animals. Judging from this booty list, the Battle of Megiddo involved the largest number of forces that ever would participate in Thutmose III's Levantine incursions, showcasing his brilliance as a tactician (Brewer and Teeter 1999: 74; Redford 1992: 156–158; Hoffmeier 2000a: 12; Hallo and Simpson 1998: 261; Wilson 1950: 237–238; Hoffmeier 2000b: 16).

Thutmose III followed in the footsteps of his grandfather by leading military campaigns into Asia, although he far surpassed him in the number of times he led operations there, as he totaled 17 Asiatic campaigns. Some involved conquest (1, 5–8), while others were merely punitive (9, 10, 14, 17) or tours of inspection (2–4, 13). Six of the 17 campaigns were directed against Kadesh of ancient Syria (Hallo and Simpson 1998: 261). Scholars universally agree that when considering these campaigns, Egypt's arch-rival clearly was the middle-Euphrates state of Mitanni, the other ANE superpower of the day.

The campaigns of Years 24–32 detail the king's focus on the Levantine littoral, with its forests and harbors, as well as areas of western Syria (Bryan 2000: 245). Early in Year 33 (*ca.* 1472 BC), Thutmose III launched his eighth and most illustrious campaign: a direct assault on Mitanni. This ingenious king transported his materials and supplies to Byblos by ship, where his troops constructed prefabricated assault-

crafts out of Lebanese cedars. These crafts then were disassembled and transported in carts at the rear of the convoy, as the entire expeditionary force marched inland to the northeast, crossing the Lebanese Mountains into the Orontes Valley (Redford 1992: 159).

The Egyptian troops passed through Kadesh and Tunip unopposed, but when they neared Aleppo, the Mitannians resisted. Three sharp engagements ensued, all of which the Egyptians won, allowing Thutmose III to proceed to the Euphrates River at Carchemish. The Mitannians crossed over to the eastern bank of the river, confiscating or destroying all of the boats in the vicinity. The Egyptians, in a move that completely surprised their enemies, then reassembled their prefabricated assault-crafts, crossed the river, pursued the bewildered Mitannians, and eventually routed them downstream, while the local nobility retreated into caves. Wholesale destruction followed, as the Egyptians torched all of the towns along the Euphrates. Afterward, Thutmose III erected a boundary stele on the riverbank alongside that of his grandfather, Thutmose I, intending this to be a permanent conquest (Redford 1992: 159).

His victory clearly represents a defeat of Naharin (Egyptian for “Mitanni”), resulting in a one-time delivery of booty that consisted of captives and desirable possessions (Bryan 2000: 245). In Year 50, Thutmose III launched his only documented Nubian campaign, which expanded Egyptian hegemony up to the Fourth Cataract (Grimal 1992: 215). With all of these international successes, Egypt had established itself as the more dominant of the ancient world’s two superpowers. This was a time of great hardship for the local populations, as written records mention the deportation of Canaanites to Egypt as slaves, tribute confiscated, military service, and enforced labor (Mullins 2015: 522).

Amenhotep II (*ca.* 1453–1416 BC) ascended the throne with Egypt at the height of its greatest glory and most extensive international dominion in its rich history, thanks to unparalleled expansion under Thutmose III. The imperialist’s son exemplified the tradition of the sporting king *and* the boastful young king, given his athletic renown and self-proclaimed prowess as a marksman who allegedly could shoot arrows through copper targets during practice (Hallo and Simpson 1998: 262; Bryan 2000: 249). Amenhotep II was a coregent with his father for 2½ years (Geraty 2015: 57; Bryan 2000: 248; der Manuelian 1987: 24; Parker 1969: 80–81; Redford 1965: 116) before he became sole ruler in 1450 BC. The highest known regnal date among the indisputable evidence is Year 26, which comes from an inscription on a wine juglet from the king’s funerary temple at Thebes.

Wente and Van Siclen (1976: 228) proved that the long-term storage of wine at Egyptian mortuary temples began far before a king’s death, justifying the view that Amenhotep II ruled beyond 26 years (Petrovich 2006: 91). While Thutmose III engaged in a remarkable 17 military campaigns into Asia, his son only ventured there on a mere two occasions (Bryan 2000: 252): in Years 3 and 7 (see Chapter 8). The matter of the great reduction in campaigning and expansionism that transpired during Amenhotep II’s reign is one of great importance, especially considering his boast of military prowess as a young man. His campaign in Year 3 was fueled by a massive revolt among the kings of Canaan’s city-states (Grimal 1992: 218), and during this campaign the Egyptians ventured northward into Syria, the buffer zone between Egypt and Mitanni.

Yet during Amenhotep II’s second Asiatic campaign of Year 7, he never even encountered Mitanni (*contra* Grimal 1992: 219). Instead, he led a mini-campaign that probably stopped short of Hazor (Aharoni

and Avi-Yonah 1977: 34), Canaan's most powerful city-state, meaning that the trip was little more than a glorified slave-raid, as the booty list and itinerary imply (see Chapter 8). Given that Chapter 8 represents an attempt to prove that Amenhotep II is the pharaoh of the exodus, and that the focus of the present volume is limited to the timing and events related to the Israelite exodus from Egypt, a summary for the remaining seven kings of Dynasty 18 will not be offered. Some of the subsequent kings and events that occurred during their reigns will be discussed at various points throughout the volume, but those isolated instances do not necessitate a synopsis of their reigns here.



## CHAPTER 2

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# CHRONOLOGY AND SYNCHRONIZATION

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### SETTING THE STAGE FOR ISRAELITE AND EGYPTIAN CHRONOLOGY

The Asiatics who settled at Avaris in Dynasty 12 (see Chapter 3) initially occupied the site during the archaeological period in the Levant that is known as the MBA (*ca.* 2000–1550 BC). As Appendix 5 demonstrates conclusively, the Asiatics who continued to reside there until, throughout, and after Dynasty 15 were separate from the Hyksos, whatever their ethnicity may have been. The evidence in favor of identifying these Asiatics as Israelites is exceedingly strong, and it includes archaeological and epigraphical finds related to the origins of the Hebrews, which have not been identified as such until now. Before examining this evidence, ancient Israelite and Egyptian chronology must be established, as well as proper historical synchronisms that link the two together with confidence.

A *literal* rendering of biblical chronology related to the Israelites' stay in Egypt, which is the hermeneutical method preferred by advocates of the early exodus view (Stripling 2021: 26, 29), requires an entry into Egypt in 1876 BC and a departure in 1446 BC. Their original arrival in Egypt under Jacob is linked to the reign of Sesostri III (1878–1840 BC), who corresponds to the biblio-historical figure of the famine pharaoh, while their exodus was linked to Amenhotep II's reign (1453–1416 BC). This synchronization also implies that Joseph first served as second in command over all of Egypt (Gen 41:39–46) under Sesostri II (1887–1878 BC), who can be called the abundance pharaoh (Gen 41:28–29), from 1885–1878 BC, the final year of which witnessed a transition to Sesostri III's reign.

### ESTABLISHING ISRAELITE CHRONOLOGY FOR THE SECOND MILLENNIUM BC

The initial text to consult for arriving at a chronology of patriarchal events in Egypt, 1 Kings 6:1, connects the exodus to later Israelite history by noting that Solomon began constructing the Temple of He-who-is in the 480th year after the exodus, signifying an elapsed time of 479+ years. A discussion of why the reference to these 479+ years should be taken literally—rather than figuratively, as do many proponents of the late exodus theory—does not need to be repeated here. Instead, the reader may consult the arguments developed in previously published materials (Wood 2005: 475–489; *idem* 2008: 205–240; Petrovich 2006: 81–110; *idem* 2008: 489–512). Virtually all but the minimalists agree that the counting of the 479+ years should begin in May of 966 or 967 BC, depending on whether one accepts Young's (2003: 601–602) or Thiele's (1994: 80) version of Solomon's regnal dates.

Therefore, the 479+ years began either in 1446 or 1445 BC, and it has been established already that 1446 BC is the proper choice between the two (Young 2006: 82; Petrovich 2006: 83–84). One compelling argument for preferring 1446 BC, which derives from extra-biblical sources, is that the Jubilee cycles agree with this date exactly, yet are completely independent of the 479+ years of 1 Kgs 6:1 (Young 2006:

71–83). The Jubilee dates are precise only if the priests began counting years when they entered the land of Canaan in 1406 BC (see Lev 25:2–10). The Talmud (*‘Arakin* 12b) lists 17 cycles from Israel’s entry into Canaan until the last recorded Jubilee in 574 BC, if using the Tishri calendar, which date is 14 years after Jerusalem’s destruction by the Babylonians. A similar statement is found in chapter 11 of *The Seder ‘Olam*, an early rabbinical writing that predates the Talmud (Young 2006: 2003: 599–603).

Advocates of the late exodus view have yet to explain the remarkable coincidence of the Jubilee cycles, which align perfectly with the date of 1446 BC for the exodus. More external evidence that supports 1446 BC as the year of the exodus comes from the historical-chronological testimony in the Tyrian King List and the Parian Marble, which affirm 967 BC as the year in which construction began on the First Temple (Young and Steinmann 2012: 223–248). Based on these various independent and external witnesses, 1446 BC is preferable to 1445 BC for the exact year of the exodus.

Even the exact month and day of the exodus can be deduced, as God both established for Israel a lunar calendar that began with the month of Nisan (originally “Abib,” per Exod 13:4) and precisely predicted the day of the exodus as 14 Nisan (Exod 12:6). The new moon that began the month of Nisan in 1446 BC reportedly occurred at 21:42 UT (Universal Time) on Wednesday, 8 April (Espenak 2020b), assuming that there were no significant variations in the earth’s rotation, apart from the roughly 25 seconds per century that NASA allows for the tidal retardation of the earth’s rotational velocity.

Yet two variables must be factored into the equation: (1) The date used to mark the new moon varies slightly according to the point of observation. In the eastern Nile Delta, where the land of Goshen and the Egyptian royal city of Memphis were located, the time is 2.1 hours ahead of longitude zero at the Greenwich Meridian, so the new moon should have been observable in Egypt at 21:42 + 2.1 hours = 23.48 hours, or 11:48 pm. Since 11:48 pm was after sunset on 8 April, and sunset was the standard time for Egypt’s priests to declare a new moon after observing the moon’s crescent, they would not have declared the beginning of a new month on that night. Instead, they would have waited until the next night, which for now can be assumed to be 9 April 1446 BC.

However, (2) the earth’s rotational velocity has varied on two prior occasions, beyond the variable of 25 seconds per century, events described in the Bible but not acknowledged by NASA. The first occasion was the “long day” of Joshua, in which “the sun stood still and the moon stopped, until the nation took vengeance on their enemies,” an event that transpired “for about a full day” (Josh 10:13). Strictly speaking, the earth—and not the sun—stood still, and of necessity the moon’s position relative to the earth did not vary, so the moon evidently stopped moving or drastically slowed down, as well.

The second occasion was during Hezekiah’s reign, in *ca.* 703 BC, when the shadow went back “ten steps” on the dial (2 Kgs 20:10), a terrestrial phenomenon that represents a retrograde motion of the earth. Since the length of these ten steps and the position of the sun at the time are unknown, exactly how much time this represents is unclear, but it probably did not exceed a few hours. Therefore, these two events together represent a variation of about one full day, meaning that the first day of Nisan in Egypt actually fell on Friday, 10 April. From here, the biblical text can extrapolate the date of the exodus.

On the 10th day of the month (Sunday, 19 April), each Israelite family was to take an unblemished lamb in preparation for Passover (Exod 12:3), although the text does not specify why they were to take

the lamb or kid of their flock on this day (Carpenter 2016: 445). On 14 Nisan, they were to slaughter the animal in the evening, just prior to the beginning of the new day, and eat the Passover Feast (Exod 12:6). That night (now 15 Nisan), all of the firstborn of the Egyptians and their animals were struck dead (Exod 12:12, 29), and on the next morning the Israelites departed from Egypt (Exod 12:33–34; Num 33:3).

In fact, the text states that the Israelites were expelled from Egypt (Exod 12:39), which fulfills the prediction in Exod 11:1 (Propp 1999: 415). Since the Israelites counted their days from dusk to dusk, they slaughtered their animals for the Passover Feast on the 14th day of the month (Thursday evening) and departed from Goshen on the 15th (Friday morning), which began their permanent evacuation from Egypt. Therefore, the Israelite exodus from Egypt may be dated with relative confidence to Friday, 24 April 1446 BC (Petrovich 2006: 84 [ftn. 15], which date is corrected here by one day).

The final text to consult is Exodus 12:40–41, which declares that the Israelites went out from Egypt 430 years after the sons of Israel entered the land of Egypt, to the very day. Since the exodus occurred on 24 April 1446 BC, Jacob and his sons evidently entered Egypt on 9 May 1876 BC, which date derives from the lunar calendar that was used in antiquity (Espenak 2020a). Given that this date corresponds to two years into the seven-year famine (Gen 45:11), the event must have begun in 1878 BC, and the seven years of plenty must have begun in 1885 BC. As mentioned in Chapter 1, Exodus 12:40 contains an extremely crucial textual variation, meaning that the ancient biblical texts and sources disagree with one another as to how the Hebrew wording of the verse originally read.

The view that the Israelite sojourn in Egypt lasted 430 years is supported by the following sources: the Masoretic Hebrew text (notably the Leningrad Codex), the Dead Sea Scrolls (4Q14Exod), *Targum Onqelos*, *Samaritan Targum*, Syriac MSS, rabbinical sources of the LXX, the Armenian version, the Boheric version, the Vulgate, the Peshitta, and Josephus's *Antiquities of the Jews* 2.9.1 (Petrovich 2019: 25). The view that the Israelite sojourn in Egypt lasted approximately 215 years (i.e., the 430 years describes the roughly 215 years that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob lived in Canaan, plus the roughly 215 years of the subsequent Israelite residency in Egypt) is supported by the following sources: the Samaritan Pentateuch, the standard reading of the LXX (as featured in the Rahlfs and Göttingen editions), Syriac manuscripts (Syro-Hexapla), and Josephus's *Antiquities of the Jews* 2.15.2 §318 (Petrovich 2019: 24).

The full study of this textual problem is undertaken in a peer-reviewed journal article (Petrovich 2019: 23–30), but the study proved conclusively that the mention of 430 years in Exod 12:40 refers only to the Israelite residency in Egypt. The present writer has shown that the variant reading that favors 215 years in Egypt is spurious, contra Rohl (2015: 78–79) and Hoffmeier (2007: 225–47), and that the view of its early adherents led to the textual variation that improperly added “in the land of Canaan” to the verse (Petrovich 2019: 27–28). The external evidence favors the double tradition of the Masoretic text and the Dead Sea Scrolls, and the internal evidence is supported by numerous arguments:

(1) No accidental error of omission seems plausible for its rise. (2) The Masoretic text offers the shortest reading, and one vital canon of transcriptional probability is to prefer the shorter reading, since intentional changes are more likely to have been additions, rather than omissions (Greenlee 1964, 78). (3) The context of Exod 12:40 is woven into a narrative that focuses directly on the Israelite sojourn in Egypt, not the previous patriarchal sojourn in Canaan. (4) The rise of the other readings can be explained easily

by the Masoretic text's reading, but its rise cannot be explained whatsoever by the originality of any other reading. The most important canon of transcriptional probability is to prefer the reading that best explains the rise of the other readings. These four arguments act as four strands that form a strong cord, making the variant with 430 years in Egypt the overwhelming choice based on internal evidence (Petrovich 2019: 30).

## ESTABLISHING EGYPTIAN CHRONOLOGY FOR THE SECOND MILLENNIUM BC

The two chronological focal points in Egyptian history for the present study are the lifetime of Joseph (Dynasty 12) and the lifetime of Moses (Dynasty 18). Fortuitously, the two ancient documentations of the rising of the Sothic star that form the basis of the conventional chronology of Egyptian history, which in turn provide the framework for the chronology of the entire Mediterranean region, date to the reigns of one king who ruled in Dynasty 12 (Sesostris III) and one king who ruled in Dynasty 18 (Amenhotep I) (Shaw 2000: 11). The chronology for Egypt's Dynasty 12 (Joseph's era) is based on the astronomical evidence garnered from Berlin Museum Papyrus 10012, which was discovered at Lahun (in M.E.) in 1899 and records a heliacal rising of Sothis on Day 16 of Month 4 of Season 2 *prt* (the eighth month on the calendar), of Year 7 of Sesostris III (Parkinson 1991: 89). This is known because the letter is dated simply, "Year 7, Month 3 of *prt*, Day 25." Peret (*prt*), the season of growth, often is referred to as winter.

The Egyptian civil calendar consisted of 365 days arranged into the three seasons: Akhet, Peret, and Shemu, each containing four months of 30 days each. Five additional days, known as Epagomenals, were added at the end of the year to make up for the lack of precision with the lunar calendar. This civil calendar probably was introduced before the advent of Egypt's monarchy, beginning with an assumed observation of the heliacal rising of Sothis on Day 1 of Month 1 of Akhet. The heliacal rising of Sothis denotes its first visibility in the morning sky after a period of invisibility (Gautschy et al. 2017: 70). According to the calculations of Richard Parker (1976: 184), historically considered the standard work for the chronology of Dynasty 12, the astronomical reference on BMP 10012 effectively dates the papyrus to 1872 BC (Shaw 2000: 11; Ward 1992: 56–59; LaSor 1982: 39–40), which in turn dates his Year 1 to *ca.* 1878 BC (Scharff and Moortgat 1950: 192).

Parker thus provided the standard chronology for Dynasty 12, known as the high chronology view, a system that has withstood scholarly criticism to this day. This heliacal rising of Sothis assumes a Memphite point of observation, which is not far from Lahun. Numerous Egyptologists agree with the astronomical dating calculated by using Memphis as the observational point for the solar rising, and thus they also take 1878 BC as the beginning of Sesostris III's reign (Gardiner 1976: 66; Redford 1992: 76). Huber (2011: 217, 220) chose 1873/72 BC for Sesostris III's Year 1, a difference of a mere five years, but he acknowledged a discrepancy rate of 40%, which alludes to numerous documents dating to Sesostris III's reign that do not fit with 1873/72 BC as Year 1. While no record of where the Egyptians observed this particular Sothic rising is extant, a Neoplatonist named Olympiodorus noted in AD 6 that it was celebrated at Alexandria, after having been *observed at Memphis* (Ward 1992: 59).

Moreover, Memphis was both a major religious center throughout the nation's history and the site of the Egyptian monarchy's first capital city. Memphis, ancient Egypt's most prominent city from the beginning of the dynastic period, thus almost certainly is the correct point of observation for all of the heliacal

risings of the Sothic star, including the one recorded on the papyrus from Lahun. Additionally, it is difficult to conceive of the point of observation changing from era to era, since this would disrupt the accrued chronology for Egypt's history from the earliest time that Sothic observations were documented. Since the present writer also accepts a Memphite point of observation for heliacal risings, and since for every degree of latitudinal variance in the point of observation there is a difference of four years per degree, this dating scheme's accuracy is relatively secure, even if not indisputably so.

The Memphite point of observation for the Sothic rising leads to the high chronology view (which, for example, places the beginning of Thutmose III's reign [Dynasty 18] in 1504 BC), a position that Hoffmeier (2021: 56) and Rohl (2015: 46) flippantly dismissed with the rationale that many Egyptologists today have rejected the high chronology view in favor of the low chronology view (which places the beginning of Thutmose III's reign in 1479 BC or so). Popularity contests have nothing to do with rational evidence that compels one to hold a particular view. Hoffmeier and Rohl failed to tell their readers that Memphis is the only site the Egyptians recorded as their point of observation, and their chief goal was to cast doubt on Amenhotep II as the proper candidate for the exodus pharaoh, because that would invalidate Hoffmeier's view of an Exodus in Dynasty 19 and Rohl's radical revision of Egyptian history.

The regnal lengths and dates for the kings from Sesostris II to Amenemhat III must be established next, in order to synchronize Israelite and Egyptian history during Joseph's era. The Turin Royal Canon, a papyrus that derives from the later Ramesside times but reflects a kinglist that was begun during the MK (*ca.* 2025–1674 BC), lists 19 years for Sesostris II's reign, and 3? (i.e., 30 + x) years for Sesostris III's reign (Wegner 1996: 250, 262). In opposition to the reading on the Turin Royal Canon, Grajetzki (2006: 51) concluded that Sesostris II reigned only eight or nine years, probably because the highest year attested thus far is on a stele from Toshka, which reads either *Year 8* or *Year 9*, and because there is little or no evidence of a coregency with Sesostris III. The possibility of a short coregency between Sesostris II and Sesostris III does exist, though, as a scarab with both kings' names inscribed on it—a dedicatory inscription that celebrates the resumption of rituals they jointly began—was discovered.

Until further evidence is found that can prove a regnal length conclusively, a reign of nine years for Sesostris II remains the best option. Although Egyptologists from the mid-1970s to the mid-1990s attempted to shorten the length of Sesostris III's reign since so few regnal dates survive from his latter years (e.g., Kurt's [1997: 162] suggested reign of only 16 years), Wegner (1996: 251) proved that he reigned much longer, with the discovery of a stratified, hieratic, administrative document from South Abydos that dates to Year 39. This, in turn, led to the conclusion that a long coregency existed between Sesostris III and Amenemhat III, with Year 1 of the son's rule following Year 19 of the father's rule (Wegner 1996: 250–251). Despite Wegner's discovery, some scholars have chosen to ignore the evidence and to maintain a shorter regnal length for Sesostris III, such as 30 years (Huber 2011: 217, based on Gautschy 2011: 1–19).

The reason for the dearth of attestation to Sesostris III's latter years undoubtedly is connected to how the junior regent in this coregency of Dynasty 12 became the active monarch in terms of governing the daily affairs of the nation (Hallo and Simpson 1956: 215), while the senior regent slipped away into a form of semi-retirement at distant South Abydos. Therefore, when Amenemhat III ascended the throne,

he correspondingly would have replaced his father, Sesostris III, as the primary ruling king. With the regnal length for Sesostris III firmly established, the regnal dates for Sesostris II and Sesostris III can be determined. Since Sesostris III ruled into Year 39, he would have ascended the throne in *ca.* 1878 BC and concluded his rule in *ca.* 1840 BC. Backtracking to the reign of his father, Sesostris II, his rule began in *ca.* 1887 BC, if indeed he ruled for about nine years, and finished in *ca.* 1878 BC, a more secure date.

The final regnal dates to be established for the relevant kings of Dynasty 12 are those for Amenemhat III, who reigned for a lengthy period, as Lahun Papyrus VI (Griffith 1898: 19) dates to Year 46, Month 1 of *3ht*, Day 22. Akhet (*3ht*) is the inundation season, the time when the Nile River flooded its banks as it flowed northward. His reign may have lasted a bit longer, as a rock inscription at Konosso (in Nubia) equates Year 1 of Amenemhat IV either to Year 46, 47, or 48 of Amenemhat III (Ryholt 1997: 212). Since the reigns of Sesostris II, Sesostris III, and Amenemhat III are the only ones that overlap with Joseph's administrative role in Egypt, attention now turns to the exodus era.

The chronology for Egypt's Dynasty 18 (Moses's lifetime) is based on the astronomical evidence acquired from the Ebers Papyrus, a medical treatise that was purchased by Georg Ebers at Luxor in 1873 and records a heliacal rising of Sothis on Day 9 of Month 3 of Season 3 *šmw* (Month 11 on the calendar), of Year 9 of Amenhotep I (Parkinson 1991: 89). Shemu (*šmw*), the season of harvest, often is referred to as summer. According to the high chronology, based on a Memphite point of observation for the Sothic rising, the Ebers Papyrus effectively dates to *ca.* 1541 BC (Ward 1992: 58–59), which in turn dates Amenhotep I's Year 1 to *ca.* 1550 BC. Some Egyptologists argue that Thebes should be the point of Sothic observation for the Ebers Papyrus, given the papyrus's Theban provenience (Shaw 2000: 11; Grimal 1992: 202), but a document's place of origin does not require that this location is where the Egyptian priests signaled astronomical events on a national level. If the low chronology were correct for this Sothic rising, a view that is rejected here, the papyrus would date to *ca.* 1523 BC (Ward 1992: 59).

The regnal lengths and dates for the kings from Amenhotep I to Amenhotep II, the exodus pharaoh, must be established in order to synchronize Israelite and Egyptian history during Moses's era. Although Year 10 is Amenhotep I's highest attested regnal year, the autobiographical tomb inscription of a horologist named Amenemhat states that he served the king for 21 years (Redford 1966: 114). This matches the later statement in Manetho's *Epitome* that Amenhotep I ruled for 21 years. For this reason, 21 years are assigned to his reign. Since he ascended the throne in *ca.* 1550 BC, he reigned until *ca.* 1529 BC.

According to Josephus, Manetho wrote in his *Epitome* that Thutmose I ruled for 12 years and nine months (von Beckerath 1990: 67). His latest attested regnal year is inscribed on a stone block at Karnak that dates to Year 9. Most Egyptologists accept Manetho's assigned regnal length as valid (Bryan 2000: 229; Hallo and Simpson 1998: 255; Grimal 1992: 204), and there is no reason to doubt that Thutmose I reigned just under 13 years. Since his rule began in *ca.* 1529 BC, it would have ended in *ca.* 1516 BC.

Thutmose II's regnal length is disputed, because it is poorly attested within the recorded monuments and among the autobiographies documented on the walls of officials' tombs. In addition, Hatshepsut usurped most of his extant monuments. The latest preserved regnal year for Thutmose II is only Year 1, which caused scholars of the late 20th century to propose that he ruled only a few years (Dorman 2006: 40), or for no more than three years (Bryan 2000: 235). Jürgen von Beckerath (1997: 121; 1990: 70, 73)

suggested that since Thutmose II was called “a falcon in the nest” in Ineni’s autobiography, and he lived long enough to father two children, he must have ascended the throne as a child and ruled for at least seven years, with 12–14 years on the throne as von Beckerath’s (1997: 121; 1990: 70) preference, which opinion most Egyptologists have chosen to follow. Grimal (1992: 207) assigned 14 years to Thutmose II. A regnal length of 12 years is preferred here, which fits within von Beckerath’s range but admittedly is uncertain.

According to von Beckerath (1997: 189), Thutmose III inherited the throne from Thutmose II on Month 1 of *šmw* (Season 3), Day 4 (of Pakhons, Month 9 on the calendar), which corresponds to *ca.* 29 April. Huber (2011: 172, 174) referred to the high chronology’s placement of Thutmose III’s Year 1 in *ca.* 1504 BC as the best fitting and most convincing astronomical chronology, which is the year preferred here. Proponents of the low chronology typically assign 1479 BC as the year of his accession. The record of Amenemheb-Mahu states that Thutmose III ruled into Year 54 (Redford 1966: 119), as he died on Month 3 of *prt* (Season 2), Day 30 (of Phamenoth, Month 7 on the calendar) (der Manuelian 2006: 418, citing Sethe 1907: 895 [line 16]), or *ca.* 22 March 1450 BC.

The regnal dates for Hatshepsut are *ca.* 1504/2–1483 BC, as her coregency with Thutmose III fell completely within his reign. She began her reign after the child-king had been installed on the throne already (Tyldesley 1996: 100), eventually (from 2–7 years later) backdating her regnal years to match his, and she abdicated the throne as coregent long before his reign ended. Thutmose III probably had ascended the throne as a child because his father died suddenly and unexpectedly (Dorman 2006: 40).

No evidence exists to date the regnal year of Amenhotep II’s death definitively, leaving its length as an inconclusive matter. The highest known regnal date among the indisputable evidence, Year 26, is inscribed on a wine juglet from the king’s Theban funerary temple. His praenomen, or throne name, is inscribed on one side of the jar, while the other side is inscribed with “Year 26” and “Panehsy,” the name of the king’s vintner (der Manuelian 1987: 42). Redford (1966: 119), using questionable logic, asserted that since the juglet was located in the king’s funerary temple, Year 26 represents his final regnal year.

Redford further suggested that since pottery jars are relatively porous, the wine within them was consumed not long after the bottling process, and because mortuary complexes were fully stocked with wine only after a king’s death, the wine juglet of “Year 26” was produced at the end of Amenhotep II’s life, and the mortuary temple probably was under construction until the king’s death and the stocking of the wine. Wente and Van Siclen (1976: 228) disputed this assertion, showing evidence for the long-term storage of wine and for the active functioning of Egyptian mortuary temples long before the deaths of the kings for whom they were built.

One source contributing to the argument that Amenhotep II reigned beyond 26 years is Papyrus BM (British Museum) 10056. Redford (1965: 110) dated a fragmentary regnal year in verse 9,8 of this papyrus to “Year 30,” although he admitted that the number also could be read differently, such as “Year 35.” If one of these readings is correct, Amenhotep II’s reign lasted at least 30 or 35 years. Many scholars have postulated that he reigned beyond 30 years because he observed a regnal jubilee called a *Heb Sed* festival, a celebration that historically marked Year 30 of a king’s reign. Sesostris I of Dynasty 12 erected two obelisks in front of the temple pylon at Heliopolis on the occasion of his first *Heb Sed* festival, commemorating his

Year 30 (Grimal 1992: 164). During Dynasty 18, Thutmose III seemingly celebrated a *Heb Sed* festival in his Year 30, as well.

Redford (1992: 158) suggested that the year of rest from Asiatic campaigning between Thutmose III's 6th and 7th campaigns, which corresponds to his Year 30, signifies a "holiday year" used to celebrate this landmark anniversary. While the *Heb Sed* festival was used for centuries to honor this regnal anniversary, der Manuelian (1987: 43) warned against concluding too much about Amenhotep II's regnal length just because he celebrated one: "No dates accompany the jubilee monuments [of Amenhotep II], and our understanding of the jubilee institution is too imperfect to allow us to assign an automatic '30th year' at every mention of a *hb-sed* festival." Caution certainly must be exercised before automatically assigning a reign of 30 years to every king who celebrated this event, but the mention of Amenhotep II's *Heb Sed* festival certainly may signify that his reign lasted over 30 years, which is all the more plausible because his reign is attested both in Year 26 and in either Year 30 or 35.

More conclusive than the evidence from the *Heb Sed* festival is that from Thutmose IV's Lateran Obelisk, which was erected a full 35 years after Thutmose III died, to whom it was dedicated. Wentz and Van Siclen (1976: 227–228) suggested that the 35 years marks the length of the interceding reign of Amenhotep II minus the coregency with his father, which is known to be  $2\frac{2}{3}$  years. The occurrence of a coregency under Thutmose III and Amenhotep II is essentially undisputed among Egyptologists today, as supporting evidence for it is plentiful (der Manuelian 2006: 422; *idem* 1987: 24; Redford 1965: 116; *idem* 1969: 80–81; numerous scarabs with both royal cartouches). If Wentz's and Van Siclen's argumentation is correct, Amenhotep II reigned exactly  $37\frac{1}{3}$  years, making him 55 years old when he died.

Both the Semna Stele and Papyrus BM 10056 offer Month 4 of *3ht* (Season 1), Day 1 (*ca.* 22 November) as Amenhotep II's accession date (der Manuelian 2006: 422). Since the year-number on BM 10056 even changed immediately after the mention of his accession, a definitive conclusion can be made that Amenhotep II's regnal years were numbered from *ca.* 22 November, not from *ca.* 23 March (Redford 1965: 121). *The Biography of Amenemheb* states that Thutmose III died on Month 3 of *prt* (Season 2), Day 30 of Year 54, and that on the very next day Amenhotep II was "established on the throne of his father" (der Manuelian 1987: 20). Therefore, Amenhotep II reigned from *ca.* 1453–1416 BC.

## SYNCHRONIZING ISRAELITE AND EGYPTIAN HISTORY IN THE SECOND MILLENNIUM BC

Huber's dating would have Sesostri II on the throne when Jacob arrived in Egypt (Gen 46:5–6) in 1876 BC, but the dating accepted here has Sesostri III (*ca.* 1878–1840 BC) on the throne at Jacob's arrival. Sesostri II apparently acceded to the throne as a coregent with his father, Amenemhat II, in *ca.* 1887 BC, which is the same year in which Joseph would have interpreted the dreams of the baker and the cupbearer while in prison (Gen 40:1–23). Even though Joseph was the instrument used to communicate the meaning of their dreams, his statement that "interpretations belong to God" (Gen 40:8) reveals that he understood the interpretation of dreams not as a human art but as a divine conferral (Wenham 1994: 383).

Two years later, in *ca.* 1885 BC, Joseph interpreted the king's dream, which referred to seven years of agricultural abundance followed by seven years of terrible drought (Gen 41:28–30). In both instances



of Joseph's interpretations of these dreams, Sesostriis II almost certainly was the ruling king, as well as the junior regent in the coregency with his father, meaning that he was the active monarch who governed Egypt. Therefore, Sesostriis II likely appointed Joseph as second in command over all of Egypt (Gen 41:39–46) and presided over Egypt during the seven years of agricultural abundance (*ca.* 1885–1878 BC). In the same year that the abundant growth ended and the famine began (*ca.* 1878 BC), Sesostriis III ascended the throne.

According to Franke (1995: 743), Sesostriis II's sudden death led to the accession of his son. Franke probably is correct that the father's reign ended suddenly and unexpectedly, but there is no information from antiquity regarding his death. Sesostriis II was buried in his royal pyramid at Lahun, which his vizier was responsible for constructing during the time of agricultural success. Roughly two years into the famine (*ca.* 1877/76 BC), Joseph encountered his brothers in Egypt, whom Jacob had sent there to buy grain so that the family would not starve (Gen 42:1–3). Soon afterward, Jacob and his family relocated from Canaan to Egypt in order to endure the famine there (Gen 46:6), since Joseph had ordered that surplus grain be stockpiled in every city throughout Egypt (Gen 41:47–49).

The Hebrews' arrival at Avaris—the city that the Bible calls Ramesses (Gen 47:11; Exod 1:11; 12:37; Num 33:3, 5), anachronistically (Chapter 3)—in 1876 BC, or Year 2/3 of Sesostriis III, corresponds to two years into the seven-year famine that was experienced throughout Egypt and the Levant (Gen 41:57). During the 1870s BC, Sesostriis III, the famine pharaoh, initiated sweeping changes within Egypt's governmental structure, including (1) the curbing of the nomarchs' power (see Chapter 5), (2) the establishment of absolute power directly in the hands of the monarch, and (3) the implementation of high offices under the vizier—three main administrative divisions: a northern department, a southern department, and a department of the “head of the south” (Elephantine and Lower Nubia).

The famine ended in *ca.* 1871 BC, which roughly was at the conclusion of Year 7 of Sesostriis III. Amenemhat III ascended the throne as coregent with his father in *ca.* 1860/59 BC, which took place either just before or soon after Jacob's death in 1859 BC (Gen 49:33). Perhaps the death of Joseph's father, which occurred 17 years after he entered Egypt (Gen 47:28), caused Sesostriis III to realize that life is short for an aging adult, motivating him to step away from the grind of the ruling king's daily duties. Just before Jacob's death, he instructed his grandsons, Ephraim and Manasseh, to relocate to Avaris (Gen 48:5). Assuming that they moved there immediately in 1859 BC, Manasseh composed Sinai 115 and its Hebrews Caption 17 years later (Fig. 3), while on a mining expedition to Serâbî el-Khâdim in Sinai (Petrovich 2016b: 15–29). Two years later (1840 BC), Sesostriis III died in his Year 39, after a long and prosperous reign in Egypt.

This fulfills perfectly the blessing that the king previously had received from Jacob (Gen 47:7–10), which represents the only reference in Genesis to the blessing of a foreigner by a patriarch (Steinmann 2019: 432). In *ca.* 1831 BC, an anonymous Hebrew composed two PCH (Proto-Consonantal Hebrew) inscriptions at Wadi el-Ḥôl (Petrovich 2016b: 36–51), the site of a desert outpost along the Nile in U.E. during the MK. Wadi el-Ḥôl Inscription 1 includes a fascinating Hebrew grammatical construction known as a *min*-comparative (Pratico and Van Pelt 2001: 53). Wadi el-Ḥôl Inscription 2 contains the oldest extant Hebrew proverb and a reference to El, a proper noun that the Levantine peoples long had been using

to refer to the king of the gods, which word the writers of the Hebrew Bible used of God 217 times (e.g., Moses’s term for the God to whom Abraham swore that he would take nothing from Melchizedek [Gen 14:22]).

In *ca.* 1831 BC, an anonymous Hebrew—potentially one of Joseph’s family members—composed the LBO (Lahun Bilingual Ostrakon) at Lahun (Petrovich 2016b: 51–64), the city to where Joseph relocated in 1885 BC to build the pyramidal city of Sesostri II and construct the dike that regulated the flow of water from the Bahr Yusef into the Fayyum to prepare the silos for the upcoming famine. Joseph undoubtedly relocated his family to Lahun immediately after his elevation to the position of vizier, or second in command in Egypt. Amenemhat III died in *ca.* 1813 BC, after a long and prosperous reign that featured major economic growth, such as an even greater development of irrigation in the Fayyum, including the reclamation of more arable land.

Joseph died in *ca.* 1805 BC, apparently in the last year of Amenemhat IV’s reign. Within four years of this (*ca.* 1801 BC), the female king named Sobekneferu died, which abruptly ended Dynasty 12 and its ruling family. In *ca.* 1772 BC, an anonymous Hebrew—probably a resident of Avaris—composed Sinai 376 at Serâbî el-Khâdim (Fig. 4; Petrovich 2016b: 65–74). This fascinating inscription features a posthumous reference to Joseph’s wife, Asenath, as well as three of the Hebrew words later used of the First Temple: (1) *bêt*, “the house of” (used of the vintner’s house, located in the garden of Asenath, but in the Bible used of the Temple of He-who-is), (2) *dabîr*, “the innermost room, cella” (used of the vintner’s house, but in the Bible used of the Temple’s Holy of Holies), and (3) *ql<sup>e</sup>*, the root word for “engraving, carving” (used of beautifying the vintner’s house, but in the Bible used of beautifying the First Temple).

### PRE-1400-BC RADIOCARBON OFFSET IN EGYPT AND THE ANE

In recent decades, the absolute dating method known as radiocarbon (or <sup>14</sup>C) dating has proven effective for providing the age of living organisms—notably those from antiquity—by measuring the residual amount of <sup>14</sup>C, a radioactive isotope, within that deceased life form. During Hezekiah’s reign, for example, the Judahites at Jerusalem built a water shaft to prepare for an anticipated Assyrian siege under Sennacherib (2 Kgs 20:20), which allowed water to be diverted from the Gihon Spring to the southern part of the city. This enabled the Judahites to obtain fresh water that previously was accessible primarily while outside of the city’s defensive wall, as the spring is located below the floor of the Kidron Valley.

A geologist and his colleagues extracted samples of plants that were trapped under a plaster lining that was laid down in the tunnel when it was built. These plant-remains that were confined inside the waterproof layer were subjected to <sup>14</sup>C analysis, and the scientists determined that the plant-life dates to 700 BC or slightly earlier (Frumkin et al. 2003: 169–171). Since biblical chronology requires that Sennacherib’s invasion would have occurred in 701 BC, Frumkin’s team concluded that the Bible presents an accurate historical record of the Siloam Tunnel’s construction.

Another example of verifiably accurate <sup>14</sup>C dating is connected to olive pits that were discovered during the excavations at Khirbet Qeiyafa, a site that can be identified as biblical Dual Gates (Petrovich 2021b: 92–93), often left transliterated in English Bibles as *Ša’ârâim* “Shaaraim” (1 Sam 17:52). As the present writer often stresses to his students in language courses, foreign words should be translated when-

ever humanly possible, not merely transliterated, because names of people and places carried meaning in the ANE. When comparing ceramic evidence with biblical chronology, the site would have been built during Saul's reign (1049–1009 BC, per Steinmann 2011: 114–115), and it would have been destroyed sometime during David's reign (1009–969 BC).

As for the earliest attested date for organic material discovered at Qeiyafa IV, the excavators found numerous samples throughout the site. Most of the samples taken record probable date-ranges that fit best within the first quarter of the 10th century BC (e.g., Qeiyafa 5, 6, 7, 10), which justifies Garfinkel's conclusion that the site was inhabited for at least some portion of David's reign in that century, but several samples fit best overall in the final two decades of the 11th century BC. For example, the olive pit designated Qeiyafa 3 (year taken: 2008), excavated in Locus 214 from Area B, dates to 1211–1011 BC with a 95.4% probability and to 1130–1046 BC with a 59.6% probability (Garfinkel and Ganor 2009: 35–38; Garfinkel et al. 2012: 363).

Given that David became king over all of Israel only in 1002 BC, Qeiyafa 3's date-range suggests that the site was occupied for some length of time before David ruled the nation, as the chance is greater than 95% that the olive was plucked from its tree by 1011 BC. This, among other forms of evidence, supports the view that the site was founded during Saul's reign, rather than David's reign. As for the timing of Qeiyafa's destruction, organic material in the form of 28 samples taken from 17 olive pits that were found in the destruction layer provides hard evidence for the dating of Qeiyafa's demise (Garfinkel et al. 2015b: 883). There is a 95.4% probability that the samples date from 1011–921 BC, and a 68.2% probability that they date from 1006–961 BC (Garfinkel et al. 2016: 152, 154, 155).

When this data set is combined with that of a radiometric measurement of 10 burned olive pits, a calculation of the city's destruction is placed at 1006–970 BC, also with a 68.2% probability (Garfinkel et al. 2015a: 220, 222). The median date for this confined range is 988 BC, the significance of which is that the excavators assigned Qeiyafa's destruction range from 1020–970 BC with a 95.4% probability and 1012–990 BC with a 68.2% probability (Garfinkel et al. 2019: 708). Therefore, the dates for Qeiyafa's occupation and destruction, as obtained by <sup>14</sup>C analysis, match perfectly with biblical chronology. These two examples, from Hezekiah's Tunnel and Khirbet Qeiyafa, demonstrate that radiocarbon dates for events in *ca.* 1000 and 700 BC coincide well with precise dates assigned to them by biblical chronology.

A crucial problem arises, though, when matching any <sup>14</sup>C samples to archaeological/historical dating before *ca.* 1400 BC. Bietak and Höflmayer (2007: 20) reported that before this time, a sharp rise (or offset) exists of up to 100–150 years at Avaris, as well as in preceding centuries, making organic material seem far older than it is. Many scholars, especially those who are younger and less seasoned, have used this strictly science-based dating method to dismiss conventional, historical dating (Bietak 2020b: 238), demonstrating that they have misunderstood archaeological contexts, distorted or discounted hard data, and undervalued what has been learned after centuries of careful research (Bietak 2020b: 235).

For example, the ancient volcanic eruption of Thera (a.k.a. Santorini), located in the Aegean near Crete, was dated to a range of 1627–1600 BC with 95% confidence (Friedrich et al. 2006: 548). However, Bietak (2013: 76–109) has proven that from an archaeological-historical point of view, such a date simply does not fit the data, and that the “high Aegean chronology” is impossible. Since Thera pumice was found

in Avaris's workshops that were in use late in Thutmose III's reign and early in Amenhotep II's reign, those who date the eruption to the end of the sixteenth century BC are forced to infer that the contexts with seals of the Thutmosid period up until Amenhotep II are to be connected with the Hyksos period (Bietak 2013: 77).

Accepting such a burden requires the willful suspension of disbelief on the part of the objective thinker. In some parts of Avaris's stratigraphy, firm connections to Egyptian historical chronology negate the plausibility of rearranging the dating of its strata, and in two cases this site presents established datum-lines that cannot be ignored or rationalized (Bietak 2020b: 238, citing *idem* 2013: 78–110). Materials that were used to date the reigns of individual kings generally were not obtained from stratified settlements, but mainly from well-dated funerary contexts or closed deposits (Bietak 2020b: 239).

Subsequent evidence for the disproving of the high Aegean chronology model that dates Thera's eruption to 1627–1600 BC was obtained from the realm of dendrochronology: the dating of tree rings. The University of Arizona's Laboratory of Tree-Ring Research has produced a new calibration curve based on annual tree-ring measurements for the timespan from 1700–1500 BC that effectively lowers the date of the eruption as far as 1510 BC (Bietak 2020b: 235, 241), which—being within a decade of the outset of Thutmose III's reign—is far more compatible with historical-archaeological dating. The dendrochronological evidence thus represents a scientific dating tool that argues against the accuracy of radiocarbon evidence before 1400 BC, alongside archaeological-historical dating tools.

Radiocarbon results of other sites with stratigraphy related to Avaris's occupational phases have produced results that are similar to those at Avaris (Bietak 2020b: 238, citing Höflmayer 2015; Höflmayer et al. 2016a; *idem* 2016b). This anomaly also appears at locations beyond Egypt, such as the eastern Mediterranean and the Jordan Rift Valley, including Jericho of the LBA I (City IV), which according to biblical chronology was destroyed under Joshua in 1406 BC (Petrovich 2008: 490, 495, 500), a date that is supported by the excavation of a stratified PCH inscription from the end of the LBA Ib at Lachish (Petrovich 2021a: in prep.; Höflmayer et al. 2021: 6, 9). Radiocarbon dates for Jericho's destruction, taken from cereal samples, provide a range of 1561–1524 BC, which is 120–160 years too early (Bruins and van der Plicht 1995: 213–220).

The same <sup>14</sup>C anomaly at Jericho occurs at the end of the EBA (Early Bronze Age, until *ca.* 2000 BC), where the radiocarbon dates are 150–300 years older than conventional archaeological dating allows (Bruins 1998: 621). Subsequently, many sites have displayed this <sup>14</sup>C anomaly: Jericho, Khirbet al-Batrawy, Tell Abu-el-Kharaz, etc. (Bietak 2013: 95). Therefore, radiocarbon dating of organic material from the ANE before the offset of 1400 BC should not be trusted as being fully accurate in terms of absolute dating. Moreover, the length of the offset increases exponentially with each prior century. This anomaly must be factored in when attempting to determine precise dates with organic material.

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