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WHAT IS THE BIBLICAL DATE FOR THE EXODUS? A RESPONSE TO BRYANT WOOD

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The date of the Exodus from Egypt has been a subject of intense scholarly discussion for decades now. Two principal dates have been staked out: the earlier one is in the 15th century, specifically 1446/7 BC, and the later date is in the 13th century, ca. 1270–1260 BC. Bryant Wood's recent article in *JETS* 48/3 (2005) rejects the later date, while advocating the earlier option.[1] This date, he maintains, is based on "biblical" chronology, while the other view he calls "a theory." Certainly anyone who takes the Bible seriously as a source for history would naturally want to base a date on "biblical" data. Consequently, many conservative scholars are adherents of the so-called "early" date. Unfortunately for some, this date has become a sort of litmus test for one's evangelical orthodoxy. This is lamentable, because I believe that the 13th-century date is equally based on biblical evidence. Hence I feel compelled to offer a modest critique of some aspects of Wood's apology for the 15th century, because it is fraught with some serious problems.

Before discussing my objections to Wood's arguments, the ongoing debate among evangelicals needs to be placed in the broader context of the mainstream of scholarship regarding the Israelite exodus from Egypt. During the 1980s and 1990s, a number of influential studies appeared by scholars who either questioned or rejected the Bible's version of Israel's origin as a nation in Egypt. Biblical historians J. Maxwell Miller and John H. Hayes conclude: "[W]e hold that the main story line of Genesis-Joshua . . . [the] entrance into Egypt, twelve tribes descended from the twelve brothers, escape from Egypt, complete collections of laws and the wilderness . . . is an artificial and theologically influenced literary construct."[2] A more radical claim was made by Robert Coote who avers that "[t]he writers of ancient Israel knew little or nothing about the origin of Israel," and concerning the era of the "exodus, conquest, or judges," he declares: "[T]hese periods never existed."[3] Also, recently Thomas Thompson has referred to the exodus-wilderness events presented in the Bible as "a theological and literary creation."[4] These troubling

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[1] "The Rise and Fall of the 13th-Century Exodus-Conquest Theory," *JETS* 48 (2005) 475–89.

[2] *A History of Ancient Israel and Judah* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986) 78.

[3] *Ancient Israel: A New Horizon* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990) 2–3.

[4] *The Mythic Past: Biblical Archaeology and the Myth of Israel* (London: Basic Books, 1999) 78.

conclusions were reached by historians, archaeologists, and biblical scholars known as historical minimalists, because they treat the Bible as containing only a minimal amount of historically reliable material.

In the face of challenges from those who treat the Bible so cavalierly, and because of the serious consequences to biblical history and theology, I have tried to concentrate my research on making the best case possible to support the authenticity of the Exodus narratives. In my book *Israel in Egypt: The Evidence for the Authenticity of the Exodus Tradition*,[5] both dates were presented in an even-handed way, and I did not commit to either date. It seemed trivial to be preoccupied with *when* the exodus occurred while the real issue being debated is *whether* it happened at all! An unexpected thing happened, however. Professor Alan Millard, who wrote a blurb for the dust jacket of the above-mentioned book, observed: "Egyptologist James Hoffmeier's fresh study of long-known evidence and new discoveries in which he has had a part effectively demonstrates the remarkable agreement between the Hebrew story and the circumstances of the thirteenth century B.C." Initially I bristled at the thought, because I was not trying to support a date but the event, and at that time I was inclined toward the early date. As I thought about Millard's comment and reconsidered the evidence I had presented, however, I began to realize that he had a point, because the Egyptian archaeological evidence and the biblical data converged at the 13th-century date, the date Wood rejects.

I. WHAT IS THE BIBLICAL DATE OF THE EXODUS?

Wood believes that there is a "biblical" date for the Exodus and that the 13th-century date "runs counter to Scripture."[6] He seems to confuse his selective, mostly literal reading of MT version of the OT narratives with this being *the* view of Scripture. For Wood, when the Septuagint's chronological data differ from the MT, the Hebrew reading is always followed. My purpose is not to defend the LXX, but to note that Paul allots 430 years between the Abrahamic and Sinaitic Covenants, or the time between Abraham and the exodus, indicating that he followed LXX chronology (cf. Gal. 3:17).[7] Obviously Paul seems to think that the LXX was authoritative for historical reconstruction, while Wood apparently thinks it is not.

I reject Wood's view that there is a single authoritative "biblical" chronology. This may sound like an odd claim coming from an archaeologist and historian. But it is true. Biblical chronology does not provide us with an absolute date for the exodus, or any event in the OT, for that matter. 1 Kings 6:1, the proof-text for the early date, reports: "In the four hundred and eightieth

[5] New York: Oxford University Press. The copyright date is 1996, but it actually was released in late 1997!

[6] "The Rise and Fall of the 13th-Century Exodus" 475.

[7] According to MT chronology, 645 years separate the two. Exodus 12:40 has a different reading in the LXX than does the MT. The LXX envisions two periods of 215 years totaling 430—215 years spent by Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in Canaan prior to the family's move to Egypt and 215 years in Egypt prior to the exodus.

year after the people of Israel came out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel, in the month of Ziv, which is the second month, he began to build the house of the LORD." This only records the time period from Solomon's 4th regnal year to the departure from Egypt, viz. 480 years. The Septuagint reads 440 rather than 480, a difference of 40 years.

Neither of these figures, however, agrees with the period derived from tallying the years in retrograde order from 1 Kings 6 back to the Book of Exodus. Here are the data provided by the OT:

3 years – Solomon's 4th year (1 Kgs 6:1)
40 years – the length of David's reign (1 Kgs 2:10)
40 years – the length of Saul's reign (1 Sam 13:1)[8]
30 years – estimated length of Samuel's leadership[9]
40 years – length of Eli's judgeship (1 Sam 4:18)
20 years – length of Samson's judgeship (Judg 15:20)
40 years – length of Philistine oppression (Judg 13:1)
8 years – length of Abdon's judgeship (Judg 12:14)
10 years – length of Elon's judgeship (Judg 12:11)
7 years – length of Ibzan's judgeship (Judg 12:9)
6 years – length of Jephthah's judgeship (Judg 12:7)
18 years – length of Ammonite oppression (Judg 10:8)
22 years – length of Jair's judgeship (Judg 10:3)
23 years – length of Tola's judgeship (Judg 10:2)
3 years – length of Abimelech's rulership (Judg 9:22)
40 years – period of Gideon's deliverance and peace (Judg 8:22)
7 years – length of Midian's oppression (Judg 6:1)
40 years – period of peace after Deborah and Barak's victory (Judg 5:31)
20 years – length of Jabin's oppression (Judg 4:3)
3 years – length of Shamgar's judgeship (Judg 3:31)
80 years – period of Ehud's deliverance and peace (Judg 3:30)
18 years – length of Moabite oppression (Judg 3:14)
40 years – period of peace after Othniel's victory (Judg 3:11)
8 years – length of Mesopotamian oppression (Judg 3:8)
20 years – period from end of conquest to death of Joshua and the elders (Judg 2:6–7)[10]

[8] There is a textual problem with 1 Sam 13:1 in the MT. The text literally reads: "Saul was . . . years old when he began to reign; and he reigned . . . and two years" (RSV). Clearly, the 10 figure did not survive. As a consequence, some LXX witnesses drop the verse altogether, while others read that he was 31 years when he began to reign and reigned 42 years, and others switch it around. Paul allots Saul 40 years in Acts 13:21.

[9] According to 1 Sam 7:15, "Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life." For the purpose this study, I offer the conservative sum of 30 years. Probably a longer period is in view by the 1 Sam 7:14 reference.

[10] This figure is an estimate, and the figure minimal. If we take Joshua's lifespan of 110 years literally, and realize that he is called a "youth" (נַעַר) in Exod 33:11 while the Israelites were at Mt. Sinai, even if we alot him 25 years, plus 40 years for the remaining time in the wilderness, and 7 years for the conquest, this would make him 72, giving him 38 years until his death and the beginning of the period of the judges. So the 20-year figure suggested here is minimal indeed.

7 years – period of Joshua's conquest until the tribal allotments[11]
40 years – length of time in the wilderness (Num 14:33)
633 years – total number

Where the Bible does not specify the number of years, I have taken the minimal number. Just three years for Shamgar's judgeship is assigned, which corresponds to the shortest period assigned to a ruler (i.e. Abimelech who was killed in battle), and the length of Samuel's judgeship easily could be longer than the 32 years proposed here. Paul's 40 years could have been used (Acts 13:21). After all, Samuel was recognized as a prophet long before he anointed Saul. He was old when his adult sons, whom he had appointed to be judges, were shown to be corrupt. This circumstance led the elders of Israel to approach the prophet about a king (1 Sam 8:1–5). Then, too, the period from the end of the conquest until the death of Joshua could be longer than the 20 years I allocated above. Consequently, 633–650 years could be the time span for the period from Solomon's 4th year to the exodus from Egypt according to this biblical chronology. Thus it could be argued that there are several biblical chronologies based on the OT. One places the exodus 633–650 years before Solomon's 4th year, and the other occurs 480 years before work commenced on the temple. Then, too, there is the shorter LXX-based chronology. So, which chronological system represents "biblical chronology"?

To get around the dilemma caused by the difference between 480 and 633–650 years, advocates of the 15th-century (and the later date) exodus date are forced to harmonize the conflicting data by proposing some overlap between judgeships to bring the 480-year figure into alignment with the 633–650 year total.[12] By doing this, one abandons a straightforward, literal reading of the Judges through Exodus narratives. Nevertheless, neither of these chronologies by themselves yields an absolute date for the exodus, because the biblical data do not disclose *when* Solomon reigned. The biblical data can only yield a relative chronology, and, as the information presented here illustrates, there is more than one biblical chronology. Determining a specific date for Solomon, or any Judean or Israelite monarch, requires synchronisms between the floating biblical chronological data and the absolute chronologies of Egypt and/or Mesopotamia.[13] The chronology of Assyria

[11] The figure of 7 years is based on statements by Caleb in Josh 14:7 and 10. He reports that he was 40 years old when Moses sent him to spy out the land from Kadesh-Barnea, and since then 45 years had passed, which allowed him to say, "I am this day eighty-five years old" (14:10). Deuteronomy 2:14 records that 38 years elapsed from the departure from Kadesh-Barnea until the Israelites arrived in Moab prior to entering Canaan. The difference between 38 and 45 years is 7. This 7-year figure receives further support when we consider that the covenant was to be read publicly every 7 years (Deut 31:10). In Joshua 24, Joshua renews the covenant, apparently 7 years after Moses did the same in Moab prior to the entry into Canaan.

[12] For a recent attempt to harmonize these different chronologies, see Andrew E. Steinmann, "The Mysterious Numbers of the Book of Judges," *JETS* 48 (2005) 491–500.

[13] In recent years, there have been renewed interest and scholarly discussions about synchronisms in the Near East in order to establish more accurate relative and, where possible, absolute chronologies. Since the 1980s there have been a number of meetings of the International Colloquium on

and Babylon from the mid-second millennium through the 7th century BC is firmly fixed, thanks to Assyrian eponym lists that contain some correlations to datable astronomical phenomenon.[14] This is why the British Museum Assyriologist Julian Reade could recently observe: "From about 1450 B.C. onwards, the chronology of literate societies in the region can rely on an accumulation of interlocking king-lists and synchronisms that exclude the possibility of any very great error."[15] One of the key Assyrian-biblical synchronisms is found in the Kurkh inscription of the Shalmaneser III, which mentions Ahab's involvement in the battle of Qarqar, dating to the Assyrian monarch's 6th regnal year.[16] The date works out to be 853 BC, providing biblical chronology with a critical synchronism. Subsequently there are numerous other synchronisms in 1 and 2 Kings with Assyrian emperors. These synchronisms allow biblical dates for the monarchy period to be determined with some accuracy.[17]

Egypt's chronology for the first and second millennia BC is likewise well established, thanks to astronomical data available to historians.[18] Consequently, had the book of Exodus named the pharaoh of the oppression and exodus, the dates could be known within a few years. Not until the period of the divided monarchy, however, are the names of Egyptian pharaohs documented in the Bible. Shishak, Sheshonk I of Egyptian records, is mentioned in 1 Kgs 14:25, providing an important synchronism with Rehoboam's

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Absolute Chronology, resulting in the publication of a number of interdisciplinary volumes. Paul Åström, ed., *High, Middle or Low: Acts of an International Colloquium on Absolute Chronology Held at the University of Gothenburg 20th–22nd August 1987*, part 1 and 2 (Gothenburg: Pauls Åströms Förlage, 1987); Paul Åström, ed., *High, Middle or Low: Acts of an International Colloquium on Absolute Chronology Held at the University of Gothenburg 20th–22nd August 1987*, part 3 (Gothenburg: Pauls Åströms Förlage, 1989); Manfred Bietak; ed., *The Synchronisation of Civilisations in the Eastern Mediterranean in the Second Millennium B.C.: Proceedings of an International Symposium at Schloss Haindorf, 15th–17th of November 1996 and at the Austrian Academy, Vienna, 11th-12th of May 1998* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2000); Manfred Bietak; ed., *The Middle Bronze Age in the Levant: Proceedings of an International Conference on MB IIA Ceramic Material, Vienna, 24th–26th of January 2001* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2002); Manfred Bietak, ed., *The Synchronisation of Civilisations in the Eastern Mediterranean in the Second Millennium B.C. II: proceedings of the SCIEM 2000—EuroConference, Haindorf, 2nd of May–7th of May 2001* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2003).

[14] Cf. J. A. Brinkman, *A Political History of Post-Kassite Babylonia, 1158–722 B.C.* (Rome: Analecta Orientalia 43, 1968); Alan Millard, *The Eponyms of the Assyrian Empire, 910–612 B.C.* (State archives of Assyria Studies 2; Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 1994).

[15] Julian Reade, "Assyrian Kinglists, The Royal Tombs of Ur, and Indus Origins," *JNES* 60 (2001) 1.

[16] For a recent translation, see K. Lawson Younger, "Neo-Assyrian Inscriptions, Kurkh Monolith" in *Context of Scripture* II (ed. W. W. Hallo and K. L. Younger; Leiden: Brill, 2000) 261–64.

[17] The standard work on this subject remains Edwin Thiele's, *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings; a Reconstruction of the Chronology of the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951).

[18] See references in note 9. Cf. R. A. Parker, *The Calendars of Ancient Egypt* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1950); idem, "The Lunar Dates of Thutmose III and Ramesses II," *JNES* 16 (1957) 39–43; idem, "The Sothic Dating of the Twelfth and Eighteenth Dynasties," in *Studies in Honor of George R. Hughes* (Chicago: Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilization 39, 1976) 177–89; K. A. Kitchen, "Egypt, History of (Chronology)," in *ABD* 2.327–29.

5th year. The dates of Sheshonk's reign are 945–924 BC.[19] This synchronism falls on the year 925 BC, thus producing the date for the end of Solomon's reign, ca. 930 BC.[20] Because Solomon is allotted 40 years (1 Kgs 11:42), his 4th year should be ca. 966/7 BC. Combining this datum with 1 Kgs 6:1, i.e. adding 480 years to 966/67, produces a date for the exodus of 1446/47 BC. With this date in hand, supporters of the early date, like Wood, then proceed to look for other biblical and archaeological evidence that would support the early date theory. Alternatively, if one were to follow tallied biblical data documented above a date between 1599–1617 BC would result, which occurs during the Hyksos occupation of Egypt. I am unaware of any historian who follows this dating because it pushes the date of the exodus, sojourn, and patriarchs too far back for anyone's reckoning. This ultra-early chronology, nonetheless, is every bit as "biblical" as the one yielding the 1446/47 BC date.

II. THE 13TH-CENTURY DATE

Wood charges that Kenneth Kitchen "has made a determined effort to keep alive" William Foxwell Albright's 13th-century exodus date.[21] He also tries to convey the impression that most scholars have abandoned the 13th-century date, and only a handful of evangelicals remain as holdouts. As evidence for this opinion he offers a partial quote from a recent article by Carl Rasmussen who declared, "[T]he Late-Date Exodus/Conquest Model has been abandoned by many scholars . . . it seems that currently the major adherents to the Late-Date Exodus/Conquest Model are some evangelicals!"[22] My immediate reaction to this quote is: "Is he unaware that those rejecting the late date are not embracing the earlier date? Doesn't he know that scholars who are abandoning the 13th-century date are discarding the historicity of the sojourn, exodus and conquest narratives and are promoting revisionist histories?" The entirety of Rasmussen's quote shows that Wood omitted a critical line where the ellipsis appears, viz., "in favor of the Peaceful-Infiltration, the Peasant-Revolt, or the Agriculturist-Resettlement Models."[23] So, the idea that scholars are moving to the early date and only a few evangelical gadflies like Kitchen defend the 13th-century date is untrue and a distortion of present reality and the history of thought on this question.

There is good reason for Kitchen's stance; there is solid biblical and archaeological evidence to support this date. Consequently, over the years many

[19] K. A. Kitchen, "Egypt, History of (Chronology)," 327–29; idem, *The Third Intermediate Period in Egypt (1100–650 B.C.)* (Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 1996) §252.

[20] A. J. Shortland, "Shishak, King of Egypt: The Challenges of Egyptian Calendrical Chronology," in *The Bible and Radiocarbon Dating: Archaeology, Text and Science* (ed. T. E. Levy and T. Higham; London: Equinox, 2005) 43–54. K. A. Kitchen, "How We Known When Solomon Ruled," *BAR* 27/5 (2001) 32–37, 58.

[21] Wood, "The 13th-Century Exodus-Conquest Theory" 489.

[22] Wood, "The 13th-Century Exodus-Conquest Theory" 475.

[23] Carl Rasmussen, "Conquest, Infiltration, Revolt, or Resettlement?" in *Giving the Sense: Understanding and Using the Old Testament* (eds. D. M. Howard and M.A. Grisanti; Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2003) 153.

prominent evangelical scholars have embraced the 13th-century date. My own OT professor, the late R. K. Harrison, held unswervingly to the 13th-century date.[24] Donald J. Wiseman, the distinguished OT scholar and Assyriologist who served on the original NIV translation committee for the OT and edited the Tyndale Old Testament Commentary series, also holds to the 13th-century exodus date.[25] To these we can add the names of Alan Millard,[26] Alan Cole,[27] John Currid,[28] K. Lawson Younger, Jr.,[29] Richard Hess,[30] and, of course, Kitchen, who has persuasively argued for this dating for decades.[31]

The 13th-century exodus date is likewise based on a foundational text, and then other biblical and archaeological data are adduced to support that date. That text is Exod 1:11, which identifies two of the store-cities "Pithom and Rameses," for which the enslaved Hebrews made bricks. Egyptologists have long understood the reference to Rameses to refer to Pi-Ramesses, the delta metropolis built by Ramesses II, the 19th Dynasty monarch who reigned from 1279–1213 BC. Placing the exodus in the 13th century or 19th Dynasty, Wood erroneously maintains, was "formulated" by Albright.[32] True, Albright labored hard to corroborate the 13th-century date by trying to produce evidence for Joshua's conquest at sites like Tell Beit Mersim and Beitin[33] (which he believed was Bethel), but this date did not originate with him.

In the 1840s the pioneer Egyptologist Richard Lepsius was among the first scholars to propose a date in the Ramesside era.[34] In 1896, the Oxford Orientalist A. H. Sayce, also known for his reasoned attacks on Wellhausenian source criticism,[35] maintained that the pharaoh who did not know Joseph in Exod 1:8 was the founder of the 19th Dynasty, Rameses I,

[24] R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969) 115–16.

[25] This dating is implied by his regarding the 480 figures as a "generalization to indicate the passing of twelve generations (each of forty years, Dt. 1:3)." Cf. *1 & 2 Kings* (TOTC; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1993) 104.

[26] *Picture Archive of the Bible* (Tring, Herts.: Lion Books, 1987) 22.

[27] *Exodus: An Introduction & Commentary* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1973) 40–43.

[28] *A Study Commentary on Exodus* (Auburn, MA: Evangelical Press, 2000) 27–29.

[29] My colleague Dr. Younger has not actually published on the date of the exodus, but he has told me that he now prefers the 13th-century date, and this lower chronology is implied in his work on the internal dating of the book of Judges (cf. K. Lawson Younger Jr., *Judges & Ruth* [NIVAC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002]).

[30] *Joshua: An Introduction & Commentary* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1996) 139–43.

[31] *Ancient Orient and the Old Testament* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1966) 57–69; *The Bible in Its World* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1977) 75–79; *On the Reliability of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003) 307–9.

[32] Wood, "The 13-Century Exodus-Conquest" 475.

[33] Cf. W. F. Albright, *The Excavations of Tell Beit Mirsim* 4 Vols. (Cambridge, MA: AASOR 12, 13, 17, 21, 1932–1943); James Kelso and W. F. Albright, *The Excavations of Bethel (1934–1960)* (Cambridge, MA: AASOR 29, 1968).

[34] C. Richard Lepsius, *Briefe aus Ägypten, Äthiopien und der Halbinsel des Sinai, geschrieben in den Jahren 1842–1845, während der auf Befehl sr. Majestät des Königs Friedrich Wilhelm IV von Preussen ausgeführten wissenschaftlichen Expedition, von Richard Lepsius* (Berlin: W. Hertz, 1852).

[35] *"Higher Criticism" and the Verdict of the Monuments* (London: S.P.C.K., 1915).

and that his grandson, Ramesses II, was the oppressor of the Hebrews.[36] This dating garnered further support for many 19th- and early 20th-century Egyptologists and biblical historians with the discovery of the famous stela of Merneptah, Ramesses II's successor (1213–1203 BC). It contained reports of the military activities of Merneptah, including the first reference to Israel in a Pharaonic period text. Hence it has been commonly called the "Israel Stela." It was Sir W. M. F. Petrie who discovered the famous stela in his excavations in western Thebes in 1896.[37] He thought that the stela was inscribed "a few years before the exodus."[38] He nonetheless thought that only some of the Israelites were in Egypt, while others remained in Canaan. The latter are those encountered by Merneptah's army. The reason so many early Egyptologists thought the exodus occurred in Merneptah's reign is that they took seriously the reference to the enslaved Israelites building the city of Rameses, as reported in Exod 1:11. Since it was known from Egyptian texts that his father Ramesses II (1279–1213 BC) had built a new city in the northeastern delta named Pi-Ramesses ("House or Domain of Ramesses"),[39] it logically followed that the exodus occurred either later in the 66-year reign of Ramesses II or during the reign of his thirteenth son, Merneptah. Viewing Ramesses II or Merneptah as the pharaoh of the exodus was the accepted view among Egyptologists throughout the 20th century. Over the last 50–70 years, with further reflection on the reference to Israel in the Merneptah stela and the realization that there is no biblical evidence for a segment of Israelites being in Canaan while another one is in Egypt, Egyptologists prefer Ramesses II as the pharaoh of the exodus. John Wilson rightly concluded that the Israel stela provided a "*terminus ante quem* for the Exodus,"[40] a point acknowledged by Gardiner.[41] Pierre Montet, the excavator of Tanis, held to this view,[42] as does Nicholas Grimal and other Egyptologists.[43]

Regarding the connection between the store-city Rameses of Exod 1:11 and the Ramesside metropolis, Pi-Ramesses, Sir Alan Gardiner saw the obvious over eighty years ago. He concluded that "there is not the least reason for assuming that any other city of Ramesses existed in the delta besides those elicited from the Egyptian monuments. In other words, the Biblical Raamses-Rameses is identical with the residence-city of Pi-Raʿmesse."[44] The archae-

[36] A. H. Sayce, "Research in Egypt," in *Recent Research in Bible Lands* (ed. H. V. Hilprecht: Philadelphia: John D. Wattles & Co., 1896) 118–19, and *Early History of the Hebrews* (London: Revlingtons, 1897) chapter III.

[37] *Six Temples at Thebes, 1896* (London. Bernard Quaritch, 1897) plates XIII–XIV.

[38] *Egypt and Israel* (London: S.P.C.K., 1911) 34–35. He held this position immediately upon the stela's discovery (cf. Petrie, *Six Temples at Thebes,* 30).

[39] Alan H. Gardiner, "The Residence of the Ramessides." *JEA* 5 (1918) 127–271.

[40] *The Culture of Egypt* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955) 255–56.

[41] *Egypt of the Pharaohs* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961) 273.

[42] *Egypt and the Bible* (trans. L. Keylock; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1968, French version published in 1959) chapter 2.

[43] *A History of Ancient Egypt* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992) 258–59.

[44] Gardiner, "The Residence of the Ramessides" 266.

ological data is now unequivocal: Pi-Ramesses is located at modern-day Qantir, near Faqus, and was built by Ramesses II beginning around 1270 BC; construction likely began shortly after Ramesses II's accession in 1279 BC. However, construction at Tell el-Dabʿa-Qantir is now documented under the previous reigns of Horemheb (1323–1295 BC) and Seti I (1294–1279 BC).[45] This means that the oppression of the Hebrews could have begun decades before the reign of Ramesses II and culminated with the construction of Pi-Ramesses. This city was abandoned around 150 years later after the Bubastite branch of the Nile had meandered away isolating the city, leading to the building of a new capital, Zoan/Tanis,[46] around twelve miles to the north at a site known today as San el-Hagar.[47] From the mid-11th century through the end of the Judaean monarchy, Zoan/Tanis was the principal city of Egypt's delta.

The first serious study that questioned the prevailing 13th-century date and proposed the 15th-century exodus date was that of J. W. Jack, an advocate of the Documentary Hypothesis, in 1925.[48] From that time until the present many evangelicals have embraced the earlier date.[49] Jack recognized the problem his dating created for the presence of Rameses in Exod 1:11, so he summarily attributed it to modernizing the name to fit the editor's day. Wood agrees, saying "editorial updating of names that had gone out of use is not uncommon in the Hebrew Bible."[50]

Indeed, such editorial glossing did occur, but typically both the earlier name and the later name occur together, such as in Gen 14:2: "Bela, (that is Zoar)"; Gen 14:3: "the Valley of Siddim (that is, the Salt Sea)"; Gen 14:7: "En-mishpat (that is, Kadesh)"; Gen 14:17: "Valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley)"; Gen 23:2: "Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron)." In these examples, a particular formula is used, viz. old name + הוא + new name. Grammatically, this formula is a "verbless clause of identification,"[51] and its use clearly indicates the editor's hand updating earlier toponymy.[52] Longer explanations for the renaming of a city are also found in the OT. Jacob's naming of Bethel in Gen 28:19 is one example: "He called the name of that place Bethel; but

[45] Manfred Bietak, "The Center of Hyksos Rule: Avaris (Tell el-Dabʿa)," in *The Hyksos: New Historical and Archaeological Perspectives* (ed. Eliezer Oren: Philadelphia: The University Museum, 1997) 124–25; Labib Habachi, *Tell el-Dabʿa I: Tell el-Dabʿa and Qantir, the Site and Its Connection with Avaris and PiRamesse* (Vienna: Austrian Academy of Sciences, 2001) 108.

[46] Zoan is the Hebrew writing for the Egyptian place name *ḏʿnt*, and Tanis is the Greek writing of the same. Some English translations use Zoan while others use Tanis.

[47] For a documented discussion of all these points, see James K. Hoffmeier, *Ancient Israel in Sinai* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005) 53–58.

[48] *The Date of the Exodus* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1925).

[49] E.g. Joseph P. Free, *Archaeology and Bible History* (Wheaton: Scripture Press, 1951) chap. 7. Merrill F. Unger, *Archaeology and the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1954) chap. 12.

[50] Wood, "The 13th-century Exodus-Conquest Theory" 479.

[51] Bruce K. Waltke and M. O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990) §8.4.1.

[52] Anson F. Rainey and R. Steven Notley, *The Sacred Bridge: Carta's Atlas of the Biblical World* (Jerusalem: Carta, 2006) 13.

the name of the city was Luz at the first (לָרִאשֹׁנָה)." Another is the renaming of Dan in Judg 18:29, "And they named the city Dan, after the name of Dan their ancestor, who was born to Israel; but the name of the city was Laish at the first (לָרִאשֹׁנָה)."

The toponym Rameses (רַעַמְסֵס) occurs five times in the OT, in Gen 47:11;[53] Exod 1:11; 12:37; and Num 33:3, 5. In none of these cases is the formula "old name + הוא + new name" used, nor does a longer explanatory gloss with the word לָרִאשֹׁנָה—"at the first" occur with any of the five citations. In other words, there is no evidence within these five passages to suspect that "Rameses" is an editorial gloss. The only reason for thinking so is that it conflicts with the early date exodus theory that insists on a literal understanding of the 480 years.

There are other more serious problems for the editorial updating theory. As noted above, Pi-Ramesses had a limited history and was abandoned toward the end of the 12th century. The last datable inscription from Qantir is from the reign of Ramesses VIII (1129–1126 BC).[54] Given the limited window when Pi-Ramesses flourished, this would mean that the glossing occurred between ca. 1270 and 1120 BC. According to the early chronology, this era should fall into the middle third of the period of the judges, a time not known for Israelite scribal activity nor a period when any canonical book is believed to have been authored.

Second, since the purpose of editorial updating is to clarify the name for a later audience, it makes no sense to contemporize the toponym to one with such a brief history and then to retain it for centuries when it would have been incomprehensible. (It is worth noting that in all the examples of editorial updating cited above the new name continued to be used in later OT history.)

Third, if the text was changed from an earlier name, such as Avaris to Rameses, then why was the name not subsequently updated to Zoan/Tanis, the delta capital that replaced Pi-Ramesses around 1070 BC and prospered into Roman times? Zoan/Tanis, and not Rameses, is used by Asaph in Psalm 78 when he describes the miraculous deeds that resulted in the exodus: "In the sight of their fathers he wrought marvels in the Land of Egypt, in the fields of Zoan" (Ps 78:12). Again in Ps 78:43, "the fields of Zoan" is mentioned, followed by reference to six of the ten plagues (Ps 78:44–51). So, plainly, during the first half of the first millennium BC when Psalm 78 was composed, and Pi-Ramesses had ceased to exist some centuries earlier, Asaph used Zoan/Tanis because it was the delta capital. If the five references to Rameses represent an updated toponym, one would expect to find Zoan/Tanis, which was occupied for more than a millennium, not the short-lived Rameses.

[53] The appearance of Rameses in the Joseph story reflects the period of authorship and not updating per se. Hence technically speaking it is anachronistic. If Moses were the author of Genesis and lived in Ramesside Egypt, the use of Rameses in Gen 47:11 would not be unexpected.

[54] I owe this information regarding Ramesses VIII to verbal communication from Professor Kitchen.

Not only does the name Rameses in Exodus point to the 19th Dynasty, but so do the other geographical terms found in Exodus and Numbers. Investigation of the Egyptian sources reveal that the names Pithom (Exod 1:11), Migdol (Exod 14:2),[55] and *P3 ṯwfy* = *Yam sûf* (Exod 10:19; 13:18; 15:4, 22) are attested beginning in 19th Dynasty sources, but are not found prior to the 13th century.[56] The closest Egyptian toponyms to Pi-hahiroth and Baal-Zaphon of Exod 14:2 are also documented beginning in the 13th century.[57] Does the fact that most of the geographical terms found in Exod 1:11 and the route of the exodus are known in Egyptian sources prior to the 13th century mean that all of these terms be the result of later updating? It might be expected that most of these toponyms would be documented in earlier sources if they were known in the 15th century BC.

We return to our two foundational texts, 1 Kgs 6:1 and Exod 1:11: one thing is certain, both texts cannot be treated literally. If the former text is taken literally, then the reference to Ramesses has to be dismissed as an editorial updating at a later date. Should the reference to Ramesses be treated at face value, then the 480 year figure has to be interpreted symbolically.

III. THE PROBLEM OF LARGE AND SYMBOLIC NUMBERS IN THE BIBLE

Biblical scholars have long wrestled with large and symbolic numbers in the Bible.[58] The question is, can one treat the 480 years figuratively and retain an evangelical view of Scripture? The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy affirms, "In inspiration, God utilized the culture and conventions of the penman's milieu, a milieu that God controls in His sovereign providence; it is misinterpretation to imagine otherwise." It continues, "So history must be treated as history, poetry as poetry, hyperbole and metaphor as hyperbole and metaphor, generalization and approximation as what they are, and so forth."

The clause that biblical writers used "the culture and conventions of the penman's milieu" must be borne in mind when addressing the question of how to interpret numbers. Such a view of Scripture encourages the researcher to investigate seriously how large numbers were used and understood among

[55] It is uncertain whether Magdalu of the Amarna letter (EA 234) is the Egyptian border fort Migdol. If it is, then this name does exist in the 14th century BC.

[56] Hoffmeier, *Ancient Israel in Sinai*, chaps. 4 and 5.

[57] Ibid. 105–9.

[58] Petrie, *Egypt and Israel* 40–46; George Mendenhall, "The Census Lists of Numbers 1 and 26," *JBL* 77 (1958) 52–66; John W. Wenham, "Large Numbers in the Old Testament," *TynB* 18 (1967) 19–53; Alan Millard, "Large Numbers in the Assyrian Royal Inscriptions," *Scripta Hierosolymitana* 33 (1991) 213–22; David Fouts, "Another Look at Large Numbers in Assyrian Royal Inscriptions," *JNES* 53 (1994) 205–11; idem, "A Defense of the Hyperbolic Interpretation of Large Numbers in the Old Testament." *JETS* 40 (1997) 377–87; idem, "The Incredible Numbers of the Hebrew Kings," in *Giving the Sense* 283–99; and Colin Humphreys, "The Number of People in the Exodus from Egypt: Decoding Mathematically the Very Large Numbers in Numbers I and XXVI," *VT* 48 (1998) 96–113.

Israel's neighbors. A literal understanding of certain large numbers may not always be correct if the authorial intent was not literal. Such misplaced literalism would be a "misinterpretation" of Scripture's meaning. Thus Jepthah's statement that Israelite tribes had occupied areas of the Trans-Jordan 300 years earlier since the days of Moses (Judg 11:25–26) could be a case of hyperbole that is intentionally exaggerating the time in order to strengthen his dispute with the Ammonites.[59]

It has long been thought that the 480-year figure of 1 Kgs 6:1 might be a symbolic figure that derives from 12 times 40—40 years being a symbolic number for a generation—thus signifying that 12 generations had elapsed between the exodus and Solomon's 4th year. Since men were usually married and had children by age 20–25,[60] a period closer to 300 years would be more accurate. When one adds 300 to 967 BC, an Exodus date around 1267 BC (20 years into the reign of Ramesses II) results. Wood rejects Kitchen's "12 times 40" interpretation on the grounds that "there is no basis for such an interpretation" and believes that 40 years should be understood as "a standard period of elapsed time."[61] I am not sure what Wood means by this ill defined statement, but the number 40 is one of the most frequently used numbers in the OT, and when used to signify a block of years, it occurs 33 times in the OT. This use is only surpassed by a block of seven years, which occurs 34 times.

As we saw above, the figure "40 years" occurs with some frequency in the data used in biblical chronology. Solomon reigned 40 years (1 Kgs 11:42); David reigned 40 years (1 Kgs 2:10); Eli's judgeship lasted 40 years (1 Sam 4:18); the period of peace after Deborah and Barak's victory was 40 years (Judg 5:31); 40 years of peace followed Gideon's delivery (Judg 8:22); and the Philistines oppressed Israel for 40 years leading to Samson's exploits (Judg 13:1). Then, too, there is the apparent division of Moses' life into three 40-year periods (Exod 7:7; Deut 34:7) and the 40 years in the wilderness (Num 14:33–34; 32:13; Deut 2:7; 8:2, 4). Why does the number 40 occur so frequently, and is it just a coincidence that the last judge and the first three kings, Eli, Saul,[62] David, and Solomon, ruled for 40 years? By way of contrast, no Egyptian pharaoh in 3000 years of recorded history ruled 40 years, and only two early Assyrian kings are allotted approximately 40 years in recently published eponym lists from Kultepe, Irishum I (c. 1974–1935 BC, Middle Chronology) and Sharrukin (c. 1920–1881 BC).[63]

[59] This possibility means that one of the supporting arguments used by Wood and others to support the conquest date at c. 1400 BC should be used with utmost caution.

[60] Gary Rendsburg, "The Date of the Exodus and the Conquest/Settlement: The Case for the 1100s," *VT* 42 (1992) 510–27. Interestingly, I have a family Bible that has been passed to the eldest Hoffmeier son since 1855 on their 21st birthday. My son, the sixth to receive it, turned 21 on January 2006. Thus 6 recipients have received it in 150 years which averages out to be 30 years per generation!

[61] Wood, "The 13-century Exodus-Conquest Theory" 484.

[62] Paul gives the 40-year figure in Acts 13:21.

[63] K. R. Veenhof, *The Old Assyrian List of Year Eponyms from Karum Kanish and its Chronological Implications* (Ankara: Turkish Historical Society 2003). I am grateful to Alan Millard for bringing this reference to my attention.

I have recently suggested that the number 40 originated out of the literal 40 years in the wilderness and then took on symbolic meaning.[64] The connection with a generation (דור) comes from statements such as: "For the people of Israel walked forty years in the wilderness, till all the nation, the men of war that came forth out of Egypt, perished" (Josh 5:6), and "For forty years I loathed that generation" (Ps 95:10). The 40 years in the wilderness was punishment intended to allow the sinful generation to die off and be replaced by a new one of adult age. It may be, then, that the number 40 was subsequently applied to a generation, and, later, from the Sinai experience it also became a period of judgment or purging (e.g. 40 days of rain in Noah's day).

There are obvious cases where the number 40 is extremely difficult to interpret literally. For example, Moses is said to have been on Mt. Sinai to receive the law 40 days and 40 nights and during that period "he neither ate bread nor drank water" (Exod 34:28; cf. Deut 9:9, 18, 25). No human could last 40 days without water. Consequently, this verse forces us to accept either the 40 days or the complete fasting literally, but not both. Outside of the Bible, the number 40 also has symbolic meaning. Consider the statement by the king Mesha in his famous stela. He declared that "Omri had taken possession of the whole la[n]d of Medeba, and lived there (in) his days and half the days of his son, forty years."[65] According to 1 Kgs 16:23, Omri reigned 12 years, and to Ahab 22 years are credited (1 Kgs 16:29). Mesha claims to have liberated his land from Israelite dominance halfway through Ahab's 22 years, meaning that the 40 year period actually was no more than 23 years![66]

Passages like these, and the use of the number 40 with such regularity, suggests that the number may symbolize an undisclosed period of time—an approximate number. Consequently, trying to reconstruct history and to establish dates involving the number 40 is indeed challenging. Then, too, it is undeniable that 480 does correspond to "12 times 40," and therefore one should not lightly dismiss the possible symbolic nature of the number. This interpretation of the 480 years did not originate with Albright as Wood thinks![67] C. F. Keil, in his commentary of 1 Kings written during the last quarter of the 19th century,[68] rejected the "12 times 40" explanation advocated by an earlier Hebrew scholar, Julius Friedrich Böttcher (1801–1863). So this interpretation has been around for more than 150 years.

More recently, Donald Wiseman has suggested a possible connection between the 480 figure—representing "a generalization indicating the passing of twelve generations"—and a similar practice in Assyria and

[64] *Ancient Israel in Sinai* 35–36.

[65] K. A. D. Smelik, "The Inscription of King Mesha," in *Context of Scripture* II.137.

[66] The term son (בן) could refer a descendent of Omri, and thus more years could be involved. Regardless of whether the period of Azariah and/or Jehoram are included, the number 40 is not reached.

[67] Wood attributes the origin of this interpretation to a 1921 article by Albright, "The 13th-century Exodus-Conquest" 484, n. 43.

[68] *1 & 2 Kings, Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament* vol. 3 (trans. James Martin; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1865–1892) 67.

Babylon.[69] The founding of a temple or refurbishing of a cult was a significant event that was often linked to earlier events by a large number of years. These special blocks of time are known to Assyriologists as *Distanzangaben*, or given distances. One such case is from the reign of Tukulti-Ninurta who declared that 720 years stood between the building of the Ishtar Temple in Ashur by Ilushumma and Tukulti-Ninurta's reconstruction which took place at the beginning of his reign. Reade doubts that the 720 figure should be taken literally, but contends that it more likely represents "an approximation relating to the distant past" and that the figure derives from "12 times 60," or else the figure is attained taking the number of kings according to the king list that separated the two monarchs, viz., 45, and then multiplying that number by 16, thought to be the span of the average reign;[70] 45 times 16 equals 720. Reade goes on to cite other examples of *Distanzangaben*, all of which are large figures and connect the present temple renovation with the distant past or a previous or original construction.

A similar phenomenon might be behind the so-called 400 years stela of Ramesses II discovered at Tanis,[71] but was originally from Pi-Ramesses.[72] The critical line of the text reads: *ḥ3t sp* 400, *3bd 4 šmw, sw 4, nsw bity stḫ ʿ3 pḥty s3 rʿ mr.f nbty stḫ*—"Year 400, 4th month of summer, 4th day the King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Seth Mighty of Strength, Son of Re, his beloved Seth the Ombite."[73] Applying a regnal year, month, and day to a deity is unique, and the repetition of the number four is curious.[74] The bottom portion of the stela is missing that may have contained further information which would clarify what the 400th year means. These factors have resulted in considerable discussion over the years as to the purpose of the stela and what is signified by the 400-year reference. Kurt Sethe, followed by Pierre Montet and others, think that the 400 years point to the origin of the cult of Seth in the region.[75] Others associate the 400 years with the founding of Avaris and Seth's status as king.[76] Regardless, it is clear that 400 years represents the period between the founding of either a temple, a cult, or a city in the distant past, and some significant recent event.

[69] Wiseman, *1 & 2 Kings* 104.

[70] Reade, "Assyrian King-Lists" 3–4.

[71] Pierre Montet, "La stèle de l'an 400 retrouvée," *Kêmi* 4 (1933) 191–215.

[72] Labid Habachi, "The Four Hundred Year Stela Originally Standing in Khataʿna-Qantir or Avaris-Piramesse," in *Actes du XXIXe Congres international des Orientalistes, Egyptologie* Vol. 1 (ed. G. Posener; Paris, 1975) 41–44.

[73] Translation my own based on the transcription of Montet, "La stèle de l'an 400 retrouvée," plate xv.

[74] The repetition of the number 4 in the dating (the 4th month of summer, day 4 of the 400th year) is odd, raising the possibility of some sort of symbolism.

[75] Kurt Sethe, "Der Denkstein mit dem Datum des Jahres 400 der Ära von Tanis," *Zeitschrift für Ägyptische Sprache* 65 (1930) 85–89; Montet, "La stèle de l'an 400 retrouvée" 208–15; Wolfgang Helck,

[76] Hans Goedicke, "The '400-Year Stela' Reconsidered," *Bulletin of the Egyptological Seminar* 3 (1981) 25–42; Labib Habachi, *Tell el-Dabʿa* I (Vienna: Verlag der österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2001) 122–27.

Could it be that the 480 years of 1 Kgs 6:1 is an Israelite *Distanzangabe*? If so, its purpose was not to provide a historical datum *per se*, but rather to create a link between the building of Israel's temple and the event that led to YHWH becoming the God of Israel. The same is true of Assyrian and Egyptian *Distanzangaben*. The connection of all these texts to the construction of a temple must be taken seriously. Is the 480-year figure in 1 Kgs 6:1 an example of the use of a large symbolic number rather than a literal number and does it represent a "convention of the penman's milieu"?

IV. DID PHARAOH DROWN IN THE RE(E)D SEA?

Wood advances a fantastic reason for rejecting Ramesses II as pharaoh of the exodus. He claims that "the Bible strongly implies that the pharaoh of the exodus perished in the *yam sûp*," and then he goes on to say, "[O]bviously, Rameses II did not drown in the *yam sûp*, as he died of natural causes some 47 years after the presumed exodus date."[77] Wood is joined by William Shea in believing that pharaoh drowned in the sea. According to Shea, "the pharaoh of the Exodus died at the sea."[78] I am not convinced that any of the texts regarding demolition of the Egyptian chariotry at the Re(e)d Sea included the death of pharaoh.[79] Implied in Wood's reasoning that Ramesses II did not drown in the sea is because his mummified remains were discovered in the Deir el-Bahri cache of royal mummies discovered in 1881. Indeed nearly every New Kingdom pharaoh and many queens were included in this ancient reinterment.

In his *JETS* article, Wood never discloses his candidate for the pharaoh of the exodus. But if one recalls his 1446 BC exodus date, and the range he uses for Amenhotep II's reign (1453–1419 BC), his preference is obvious. There are several problems with this position. First, Wood muddles Egyptian chronology by using the high chronology for the 18th Dynasty (e.g. Ahmose 1570–1546 BC, Amenhotep II 1453–1419 BC) and the low chronology for the 19th, dating Ramesses II to 1279–1213 BC—the high chronology dates are 1304–1237 BC. The two systems ought not to be mixed, and the high chronology is largely passé now. One of the important outcomes of above-mentioned colloquia on absolute chronology is that Egyptologists largely

[77] Wood, "The 13th-century Exodus-Conquest Theory" 478.

[78] "The Date of the Exodus," in *Giving the Sense* 244.

[79] Psalm 136:15 may be the closest to suggest that pharaoh drowned in the seas, but that may be due to misleading English translations, e.g. JB: "Drowned Pharaoh and his army"; NIV: "swept pharaoh and his army into the Red Sea"; KJV and NAS: "He overthrew Pharaoh . . . into the Red Sea." The key word here is נאר, which is the word used in Exod 14:27. נאר means to "shake off" (Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* [Leiden: Brill, 2001] 707). Nothing in this term suggests that pharaoh drowned in the sea. In fact, there is nothing to suggest in the various texts, especially in Exodus, that pharaoh led the chariot corps in pursuit of the escaping Hebrews. Perhaps people have been influenced by Cecil B. DeMille's portrait of angry Ramesses (Yul Brynner) leading the attack at the sea. But even in *The Ten Commandments*, Ramesses does not follow the Israelites into the sea!

favor the lower chronology by 20 to 30 years. Rolf Krauss puts the reign of Ahmose at 1539–1514 BC, while Kitchen and others prefer 1550–1525 BC, but they agree on Thutmose III (1479–1425 BC), and regarding Amenhotep II they differ on the length of his reign (1427–1400/1392 BC).[80] According to the now-preferred lower chronology, the 1446 BC exodus lands in the reign of Thutmose III. Many evangelical scholars cling to the higher chronology because they have determined *a priori* that Amenhotep II has become their pharaoh of choice for the obstinate potentate that Moses dealt with.

The second problem for Wood's exodus pharaoh drowning in the sea is that the mummy of Thutmose III was found in the Deir el-Bahri cache, while Amenhotep II's was actually discovered in his tomb, one of only a few royal mummies discovered intact.[81] In fact, all the mummies of the 15th century are accounted for.[82] According to the X-rays and investigations of these mummies, none indicate a death by drowning.[83] Following Wood's logic regarding Ramesses II, one would have to conclude that none of the 18th Dynasty pharaohs could have been pharaoh of the exodus![84]

V. CANAAN AND CONQUEST

One of the major problems for the early date exodus is the early date conquest. As one who has extensively studied texts relating to Egypt's military activity in Canaan from the 16th through 14th centuries,[85] I have been troubled by two problems. First, among the records of the warring kings of

[80] A comparison of the two chronologies are in Kitchen, "Egypt, History of (Chronology)" 329. Amenhotep II's accession date in 1427 BC—two years before the death of his father—is because there is strong evidence of a brief co-regency.

[81] James E. Harris and Kent R. Weeks, *X-Raying the Pharaohs* (New York: Scribner, 1973) 138.

[82] Harris and Weeks, *X-Raying the Pharaohs* 130–43. The remains of Hatshepsut have not been identified with certainty, but could be "the elder woman" who had been reburied in the tomb of Amemnhotep II (ibid. 37).

[83] See also the studies of the royal mummies in, Kames E. Harris and Edward F. Wente, *An X-Ray Atlas of the Royal Mummies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

[84] Here is not the place for a full critique of William Shea's imaginative speculations about the mummified remains of the 18th Dynasty monarchs and how Thutmose II, Thutmose III, and Amenhotep II could all possibly be the drowned pharaoh! He wildly postulates that Amenhotep II drowned at sea, and that someone filled in for him as king while the drowning victim was secretly buried or that another dead soldier was retrieved and buried in his place (see "The Date of the Exodus," in *Giving the Sense* 236–59). Suffice it to say, there is little credibility to any of his ideas. In fact, in my view, his method, logic, and treatment of both the Bible and archaeological data are of the sort that give evangelical scholarship a bad name.

[85] James K. Hoffmeier, "Reconsidering Egypt's Part in the Termination of the Middle Bronze Age in Palestine," *Levant* 21 (1989) 181–93; "Some Thoughts on William G. Dever's 'Hyksos,' Egyptian Destructions, and the End of the Palestinian Middle Bronze Age," *Levant* 22 (1990) 83–89; "James Weinstein's 'Egypt and the Middle Bronze IIC/Late Bronze IA: A Rejoinder,'" *Levant* 23 (1991) 117–24; "Understanding Hebrew and Egyptian Military Texts: A Contextual Approach," *The Context of Scripture III: Archival Documents from the Biblical World* (ed. W. W. Hallo and K. L. Younger; Leiden: Brill, 2002) xxi-xxvii; "Aspects of Egyptian Foreign Policy in the 18th Dynasty in Western Asia and Nubia" in *Egypt, Israel, and the Ancient Mediterranean World: Studies in Honor of Donald B. Redford* (ed. Gary Knoppers and Antoine Hirsch; Leiden; Brill, 2004) 121–41.

Egypt who had imperial control of Canaan and Syria from ca. 1500–1200 BC, except for the Merneptah stela, there is no reference to Israel or any of the tribes despite the fact that several hundred toponyms are known for the region.[86] Wood points to a recently published inscribed block by Manfred Görg that is stored in the Berlin Museum as possible evidence of Israel's presence in Canaan in the 15th century. On stylistic grounds, Görg suggests a date for it in the reign of Thutmose III or Amenhotep II.[87] The block contains three toponym name rings. The first one on the left clearly reads Ashkelon, the second one is Canaan, and the third is the one Görg provisionally suggests is Israel.[88] The first sign is clearly *i* (). The second sign is largely missing, but Görg restores as *ꜣ* (). The remaining three signs are clear enough:  . Assuming he has restored the second sign correctly, this word looks little like "Israel" when written on the Merneptah stela. Görg's reading of this name as "Israel" is plagued by serious linguistic and orthographic problems that preclude it from being Israel. I shall address four of the most glaring objections.

(1) One would not expect the second sign to be a  (*ꜣ*), but  or  (*śin*) if Israel was the toponym.[89]

(2) If the restored sign is *ꜣ*, then it likely represents the Semitic *lamed*, never a *śin*.

(3) The wrong sibilant is used for Israel. *Ś* should be used, as it is in the Merneptah stela, and not *š*. Furthermore, the sign  is a bi-literal for *šꜣ*, representing a consonant plus vowel in group writing. This same sign is used in the spelling of Sharuhen in Thutmose III's annals,[90] and corresponds to Hebrew *ש*. The writing of Israel in Hebrew reads *śr*.

(4) Because the Egyptian language lacked a *lamed*, *resh* or *aleph* is used as the corresponding sound. Thus the sign  in this uncertain name could represent *resh*, but this is questionable on orthographic grounds as in the writing of Ashkelon in the first name ring on the same block the *lamed* is written with the  sign.[91] One would expect that if the final sign really represented the Semitic *lamed* the same hieroglyph would be used as in the adjacent writing of Ashkelon. These factors mean that there are several options for how toponyms could be read,

[86] See the study of all these names by Shmuel Aḥituv, *Canaanite Toponyms in Ancient Egyptian Documents* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1984).

[87] Wood, "The 13th-century Exodus-Conquest Theory" 21–27.

[88] Manfred Görg, Israel in Hieroglyphen," *BN* 106 (2001) 21–27.

[89] Aaron Ember, "Semito-Egyptian sound-changes," *Zeitschrift für Ägyptische Sprache* 49 (1911) 87–88; Wolf Leslau, "Semitic and Egyptian Comparisons," *JNES* 21 (1962) 47; James E. Hoch, *Semitic Words in Egyptian Texts of the New Kingdom and Third Intermediate Period* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994) 12.

[90] Shmuel Aḥituv, *Canaanite Toponyms in Ancient Egyptian Documents* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1984) 171.

[91] These signs can be used interchangeably, as it is with the writing of Ashkelon on the Merneptah Stela and the Karnak inscription of Merneptah. What I am referring to here is using these two different signs by the same scribe on the same inscription.

> but none are Israel: they are Ilshalir, Ilsharil, Irshalil, Irshalir, Irsharil, and Irshalil.

Thus the only occurrence of Israel from ancient Egypt remains the Merneptah Stela that dates to ca. 1210/11 BC.[92] This is certainly unexpected since we possess scores of geographical texts and toponym lists, and hundreds of extant toponyms from Canaan from the 15th and 14th centuries, and yet neither Israel nor any of the tribal names are attested.[93] For the period 1400–1250 BC Egypt exercised hegemony over Canaan and Syria. So this silence is problematic for the early date exodus and conquest.

This silence by itself is not decisive. But when coupled with the corresponding absence of references to Egyptian military activity against Israel in the Books of Joshua and Judges, the silence becomes a serious problem for the belief that Israel could fight against vital Egyptian interests in Canaan (Joshua 6–11) and struggle among its tribes to seize their inheritance (Judges 1) without evoking an Egyptian response. If the Israelites arrived in Canaan in 1406 BC, then the military activities of the judge-deliverers in the Book of Judges should span approximately from 1400–1150 BC.

When one considers all the nations who oppressed Israel in the book of Judges that resulted in the emergence of a charismatic judge-deliverer, we find the enemies to be from Mesopotamia, Moab, Philistines, Canaaniates/Hazor, Midianites and Ishmaelites, Amorites, Philistines, Ammonites, and Philistines, in that order.[94] The Philistines appear more than any other opponent, suggesting that they are the major menace (cf. Judg 3:31; 10:7; 13:1ff), and yet they only arrived in southern Canaan with the Sea Peoples invasion during the 8th regnal year of Ramesses III, around 1177/6 BC.[95] Never is Egypt mentioned as one of the oppressors against whom a judge-deliverer fought. This is strange indeed, because the major portion of the Judges period, according to Wood's "biblical" chronology, coincides with Egypt's empire in Canaan and Syria, but neither Egyptian sources mention Israel, and biblical records are silent on Egyptian hostility.[96] After Merneptah's

[92] See James K. Hoffmeier, "The (Israel) Stela of Merneptah," in *Context of Scripture* II.40–41.

[93] For a thorough list of the sources for Canaanite toponyms in Egyptian sources, see Aḥituv, *Canaanite Toponyms in Ancient Egyptian Documents* 9–42.

[94] Egyptians are mentioned in a general way in Judg 10:11, which reads: "The LORD said to the people of Israel, 'Did I not deliver you from the Egyptians and from the Amorites, from the Ammonites and from the Philistines?'" Younger points out that Judges does not give details on all Israel's oppressors during this period, but concentrates on those which resulted in God raising up a deliverer. It is possible that Egypt engaged Israelite tribes during the Judges period, but it obviously did not merit inclusion, nor apparently did it result in a response from a military savior. Another possibility is that the mention of Egypt in Judg 10:11 could be a broader statement about God's salvific interventions going back to the exodus from Egypt and up to the recent events.

[95] Gardiner, *Egypt of the Pharaohs* 283–84; Grimal, *A History of Ancient Egypt* 272.

[96] Here is not the place to enter into a major discussion about the identity of the Habiru during the Amarna Period (1350–1325 BC), but it is well known that the term Habiru is not an ethnic designation but a sociological term for brigands, outlaws, or displaced people, and the Habiru are found centuries before the earliest date for the Israelite appearance in Israel and they are found as far north as Syria and into Mesopotamia. All of these Habiru in all these locations cannot be the biblical Hebrews.

foray into Canaan in which he engaged Israelites (ca. 1208 BC), Egypt's grip on Canaan began to loosen considerably, with only a token presence in previous administrative centers.[97] An exodus date around 1270–1260 BC, with an Israelite entry into Canaan around 1230–1220 BC, means that Merneptah's invasion could be in response to Israel's expanding its control during the early judges period. Subsequently, the Israelites were able to operate with little interference from Egypt, but then the Philistines emerged as the new foe (after 1175 BC) as suggested by the Book of Judges.

Oddly, no memory of Merneptah's campaign is preserved in the Book of Judges, which according to the early chronology should have occurred during the period of the judges. However, a spring near Jerusalem in Josh 15:9 and 18:15 appears to contain Merneptah's name, a vestige of the campaign of 1210/11 BC. It is עַיִן מֵי נֶפְתּוֹחַ which is usually translated as "Spring of the Waters of Nephtoah" (RSV, NIV). The combination of the spring and waters is patently redundant.[98] In fact, the combination of עַיִן + מֵי + name is not attested elsewhere in the OT. A better reading is "the Spring of Menephtoaḥ," the precise spelling one would expect being Merneptah.[99] In Late Egyptian (begins in the Amarna period) the final *r* in words like *mer* (meaning beloved) is quiescent and not typically vocalized.[100]

Some of the Egyptian names written in the Amarna Letters reflect this reality. Mayati is the writing for Mery-Aten (EA 10:43ff.), meaning "beloved of Aten," and Maireya is the writing for Mery-Re (EA 367:7), meaning "beloved of Re."[101] Similarly, Mer-ne-ptaḥ would appear as Menephtaḥ. It thus appears that the name of the spring in Josh 15:9 and 18:15 preserves the name of Egyptian Pharaoh, whose clash with Israel is recorded on the Israel Stela, viz., Merneptah. Furthermore, Pap. Anastasi III (verso 6, 4) contains a reference to the "wells of Meneptaḥ" somewhere in Canaan, which Ricardo Caminos observed "have with some probability been equated with 'the fountain of the waters of Nephtoah' (Joshua 15,9; 18,15)."[102]

The Late Bronze Age (LB) destructions at Hazor are discussed by Wood in an attempt to correlate them to Joshua (Joshua 11) and Barak and Deborah's

[97] Concerning Egypt's administrative centers or Governor's residences in Canaan during the 13th to early 12th centuries, see Eliezer Oren, "Governors' Residences" in Canaan under the New Kingdom: A Case Study of Egyptian Administrations," *Journal of the Society for the Study of Egyptian Antiquities* 14/2 (1984) 37–56; and Ellen F. Morris, *The Architecture of Imperialism: Military Bases and the Evolution of Foreign Policy in Egypt's New Kingdom* (Leiden: Brill, 2005) chaps. 3 and 4.

[98] The redundancy of spring and waters was recognized by Robert Boling and G. E. Wright (*Joshua: The Anchor Bible* [Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1982] 429), but they did not recognize the connection to Merneptah.

[99] Gary Rendsburg, "Merneptah in Canaan," *Journal of the Society for the Study of Egyptian Antiquities* 11/3 (1981) 171–72; Yohanan Aharoni, *The Land of the Bible: A Historical Geography* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1979) 184.

[100] Friedrich Junge, *Late Egyptian Grammar: An Introduction* (trans. David Warburton; Oxford: The Griffith Institute, 2001) 35.

[101] William L. Moran, *The Amarna Letters* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992) 22, 365

[102] Ricardo Caminos, *Late-Egyptian Miscellanies* (London: Oxford University Press, 1954) 108, 111.

activities (Judges 4).[103] Stratum 2 of the lower tell at Hazor was destroyed in the 15th century, as was Stratum XV in the upper city. These destructions according to the early chronology should be Joshua's destruction. The destruction of LB IIB, or late 13th century, city is found in Straum 1a and XIII respectively. These later destructions Wood identifies with Barak and Deborah's victory over Jabin and his general Sisera.[104]

This reconstruction is not especially compelling. Joshua 11 rightly portrays Hazor as the foremost city of Canaan (Josh 11:10), and that it was thoroughly destroyed and burnt (Josh 11:11–13). According to Yigael Yadin, the excavator, the LB I city of Hazor was destroyed, and then rebuilt, and the final LB II city "represents the peak of Hazor's prosperity."[105] It was this later city that Wood credits with Barak and Deborah's victory in Judges 4. It is hard to believe that the city that was the "head" of all kingdoms of northern Canaan should be so thoroughly devastated by Joshua in 1400 BC and then rise from the ashes to be rebuilt to its peak of prosperity only to be demolished by a much smaller force from the tribes of Naphtali and Zebulon (Judg 4:6, 10) under Deborah and Barak.

For this scenario to be correct, Wood has to invent an attack on Hazor that Judges 4 never claims. The oppressive enemy of Judg 4:2–3 is "Jabin king of Canaan, who reigned in Hazor," and Sisera his general who resided in Harosheth-ha-goiim. The proper meaning and location of Sisera's home has been much discussed, but it appears to refer to the Megiddo-Tanaach area.[106] The battle between Jabin and Sisera's chariotry against foot soldiers of Israel occurred by Mt. Tabor near the Kishon River (Judg 4:6, 12–14). This spot is situated about 10 miles south of Megiddo and around 25 miles south of Hazor (depending on the route taken). The Israelites were victorious, leading to the submission of Jabin.[107] Judges 4:23 reports that God "subdued Jabin the king of Canaan." The verb rendered "subdued" (so RSV, NIV) is וַיַּכְנַע, which in the *hifil* form means "to humble somebody,"[108] and was no doubt used intentionally to play on the word Canaan (כְּנָעַן) in the following phrase. Verse 24 indicates that the Israelites "cut off" or "exterminated" Jabin (הִכְרִיתוּ אֵת יָבִין).[109] A close reading of the text indicates that God gave Israel victory over her oppressors in a major battle 25 miles away from Hazor, but the text is absolutely silent regarding any military action against Hazor itself. Furthermore, the terminology used in 4:23–24 is not found in Joshua or Judges to indicate attacks on cities. Consequently, there is no basis to believe that the destruction of the final LB IIB (late 13th century) city was caused by Deborah and Barak's triumph over Jabin and Sisera.

[103] Wood, "The 13th-century Exodus-Conquest Theory" 487–88.

[104] Ibid.

[105] Yigael Yadin, "Hazor," in *The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land* II (ed. E. Stern; New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993) 595.

[106] Rainey, *Sacred Bridge* 150–51.

[107] For a discussion of the military strategy and maps showing the area of this battle, cf. Rainey, *Sacred Bridge*, 138, and Chaim Herzog and Mordechai Gichon, *Battles of the Bible* (Toronto: Stoddart Publishing, 1997) 63–71.

[108] Koehler and Baumgartner, *Hebrew & Aramaic Lexicon*, 485.

[109] I.e. the hifil form of כרת. Cf. Koehler and Baumgartner, *Hebrew & Aramaic Lexicon,* 501.

There are additional reasons for rejecting the view that Joshua destroyed LB I Hazor around 1400 BC. From the Amarna letters, written to the pharaohs Amernhotep III and Akhenaten between 1390–1340 BC, we learn that Hazor was thriving during this period. Abdi-Tishri, the King of Hazor, in communiqué declares his fidelity to Pharaoh, indicates that he is protecting Egyptian interests in the region, and specifically refers to Hazor as being "your [i.e. pharaoh's] city" (EA 228).[110] But another ruler, Ayyab, complains to Pharaoh that the king of Hazor "has taken 3 cities from me."[111] EA 148, written by Abi-Milku the king of Tyre, reports to Pharaoh that the king of Hazor "has aligned himself with the ʿApiru (i.e. Habiru)."[112] According to the Wood, the marauding Habiru of the Amarna Letters could be the Hebrews.[113] Abi-Milku, however, makes clear that Hazor was an ally of the Habiru rather than being the destroyers of Hazor. This information from the Amarna correspondences demonstrates that Hazor during the LB IIA was a major player in the region and does not sound like a city that had just been demolished and burnt by Joshua and his forces.

On the eve of the conquest of Canaan, God instructed the Israelites in Deut 7:2 and 5: "when the LORD your God gives them over to you, and you defeat them; then you must utterly destroy them (וְהִכִּיתָם הַחֲרֵם); you shall make no covenant with them, and show no mercy to them." . . . "But thus shall you deal with them: you shall break down their altars, and dash in pieces their pillars, and hew down their Asherim, and burn their graven images with fire." Joshua 11:10–11 records the annihilation or חֵרֶם of Hazor. The intentional desecration of shrines and cultic objects is a practice unique to Israel. Among the polytheistic peoples of the Near East, there was usually respect for the sacred sites and images of others. The excavations of the LB IIB sacred areas of Hazor from 1955–1958 and 1960 revealed that the temples had been sacked and burnt. Cultic statues discovered by Yadin were intentionally decapitated.[114] I have examined one of the now restored decapitated statues in the Israel Museum in Jerusalem, and a rectangular hole of a chisel that severed the head from the neck is evident. This demonstrates that the removal of the head was calculated. Since 1991, Amnon Ben-Tor has renewed excavations at Hazor, and further examples of desecrated statues have been uncovered.[115] Of particular interest are those that are both decapitated and have hands chopped off in destruction layers filled with ash.[116] There is only one ancient source that alludes to this practice, and it is in the Bible. 1 Samuel 5:2

[110] Moran, *The Amarna Letters*, 289–90.

[111] Ibid. 362.

[112] Ibid. 235.

[113] Wood, "The 13th-century Exodus-Conquest Theory" 489.

[114] For pictures of two of the statues, see Yadin, "Hazor" 596 and 600. See also Yadin, *Hazor: The Schweich Lectures of the British Academy* (London: Oxford University Press, 1970) plates XIV–XXI; and *Hazor: The Rediscovery of a Great Citadel of the Bible* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1975) chapter 5.

[115] For yearly reports since 1991 see the project's website: www.unixware.mscc.huji.ac.il/~hatsor/hazor.html.

[116] Amnon Ben-Tor and Maria Teresa Rubiato, "Did the Israelites Destroy the Canaanite City," *BAR* 25/3 (May/June 1999) 22–39.

describes what happened to the statue of Dagon when the ark of the covenant is brought into its presence: "But when they rose early on the next morning, behold, Dagon had fallen face downward on the ground before the ark of the LORD, and the head of Dagon and both his hands were lying cut off upon the threshold; only the trunk of Dagon was left to him." This description and the savaged statues from Hazor fit the *ḥerem* tactics described in Deuteronomy 7 and Joshua 11, which leads Ben-Tor to believe that this desecration is related to Joshua's attack on Hazor.[117] Consequently, the biblical and archaeological data point to Joshua destroying the LB IIB city of Hazor, while Judges 4–5 make no claims of destroying, let alone burning it and targeting its cultic objects and images in a *ḥerem*-like fashion.

VI. KITCHEN AND COVENANT

In his criticism of Kitchen's comparison of ancient Near Eastern treaties and law codes with the covenants in the Pentateuch, Wood imprudently charges Kitchen with "manipulating the evidence" to make the structure of Exodus 20ff. and Deuteronomy fit the 13th-century Near Eastern materials. This is a serious charge to make against arguably one of the most significant and prolific Near Eastern/biblical scholars of our times. Kitchen's mastery of Near Eastern materials has been consistently used for nearly fifty years to demonstrate the reliability of the OT. His conclusions regarding the comparison of the biblical covenants and second-millennium counterparts from the Near East were not made by simplistically comparing translations of these texts from Pritchard's *Ancient Near Eastern Texts* with the NIV or NASB, but are the result of years of painstaking study of all the texts in their original languages. Kitchen now has amassed over one hundred treaty texts and law codes that span the third through first millennia BC, and these serve as the basis for the understanding that Wood rejects.

However, Kitchen has always maintained that the biblical covenants were not precise replicas of ancient treaty forms. As early as 1977 he cautioned: "It is important to remember that Exodus-Leviticus, Deuteronomy and Joshua 24 are not themselves actual covenant-documents; they describe the giving of the covenant and its renewals. Thus, our existing books of Exodus-Leviticus, Deuteronomy and Joshua 24 stand at one remove (but *only* one remove) from the actual covenant-documents, remaining very close to these and incorporating all their main features."[118] By ignoring this caveat in Kitchen's treatment of Near Eastern materials, Wood misrepresents Kitchen's position. Fortunately, Kitchen is preparing a three-volume *magnum opus* that brings together all the Near Eastern legal materials before comparing them to the biblical treaty/covenants. Readers then will be able to determine whether or not Kitchen is manipulating the data to fit his 13th-century date. Until Wood makes the same kind of comprehensive study of all this material

[117] Ben-Tor and Rubiato, "Did the Israelites Destroy the Canaanite City" 22–39.
[118] *The Bible in Its World* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1977) 81.

in the original languages, rather than naïve comparisons of English translations, he is simply not in a position to make such an unfounded accusation against one of the true giants of our field.

VII. CONCLUSION

Bryant Wood concludes his article on the 13th-century date exodus by asserting that "there is no valid evidence, biblical or extra-biblical, to sustain it," and ends with a prophetic call to evangelicals to "abandon the theory."[119] Hopefully I have been able to demonstrate that there are good biblical and archaeologically-based reasons for espousing the 13th-century date, and therefore there is no reason for abandoning it.

The conservative evangelical scholar Charles Pfeiffer made the cogent observation four decades ago, still valid today, that "the evidence for the historicity of the Exodus account is decisive, but the evidence for the specific date is still inconclusive."[120] I concur, but believe that for now both biblical and archaeological data—especially Egyptian sources—converge nicely in the 13th century. Should, however, new evidence emerge that would support the 15th-century theory, I would shift my position, because I am not ideologically committed to the 13th-century date. In the meantime, I would urge evangelical biblical scholars, historians, and archaeologists not to expend all their energies on defending a date for the exodus when the real debate today is whether the books of Exodus-Judges contain any history at all and if there was a sojourn and an exodus.

[119] Wood, "The 13th-century Exodus-Conquest Theory" 489.
[120] "Exodus," *The New International Dictionary of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1963) 333.