

EVIDENCE for the BIBLE

Clive Anderson and
Brian Edwards



DayOne

Dedication

*To Amanda and Rosie for their unfailing
love, support, and patience*

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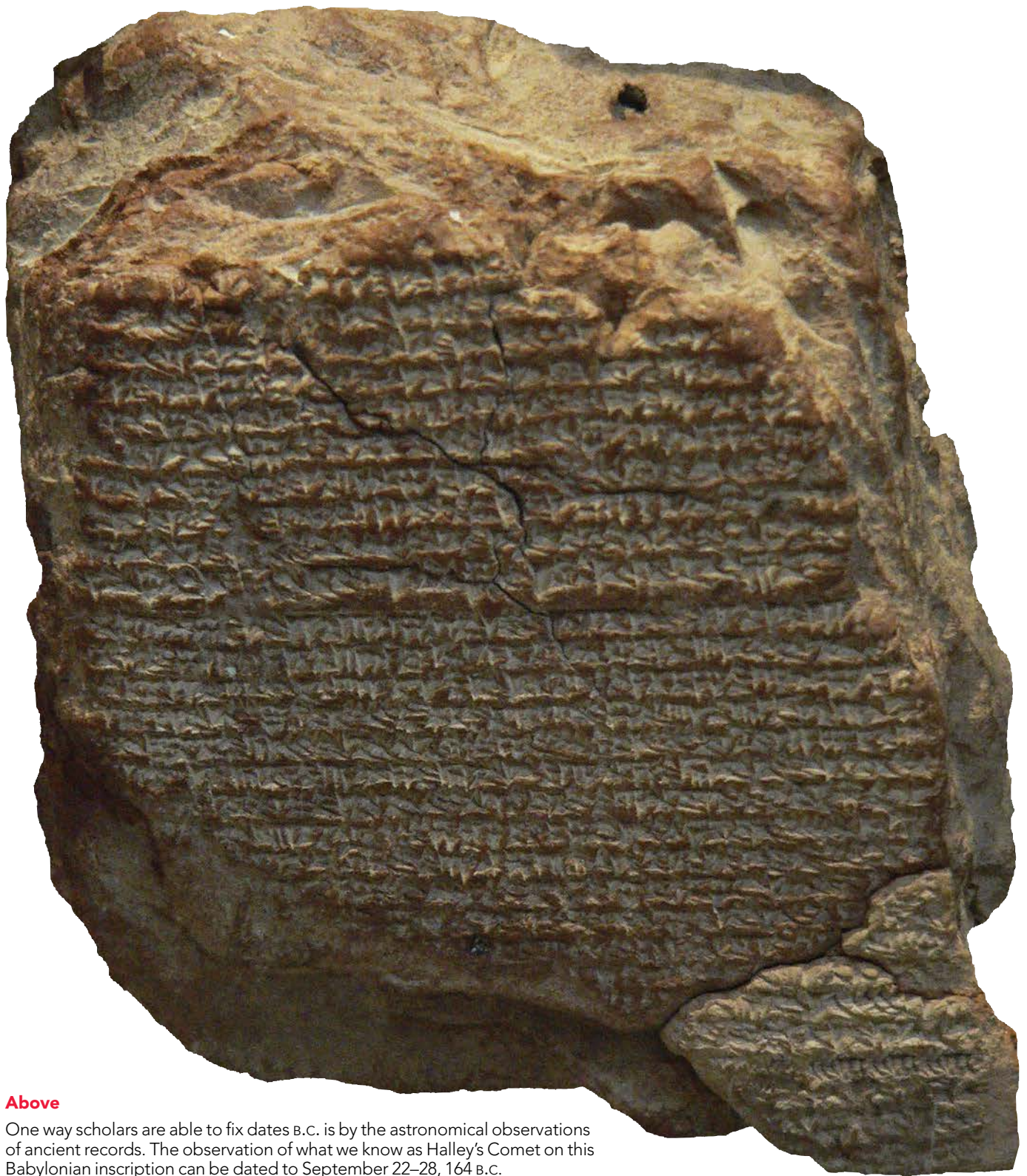


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Above

One way scholars are able to fix dates B.C. is by the astronomical observations of ancient records. The observation of what we know as Halley's Comet on this Babylonian inscription can be dated to September 22–28, 164 B.C.



Name: Babylonian Observation of Halley's Comet
Origin and date: Babylon, Iraq 164 B.C.
Discovered: 1881
Size: Length 3.5cm Width 3.81cm
Present location: The British Museum WA41462



Name: Alexander the Great marble sarcophagus
Origin and date: Sidon, between years 317–312 B.C.
Discovered: 1887
Size: Length 3.18m Width 1.67m Height 2.12m
Present location: The Istanbul Archaeological Museum

Introduction

Archaeology is like looking through a window into the past. By uncovering the remains of buildings and of household bits and pieces of previous civilizations we learn who the people were and when and how they lived.

The word “archaeology,” from the Greek word meaning ancient or old, was not used of items that could be dug out of the ground until the early 19th century. Today it refers to anything discovered from the past, including manuscripts.

Unfortunately many of the first “archaeologists” were grave robbers, and little serious archaeological work was done until after the defeat of Napoleon when British and French archaeologists worked together in Egypt and elsewhere. Soon, there was a scramble to dig up the past and bring the most impressive objects to museums in London and Paris. Archaeological societies sprang into being.

In newly discovered texts, the names of rulers of the Ancient Near East could be identified with those mentioned in the Bible, and in these texts, kings of Israel and Judah and place names mentioned in the Bible also appeared.

During the first decades of the 20th century there was a growing interest in “biblical archaeology” — uncovering sites related to the biblical record. One of the most scholarly archaeologists was William F. Albright who believed that archaeology and the biblical record were in complete harmony.

Today, the picture is very different and there is widespread skepticism of the accuracy of the Bible as a historical record.



We have chosen to follow the biblical record in broad strokes, stopping off only where there are interesting finds from archaeology to confirm or illustrate the biblical account. Because this book aims to be a brief and easily-read introduction to the world of biblical archaeology, it deliberately avoids the complex details that lie behind many of the areas presented. Extended notes at the back deal in more detail with a few contentious issues. However, accuracy and honesty have been our two guiding principles: we have endeavored to provide a reliable summary of the up-to-date position and have not claimed more than the facts deserve. For those who wish to dig deeper into a subject, we have added reference books. To avoid repetition, the qualification of scholars mentioned in the text will be found on page 232.

One thing will become clear: contrary to the claim of many, the records in the Bible are intended to be taken as historical fact. They are not legends or myths. Foreign rulers and kings of Israel and Judah who are featured in the Old Testament are found in the order and places that we discover from contemporary texts; battles and their outcome are exactly as we know them from inscriptions; the setting of narratives fits the period they relate to; and the details of prophetic utterances are precisely what are known to have happened.

This is a fascinating journey during which the traveler never knows what may turn up with the next trowel. Join us on the adventure as you turn the pages and listen to the voices from the ground. Note that the provenance, present location, and size of objects illustrated are shown where known.

Creation and Flood stories

Mesopotamian and Egyptian accounts of creation have similarities with the biblical record, though many of the Flood legends offer much closer parallels to Genesis 6 to 8 (SCG pp 47–51).

The suggestion that such stories originated from the annual flooding of the area between the Tigris and Euphrates overlooks the consistent references to “the Flood” as something exceptional and widespread. A list of the early rulers of Mesopotamia (modern Iraq), known as the Sumerian King List, separates its kings as pre and post ‘Flood’ (LTB p 23–25).

The **Gilgamesh Epic**. Gilgamesh seeks immortality and meets Ut-napishti who tells how he gained immortality by surviving the Flood. Ut-napishti was instructed by the god Ea to build a huge boat and bring his family and representatives of all living creatures into it. Details of the construction are given and the great six-decker rides out a flood that destroys the rest of mankind. The description is vivid and even “the gods were frightened by the deluge.” On the seventh day “the sea grew quiet, the tempest was still, the flood ceased” and Ut-napishti sends out a dove, a swallow and a raven — the raven does not return. Ut-napishti leaves the boat and offers sacrifices to the gods. When the gods “smelled the sweet savour,” the god Enlil regrets destroying the whole of mankind. As a reward Ut-napishti and his wife are given immortality (ANET pp 89–95).

Below

The **Gilgamesh Epic** recounts a story of a great flood that has many similarities with the biblical record. This tablet, discovered in the library of Ashurbanipal at Nineveh, is derived from a much earlier one that possibly predated Moses.



Name: Flood Tablet (Gilgamesh Epic)
Origin and date: Nineveh, c 650 B.C.
Discovered: Nineveh c1857 by Layard
Translated 1870 by George Smith
Size: Length 15.24cm Width 13.33cm
Present location: The British Museum MEK3375

Sumerian and Atrahasis Flood Epics

Right

The Atrahasis Epic. There are many Assyrian and Babylonian versions of this story, but they are all fragmentary.

Far Right

This Sumerian myth describes the creation of “the black-headed people,” vegetation, and the animals before the gods brought the flood.



The **Sumerian myth** is known from one fragmentary clay tablet. Ziusudra is informed by the assembly of the gods of their intention “to destroy the seed of mankind.” The flood continues for seven days and nights, Ziusudra worships the gods and is himself given “breath eternal.” The reasons for the flood and details of the construction of the ark are missing (ANET pp 42–43).

In the **Atrahasis Epic**, Anu is the god who rules in heaven, while Enlil rules the pantheon of minor gods on the earth. When these minor deities down tools and refuse to work any more, man is created out of blood and clay. The noise from this rapidly increasing race annoys Enlil — “the

clamour of mankind has become oppressive” — and he floods the earth. Atrahasis, warned in advance, escapes in a boat with his family, the craftsmen, and the animals. When the flood recedes, Atrahasis offers a sacrifice to the gods (ANET pp 104–105).

In 2013 an unprovenanced (precise origin and source uncertain) tablet was published (ABN). Written in old Babylonian cuneiform (see page 9) it is dated between 1900 to 1700 B.C. and this would predate the record of Moses which was around 1500 B.C. It contains details of a flood and bears similarities to the biblical record. However, the ark was circular and, unlike the biblical ark, was not capable

of withstanding a major catastrophic flood. There is, of course, no certainty that it refers to the same event, but if it does it merely adds to the vast amount of literature reflecting a universal flood in ancient times.

A primeval catastrophic flood is well embedded in the traditions of nations across the world, including Iran, Egypt, Russia, China, India, Mexico, Peru, and Hawaii. The prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 54:9), Jesus (Matthew 24:37), and the Apostle Peter (1 Peter 3:20), all believed that Noah and the universal Flood were historically true.

3
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Name: Atrahasis Epic
Origin and date: 1635 B.C.
Discovered: 1888 and later rediscovered by Prof. Alan Millard
Size: Length 25cm Width 19.4cm
Present location: The British Museum ME 78941



Name: The Sumerian myth
Origin and date: Iraq, c 2150 B.C.
Discovered: Nippur, Iraq
Present location: Collections storage
Pennsylvania Museum B10673

Father Abraham

The narrative of Abraham from Genesis 11 has inspired Jews and Christians alike for millennia. But is it real history?



Left

The Ziggurat in Ur (Iraq) was the temple of the moon god Sin and was well known to Abraham before his call by God.

Below

This cylinder seal from Syria shows the early use of camels as beasts of burden.

For example:

- The names of the five kings in Genesis 14:1–4 are known names from this period and region — though not the same men. “Shinar” (Genesis 14:1) is a very early name for Babylon (OROT p 319–320).
- The practice of adoption and surrogacy illustrated by Abraham is well attested in second millennium documents (OROT p 325).
- During the 1920s, Sir Leonard Woolley excavated at Ur of the Chaldeans and discovered that, half a millennium before Abraham, one-fifth of all homes contained writing material and that the people were skilled in algebra, geometry, and quadratic equations.
- The reference to domesticated camels (Genesis 12:16) has been shown consistent with the few figurines of camels with loads dating to the second millennium B.C. (OROT p 339; LCA p 24).
- Clearly, Jesus believed Abraham to be a real person of history (John 8:56)

4

Some believe that these stories were written during the time of Josiah in the mid-7th century B.C. (2 Kings 22) or later, to create a “history” for the nation of Judah (TBU pp 281–284). However, analysis of the social, domestic, legal and political

culture revealed in the Book of Genesis leads to the conclusion that: “The main features of the patriarchal narratives either fit specifically into the first half of the second millennium or are consistent with such a dating” (OROT p 313–372).



Name: Cylinder Seal with a two-humped camel carrying a divine couple
Origin and date: Syria, 1800–1650 B.C.
Discovered: 1960s by Manfred Bietak (University of Vienna)
Size: Length 2.8cm
Present location: The Walters Art Museum, Baltimore USA. 42.804

Sodom and Gomorrah



5

The account of Lot rescued from the destruction of Sodom (Genesis 19) has often been dismissed simply as legend rather than a true record. This has not stopped archaeologists searching for the most likely location for the city of Sodom.

Among suggestions backed by archaeological research are Bab edh-Drah (at the southern end of the Dead Sea) and Tell es-Sa'idiyeh (beside the Dead Sea). However, Tall el-Hammam at the northern end of the Dead Sea on the Jordanian side east of Bethel and Ai is a recent candidate (BAR March/April 2013 pp 34–41). Research at this site is ongoing (www.tallelhammam.com).

- When Lot made his choice of the best land, he was between Bethel and Ai (Genesis 13:3).
- The Hebrew word for “plain” (Genesis 13:10) is *kikkar* or

“disk shaped,” A disk-shaped alluvial plain in this area meets the Genesis 13:10 criteria of “Well watered like the garden of the LORD.” The area is richly fertile even today.

- On the 100-acre mound in this plain, the remains of a large fortified city have been found dated to the Middle Bronze Age — the time of Abraham and Lot.
- Scorched walls and floors were buried beneath three feet of “dark grey ash,” and pottery shards had been subject to searing temperatures exceeding 2,000 degrees Fahrenheit. Yet there is no geological evidence of volcanic activity in this area!
- The whole area was left abandoned for around seven hundred years.

The exact site may never finally be determined, but there is no archaeological reason to dismiss the biblical account. Matthew

10:14–15.

Above

Tall-el-Hammam, a possible site of the ancient Sodom, at the northern end of the Dead Sea.

Genesis fits the frame

In the ancient world it would be impossible for a writer in the 7th century B.C. to know the details of life 2,000 B.C.



6

Above

From the ancient city of Mari, texts provide a valuable insight into every aspect of life at the time of Abraham. This "Inscription Disc" from King Yahdun-Lim (c. 1800 B.C.) records his fortification of two cities and his irrigation systems.

In the 7th century people, did not write historical novels with authentic research and minute details of geography. Kenneth Kitchen concludes that the old idea that the patriarchal stories were written during the time of the divided monarchy at the earliest, is without "a particle of supporting factual evidence" (OROT pp 188, 372).

Mari was a capital of the Amorites until 1760 B.C. The vast palace, situated on the Euphrates River 320 km (199 mi) southeast of Haran where Abraham lived, covered 6 acres, with nearly 600 rooms on two levels. More than 20,000 texts discovered in the ruins provide a close parallel to the patriarchal culture.

Daniel Fleming, an expert in the Mari texts, concludes that these demonstrate that the narratives of the patriarchs accurately reflect the culture of that time (FBA pp 203–205). Personal names similar to Noah, Abram, Laban, Jacob, Gad, Dan, Levi, and Ishmael appear in the texts and show that such names were common at this period. A city named Nahur (Nahor of Genesis 11:22–25?) is mentioned, as well as the city of Haran (Genesis 11:31 to 12:4). Hazor is referred to often, and there is a reference to Laish (Dan) and an Arioeh (Genesis 14:1).

The Mari texts claim that at this time "there is no king strongest by himself," which is exactly reflected in the Book of Genesis (OROT p 320–321).



Name: Disk of Yahdun-Lim, king of Mari
Origin and date: Mari, Syria, Terracotta, c 1800 B.C.
Discovered: Excavated by André Parrot, 1935
Size: Diameter 20.32cm
Present location: Department of Oriental Antiquities, Musée du Louvre, Paris

The earliest writing

Just as it is no longer possible to claim that the Genesis record does not fit the time in which it is set, so it can no longer be claimed that formal writing did not exist in the time of Abraham.

In 1975, some 20,000 fragments from 7,000 cuneiform tablets of commercial transactions, administrative texts, and royal decrees were recovered from the tell (ruin mound) of the ancient city of the king of Ebla in northwest Syria. These records are dated at the latest to 2,250 B.C. when the city was destroyed. This is earlier than the Mari texts and predates Abraham by at least a century. Personal names similar to Abraham, Ishmael, and Israel have been found at Ebla, which is evidence of the names being used at the same general time as Genesis (LCA p 24).

For the first three thousand years of writing there were only two major forms across the Ancient Near East: Egyptian “hieroglyphics,” meaning “sacred writing,” and Mesopotamian “cuneiform,” referring to its wedged-shaped form. Which of the two came first is a matter of debate, but some of the earliest hieroglyphic writing is dated to 3,400 B.C. (TKE p 305).

However, with the introduction of the alphabet around 1,000 B.C., its 22 consonantal signs meant that more people could use it. Consequently, hieroglyphics and cuneiform fell into disuse and only in the early 19th century were they deciphered (see pages 8–9).

Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek were written with the alphabet, and

Aramaic became the official language under the vast Persian Empire in the 6th century B.C. From 330 B.C., the conquests of Alexander the Great meant that Greek replaced Aramaic over the same area (see page 108).

Below

An Ebla tablet



7
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Name: Ebla Clay Tablet
Origin and date: Tell Mardikh, c 2500 B.C.
Discovered: Paolo Matthiae and his team in 1974–7
Size: Height 35cm Width 34 cm
Present location: The Collection is in the Syrian museums of Aleppo, Damascus, and Idlib

The Rosetta Stone

Although Jesus referred to the writing of Moses (John 5:46), at one time it was assumed that Moses could not have written the Pentateuch — the first five books of the Bible — because writing did not go back that far.



At the time of its discovery, no one could read the first two texts.

For all its notoriety, the Rosetta Stone was not of great value to Jean-François Champollion who, by his death in 1832, had been the first to decipher hieroglyphics. The inscriptions at Abu Simbel in Egypt (see page 20), and the Drouetti collection in Turin were his chief source of material.

(AE pp 30–31. TKE pp 168, 213–214). Thousands of hieroglyphic inscriptions that opened the window on the world of ancient Egypt — including the world of Joseph and Moses — could now be read.

8

We now know differently. The Egyptian hieroglyphic script has some 700 pictorial signs and can be written from right to left, left to right, or downward!

One of the most visited items in the British Museum is the Rosetta Stone. Discovered by an officer of Napoleon in 1799 near Rosetta in the Nile Delta of Egypt, it was taken by the British after the defeat of Napoleon and arrived in the British Museum in 1802. The citation, to celebrate the first anniversary of Pharaoh Ptolemy V in 195 B.C., is identical in three languages: Egyptian hieroglyphics (used by the priests), demotic Egyptian (for the people), and Greek capital letters (the language of administration).

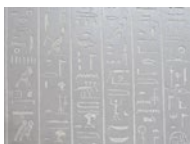


Top Left

This example of hieroglyphic script is taken from the sarcophagus (stone coffin) of an Egyptian princess at the time of the biblical prophet Jeremiah.

Left

The black granite Rosetta Stone helped to decipher the hitherto mysterious Egyptian hieroglyphics.



Name: Sarcophagus of Ankhnesnerferibre
Origin and date: Karnak, Egypt, 590 B.C.
Discovered: Found in the tomb at Deir el-Medina, Thebes
Size: Height 81.3cm Length 257cm Width 115cm
Present location: The British Museum EA32



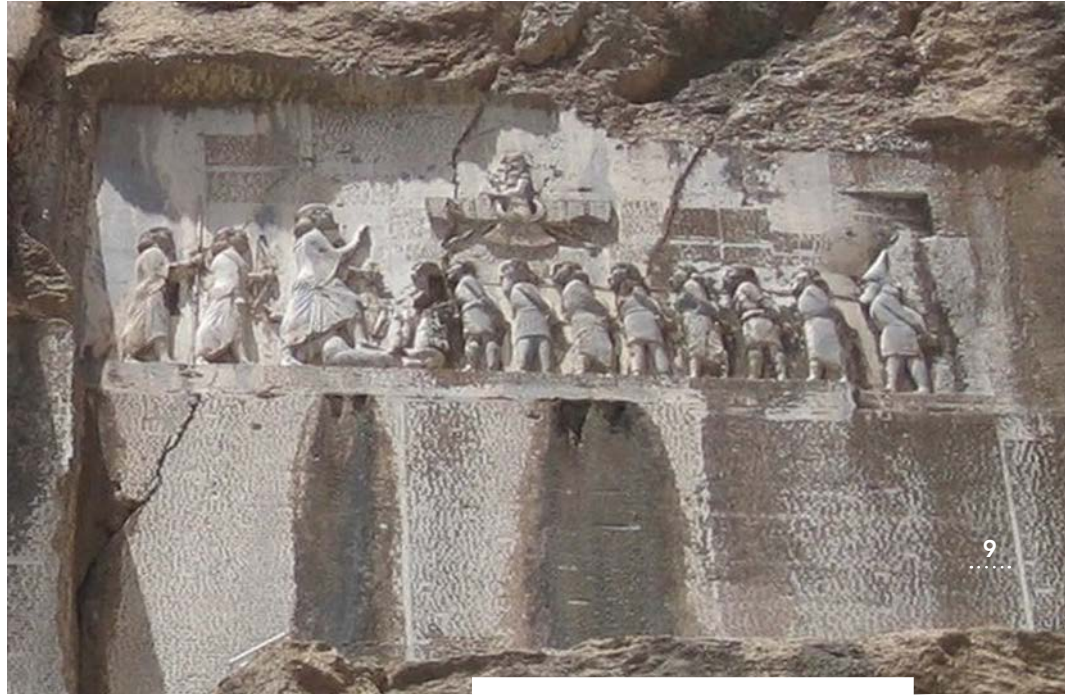
Name: The Rosetta Stone
Origin and date: Original site unknown
Discovered: at Rosetta (el-Rashid), Egypt 1799
Size: Height 114.4cm
Present location: The British Museum EA24

Deciphering cuneiform

Most of the inscriptions that refer to contemporary biblical characters and events are in cuneiform, a script reaching back at least 3,000 years B.C. (TCC p 11). With its 300 signs, it became the common script across the Fertile Crescent until the alphabet replaced it after 1,000 B.C. Unlike hieroglyphics, cuneiform is a script rather than a language, thus many Ancient Near East languages used it until the introduction of the alphabet. Like hieroglyphics, its use was limited to trained scribes.

In 1835, Henry Rawlinson perched precariously on a narrow ledge above a sheer drop to copy the Behistun Inscriptions. These had been carved in the reign of King Darius of Persia (522–486 B.C.) and, like the Rosetta Stone, consisted of an identical text in the three official languages of the Persian empire: Old Persian, Elamite, and Babylonian (Akkadian). They were all written in cuneiform.

By 1846, Rawlinson could read the Old Persian and slowly he and others deciphered cuneiform. In May 1857, under a carefully controlled test at the British Museum, four scholars



who had been working on Babylonian cuneiform — Rawlinson, Fox-Talbot, Oppert, and Hincks — independently translated a cuneiform prism and their “very remarkable coincidence” of translation proved that cuneiform had been deciphered (EOP pp 339–340). (See also page 89.)

Right

The inscription from the time of the Assyrian king Tiglath-pileser I that Rawlinson and his colleagues translated independently of each other. It recounts the military and civil achievements of the king and his successes in lion hunting.



Top Right

The Behistun Inscription in Persia is some 15m (49ft) high by 25m (82ft) wide and 100m (328ft) up a limestone cliff above a ledge a little over half a meter wide!



Name: The Behistun Inscription
Origin and date: Darius the Great between 522 and 486 B.C.
Discovered: Ctesias of Cnidus who noted its existence c 400 B.C.
Size: Height 15m Width 25m
Present location: Mount Behistun in the Kermanshah Province, Western Iran



Name: Clay Prism Foundation Record of Tiglath-pileser I
Origin and date: Ashur, Iraq 1112–1074 B.C.
Discovered: Library of Ashurbanipal, Nineveh
Size: Width 17.03cm Height 30.34cm
Present location: The British Museum 91033

Escape to Egypt

Egypt's fertility from the Nile was prized by many other nations, and the Assyrians, Babylonians, and others fought to possess the land.



10

During Roman times, Egypt was the major breadbasket of the Mediterranean, and was therefore a vital part of the Empire. Egypt was a refuge for people from Canaan during times of famine, including Abraham (Genesis 12:10), and the presence of Semitic people trading in Egypt at this time is well attested (IE pp 52–68). Joseph was sold into slavery in Egypt, where eventually his family found refuge from famine (Genesis 47).

After the Exodus, the Israelites longed for the food of Egypt (Numbers 11:4–6), and during the monarchy, Egypt was seen as a place of refuge (2 Kings 25:25–27); however, the Assyrian King Sennacherib (701 B.C.) warned against looking to Egypt for help (Isaiah 36:6).

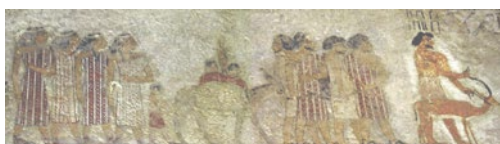
In fulfillment of the prophecy, Joseph, Mary, and the young Jesus escaped to Egypt (Hosea 11:1; Matthew 2:13–15). According to legend, they traveled as far south as Deir el-Maharra, near Assut. If they did, they would no doubt have sailed down the Nile.

There can be little doubt that the Genesis and Exodus records were written by a contemporary and not centuries after the events. One scholar of this period comments, “The clustering of Egyptian loan-words in Genesis 41:1–42 (The Joseph Story) and Exodus 2:3 (The description of Moses’ basket), suggests that the writer knew the cultural setting that he was writing about, and that he was not making it up in another land centuries after the event ... The

author’s comment about Egypt in Genesis 13:10, and his statement about Zoan in Numbers 13:22 also suggest a firsthand knowledge of Egypt. Moses fits such a writer well” (BMR p 122).

Above

The Beni Hasan Mural around the time of the Patriarchs depicts Semitic traders in Egypt. The merchants are wearing knee-length multi-colored tunics, possibly reminiscent of Joseph’s coat of many colors?



Name: Beni Hasan Mural
Origin and date: 1890 BC
Discovered: Known since the early 19th century
Size: Height 0.45m Length 2.43m
Present location: Tomb 3 – Khnumhotep, the rock-cut tombs.
Beni Hasan Egypt

Joseph in Egypt

Egyptian records from the time of Joseph reveal how accurate the biblical details are; other texts of the period (Mari and Hammurabi) confirm this (IE pp 83–116).

- Joseph's price of 20 shekels (Genesis 37:28) is exactly the slave price in the Mari, Hammurabi, and Brooklyn Papyrus (see page 16) of this time. By the Persian exile of Israel in the 5th century B.C. (when some think these stories were invented), it had risen to over 90 shekels. A 5th-century writer would not know the price of a slave 1,000 years earlier (OROT pp 344–345).
- Names such as Potiphar, Zaphenath-paneah, Asenath, Potiphera (Genesis 39:1, 41:45) are authentic to the period.
- Until the time of Ramesses II in the 13th century, it was common for the title “Pharaoh” to stand alone with no name added; from Ramesses onward, the name was mostly added. In Genesis and Exodus there are no named Pharaohs until the time of the divided monarchy when the Pharaohs are identified.
- The phrase “overseer of the house” (Genesis 39:4) is exactly the phrase used in Egyptian texts at this time. Taskmasters, quotas, and straw

for brick-making (Exodus 5:6–8), holidays for religious festivals (5:1), and foreigners working as slaves (1:14) are all attested for this period.

- Jacob was mummified and Joseph placed in a coffin (Genesis 50:2, 26) but neither mummification nor coffins were known in Canaan during the Bronze age (3000 to 1200 B.C.), pointing to an Egyptian context for these accounts (OROT p 351).

Below

This solitary obelisk still standing in On (Heliopolis), Egypt, may have been a familiar sight to Joseph when he was living in the house of Potiphar.



Joseph in prison

Ancient Egypt was not an idyllic place of peace and plenty; it was often a land of intrigue, pain, theft, and murder.

The Pharaoh, along with his officials, was entrusted with maintaining law and order. Prisons in Egypt — commonly called *Khenret*, meaning a place of confinement — were generally used only to hold those awaiting trial. Convicted criminals were more likely to be exiled to a work gang or given a physical punishment ranging from beating and wounding, to mutilation of the face, or death by impalement, which is the more probable meaning of Genesis 40:22. When Joseph was falsely accused after resisting the advances of Potiphar's wife, he ended up in prison (Genesis 39:20), probably in Thebes, away from the center of court at Memphis in the north.

The vizier or head of state bureaucracy, a position Joseph himself would eventually hold, could decree that the offender be held in the Great Prison (JP p 41). This was at Thebes and was one of a number of prisons and small jails dotted all over Egypt. The Great Prison also housed the legal archives, including criminal records; so one day we may discover Joseph's! It also housed the lawcourt and cells, was the place where punishment was swiftly carried out, and could serve as a barrack or work house.

Due to problems with lice and fleas, most Egyptians shaved off all bodily hair. When Joseph was released from prison, he shaved himself before he came before Pharaoh because it was not acceptable to appear before the king unshaven (Genesis 41:14).

Left

A timber statue showing a clean-shaven Ancient Egyptian man from the Old Kingdom. The statue is made of soft wood and has lost its paint.

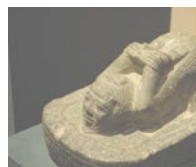


Above

A bound captive shows how brutal the punishment could be in ancient Egypt. (See Psalm 105:18.)



Name: Male standing figure
Origin and date: c 2200 B.C.
Discovered: Unknown but acquired by Henry Walters, 1924
Size: Height above base 28.7cm
Present location: 1931 bequeathed to Walters Art Museum
Baltimore, USA



Name: A bound captive
Present location: Luxor Museum Egypt

Joseph's lookalike?

We have seen that the writer of the Joseph story was well acquainted with Egyptian literature, culture, and court life of the period. Joseph and Moses may also have been familiar with a form of cuneiform writing (see page 9 and BMR p 25), but how did Joseph and his wife Asenath (Genesis 41:45) dress when he rose to power?

An interesting story surrounds this limestone dyad — a statue of two people carved from one block of stone or marble. The couple were unknown when it came to the British Museum in 1837, although the man illustrates the dress of a high ranking Egyptian. The clue to their identity was in their clasped hands, part of which was missing. In 1976, an Anglo-Dutch team discovered an unusual fragment in the tomb of

Pharaoh Horemheb at Saqqara, a vast burial ground for the ancient Egyptian capital of Memphis. Later, Dr René van Walsem linked it with the missing hands in the British Museum. In 2009, a plaster mold of the fragment fit perfectly. Before becoming Pharaoh around 1323 B.C., Horemheb was a powerful general under three Pharaohs — Amenhotep IV (Akhenaten), Tutankhamun and Ay (HFP p 31).

Incidentally, when Jacob fled from his brother Esau and paused for rest outside the city of Luz, he took a stone as his pillow (Genesis 28:10, 18). It was common practice in a hot climate to use such a headrest to keep the upper part of the body off the ground; it also kept insects out of the hair!



13
.....



Above

Horemheb and Armenia

This dyad illustrates the clothing that both Joseph and Moses may have worn in Egypt as high-ranking officials.

Left

This ivory headrest comes from Egypt.



Name: Ivory Headrest
Origin and date: Tomb of Gua, Deir el Bersha
Egypt 12th Dynasty, 1985–1795 B.C.
Present location: The British Museum



Name: Limestone dyad of man and wife
Origin and date: Saqqara, 14th century B.C.
Discovered: 1837 Saqqara, Egypt
Size: Height 130cm
Present location: The British Museum EA36

Death on the Nile — mummification

The ancient Egyptians believed that in order to be granted a place in the afterlife, they had to be buried intact and have a suitable funeral, with appropriate words and rituals.

This was most important for royalty because in their future hope lay the hope of the people. Jan Assmann writes, “The mummy was more than a corpse; it was an image of the god Osiris and a sort of hieroglyph of the entire person, one that, as the Egyptians put it, was ‘filled with magic.’ Just as the magic of writing made it possible to make meaning visible and to preserve it, so the mummy, as a symbolic form or hieroglyph, made the person of the deceased visible and preserved” (DS p 33).

Mummification was a form of embalming, and it meant extracting all bodily fluids to protect the body from corruption. The best descriptions of the process of mummification come from the Greek historians Herodotus (c 484–425 B.C.) and Diodorus Siculus, who wrote works of history between 60 and 30 B.C. They both confirmed the accuracy of the length of time taken recorded by Moses over 1,000 years earlier (Genesis 50:2–3).

The Hebrews Jacob and Joseph were both mummified in Egypt because they were to be taken on a long, hot journey to be buried in Canaan. Jacob was buried in the field of Machpelah, near Mamre, (Genesis 50:13), a journey of about 650 km (404 mi). Joseph’s remains accompanied the Jews in the wilderness for 40 years before being buried at Shechem (Joshua 24:32).



Left

The gilded coffin of Pharaoh Nubkheperre Intef (c 1600 B.C.). Probably similar in construction to the one that would have been prepared for Joseph.



Above

A detail to show a mummified head. This is of Djehutynakht, thought to be the governor of Hermopolis around 1991–1962 B.C.



Name: Coffin of King Nubkheperre Intef
Origin and date: c 1750–1550 B.C.
Discovered: Found in 1827, in the Theban necropolis, Egypt
Size: Height 3m
Present location: The British Museum EA 6652

Timekeeping

— how accurate were the ancients?

History refers to what has happened and chronology is the history of time; chronology therefore refers to the order in which events happened according to dates and time.

Moses is precise in his claim: “Now the length of time the Israelite people lived in Egypt was 430 years. At the end of the 430 years, to the very day, all the LORD’s divisions left Egypt” (Exodus 12:40–41). Is that a statement of fact or is it symbolic?

We do not have precise details regarding the timekeeping of the Hebrews but they would have been influenced by the Egyptians. The earliest Egyptian calendars were based on lunar observations combined with the annual cycle of the Nile inundation. Astronomy was a vital tool in timekeeping as Matthew 2:7 reveals.

Over four thousand years ago in Mesopotamia, methods of sexagesimal timekeeping (using 60 as the base) were developed, whereas the ancient Egyptians counted in tens and hundreds. The Egyptians also divided the day into two 12-hour periods and the shadow of large obelisks were used to track the movement of the sun.

They could calculate morning and afternoon, and summer and winter solstices. Shadow clocks were, of course, useless at night and in cloudy weather, therefore the Egyptians used various methods of time-keeping, including hourglasses, tracking star movements, and water clocks.

Egyptian examples are known from the New Kingdom onward. Around 1500 B.C., Amenemhet, an Egyptian court official, claimed to have invented the water clock. However, a Babylonian inscription of 1700 B.C. also refers to water clocks.

A carefully calibrated container allowed water to flow out to enable time to be measured.

Below

This clay tablet for the scribe Nabû-apla-iddina, contains a table for a water clock and payment to guards for night and day watches.



Name: Table for the water clock, for the scribe Nabû-apla-iddina
Origin and date: Babylon, 600–500 B.C.
Discovered: Babylon 1898
Size: Height 8.2cm Length 11.8cm Width 2.5cm
Present location: The British Museum

Israel in Egypt

Genesis closes with the tribe of Jacob (Israel) in Egypt. When Exodus opens, they have been slaves for some 400 years. Unfortunately, as yet there is no archaeological evidence to support this.

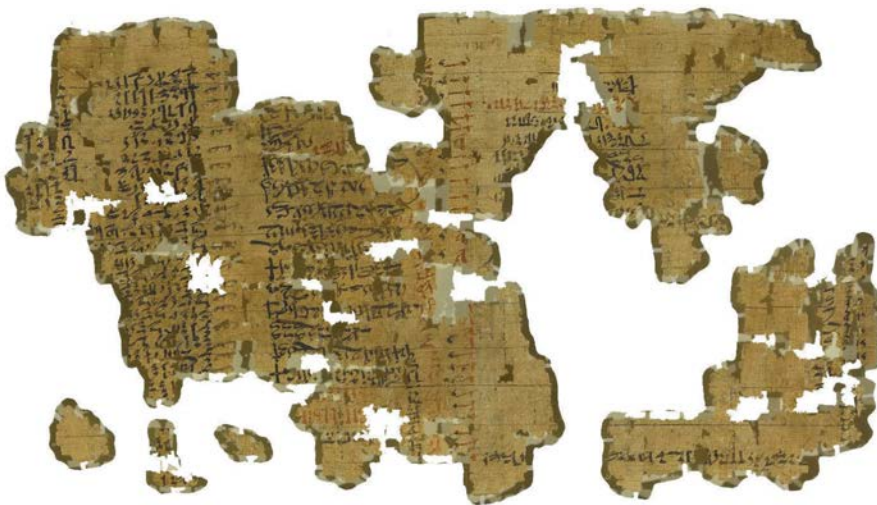
Below

The Brooklyn Papyrus reflects the time when the Israelites were in Egypt and contains a ledger of 95 household servants in Egypt, half of whom have names that reveal their Syro-Palestinian origin.

However, the Hebrews lived in mud brick houses in Goshen, in the Nile Delta (Genesis 47:6), and mud bricks don't last well for 3,500 years. In addition, the branches of the River Nile in the Delta have significantly altered course over the millennia, destroying many of the brick buildings. In fact, the only records recovered from Pi-Ramesse (the administrative center of the Delta) consists of "a handful of wine-vintage dockets from broken jars" (OROT p 310). In addition, Israel clearly adopted Egyptian culture and became archaeologically indistinguishable.

The *Prophecy of Neferti*, dated around the time of Abraham, is among many Egyptian texts that refer to foreigners in the land. Hoffmeier summarizes *Neferti*: "The eastern Delta has become home to unruly Asiatics who came to Egypt for food and in the process terrorized the Egyptian population" (IE p 58). The Brooklyn Papyrus similarly provides evidence of large numbers of people of Semitic origin in Egypt at the time of Joseph to Moses.

While it is acknowledged that "Moses" is an Egyptian name, there is no evidence outside the Bible for the man who led the Israelites out of slavery. John van Seters concluded, "The quest for the historical Moses is a futile exercise. He now belongs only to legend" (ER Vol 10 "Moses"). Given the many examples of once unknown biblical characters that have later become well attested, that may prove to be an over-hasty assertion. There are thousands of unread documents in the museums of the world waiting to be deciphered, and much more to discover from the ground.



Name: The Brooklyn Papyrus
Origin and date: Egypt, 18th century B.C.
Discovered: c1889 and donated to the Brooklyn Museum 1930s
Size: Height 26.3cm Length 30cm
Present location: Brooklyn Museum 35.1446

Bricks without straw

Whichever Pharaoh oppressed the Israelites, we do know that they were enslaved by him and an attempt was made to reduce their numbers (Exodus 1:1–22). Later, when Moses became the spokesman of God to demand the release of the Israelites, the Pharaoh increased their labor by demanding they make bricks and gather their own straw. A leather scroll from the time of Ramesses II informs us that a person's daily quota (Exodus 5:8) was 2,000 mud bricks.

Mud from the river would be composed of fine particles and therefore would dry slowly and be liable to crack, so straw was used to bind the mud brick. These mud bricks were sun baked rather than kiln fired, and with straw to bind them they have almost twice the strength of those without straw. Only bricks used for state projects would be stamped with the Pharaoh's cartouche. Stone was used only for significant buildings such as temples or royal tombs that were intended to last forever. The Egyptians expected their mud homes to be constantly repaired and replaced.



Left

This Nile mud brick, which has the stamp of Ramesses II on the face, perfectly illustrates the type of brick that the Israelites made under forced labor. Chopped straw can clearly be seen.



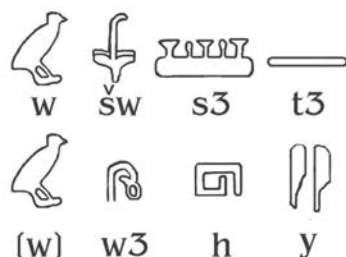
The Egyptians used millions of mud bricks. Some were used to aid construction as here behind the great pylon at Karnak temple. The Israelites were employed in making bricks exactly like these.



Name: Nile mud brick
Origin and date: Ramesses II, 1279–1213 B.C.
Discovered: The Nile Delta
Size: Length 38cm Width 19cm
Present location: The British Museum EA6020

Yahweh and the burning bush

When Moses turned aside to the burning bush, God revealed a special name by which he would be known exclusively to the Hebrews to distinguish Israel's God from the false gods of the nations (Exodus 3:14).



Inset

The hieroglyphic inscription from the time of Pharaoh Amenhotep III (1390–1352) referring to "Shasu land of Yahweh"

Below

The temple of Soleb, situated on the west bank of the Nile River in Sudan, is a well-preserved sandstone temple ordered by Amenhotep III the ruler of Egypt and of Nubia (modern Sudan) in honor of the god Amun-Re (see Amun on page 73).



The name, but not its significance, was known before the time of Abraham (Genesis 4:1, 13:4, 15:7). Hebrew was originally written only as consonants and the name was YHWH. Meaning "He who is" or "the One who is," it refers to God as eternal. Later, from the time of the Babylonian/Persian exile in the 6th century B.C., the Jews counted the name so holy that they would never speak it and instead substituted the common name for "lord" (*adonay*), as in a servant and master. When vowels were added to the written

Hebrew around the 9th century A.D., the vowels of *adonay* were added to YHWH to form an unpronounceable word. Over the centuries the Jews often disobediently mixed the worship of YHWH with the idols of other nations.

To date, the earliest reference to YHWH outside the Bible is found on an inscription in the temple of Amenhotep III, which was rebuilt and enlarged by Ramesses II in the 13th century. It includes a list of defeated nations including "Shasu land of Yahweh."

In Egyptian texts, the Shasu were often linked with the land of Edom, known as Seir, the founder of which was Esau, the brother of Jacob (Genesis 32:3, 36:1, 8.). The inscription may imply that Edomites were worshipping Yahweh in the 15th century B.C. Although not all agree with this connection, it may provide an early date for the unique name of Israel's God (AIS p 240–243). To date, the name is not found among any of the surrounding nations (DAN p 324).

The oldest text of Scripture

In 1979, a group of young amateur archaeologists led by Gabriel Barkay were cleaning some ancient tombs at Ketef Hinnom, overlooking the Hinnom Valley in Jerusalem, when they discovered, among many other small items, two tiny amulets intended as protection for the deceased. These silver scrolls were deciphered and published in 1989. Their position and the early Hebrew script positively dated them before the Babylonian conquest in 587 B.C., at the time of Jeremiah the prophet and King Josiah (BAS p 41–70). Some date them even earlier to the late 7th century B.C. (BMR p 4).

This may be additional evidence that the Pentateuch could not have been composed after the Persian exile in 539 B.C. as some critics suggest. If, as is generally accepted, the amulets are dated before the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem in 587 B.C., it would appear that the Pentateuch was being copied long before some thought it had even been written!

The script was “microscopic,” but both amulets contained a text also found in Numbers 6:24–26. One reads:

May YHWH bless
you and
[may he] keep you
[may] YHWH make
his face shine
upon you and
grant you p[ea]ce

It also contained a slight variation of Deuteronomy 7:9

The other reads:

May YHWH bless you
Keep you.
May YHWH make
his face shine
upon you and
grant you p[ea]ce

Their significance is that they contain some of the oldest texts also found in the Bible and an early use of the special name YHWH outside the Bible (see also pages 37, 91).



Right

The tiny amulets contain a text also found in Numbers and Deuteronomy.



Name: Amulets from Ketef Hinnom
Origin and date: Ketef Hinnom, Jerusalem
Discovered: 1979 Ketef Hinnom, Jerusalem
Size: Height 2.5cm
Present location: Israel Museum, Jerusalem

Out of Egypt

In their monuments and records, ancient rulers rarely referred to their own defeats, so they would certainly not record the successful exit of a large crowd of foreign slaves at the cost of the nation's elite chariot corps.

The temple built by Ramesses II at Abu Simbel is an example of a Pharaoh celebrating a “victory” over the Hittites whereas in reality the battle was a costly stalemate.

Although there are no records of the Exodus outside the Bible, Egyptologist James Hoffmeier has shown that the details of life in the wilderness, the number of Egyptian names and words in the biblical record, the details of the tabernacle, and the form of the presentation of the Law, all reveal an Egyptian background which would have been

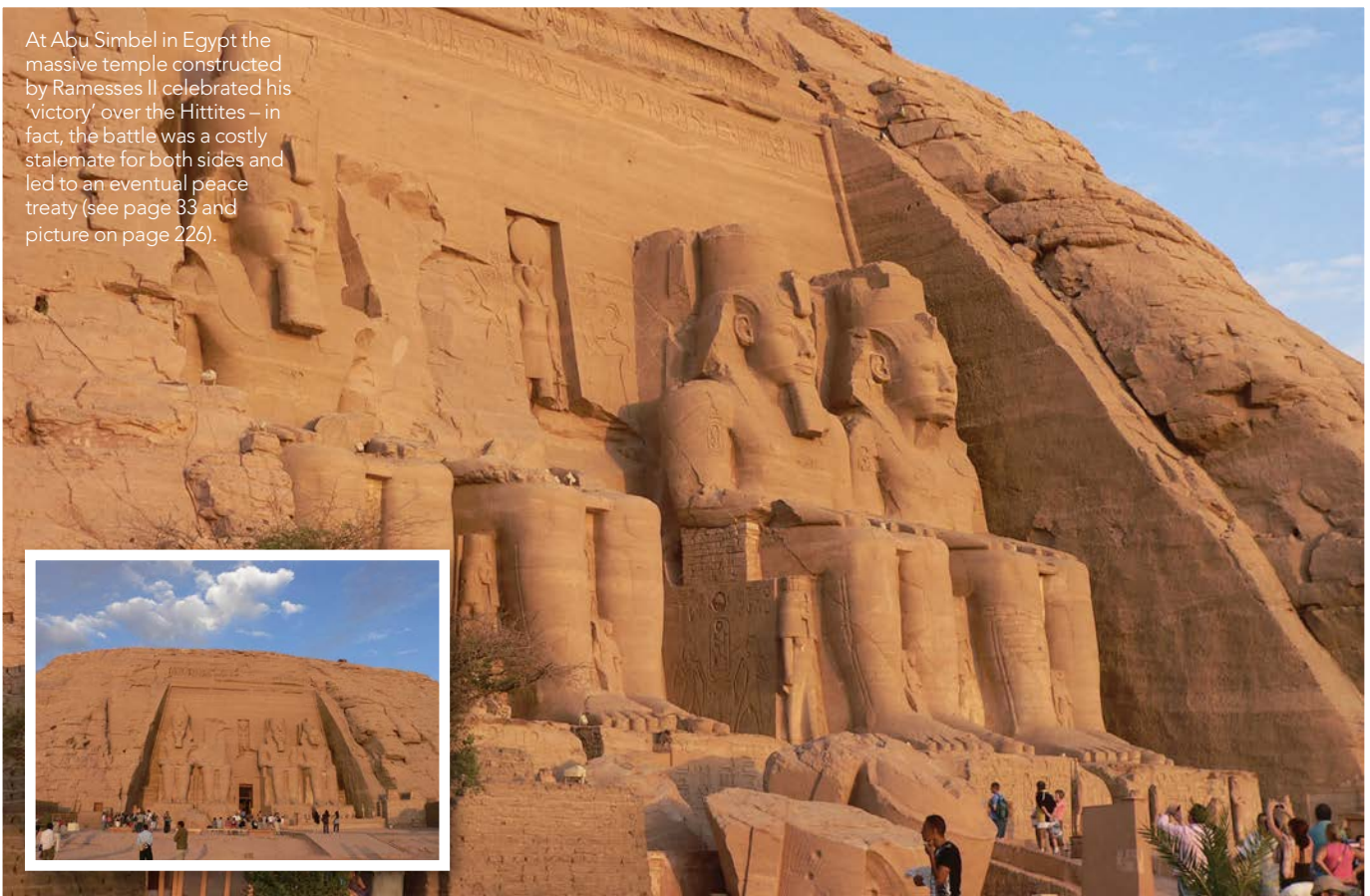
wholly unknown to an editor 700 years later (IE pp 77–98).

Hoffmeier concludes, “It seems doubtful that a late period writer would have been interested in researching historical and cultural details simply to make the account look authentic to an audience who would not know the difference!” (AIS p 249).

Jesus believed in the historical Passover and Exodus (Luke 22:28).

- Why would the Jews invent a story of their ancestors as slaves to one of their bitterest enemies? (LTB p 74).
- If there was no Exodus, the Jews based their most important annual festival, the Passover, on an event that never happened.
- The story of the Egyptian slavery is unique — being the story, not of a nation taken into exile, but of Jacob, a shepherd Semite, bringing his family to Egypt in the time of famine and becoming a significant people group.

At Abu Simbel in Egypt the massive temple constructed by Ramesses II celebrated his ‘victory’ over the Hittites – in fact, the battle was a costly stalemate for both sides and led to an eventual peace treaty (see page 33 and picture on page 226).



Numbers!

According to Exodus 12:37, “about” 600,000 Israelite fighting men left Egypt. Together with women, children, and the foreigners who joined them, there must have been well in excess of 3 million in the Exodus.

This huge number would present many problems apart from the logistics of organization, communication, maneuvering, and provision.

- More than half a million fighting men would vastly outnumber the Egyptian army, which we know was not more than approximately 24,000. Archaeological estimates put the entire population of Canaan at this time around 140,000 (AIS p 155).
- God promised to drive out the Canaanites “little by little” until Israel’s numbers were large enough to occupy the land (Exodus 23:30). Israel was warned that the inhabitants of Canaan were more numerous and powerful than they (Deuteronomy 7:1, 9:1, 11:23, 20:1). But an army of over half a million needed to fear no one.

Right

Archaeological remains at Gath. Goliath and others came from here to threaten the Jews.



A possible solution

- The Hebrew word for “thousand” (eleph) can refer to a thousand (Genesis 20:16), a clan/family (Joshua 22:14; Judges 6:15; Micah 5:2) or a unit (1 Samuel 17:18). The context must decide and the meaning can change even in the same context.
- This means that our problem is not the accuracy of the text, but one of translation.
- This would reduce the number of fighting men to 600 “units.” A military unit at that time was

approximately ten men (MOE p 108), so we have “about” 6,000 men and a total population of around 30,000, plus the Levites and the “many other people” that accompanied Israel (Exodus 12:38).

- For example, in Numbers 1:20–21, it would not be 46 thousand (eleph) 500 men, but 46 units (eleph) totalling 500 men.

For a more detailed discussion of this issue, see page 196.

The Pharaoh of the Exodus?

The writer of the Exodus account provides us with the names of the Hebrew midwives (Exodus 1:15), but not the name of the Pharaoh at that time.

Tuthmosis III is known as the Napoleon of Egypt because of his foreign campaigns.

22

In fact, no Pharaoh is named in the Bible until the time of the divided monarchy in Israel and Judah around 925 B.C. This absence of names in Genesis and Exodus is exactly what we know of the Egyptian practice: from the 15th to the 10th centuries B.C., the title is used without the name (IE p 87–88; see also page 11).

A key to the date of the Exodus is found in 1 Kings 6:1 where the fourth year of Solomon's reign is said to be 480 years after the Exodus. The fourth year of his reign is generally agreed at around 966 B.C. This would place the Exodus in the year 1446 B.C., during the time of Tuthmosis III.

Tuthmosis III came to the throne in 1479 B.C. and reigned for 54 years, although for the first 22 years he reigned jointly with his stepmother, Queen Hatshepsut. Tuthmosis fought 17 campaigns and extended Egyptian power to its farthest limits. This meant that Egyptian control reached into Canaan by the time of the conquest.

The start of the Conquest of Canaan would then be around 1406 B.C. in the time of Pharaoh Amenhotep II. According to Judges 11:26, from here to the days of Jephthah is 300 years; this would place Jephthah around 1106 B.C. and Saul, the first king of Israel, around 1050 B.C. All this fits well the amount of time required for the period of the judges.



Name: Tuthmosis III
Origin and date: Thebes, Egypt, c 1450 B.C.
Discovered: Karnak cachette in 1904
Size: Height 90cm Greywacke Granite
Present location: Egyptian Museum Luxor

An alternative Pharaoh

The general consensus of scholars today accepts that Ramesses II fits the requirements for the Pharaoh at the time of the Exodus. It is assumed that the cities of Pithom and Rameses (Exodus 1:11) were built during the time of this Pharaoh, and the word *hapiiru* (Hebrews?) was used to describe the slave laborers who built the cities. Archaeological reasons lead some to the conclusion that the conquest of Canaan cannot be placed much earlier than the 13th century B.C. (JETS June 2007). This would make an Exodus around 1220 B.C.; Ramesses II was on the throne between 1279 and 1213 B.C.

Much is known about Ramesses. He was a great warrior king and his mummy in the Cairo Museum bears the scars of battle. Five years into his reign he fought the Hittites at Kadesh with massive losses to both sides (see pages 20, 33).

He was also an impressive builder and there are more monuments and temples to Ramesses than to any other Pharaoh. In addition, he was a great family man — with as many as 45 sons and 40 daughters! Ramesses was on the throne for 66 years.

For a more detailed discussion of the date of the Exodus, see page 198.

Main

Egypt was known as Deshret and Kemet (Red Land and Black Land). This magnificent bust of Ramesses II, carved during his lifetime, is cut from one block of stone both red and black, signifying that he rules the whole of Egypt.



Inset

The hooked-nosed, red-haired mummy of Ramesses II reveals that he suffered from arthritis, serious tooth decay and hardening of the arteries. This is not surprising since he lived to the age of 90, and in his day few men lived beyond the age of 40.



Name: Ramesses II
Origin and date: from the mortuary temple of Ramesses at Thebes (the "Ramesseum"), 19th Dynasty carved from red granite granodiorite
Discovered: Retrieved by Giovanni Belzoni in 1816
Size: Height 2.66m Width 2.03cm Weight 7.25t
Present location: The British Museum EA19



Name: Mummy of Ramesses II
Origin and date: Thebes, Egypt, 1213 B.C.
Discovered: Emile Brugsch 1881
Size: Height 1.7m
Present location: Cairo Museum, Egypt

Sinai and the Law of God

Five sites for Mt Sinai have been suggested, but wherever it was, the events at that mountain were critical for the future of Israel.



The laws revealed through Moses have an Egyptian background, with the first commandment “no other gods before me” (Exodus 20:3) contrasting to the 2,000 gods of Egypt. The Mosaic laws have often been compared to the law collection of Hammurabi, an Ammonite/Babylonian king who ruled between Abraham and Moses. However, while there are undoubted similarities, there are significant differences between the Mosaic law and those of Hammurabi:

- There are clear rules for the punishment of crimes in the laws of Hammurabi, but there is no provision of forgiveness, since the gods have little interest in morality. In the Mosaic laws, sin is primarily an affront to the character of God, but repentance and sacrifices for forgiveness and reconciliation are inseparable from the law (LTBp 65 and ANETOT).
- The laws of Hammurabi address at least nine gods. Moses worships only one.
- The exalted reputation and wisdom of Hammurabi is in focus, whereas Moses received no credit for the laws of God.
- Hammurabi is the author of his laws. Moses received his as a revelation from God.
- The laws of Hammurabi have no reference to the moral qualities of the gods. The Mosaic laws are a reflection of the holiness of God.

It has been said that “the gods have jobs while Yahweh has a plan” (ANETOT p 141). The most reasonable conclusion is that the laws and religion of Israel were uniquely revealed to Moses by God and reflect his plan for salvation from the dawn of creation.

Jesus believed that God had given the Law to Moses (John 7:19).

Left

The law code of Hammurabi contains many laws that are similar to those given through Moses.



Name: Hammurabi Code
Origin and date: Sippar, Babylon, c 1770 B.C.
Discovered: 1901, Jacques de Morgan at Susa, Iran
Size: Height 2.25m
Present location: Musée du Louvre, Paris

Israel's unique religion

The suggestion that by the 6th century B.C. Israel's religion had developed from polytheism to monotheism, is entirely without evidence. Contrast the religion of Israel with their neighbors (ANETOT pp 103–160).

- Israel held a clear monotheistic (only one God) religion.
- Israel's God was just, perfect, wise, and kind. The Hittites, for example, considered their gods unreliable and often incompetent — which they would point out to them (TH p 157).
- Yahweh is frequently described as faithful, a concept virtually unknown among the nations since the gods made no covenant promises.
- For the nations, holiness is adherence to the cult rather than moral virtue.
- The gods were limited to their sphere of power (war, fire, fertility, etc.), whereas Israel's God controlled the entire universe and every sphere of life.
- The gods had needs (food, sleep, clothing) which the worshipers must provide.
- Israel was forbidden to make images of her God or consult omens, yet idolatry and divination were common among all her neighbors (Deuteronomy 5:7–8 and 18:9–14).
- For Israel, people are created to delight in God who provides for them; in paganism they are slaves to provide for the gods.
- Israel's unique system of repentance, sacrifice, total forgiveness, and reconciliation to God was unknown among the pagans.
- There is no reference to the scarab beetle in the Old Testament, although its veneration was widespread and especially in Egypt where the Israelites lived for four centuries. (See page 69.)

The Western Wall in Jerusalem is evidence of Israel's continuing faith in one God from before the time of Moses.



Forty years in the wilderness

The Sinai desert has been described as “24,000 square miles of nothing” (62160 sq km). It is hardly surprising that archaeologists have not yet discovered evidence of the Israelites there.



Left and below

Modern Bedouin camps in Israel. Such camps leave no trace for the archaeologist.

Critics insist that “Some archaeological traces of their generation-long wandering in the Sinai should be apparent... [therefore] there was no mass exodus from Egypt” (TBU p 61, 118). However, the absence of evidence is not the evidence of absence.

As nomads, Israel lived in tents and mainly used animal skins rather than pottery for their receptacles; there were no permanent worship centers, houses, burial sites, or industry. Nomadic people are acknowledged as “archaeologically invisible” (AIS pp 150–151).

If a writer in the 7th century B.C. was inventing a story of wilderness wanderings, he would use place names familiar in his time and therefore more easily recognized by archaeologists today.

The route taken by the Israelites from Egypt to Sinai is carefully noted in Exodus 12:37 to 19:2 and it marries almost exactly with Numbers 33:3–15. Unfortunately, most places are now hard to identify and we

cannot be certain which route they took. However, these details are still considered to be “an impressive and credible piece of ancient historical writing” (BAR 1994 p 54–62 and IE p 176–191).

We have the same problem with the details of Pharaoh Sheshonq and his northern invasion in 925 B.C. The place names are found on the Bubastite Portal and, although many cannot be identified, few doubt that it was a real campaign.

We need not be surprised at this difficulty since Roman names in Britain are unrecognizable by most people today: Caesaromagus (Chelmsford), Camulodunum (Colchester), Durolipons (Cambridge), Venta Belgarum (Winchester).



The walls came tumbling down!

Jericho is one of the oldest and lowest cities on earth (204m or 670 ft below sea level). Although in biblical times it was never extensive, it stood as a strategic gateway into Canaan. To a nomadic people, any walled city would have been a formidable obstacle (Numbers 13:28).

During the 1930s, John Garstang from the University of Liverpool in England, discovered huge walls in the ruins of the old city of Jericho that had collapsed and been burned with fire. He dated the destruction at around 1407 B.C. — the time of the Israelite conquest (SOJ). However, in 1958, Dame Kathleen Kenyon announced that the city had been finally destroyed and abandoned in 1550 B.C. (DUJ). Then, in 1978, John Bimson from Sheffield University argued comprehensively against Kenyon's dating and supported Garstang (REC). More recently, a significant response to Kenyon (BAR Mar/Apr 1990) has been made in favor of a date around 1400 B.C. The archaeological data alone is not decisive to prove the date of the destruction of Jericho (ALOB p 331) and the debate is ongoing. However, there are many examples outside the Bible where the text records what the spade fails to reveal (see pages 10, 217 for example).

Much of the old city is now under more modern occupation (OROT p 187), so it cannot be excavated. Also, the biblical text indicates that the city was destroyed and left



desolate until the time of Ahab some 550 years later (compare Joshua 6:26 and 1 Kings 16:34), therefore, natural erosion would have destroyed most evidence of civilization.

Top

A view of Tell es-Sultan, the biblical Jericho. The tell has caused much controversy among archaeologists.

Above

Part of the excavation at biblical Jericho.