

An Egyptian Archeological Seder

Background: This guide contains readings for an Egyptian Archeological seder, done at the Spiegel's 2003 seder. We followed a book by David Rohl, whose essential argument is that early Egyptologists, wanting to confirm Biblical events in Egyptian archeology, made the mistake of associating Ra'amases (the store-city the Bible says were built by the slaves), with Pi-Ramesse, the capital of Ramasses II's reign; in addition, the decoder of hieroglyphs, Champollion, mistakenly identified one king's campaign into Israel, plundering Solomon's temple, as the Biblical Shoshenk. These two identifications misaligned the timeline of the Egyptian Pharaohs and Dynasties. Rohl maintains that an adjusted timeline better matches historical events and uncovers some archeological evidence of the Passover story.

28 people participated; readings plus Haggadah plus ancillary discussions took us about 2½ hours.

We played ancient-sounding Middle-Eastern music for mood, while the room was completely covered in posterized tomb and hieroglyph pictures; we also had a 5-foot high blow-up sarcophagus. The host couple entered dressed in rented Pharaoh and Queen costumes. We rewrote Bill Cosby's "Noah" skit into a Moses skit, created by cutting and pasting Cosby's voice, who now answered commands from a newly scripted God of the Exodus (played by the author); the skit played while a bush burned in our fireplace. We wrote a themed parody to the song "Walk Like an Egyptian," by the 80s group, the Bangles. (Both skit and parody are available on the accompanying website.) The Afikomen search involved a simulated archeological dig in our garage: one at a time, each person had to dig through a "soil stratum" (sand and kitty litter in various boxes) to retrieve broken pieces of an "ancient clay tablet." When assembled, the clay tablet contained hieroglyphs that revealed a major clue to the Afikomen's location. (The hieroglyph key was hidden behind a picture of Champollion, the original decoder of Egyptian hieroglyphs.) The clue was made more difficult by being written in *boustrophedan* writing form (see readings for explanation) and by the fact that several letter-sounds map to the same hieroglyph.

Lines beginning with "L:" are placeholders for host's brief comments. Other paragraphs are read by participants. Triangles are references to the traditional seder or other noteworthy events. Page numbers in the Haggadah refer to traditional Haggadah (Maxwell House used here as a widely available reference – substitute page numbers from your own Haggadah). Page numbers in the comments refer to Rohl's book. Timings are an estimate of how long¹ the readings take.

References lists the book and video presentation that was abstracted from.

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- ▷ Play Egyptian/Middle Eastern music as people enter
- ▷ Welcome to Egypt 4000 yrs ago! More on that later.
- ▷ Kiddish / Wash / Karpas¹ [pages 4-6]
- ▷ Ha Lachma, traditional welcome and intro in Aramaic [page 8]

Introduction

L: Tonight our primary Haggadah will be this pamphlet. This is our own Intro to this evening's seder. It's encouraged to ask questions at the seder, questions about the traditions, the symbols, the history. I may not know the answer, but maybe someone else will. Or it will spur an interesting discussion. So, I'll start with some questions posed at the beginning of a book about Egypt and its archeology: Were the great events of the earliest parts of the Bible real happenings or should we regard the biblical narratives purely as a collection of allegorical folktales? Simply put, is the early Old Testament real history or just legend? [Read like Haggadah – rotate readers]

In the words of one of the leading Bible authorities: [Prof. Thomas L. Thompson, Copenhagen University]

¹ Page numbers in leader's guide refer to Maxwell house Haggadah. Replace with pages from your own Haggadah

If we reflect² on how easy it is to challenge the historicity not only of a David or Solomon but of events in the reigns of Hezekiah or Josiah, ... the very substance of any historical project that attempts to write a history of the late second- or early first-millennium B.C. in Palestine on the basis of a direct integration of biblical and extrabiblical sources, ... must appear not only dubious but wholly ludicrous.

L: This view has considerable support. As we'll see, there's little traditional evidence for the events of Passover. But, when did people start searching for it? What was their motivation?

The educated Victorian gentleman³ was the product of a moralistic society, with emphasis placed on the family, Sunday worship and a solid grounding in the narratives and teachings of the Christian Bible. The biblical stories lay at the heart of a European child's education and upbringing, and they were constantly being re-stated and re-read during adult life, through regular parlor Bible readings or in sermons during Sunday service. Likewise, every man, woman and child in the Jewish community was conversant in the Tanaakh and Midrashic teachings.

It was somewhat inevitable that a search for archaeological proof of the biblical narratives should dominate the early years of excavation and exploration in Egypt – the mysterious land which played so dramatic and dominant a role in the history of the Israelite nation in the Old Testament. The objective of the Egypt Exploration Society, founded by Amelia Edwards in 1891, included the promotion of surveys, explorations and excavation work which would be 'for the purpose of elucidating or illustrating the Old Testament narrative'. The earliest digs initiated by the Egypt Exploration Society were concentrated in the Nile delta. Edwards' committee purposefully selected sites that were strong candidates for Ra'amses and Pithom – the store-cities of Exodus 1:11 built by the Israelites during their Bondage in Egypt.

The discipline of Egyptology⁴ has, therefore, been traditionally regarded as the window opening onto the biblical landscape. Today's received wisdom attempts to site the Sojourn of the Israelites and the patriarch Joseph in the 18th Dynasty [1539-1295 BCE], while Moses and the Exodus are placed in the time of the 19th Dynasty [1295-1186 BCE].

L: (Reference the time lines of Dynasties.) Only been searching for 110 years.

Except for one stela fragment⁵ written in Aramaic, which mentions 'the House of David', (*L: found in the past 5-6 years*) we have as yet no other material evidence for the reigns of David and Solomon. Even the 'Solomonic Gate' at Megiddo is no longer dated to the time of Solomon, although the modern tourist sign in front of it continues to inform visitors they are before a gate 'from the time of Solomon'.

A rather disconcerting factor is the lack of archaeological links between Egypt and Israel – this in spite of the two countries being neighbors - the Bible is full of instances when their histories coincided. It is precisely this lack of archaeological confirmation – especially before the ninth century BCE – which has led to the mythologizing of biblical history. There is a remarkable book by David Rohl, a British Egyptologist with degrees in Egyptology and Ancient History from University College in London, currently [2003] on leave from its Doctoral program; we will be relying on his book to teach us a new perspective on old findings. Our Egyptian Haggadah is largely excerpted from his book, with his permission. We now return to the traditional Haggadah.

▷ Break Matzah [read in Haggadah, page 7]

▷ Annual question: What aspects of the Passover story are you most suspicious of? What seems hardest to believe?

L: Eat, eat (Feast now; famine comes later) *[12m]*

² page 7. Page numbers in comments (here) are from Rohl's *Pharaohs and Kings*

³ page 113

⁴ page i

⁵ page 34

L: Reorganize the Haggadah (a little) for proper time sequence; Seder = order for traditions and rituals, but the telling of the story is most disordered

▷ Where does story really begin? What is the first mention of anything that directly leads to the events of Passover? [p13 bot] Jacob + children came down to settle
 What happened before this? (You can answer based on your knowledge of the Bible or reference Hollywood movies.) Why do we find Hebrews in Egypt? What evidence in support?

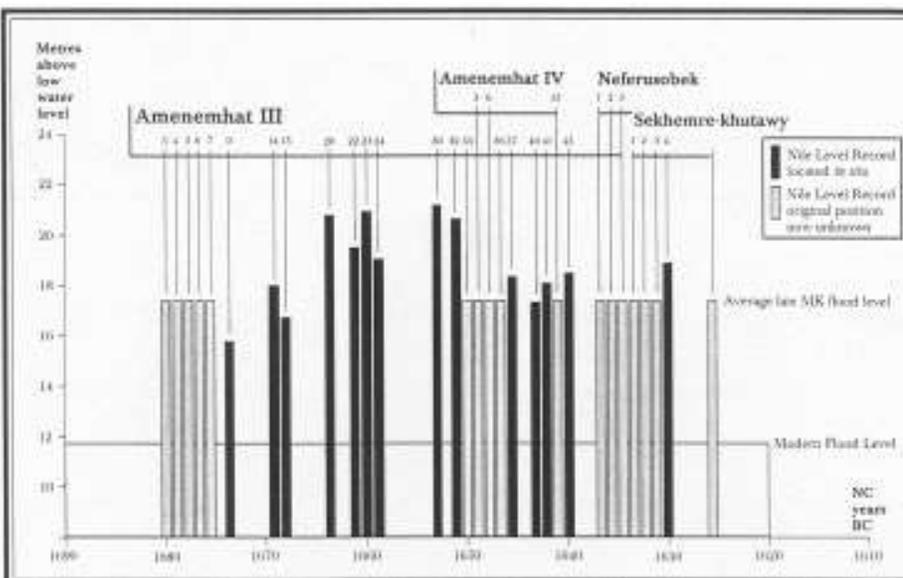
Story in Dreamcoat / Prince of Egypt
 Sold to Midianites
 Vizier of Egypt
 Feast/famine [p15 ½ par 2]



Detail from the famous scene of a trading caravan of thirty-seven 'Midianites' depicted in the tomb of Khnumhotep at Beni Hasan. Some of the men wear multi-colored coats.

L: Tomb painting, multicolored
Floods

L: To explain the feast and famine years, we can look⁶ to Nile records around the time of Joseph. For about sixty years the highest point to which the Nile flood reached in a given year was marked by a short hieroglyphic inscription on the rock faces of two forts near Egypt's southern boundary, Semna Fort and Kumma Fort. Each text gave the name of the king and the year number of his reign for the high Nile. These records were discovered in 1844. [15-20m]



1685	16 - Senuseret III
1684	17
1683	18 Joseph arrives in Egypt
1682	1- Amenemhat III == 19
1681	2
1680	3 Good floods begin
1679	4
1678	5
1677	6
1676	7
1675	8
1674	9
1673	10
1672	11
1671	12
1670	13
1669	14
1668	15
1667	16
1666	17
1665	18
1664	19
1663	20 High floods begin
1662	21 Start of Famine
1661	22 Israelites arrive in Egypt
1660	23
1659	24
1658	25
1657	26
1656	27
1655	28
1654	29

Late 12th Dynasty
 in the
 New Chronology

Lamarès for 8 years ...
 (Manetho - Africanus version)

⁶ page 337

The high Niles of the late 12th Dynasty illustrated in diagram form to show the flood peak starting in Year 20 of Amenemhat III. The grey bars represent high Nile inscriptions which have fallen from their original positions, for which a height cannot be determined. They have been given an 'average' height of 17.5 metres. The black bars are high Nile levels recorded *in situ* for which heights can be accurately determined.

The evidence⁷ indicates that, during the first two decades of Amenemhat's reign, the Egyptians observed flood levels to about the seventeen-meter mark. This is thought to have been considered a 'very good flood' bringing extra silt and expanding the area of cultivation to its maximum extent.

By Amenemhat's twentieth year the picture drastically changes. For the next twelve years or so the flood levels at Semna rise to an average height of twenty-one meters – some nine meters above the level mentioned as a 'good flood' level during the reign of an earlier king [Senuseret I], and four meters above the very high Niles of the previous two decades of Amenemhat's reign. If the flood rises above a certain level it can wash away villages, break down dykes and causeways, flood temples, tombs and palaces; worst of all, if the rise is sustained, the waters take much longer to subside and the fields cannot be made ready for the planting season. An American specialist in the ancient climates, Barbara Bell argues these great floods – bringing three to four times the volume of water compared to a normal flood – would almost certainly have led to a period of famine.

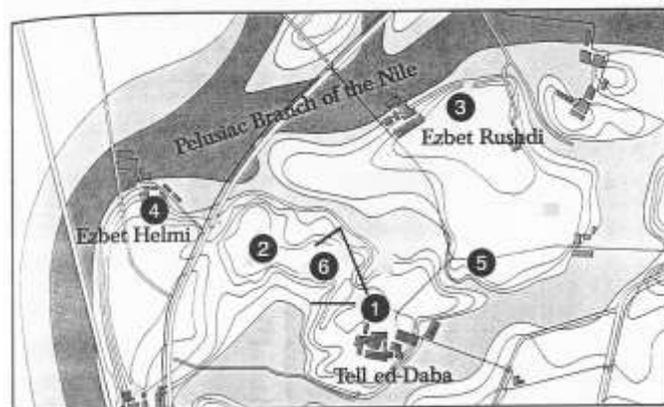
Not coincidentally at this time, the crocodile god name [Sobek] appears in Pharaoh names; almost as a prayer to appease that deity.

Earliest Hebrew settlement

What about the location of the earliest Hebrew settlement in the Nile delta, that of Joseph, his brothers and father? Archaeological evidence⁸ of the Israelite Sojourn in Egypt has been sought in Egypt for the best part of two centuries but the archaeologists have searched in vain. No Israelite settlement has ever been found in the 19th Dynasty levels, where the orthodox chronology predicts it. Within the strata of Pi-Ramesses (Estate of Ramesses) in the ruins of Tel ed-Daba, near present-day Qantir, no evidence has been unearthed so far to support the conventional hypothesis that a large Asiatic population resided there. On the other hand, dig down below the 19th Dynasty in Tel ed-Daba, and you reach the city of Avaris, of which the vast majority was Asiatic.

Avaris⁹ was built on a series of sandy hillocks surrounded by swamplands with the Nile to the west and north. The higher dry land was densely populated with modest domestic residences tightly packed together around narrow alleyways. All the buildings at this time were constructed of mudbrick.

Show Video [Bietak in 1966] [20-25m]



Location of the main excavation areas opened up by the Austrian mission since 1966 and previous excavators working in the area of Kantir/Khatana. (1) Tell ed-Daba main Tell A (village settlement); (2) Area F (site of a 13th Dynasty palace and garden); (3) Ezbet Rushdi Middle Kingdom temple; (4) Ezbet Helmy granite blocks of the 12th Dynasty *djadja*; (5) Eastern suburb of Avaris; (6) The Austrian dig-house located within the area of the Seth temple at Avaris. The topography of Avaris, including the original location of the Pelusiac branch of the Nile, has been determined using drill core analysis by Josef Dorner.

L: Perhaps even more compelling than the architectural designs, Bietak made the discovery that the *grave goods* associated with the majority of these tombs were of Asiatic origin.

Bietak notes¹⁰ that the early Asiatics were highly 'Egyptianised'. Why so? If we identify them with Joseph's brethren, the answer is obvious. The Bible states that Joseph was highly Egyptianised and readily accepted the influences of Egyptian culture for his people. However, adopting a partly Egyptian way of life did not mean sacrificing the most important Hebrew cultural traits that were of religious significance – in other words, their burial practices.

The only period in Egyptian history with incontrovertible archaeological evidence for a large Asiatic population in the eastern delta (i.e. Goshen) is the Second Intermediate Period – the era into which Rohl's new chronology will place the historical events of the Israelite Sojourn, Bondage and Exodus.

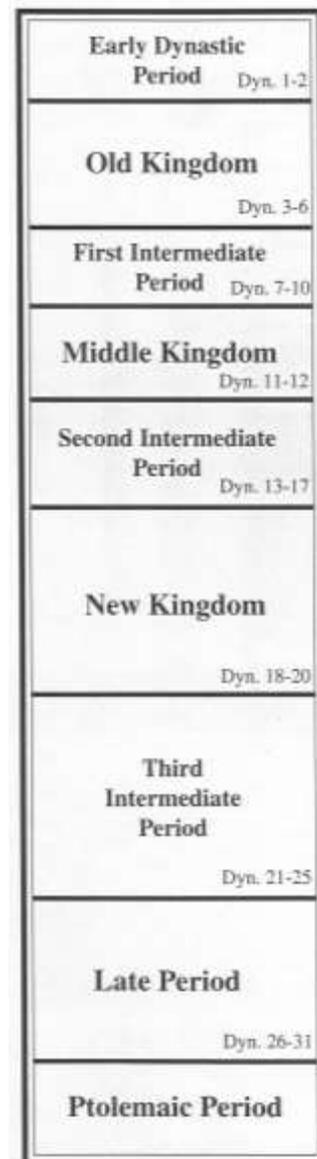
Time, time, time; See what's become of me¹¹

To provide a little background for Egyptian chronology, this diagram¹² shows that Egyptian periods are divided into major Kingdoms, encompassing several dynasties with several kings each. At¹³ certain times, pharaonic authority waned through weak leadership or unwise rule, and chaos rapidly encroached upon the ordered existence of the Egyptian people. When the eras of chaos were severe and prolonged, the Egyptian state tended to fragment into smaller kingdoms ruled by rivals. Victorian scholars dubbed these chaotic times 'Intermediate Periods.'

L: Now we move from a description of Egyptian dynasties to how they've been dated.

What happens¹⁴ when we need to fix an event which occurred before year 0 (Christ's birth)? How do we actually establish its BC date? For instance, what methods do scholars employ to determine exactly how many years have elapsed since Pharaoh Ramesses II fought his heroic battle at Kadesh or when Tutankhamun was buried in the Valley of the Kings? The scribes and officials of those times were unable to look into the future to determine how many years were still to run before BC became AD. The ancients dated events using what scholars call the 'regnal dating system,' that is, they dated events to the years of the ruling monarchs. So we know from Egyptian inscriptions that the Battle of Kadesh took place in Year 5 of Ramesses II, and Tutankhamun died around the boy-king's ninth regnal year. In the same way we read in the Bible that the Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem was plundered of its treasures by an Egyptian king named Shishak in the fifth year of King Rehoboam of Judah.

But how do scholars make the giant leap assigning an absolute date of 1275 BCE to the Battle of Kadesh, 1327 BCE to the death of King Tut and 925 BCE for the sacking of Solomon's Temple? Historians simply add up the sequence of regnal years (i.e. the number of years each king reigned) backwards from the birth of Christ to the event they wish to date. But history is never so simple, for there are many other factors which have to be taken into account. Nevertheless, in its simplest terms, the methodology adds up the intervening reign lengths between two events and applies historical cross-links between different ancient civilizations in order to construct a time framework upon which we embroider the events of history.



¹⁰ page 271

¹¹ Simon and Garfunkel

¹² page 8

¹³ page 14

¹⁴ page 9

L: How do we *know* if historians have built a reliable structure for us to place Ramesses II and Tutankhamun in time? The honest answer is we take it for granted that they know what they are doing. Today's academics rely on the framework supplied by their predecessors. [25-35m]



The Royal Canon

One¹⁵ of the most important pieces of the giant historical jigsaw puzzle is the papyrus 'Royal Canon of Turin,' which contains a detailed list of Egyptian rulers from earliest times to the beginning of the 19th Dynasty. It was composed from palace or temple records, and is the most accurate and therefore valuable king list available to Egyptologists. It catalogues the sequence of kings and also gives their reign lengths to an accuracy of days, and occasionally provides the

total number of years for historical eras. Sadly, it is in a very fragmentary condition; what remains (in the Egyptian Museum in Turin) only gives a hint of what might have been if the papyrus had survived entirely intact.

4 pillars

The dating system¹⁶ for the Pharaohs has been based on a number of anchor points, which appear to be mutually supportive. We'll now examine some of the four great pillars to the chronological edifice of Egypt.

1. The Sacking of Thebes

Rohl says the most recent of these is beyond reproach as a secure date in history. In 664 BCE, Ashurbanipal, king of Assyria, brought an army to Egypt and sacked the sacred city of Thebes as punishment for a revolt led by Pharaoh Taharka against the recent Assyrian occupation of Egypt. This date of 664 BCE is supported by a whole network of interlocking data supplied by various independent sources, including Berosus, Manetho, the Assyrian and Babylonian chronicles, Apis stelae and Egyptian regnal dates. We can state this crucial anchor point in Egyptian chronology is our first real 'fixed point' in history.

2. Shishak and Shoshenk

Moving backwards in time, the second pillar¹⁷ involves the following Biblical passage: [II Chronicles 12:9]

ALL: So Shishak king of Egypt advanced on Jerusalem and carried off the treasures of the Temple and the treasures of the royal palace. He took everything away, including the golden shields which Solomon had made.

¹⁵ page 242

¹⁶ page 119

¹⁷ page 123

In ¹⁸ the fifth year of Rehoboam, who was the son of Solomon, Chronicles tells us of the successful campaign of Shishak, king of Egypt, against the cities of Judah. After taking many of Rehoboam's fortified towns, Shishak reaches the gates of Jerusalem and demands Rehoboam's capitulation. His price for not razing Jerusalem to the ground is to strip the palace and temple of Solomon of all its treasures, taking them to Egypt. From the description of this event, we reach our first 'confirmation' of an event in Israelite history from external sources.



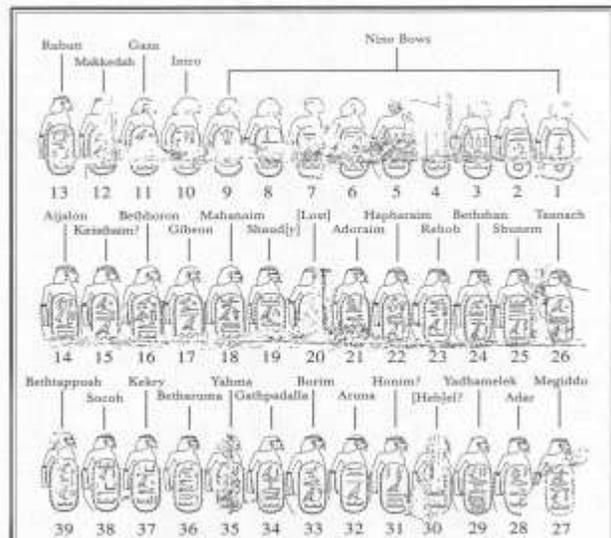
Jean François Champollion

This was first related to Egyptian chronology by Jean-Francois Champollion. Six years after he deciphered hieroglyphs, in ¹⁹ 1828 Champollion first visited Egypt. He stood beneath the monumental inscriptions of the temples and tombs and was the first person in perhaps 2000 years to read the utterances of Pharaohs and the gods directly from the very walls themselves.

Champollion looked at the triumph scene of King Hedjkheperre Shoshenk I, cut into the walls of the Karnak Temple. He recognized the faint outline of the Pharaoh – wearing the tall white crown of Upper Egypt, with raised right arm and, in his fist, the royal mace poised to crash down upon the heads of bound captives at the center of the smiting scene. On the other side of the wall stood the regal god and goddess of Karnak, both of whom were dragging towards the king tethered rows of oval name-rings surmounted with the heads of captive chieftains. The hieroglyphs inside the rings spelled the names of cities captured by King Shoshenk during his Year 20 military campaign into Palestine.



The first three rows of the Shoshenk I campaign city list with the Yadhamelek name located within the box at the bottom right; an arrow (center left) indicates where the name Jerusalem should have appeared if Shoshenk is to be identified with Shishak.



The city names are read in the usual way for hieroglyphs: zig-zagging down the page - right to left, then left to right. Observe the numbering. This is called *boustrophedan* writing, as an ox plows a field.

Champollion read the city names: Aijalon, ... Gibeon, Mahanaim, ... Bethshan, Shunem, Tanaach, Megiddo – all familiar from the Old Testament. He came to name-ring 29 and read the signs: *y-w-d-h-m-l-k*. He vocalized the consonants (the ancient Egyptians did not write vowels): *louda-ha-malek* – 'Judah' (Heb. *Yehud*), followed by 'the Kingdom' (Heb. *ha-malcûth*). Had Pharaoh Shoshenk conquered the Kingdom of Judah? Indeed! Champollion was delighted to have found a crucial chronological link between the events of the Bible and the history of the Pharaohs. From that moment on, Shoshenk I, became identified with the

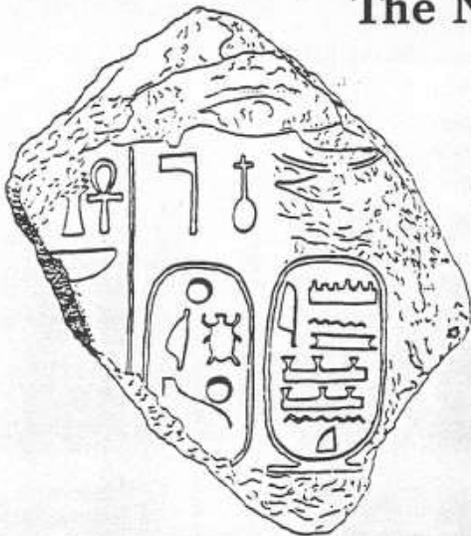
¹⁸ page 32
¹⁹ page 120

Biblical King Shishak. This event – according to Biblical chronology – was datable to the first half of the 10th century BCE, and is conventionally given the date 925 BCE.

The names Shoshank and Shishak

L: You can read on your own how Shishak could be the same name as Shoshank.²⁰ [30-40m]

The Names Shoshenk and Shishak



In Egyptian hieroglyphs the name Shoshenk is usually written *Sh-sh-n-k* but occasionally as *Sh-sh-k* with the 'n' omitted. The latter form would thus appear to be an exact equivalent of the biblical name Shishak. However, the few monuments of Shoshenk I found in Palestine never display the missing 'n' form. Moreover, a contemporary text in east-semitic (Akkadian) cuneiform transcribes the name Shoshenk as *Susink* – displaying both the 'n' and the common transposition of Egyptian 'sh' into semitic 's'. It is therefore apparent that the 'n' was part of the pronunciation of the king's name, even amongst the semitic language speakers of the Near East. Hence the biblical name Shishak is not a straightforward equivalent of Shoshenk. It is, in fact, common for hieroglyphic writing not to indicate all the sounds which make up a particular word; the script itself is a monumental art form, and as such is governed by rules of aesthetic arrangement rather than simple 'phonetics' – in other words, the omission of the 'n' is a fact of the writing not of the pronunciation of the name Shoshenk.

The cartouches of Shoshenk I found on a stela fragment from Megiddo. The hieroglyphic signs of the king's nomen spell out *Sh-sh-n-k*.

The Four Fours

L: In the interest of time, we will merely list pillars 3 and 4, after the two we explored in some detail:

1. The sacking²¹ of Thebes by the Assyrians in 664 BCE = Year 1 of Psamtek I.
2. The 925 BCE campaign into Palestine in Year 20 of Shoshenk I = Shishak (based on I Kings 14:25-26 & II Chronicles 12:2-9).
3. The accession of Ramesses II in 1279 BCE (based on Year 52 = lunar-derived date 1228 BCE).
4. The accession of Ahmose in 1550 BCE (based on the helical rising of Sothis, the dog star, in 1517 BCE = Year 9 Amenhotep I).

L: 4 cups of wine, 4 questions, 4 sons, 4 pillars – see how it all fits?

What is so important about Egyptian chronology? Why all the fuss? The Egyptian chronological edifice has been supported by four (apparently) mighty pillars upon which the otherwise floating chronologies of Mycenaean Greece, Minoan Crete, Hittite Anatolia, the Levantine city-states of the Late Bronze Age and above all pre-Solomonic Israel have all been constructed. If any of the pillars are wrong, the effects would obviously be far-reaching. (More on this later ...)

L: Our next search for confirmation of Passover events relate to slavery. Where are the readings? [30-40m]

▷ We were slaves [read in Haggadah all readings about slavery, page 15-16]

L: What evidence is there for Bondage/slavery?

The Brooklyn museum²² contains a papyrus roll [catalog number 35.1446], which is a copy of a royal decree by Sobekhotep III authorizing the transfer of ownership of a group of domestic slaves/servants (Egyptian

²⁰ page 128

²¹ page 132

²² page 276

khenmu) to an estate in the Theban area. It also lists the names of household servants, probably the slave group. Over fifty percent of the ninety-five names are Semitic in origin. These foreign servants are each clearly designated as *aamu* – the Egyptian term for ‘Asiatic’. Their Egyptian names given to them by their owners are also listed. For example we read: ‘The Asiatic Dodihuatu, who is called Ankhuemhesut’. ALL: Hey Ankhuemhesut, c’mon over here!

Several of the domestic slaves originally had Biblical names: We see the name ‘Menahem,’ which was later the name of the sixteenth king of Israel [743-738 BCE]. We also have variants of the tribal name ‘Issachar’ [one of Jacob and Leah’s sons], the clan of Asher and the name Shiphrah - all Biblical Hebrew names.

If the Brooklyn Papyrus is representative of a typical Egyptian estate, then at least half the servant population in Egypt at the time of the mid 13th Dynasty were people from the language group including biblical Hebrew. The document listed domestic slaves of an Upper Egyptian estate; we may logically conclude that the Asiatic slave population in Lower Egypt, and especially the delta nearest to the area closer to modern-day Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Israel, would have been much larger and may have constituted the vast majority of the bonded work force.

This record implying Hebrew slaves suggests another parallel with the Passover story, since there is a high proportion of female slaves listed in the papyrus. A similar picture emerges at Avaris, which had the earliest Asiatic presence in the Nile delta. The graves at a later strata had more females than males: more adult women were buried in the settlement than adult men. This could simply indicate that there was a disproportionately high female population at Avaris. But, in the context of the Sojourn tradition, this could be explained by the culling of the Israelite male children – an act of the ‘Pharaoh who did not know Joseph’ who feared the threat of a strong Asiatic population in Egypt.

It was also discovered that there was a higher percentage of infant burials at Tell ed-Daba (Avaris) than is normally found at archaeological sites of the ancient world. Sixty-five percent of the burials were children under eighteen months. Based on pre-modern societies, we expect an infant mortality rate of around twenty to thirty percent. Could this also be explained by the slaughter of the Israelite infant males by the Egyptians?

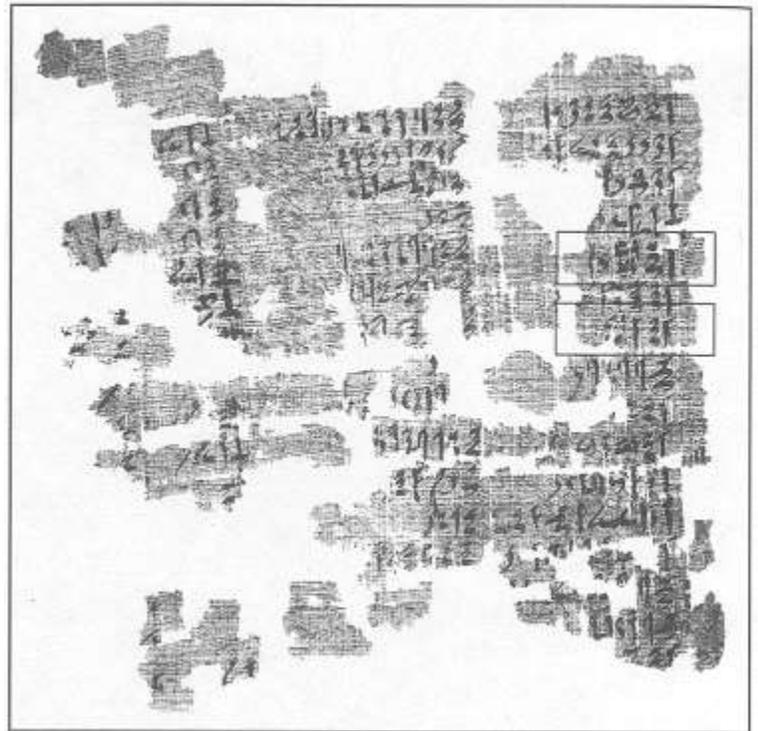
L: What symbol does the seder use to represent slavery?

▷ Maror zeh [read in Haggadah, page 24]; first of three symbols we are told to explain [on page 23].

▷ What did the slaves do? Pithom and Ra’amses [read in Haggadah, page 16]

Pithom and Ra’amses

After Champollion’s decipherment²³ of hieroglyphics, the inscriptions on the monuments of Egypt brought one Pharaoh to the fore, above all others. The names, titles and deeds of Ramesses II were everywhere – on monuments bigger and more imposing than anything belonging to his predecessors or successors (only excluding the mighty pyramids of Giza). Ramesses II was so great that there were 9 more Ramesses kings in the 19th and 20th Dynasties. The Victorian world called him ‘Ramesses the Great’ in recognition of his



²³ page 114

spectacular accomplishments. This powerful and long-lived Pharaoh built many cities and temples in the delta but, most significantly, he founded a new capital in the region, named Pi-Ramesse – ‘the estate of Ramesses’.

The first chapter of Exodus states that following the death of Joseph, ‘a new king who had never heard of Joseph,’ came to power in Egypt. The Egyptians then ‘put taskmasters over the Israelites’ who had settled in Egypt ‘so as to wear them down by forced labor’ and ‘in this way they built the store-cities of Pithom and Ra’amses for Pharaoh’.

ALL: Putting these points together, Victorian scholars concluded it was Ramesses II who enslaved the Israelites and forced them to build his new eastern-delta capital – the biblical Ra’amses. The title of ‘Pharaoh of the Oppression’ has hung from the shoulders of poor Ramesses ever since.

L: Intro of 1975 book used for posters had this statement.

Location of Ramesses II

L: A small digression – Nu? What’s so unusual about that in a Seder? [35-45m]

Ramesses II, along with most of the kings from his era, were not found in the tombs in the Valley of the Kings. Where were they? Where did Ramesses II end up?

For this story, we visit a 19th century novelist. Amelia Edwards,²⁴ who was mentioned earlier as a founding member of Britain’s Egypt Exploration Society, was undertaking her famous one-thousand mile journey up the Nile in 1874. Within hours of arriving at the Temple of Luxor, Edwards sensed excitement:

“There were whispers of a tomb that had been discovered – a wonderful tomb, rich in all kinds of treasures. No one, of course, had seen these things. No one knew who had found them. No one knew where they were hidden. But there was a solemn secrecy about certain of the Arabs and a conscious look about some of the visitors.”

She was soon offered a papyrus roll replete with its own mummy, plus a collection of statuettes and vases. Two years later, a dealer was offering a one-hundred-foot-long scroll to agents of the richer museums of Europe, and ushabtis [funerary statuettes] of the High Priest of Amun were turning up in the antique shops of Europe’s capitals. Clearly an important discovery of an unknown royal tomb had been made in the mountains near Luxor; the Egypt’s Antiquities Service decided to flush out the culprits.

After a few years, the authorities found the locals who had discovered (and were plundering) what we now call the Royal Cache. Under threat of jail, augmented by torture, the locals took them to the secret tomb in 1881. Soon the Director of the Antiquities Service, Emil Brugsch, was lowered by rope down to the bottom of the shaft:

ALL (acting part of Emil): “It was an exciting experience for me. It is true I was armed to the teeth and my faithful rifle, full of shells, hung over my shoulder; my assistant from Cairo was the only person with me whom I could trust. Any one of the natives would have killed me willingly, had we been alone, for every one of them knew I was about to deprive of them a great source of revenue.”

The first person in nearly three thousand years, able to identify the occupants of this gallery of the dead, shuffled past the coffins. Inspecting the inscriptions on each one, Brugsch read the crudely painted cartouche on the fourth coffin. In clear black hieroglyphs – within two ovals standing above the sign for gold – he read the name: ‘King Menmaatse Seti-merenptah.’

The import hit Brugsch like a hammer. He was the first Egyptologist to be in the presence of one of the greatest warrior Pharaohs of the New Kingdom – King Seti I – father of ‘Ramesses the Great,’ the infamous Pharaoh of the Oppression and Exodus.

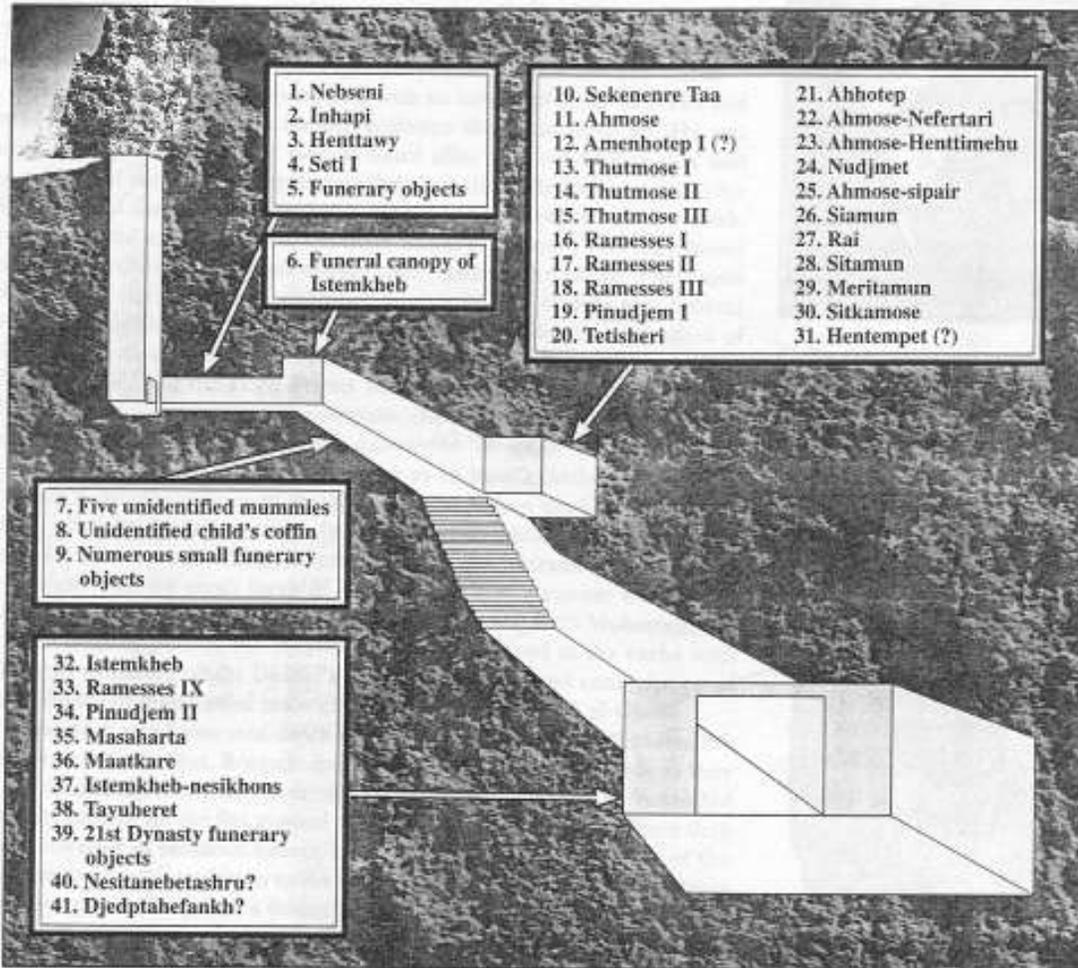
“Soon we came upon cases of porcelain funeral offerings, metal and alabaster vessels, draperies and trinkets; we came upon a cluster of mummy-cases in such number as to stagger me. By the light of my torch, I saw they contained mummies of royal personages of both sexes, and yet that was not all. I came to a deeper chamber and there, standing against the walls or lying on the floor, I found an even greater

²⁴ page 71-

number of mummy-cases of stupendous size and weight. Their gold coverings and polished surfaces so plainly reflected my own face.”

The cache held some of the most powerful kings and queens of the ancient world. Here rested the mortal remains of Ahmose, founder of the New Kingdom Empire of Egypt; sacred Amenhotep I, deified by the local Egyptians upon his death; Thutmose III, Napoleon of pharaonic Egypt; and by no means last, Ramesses II himself, ruler of rulers, legendary king and conqueror.

They were all removed to the Cairo museum. Some of the coffins were so large and heavy, it required a dozen men to lift them. Working day and night, the whole operation took forty-eight hours to complete. The conveyance of the mummy cases, carried aloft in a great snaking procession through the desert to the museum’s river boat, must have been an astonishing sight to behold. The Royal Cache had contained the coffins of some 40 major royal mummies. [45-55m]



Isometric illustration of the Royal Cache produced from descriptions of TT 320. The locations of the mummies are speculative but based on contemporary reports.

How did they happen to all be tightly crammed into one tomb? The answer was revealed when the ink docketts written on the coffin chests were read. The priests of the time of the King Siamun, 5th ruler of the 21st Dynasty, devised a plan to preserve the mummies of the kings, whose “houses of eternity” were regularly being violated by tomb robbers. They used the burial of a high priest, Pinudjem, as camouflage for the secret caching of the royal mummies. Late one night, the bodies of the New Kingdom Pharaohs, from a 250-year time period, were lowered into the shaft of Pinudjem’s family tomb. The deception worked well, for the Royal Cache remained hidden for nearly three thousand years, until their discovery by local Arabs in the 1870s.

Egypt Timeline

Now we return to the traditional Egyptian timeline set by the Victorian scholars. Does the timeline – based on the 4 great pillars – explain all the archeological evidence? Rabbi Gamliel said the first chink in the edifice is based on the cult of the Apis bull.

The Apis bull²⁵ had been worshipped in Egypt from the earliest times; it was a potent symbol of fertility and strength, and therefore of kingship. The Apis bull participated in the great jubilee of the King and other ceremonies. During its lifetime, the bull received petitioners as he stood bedecked in the finery befitting a god of Egypt. As was the case with the king, when Apis died he became Osiris, god of the dead, and received a magnificent burial at Sakkara. There could only be one living Apis at a time. Upon his demise, the priests of Memphis would be dispatched in search of his reincarnation. The newly chosen calf was brought to the special Apis House in the great Ptah Temple at Memphis. The remains of Apis were interred in the underground vaults with dedication stelae and funerary offerings. The cult of the Apis continued until the Hellenistic period [late 4th century BCE to 1st century CE].

A huge vault with Apis bull burials was discovered in 1851. From the stela and inscribed jars associated with their burial, one can build up a list of Pharaohs who ruled at the time of these Apis burials. One so far inexplicable aspect of the finds is the complete lack of burials for all Pharaohs in the entire 21st Dynasty and the first half of the 22nd. Furthermore, Apis burials in the vaults span an interval of 606 years using conventional Pharaoh dates. As the Apis bulls lived an average of 18 years, there should be 33 Apis bulls; but there were only 23. Consistent with the lack of burials during the 21st and 22nd Dynasties, this implies a discrepancy of about 200 years. Perhaps some Apis burials are missing? Perhaps the conventional Dynasty dates are incorrect? *[50-60m]*

Linen Bandage

Rabbi Elazar, the son of Azariah, said verily I am like a man of seventy years old, yet I was unable to understand a second fact about Egyptian chronology. Remember the Royal Cache, said he, the Cache that contained the coffins of 40 royal mummies. Apart²⁶ from the docketts painted on the coffin chests, curators later discovered more texts, including labels written on the linen bandages wrapped around the mummies. One of the less important mummies, the second prophet of Amun, contained a linen marking that disturbs the conventional time line. It showed that the body had been wrapped in Year 11 of King Shoshenk - 34 years after the Royal Cache was sealed – yet the prophet's mummy was found deep inside the tomb. Was the secret hiding place of the great Pharaohs really reopened for the burial of an official from Karnak Temple? Rohl goes on to explain that the later-arriving mummy couldn't have fit through the narrow passageways containing the earlier mummies.

Royal Architects

Rabbi Jose of Galilee relates the third chink in the conventional timeline. Along²⁷ the Nile's route near the port of Kuseir is an ancient road. Here Egyptians quarried the stone to make magnificent statues of the Pharaohs. The quarrymen inscribed graffiti. One is from the Royal Architect Khnemibre, showing the genealogy of the royal architects for the prior 22 generations. His genealogy goes from Year 26 of Darius I (well-attested as 496 BCE) 22 generations back to the Royal Architect early in Ramesses II's reign. This period of 784 years according to conventional dating implies an overly long generation of over 35 years, when the average age of death in the ancient world was around 30 years. (Other evidence also implies the time period around Ramesses II is overstretched in conventional dating.)

Rohl concludes that genealogies²⁸ stepping back into a 19th Dynasty no longer belong in the 13th century BCE, but rather in the 9th and 10th centuries. This overstretched chronology came about by the need of Victorian scholars to 'find' the Bible in Egypt. They identified Ramesses II as Pharaoh of the Oppression simply because they assumed a historical link between Pi-Ramesse and the store-city of Ra'amses. Such a link was tenuous at best. The Israelites may have built a city at the location of Pi-Ramesse but they had not necessarily built the capital and residence of Ramesses II. In fact, the biblical date for the Exodus [1447 BCE] was entirely at odds with the dates for the 19th Dynasty [1295-1186 BCE]. The link between Ramesses II and the Israelite Bondage was an illusion without any real foundation.

²⁵ page 46

²⁶ page 76

²⁷ page 141

²⁸ page 138, 144

ALL: What about the link established by the great Champollion between Shoshenk and Shishak?

L: This will be *our* Shawshank redemption.

Champollion²⁹ was entirely wrong in reading name-ring 29 in Shoshenk's campaign city list as *louda-ha-Melek* ('Judah the Kingdom'). As early as 1888 experts pointed out that ring 29 should be read *Yad-ha-melek*, literally 'Hand of the King,' which should be understood as "Monument" or "Stela of the King." In other words, a location in Palestine where an unnamed ruler had erected a commemorative stela. [50-60m]

More damaging to Champollion's hasty reading is the geographical location of this Yadhamelek; its position in the Shoshenk's campaign list locates it in northern Israel, well outside the boundaries of Judah. Name-ring 29 cannot be translated as 'Judah the Kingdom.' (Many other lines of evidence indicated Shoshenk went nowhere near the Kingdom of Judah, whereas the Biblical Shishak attacked the entire area.)

L: So who ransacked Jerusalem? Rohl believes none other than Ramesses II.

In 1983, Rohl visited the famous Ramesseum (picture on front cover), the mortuary temple of Ramesses II, in the City of the Dead in the Valley of the Kings. One entrance gateway contains inscriptions depicting the military campaign into Syro-Palestine by the young King. An earthquake has destroyed much of the temple, but the inscription on one stone (shown below) is translated "The town which the King plundered in Year 8 [of Ramesses II's reign] – Sh-a-l-m." Shalem was the earliest name for Jerusalem [Gen 14:18; Psalm 76:2; Hebrews 7:1].



The outline of a fortress façade carved in shallow relief and, down the center, the vertical column of text which reads: 'The town which the king plundered in Year 8 – Shalem.'

Before studying the shema, Rabbi Eliezar asked "How is possible that the Shishak mentioned in the Bible is the same as Ramesses II?" Honorary Rebbe Rohl answers:³⁰ 1) Ramesses II's full prenominal and nomen was Usermaatre-Ramesses, so he certainly needed a nickname: it turns out to be Sysa; 2) sometimes Egyptian s's were rendered as "sh" (for the name Ramesses, Hittites used Riamashesha); and 3) sometimes the Bible adds a "k" to names (if a "k" was really added to Shysha, then Shishak might have been associated with Shashak, which means "assaulter").

L: The linguistic path from Ramesses to Shishak takes Rohl 7 pages to explain; be thankful we did it in one long sentence. Rohl emphasizes his real evidence is that Ramesses II did undertake a military campaign into the country of Judah (which Shoshenk didn't) and a noted Egyptian professor analyzed Ramesses II's campaign and concluded he reached Jerusalem.

So, in summary, we find that the famous Pharaoh, Ramesses II is not the Pharaoh of Egyptian Bondage or the Exodus, but is the builder of many temples, monuments, and a fabulous estate, and more important to us, a plunderer of the capital of neighboring Israel several hundred years *after* the Exodus.

L: What is the true relationship between Ramesses, Pi-Ramesse and Ra'amses?

²⁹ page 138

³⁰ page 17

Pi-Ramesse³¹ is located just south of modern day Qantir, in the same general location of where Avaris had been. From remains discovered in 1929 onward, we now know the royal city Pi-Ramesse covered a huge area, and endured for over a half a millennium.

There is no doubt³² Ra'amses was built by Ramesses because Egyptian royal cities were named after their royal founders. No such place-name existed before the 19th Dynasty, since the Royal name Ramesses is a 19th Dynasty phenomenon. But Gen 47:11 states when Joseph became vizier of Egypt, he 'settled his father and brothers, given them land holdings in Egypt, in the best part of the country, the region of Ramesses, as Pharaoh ordered.' So the Israelites settled in the region of Ramesses centuries before the first king called Ramesses ascended the throne? Scholars argue the name 'Ramesses' was anachronistic; in other words, the 'region of Ramesses' was added by the compiler of the Old Testament scrolls to identify this area for contemporary readers – they knew it best by the name the site had for half a millennium after the city of Pi-Ramesse had been founded.

Both the 'region of Ramesses' in Gen 47:11 and the 'Ra'amses' of Ex 1:11 were probably edited for a 6th C BCE Jewish audience. Imagine reading in a modern encyclopedia the Emperor Hadrian established a Sixth Legion garrison at York in 120. But the second century CE Roman town at the site of modern York was called Eboracum. Should we make the Sixth Legion contemporary with King Alfred the Great because the encyclopedia stated the Romans had fortified York? So why should anyone accept Ramesses II was the Pharaoh of the Bondage because Exodus says the Israelites built the store-city of Ra'amses? We now suspect the store-city built by the Israelites was buried deep under the ruins of Pi-Ramesse. The Biblical editor would naturally refer to the city using a name familiar to his contemporaries. This area of the delta was called "Ramesses" as late as the fourth century CE.

L: [Extra note: Pithom sometimes assoc with Pi-Atum, Estate of the sun god Atum.]

L: A possibly rational perspective: Ramesses II is associated with successful military campaigns and huge estates, temples and monument. Egypt reveres Ramesses II as one of the greatest Pharaohs, and his name is associated with 9 more Ramesseses (up to Ram XI). Yet, many still associated Ramesses II with Egyptian Bondage and the Exodus. This is not the Pharaoh of the Exodus! Would it make sense to give such honor and reverence to a Pharaoh who was humiliated by a foreign God that inflicted a series of plagues, crushed his army at the Red Sea, and who gave freedom to his slave population? Ramesses II is an undefeated proud Pharaoh who ruled into his 80s. [1:00-1:10]

Rohl's commentary March, 2003] on the above:

Ramesses II is completely illogical - especially since he is depicted at Karnak fighting against Israelites with chariots (did Israel possess chariots before the reigns of David and Solomon?) and his son Merenptah recalls the defeat of Israel - a nation already existing in Canaan at the time (and not wandering around in Sinai).

L: This is not the Pharaoh of the Exodus!

ALL: Then who is it?

L: David Rohl's new Egyptian time line and fragmentary evidence for the 13th Dynasty (see diagram) puts the Exodus at the time of a minor Pharaoh called Dudimose ["doo-dee-mo-seh"], about which little is known. This actually makes more sense than to associate Ramesses II with a defeated Pharaoh in one of the most miraculous Biblical events.

13th Dynasty	
1632	Sobekhotep I
1627	Sekhemkare
1622	6 years of no king
1616	Amenemhat V
1612	Sehetepibre
1607	Iufni
1602	Sankhibre
1597	Smenkhkare
1592	Sehetepibre
1587	Sewadjkare
1582	Nedjemib[...]re
1577	Sobekhotep II
1575	Renseneb
1575	Awibre Hor
1570	Sedjef[...]kare
1565	Wegaf
1563	Khendjer
1558	Mermesha
1553	Inyotef
1548	[...]set
1543	Sobekhotep III
1540	Neferhotep I
1530	Sihathor
1529	Sobekhotep IV
1508	Sobekhotep V
1503	Iayib
1493	Ay
1470	Sobekhotep VI
1469	Sankhrenešewadjtu
1467	Ined
1464	Hori
1459	Sobekhotep VII
1457	[...] - [lost]
1455	[...] - [lost]
1452	[...] - [lost]
1450	[...] - [lost]
1448	Dudimose
1447	EXODUS

New Chronology dates for the 13th Dynasty down to Dudimose. The dates are based on data supplied in the Royal Canon and an average reign length.

³¹ page 266

³² page 115

Returning now to the events in the Passover story, we now turn to Moses as an adult in Midian.

▷ Burning Bush/Cosby skit

L: This is as good an introduction to the plagues we're going to get, so let's read about them.

▷ Read plagues, drops of wine [read in Haggadah, page 17, 19]

Plagues

Is there any historical corroboration for the plagues? Two fragmentary sources³³ of early Egyptian history mention the time period of the plagues. The 3rd C BCE historian Artapanus, who had researched records housed in the great Egyptian temples, mentions a possible set of disasters. His original text is quoted in the later writings of Eusebius. Artapanus tells us on the night before the Exodus, a terrible hailstorm and a violent earthquake struck Egypt.

Another pseudo-historical source from Ptolemaic Egypt covers this period. Manetho,³⁴ quoted by the first century CE Jewish historian Josephus, says this about the fall of the 13th Dynasty and the subsequent occupation of Egypt by foreigners:

“Tutiamaos. In his reign, for what cause I know not, a blast of God smote us; and unexpectedly, from the regions of the East, invaders of obscure race marched in confidence of victory against our land. They easily seized it without striking a blow.”

That the ‘invaders of obscure race’ were able to overwhelm Egypt ‘without striking a blow’ indicates the Egyptians were unable to defend themselves because of the earlier disaster (the ‘blast of God’) which had befallen them.

Can there be any physical evidence of the plagues? We³⁵ really may³⁶ be dealing with a sudden catastrophe as Exodus relates, or an event which took place over a longer time. After all, a disease or plague doesn't always take its toll literally overnight. The aftereffects of either disaster should survive in the archeological record in the burials of its victims. When we look at the only major late 13th Dynasty site so far investigated (Avaris), do we have any evidence of a sudden catastrophe that might mirror the events of the Exodus tradition? The answer is a qualified yes.

At Tell ed-Daba's layer dated roughly to the end of the 13th Dynasty, Bietak's archeological team uncovered a gruesome scene. All over the city they found shallow burial pits into which the victims of some terrible disaster had been hurriedly cast. There were no careful internments of the deceased. The bodies were not arranged in proper burial fashion, but rather thrown into mass graves, one on top of the other. There were no grave goods placed with the corpses, as was the usual custom. Bietak is convinced this is direct evidence some sudden catastrophe at Avaris, such as a plague. Analysis of the site archeology suggests a large part of the remaining population of the town abandoned their homes and departed from Avaris en masse.

L: Not everything in Rohl's book is reliably substantiated. He quotes an interesting connection made by Velikovsky.

Obviously, Velikovsky³⁷ says, no natural plague can be so specific as to only kill the first born. Velokovsky says the Hebrew word for ‘first-born’ is *bechore* while the Hebrew for ‘chosen’ (as in the chosen people) is *bakhur*. Both words, Velikovsky says, appear to have the same root. He suggests what's really meant is the plague killed the chosen of Egypt, the flower of Egypt, its hope for the future. In reality, the words don't have the same root at all: first born is בְּכוֹר, while chosen is בְּחֹר. The words do have related meanings (‘first born’ has associations of “the best” or “the choicest offspring”) and the roots בַּחַר/בָּכַר are similar, but not exactly the same. This doesn't taint Rohl's main timeline arguments. Still, it's an important lesson – don't believe every seemingly scholarly analysis you hear. [1:10-1:20]

³³ page 283

³⁴ page 280

³⁵ page 279

³⁶ page 279

³⁷ page 284

ALL: Now we turn to this year's musical interlude.



▷ Song: Walk Like an Egyptian

[Group: Bangles, released on Columbia album "Different Night" in 1986.]

L: (Call attention to timeline pic ending with Exodus.) I want to note that the Exodus is conventionally dated to 1447 BCE. If that's correct, we have the coincidence that this year [2003] is a major mid-century anniversary: we stand 3450 years after the Exodus.

▷ Rapid departure from Egypt comes down to us today in the tradition of Matzah. Matzah Zeh [read in Haggadah, page 24] – 2nd symbol of Passover

L: After the departure from Egypt, we had the Red Sea crossing. Now we turn to some speculative evidence regarding that.

▷ Video: Path thru Sinai, Red Sea, Chariots

L: Very speculative, especially after 3000 years. Shows re-creation of wheel; actual photo probably unrecognizable as wheel

L: In the interest of time, didn't show hour-long video talking about the path thru the Sinai, the location of Mt Sinai, various settlements, but here's a 2-minute summary.

▷ Video: Summary of evidence

Lennart Möller (Dutch Author of "The Exodus Case"), Viveka Pontien (Dutch). [1:15-1:25]

▷ 4 Sons – 4 views of Archeology? Wise: Rohl? Wicked: Who, disbeliever? Simple: Me(prev) No ask: ?
Song: 4 Daughters

▷ Dayenu – Dayenu already with Archeology [read in Haggadah, page 21] [1:20-1:35]

▷ Our own Dayenu's? Any personal items we're thankful for?

▷ Rabbi Gamliel says [page 23] unless we mention 3 symbols we have not done our duty. What symbol not yet mentioned? [Pesach, no Zeh; read in Haggadah, page 23]

Roasted meat, representing the sacrifice of the lamb at the Temple during this Holiday, was topic of the original 4th question. That's our lead in to the 4 questions:
4Q [page 9]

▷ In every generation, bound to retell [read in Haggadah, page 25 + raise wine "Therefore ..."]

L: This time tried to do so and augment story with carefully chosen evidence. No doubt, just one of many ways to assemble the jigsaw puzzle.

▷ Final thoughts

L: What is history?³⁸ Or rather, what is the writing and understanding of history? Rohl says that even the standard reference works for students of Egyptian history only represent the conventions of the pre-eminent scholars of various disciplines. But it is not the past itself. History is not a simple, single reality, but a complex, living response to the evidence left by the past.

L: Thoughts? Changed initial impressions?

▷ Final blessings [read in Haggadah, page 27-29]: 2nd cup (Blessed are thou"); [Prior to Matzah]: Here is another piece of ancient history (*Manisch ad from 1930's*); matzah, wash, Hillel. [1:45-2:00]

▷ Prayer for peace

▷ Meal

▷ Afikomen - archeology search

References:

Text, quotations and excerpts based on David M Rohl's "Pharaohs and Kings: A Biblical Quest" (also published as "A Test of Time"), (c) 1996, ISBN 0-517-70315-7. Rohl has degrees in Egyptology and Ancient History from University College in London, and is the editor of the Journal of Ancient Chronology Forum. Permission to use text and photos for non-commercial distribution received Mar 13, 2003.

Video excerpts from 'Exodus Revealed: Search of the Red Sea Crossing', ISBN 1-56855-735-3.

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