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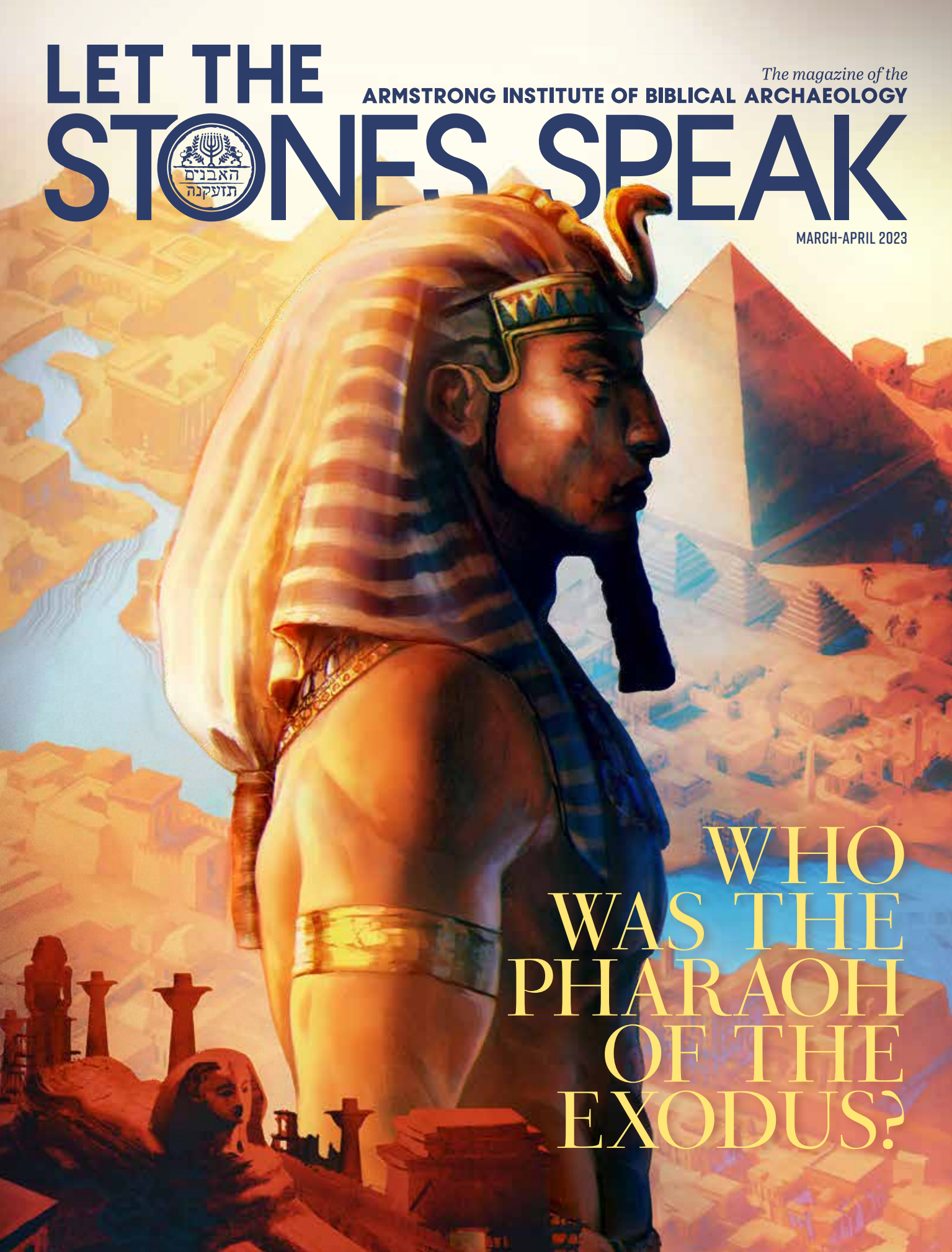
ARMSTRONG INSTITUTE OF BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY

The magazine of the

STONES SPEAK



MARCH-APRIL 2023



WHO
WAS THE
PHARAOH
OF THE
EXODUS?



LET THE STONES SPEAK

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JULIA GODDARD/ARMSTRONG INSTITUTE OF BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY



FROM THE EXECUTIVE EDITOR | STEPHEN FLURRY

IS IT WRONG TO USE THE BIBLE IN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION?

It wasn't what Dr. Mazar uncovered that rankled scholarly critics—it was that her findings matched the biblical narrative.

IN ANSWERING SCHOLARS WHO CRITICIZED DR. EILAT Mazar's discoveries of King David's palace in 2005 and Nehemiah's wall in 2007, Hershel Shanks wrote in *Biblical Archaeology Review*, "No one would question her professional competence as an archaeologist. Her chief sin, however, is that *she is interested in what archaeology can tell us about the Bible*" (March-April 2008; emphasis added throughout). (Both Mazar and Shanks have since died.)

Sadly, in today's world nothing ignites scholarly criticism and hostility quite like scientific conclusions that actually *confirm* the biblical record. This is mainly why Mazar's work is controversial. But as Shanks noted in his column, it's not like Mazar was the only archaeologist to uncover remains from the ancient kingdom of Israel. Kathleen Kenyon's excavation on the eastern slope of the City of David during the 1960s, for example, "enabled Nehemiah's wall to be identified," she wrote in 1967 (*Jerusalem: Excavating 3,000 Years of History*). Kenyon excavated in the same general area Mazar later did.

For 10 years, beginning in 1968, Mazar's grandfather, Benjamin Mazar, excavated 8 acres between the City of David and the southern wall of the Temple Mount. Besides numerous fascinating discoveries from the Ottoman, Byzantine and Roman periods, Mazar also uncovered remains from the royal quarter of David's dynasty, built during the reign of the kings of Judah.

Digging in this same area during the mid-1980s under the guidance of her grandfather, Eilat uncovered a large stone gateway complex, 13.7 meters by 16.5 meters (45 feet by 54 feet), constructed sometime

before the Babylonians sacked Jerusalem in the sixth century B.C.E. Attached to the gate was a short section of the city wall of Jerusalem, which she believed was built by Solomon (mentioned in 1 Kings 3:1). Announcing the news at a press conference in 1986, Mazar said the gateway complex was probably one of 12 gates mentioned in the biblical record. Associated Press quoted Benjamin Mazar, who attended the briefing with his granddaughter: "Now we have more or less the feeling that this is really a gate of Jerusalem from the period of the kings of Judah" (April 21, 1986).

In 1993, seven years after the Mazars discovered the Solomonic gate, a team digging in northern Israel found a large stone tablet, dated to the ninth century B.C.E., bearing these carved inscriptions: "House of David" and "King of Israel." It was a stunning discovery—scientific proof that David not only existed, but his kingly reign began a royal dynasty. Two years after that incredible find, *U.S. News* featured an article on "God's City": "The triangular 12-acre city David built lay some 350 feet to the south of the walled Jerusalem of today, on and beyond the eastern ridge called the Ophel. Archaeologists, who have uncovered 21 strata there ranging from the fourth millennium B.C. to the A.D. 15th century, estimate that the Davidic city's population never exceeded 4,000—largely members of the court. *Until recently*, the biblical references to David and the city's structures were not corroborated archaeologically" (Dec. 18, 1995). Over the past three decades, archaeological finds mentioned in scriptures have been popping up all over the place.

The same year *U.S. News* printed “God’s City,” construction began on a new visitors’ center in the City of David. Not long after breaking ground, workers were startled to find a wealth of archaeological remains buried deep beneath the surface. Construction work immediately gave way to a massive archaeological excavation. Archaeologists Ronny Reich and Eli Shukron unearthed remains of a massive fortified compound built around the City of David’s principal water supply—the Gihon Spring (see *ArmstrongInstitute.org/844*). They also confirmed that the vast underground water system (not including the tunnel Hezekiah built) predated the Davidic period. 2 Samuel 5:8 says King David’s forces conquered the Jebusite fortress by sneaking into the city through a water tunnel.

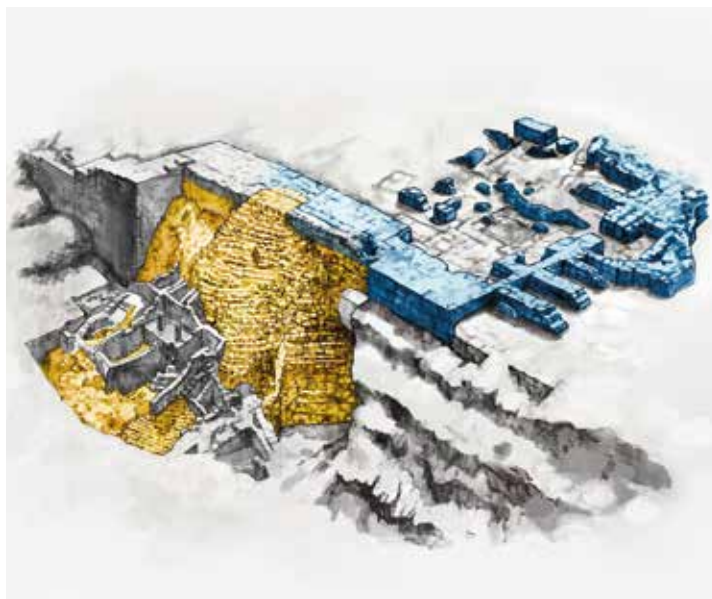
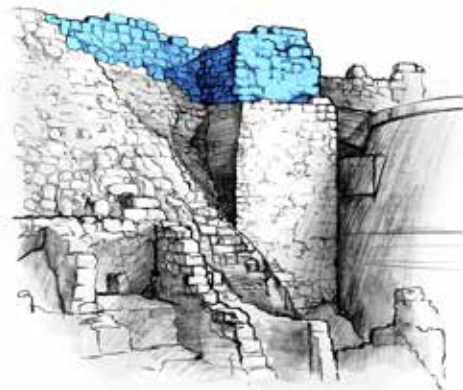
In 1997, not long after Reich and Shukron began their work at the Gihon Spring, another biblical verse, also in 2 Samuel 5, caught the attention of Eilat Mazar. Once David conquered the Jebusite city, he took up residence in the stronghold—or the Jebusite fortress at the north end of the city. According to verse 9, David then began to build up the area around Millo and inward. The New International Version says David “built up the *area* around it, from the supporting terraces inward.” So David set out to enlarge the city limits—first concentrating on a royal palace. The Bible says King David’s palace was partially built by workers sent to him by the Phoenician king of Tyre as a gesture of friendship (verse 11). “And David waxed greater and greater; for the Lord, the God of hosts, was with him” (verse 10).

Near the end of David’s palace construction, the Philistines attacked. And since the new palace may not have been reinforced strongly enough to withstand the Philistine assault, verse 17 says David went *down* to the citadel to barricade himself within the city walls. This, Eilat Mazar theorized, indicated that David’s new palace stood on higher ground than the Jebusite fortress. She published her theory in *Biblical Archaeology Review* in January 1997. Under the title “Excavate King David’s Palace” on a two-page spread picturing an artist’s rendering of the ancient City of David, Mazar drew an arrow pointing at the north end of the city, underneath the caption “It’s there.”

She wrote, “A careful examination of the biblical text combined with sometimes unnoticed results of *modern* archaeological excavations in Jerusalem enable us, I believe, to locate the site of King David’s palace. Even more exciting, it is in an area that is now available for excavation. If some regard as too speculative the hypothesis I shall put forth in this article, my reply is simply this: Let us put it to the test in the way archaeologists always try to test their theories—by excavation.”

In the nine-page article, Mazar cited Kathleen Kenyon, Benjamin Mazar, Yigal Shiloh and several other scholars—oh, and also the Bible. Maybe that “chief sin” is one reason why Mazar found it difficult to obtain the financial support needed to test her theory. Or maybe it was because so many archaeologists had already excavated around that location. Whatever the reason, it took *eight years* for Mazar to receive the funding needed to excavate.

LEFT **Nehemiah’s Wall**
RIGHT **David’s Palace/
Large Stone Structure and
Stepped Stone Structure**



Within months of beginning her dig in 2005, Mazar's team uncovered what she later called a Large Stone Structure—a monumental wall running east-west that she believed to be the northern facade of David's palace. Only 10 percent of the structure was exposed during the first phase of digging. But it was enough to reveal that this was not a common house, but rather a "fantastic house." Her most significant discovery was in identifying the relationship between the Large Stone Structure and the Stepped Stone Structure on the city's northeastern slope. "It can already be said with some certainty," she wrote in her first phase report, "that the two are part of a single, enormous building complex. The Stepped Stone Structure, so it appears, was built as a gigantic, well-devised supportive structure that allowed for the erecting of a great podium on which the Large Stone Structure, which is identified with King David's palace, would be built."

The first phase also turned up the Jehucal bulla, which we have written about before (see ArmstrongInstitute.org/630). Jehucal was a royal officer who worked in the administration of King Zedekiah, Judah's last king before going into Babylonian captivity during the sixth century B.C.E. Jehucal is referred to twice in the book of Jeremiah (Jeremiah 37:3; 38:1).

During the second phase of her excavation (winter of 2006–07), Mazar uncovered a massive wall on the eastern side of the royal complex, measuring 5 meters thick. Mazar also located the seam between this eastern wall of the palace and the Stepped Stone Structure.

During the third phase (winter of 2007–08), while excavating under a tower built on top of the Stepped Stone Structure, Mazar discovered large quantities of pottery and other artifacts which dated the tower's construction several hundred years earlier than previously thought. It was actually built during the Persian Empire's heyday, which is precisely when the Bible says Nehemiah rebuilt the wall around Jerusalem.

Not long after Mazar announced that she had located a section from Nehemiah's wall, she found a black stone seal, bearing the Hebrew inscription "Shlomit," which some scholars believe may have belonged to Shelomith, the daughter of Zerubbabel, referred to in 1 Chronicles 3:19.

In addition to her digs in the City of David, Dr. Mazar performed extensive excavations on the Ophel, which is situated just a couple of hundred meters north. Eilat often referred to the Ophel as Solomon's Royal Complex. This was where Solomon constructed the massive temple and his impressive palace, as well as other administrative buildings. The Ophel was the seat of Judah's power right up to the Babylonian destruction in 586 B.C.E. Here on the Ophel, and in addition to the Solomonic gatehouse, Dr. Mazar found



Dr. Eilat Mazar

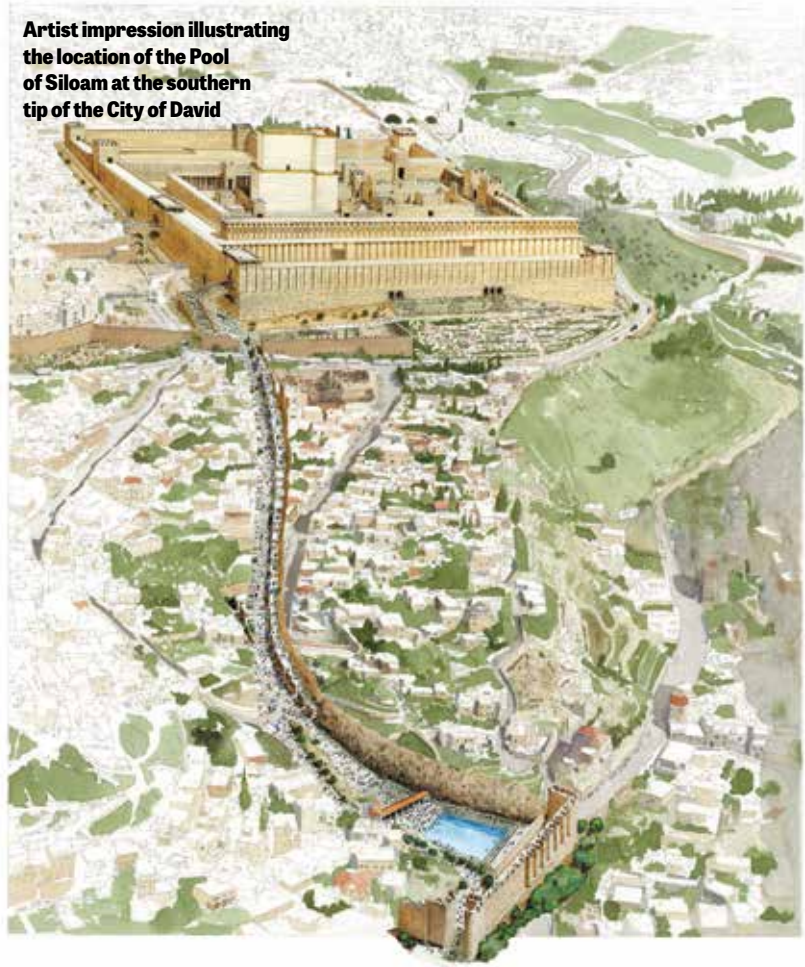
the bullae of King Hezekiah of Isaiah, along with multiple other impressive artifacts connected to the Bible, including important inscriptions dated to the time of King Solomon.

In this article, I've written only about Dr. Mazar's archaeology and its confirmation of the biblical text. Other archaeologists, including Eli Shukron, Ronny Reich, Yuval Gadot and Yiftah Shalev have also done great work in this area. Outside of Jerusalem, Hebrew University professor Yosef Garfinkel's excavations at Khirbet Qeiyafa (which he has identified as the biblical city Shaaraim) and Khirbet al-Ra'i (which he has identified as the biblical city of Ziklag) brim with material from the Davidic period.

Even as these now-frequent discoveries are being made, all supporting the biblical record, there has been a corresponding rise in the level of hostility from scholars who reject many of the conclusions made from these findings—not because they question the credentials of the archaeologists *but because they are dismissive of the biblical text.*

Dr. Mazar's "chief sin," as Shanks pointed out in his column, was "making a reasonable judgment about archaeological evidence *as it relates to the Bible.* In some scholarly circles," he wrote, "this is considered 'unscholarly.' If the judgment she made related to something other than the Bible, no one would give it a second thought. Only a finding related to the Bible brings such obloquy down on the head of a leading archaeologist."

Several years ago, Dr. Mazar criticized the modern scholarly approach to archaeology—that of discounting the biblical record as false *unless* it can be proved true. In fact, it's worse. Even when *proved* true, many scholars still reject it. ■



Artist impression illustrating the location of the Pool of Siloam at the southern tip of the City of David

Excavating the Pool of Siloam— AN INTERVIEW WITH Ze'ev Orenstein

Earlier this year, the City of David Foundation together with the Israel Antiquities Authority began excavating the famed biblical Pool of Siloam in ancient Jerusalem. In February, *Let the Stones Speak* assistant managing editor Brent Nagtegaal interviewed Ze'ev Orenstein, the City of David's director of international affairs, to discuss this exciting new excavation. The following interview has been edited for clarity and length.

BRENT NAGTEGAAL (BN): Thanks for visiting us here at the Armstrong Institute. Let's begin with you telling us about the City of David and about your organization, the City of David Foundation.

ZE'EV ORENSTEIN (ZO): You're welcome. Up until about 150 years ago, when people wondered where the original biblical city of Jerusalem [the Jerusalem synonymous with figures such as David, Solomon and Hezekiah] was located, everyone imagined it to be inside the Old City of Jerusalem, surrounded by the iconic Old City walls. These walls are about 500 years old. But ancient Jerusalem is about 4,000 years old; King David lived 3,000 years ago. Still, until relatively recently, everyone thought that the Old City was biblical Jerusalem.

In 1867, Queen Victoria of England sent a man by the name of Capt. Charles Warren to the Holy Land to uncover the treasures of the Bible. Naturally, Warren wanted to search the Temple Mount, or biblical Mount Moriah. The Ottoman Turks were in charge of this area at the time, and they denied Warren the opportunity to excavate the Temple Mount. To this day, due to religious and political sensitivities, there has been virtually no archaeological activity on the Temple Mount. Charles Warren had a problem. So he said, "If I can't dig on the Temple Mount, I'll dig near it."

So Warren comes south down the hill and discovers the Gihon Spring, the life source of ancient Jerusalem going back thousands of years. One discovery leads to another, and Warren soon comes up with the theory that the original biblical city of Jerusalem, the city of David, the place where Jerusalem began, was not located inside the walls of the Old City, but was located just outside.

At that time, scholars and laymen alike rejected the idea. They

ridiculed Charles: “Do you really believe this barren 11-acre ridge is the site of ancient Jerusalem, with significance, not to millions, but to billions of people around the world?” He said, “I’m telling you, this is the spot.”

Over the next 150 years, the City of David became one of the most archaeologically excavated sites in the world and the most excavated site in Israel. Today, everyone recognizes that the City of David is not inside the Old City. The place where the kings of the Bible ruled, where the prophets of the Bible preached, is not in the Old City—it’s in the City of David, just outside the walls of the Old City of Jerusalem.

Over the last three decades, the City of David Foundation has been bringing the archaeology back, bringing the tourism back—bringing the City of David, the place where Jerusalem began—back to life. Our goal is to transform this once forgotten and barren 11-acre ridge into one of the most significant heritage sites on the planet.

BN: What achievements have you made in recent years? What can tourists visiting the site expect to see?

ZO: The historian Josephus recorded that going back about 2,000 years to the time of Jesus, there would have been millions of people making

pilgrimage to Jerusalem. We are talking about the feasts of Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles. How did all of those people make their way up to the temple?

Over the past couple of years, archaeologists have uncovered and are excavating as we speak what I call the biblical superhighway, or the Pilgrimage Road. This is the very road that would have taken our ancestors, whether you are Jewish or Christian, on pilgrimage up to the temple. This road would have taken you on a half-mile journey up the hill to the temple.

Fifteen chapters of the Psalms (from 120 to 134) begin with the same words: “A song of ascents.” The way most people understand this is that it is referring to a spiritual ascent: going to Jerusalem and to the temple, it’s holy, etc.

Thousands of years ago, when they were making a pilgrimage, the vast majority of people would have gone up to the temple from the southern part of the City of David. As they made that journey [or ascent], they sang those 15 chapters. The songs of ascent are not just about a spiritual ascent, but they are actually a description of the physical pilgrimage experience. When you’re in the place where the Bible happened, the words of the Bible come to life. There is no other place in the world where you can actually experience those songs

of a physical ascent going up to the temple in Jerusalem, other than walking along the Pilgrimage Road in the City of David.

In a few years, people of all faiths and backgrounds will be able to walk in the footsteps of the Bible, re-creating that pilgrimage experience. Visitors will be able to walk through the City of David to the Western Wall and the southern steps of the Temple Mount. They will literally walk on the very same flagstones our ancestors did thousands of years ago.

BN: This is an amazing discovery! This pilgrimage journey will begin at the Pool of Siloam. Can you describe its initial discovery and what the City of David Foundation is doing today at the Pool of Siloam?

ZO: We have a teaching in our faith that says “God has many messengers.” Back in 2004, a sewage pipe burst beneath the road at the southern end of the City of David. The municipality of Jerusalem sent in a construction crew to repair the sewer pipe. But Jerusalem is not your average municipality; the City of David is not just another part of Jerusalem. Here, when a sewage pipe bursts, you not only send in construction crews, you also send in archaeologists. One day, as the construction crew was working, the archaeologist Eli Shukron heard scraping. He explored it with archaeologist Ronny Reich. They learned that as they were preparing to repair the sewage pipe, the workers had inadvertently uncovered a series of ancient stone steps dating back some 2,000 years [the time of Jesus].

When they studied the steps, the archaeologists observed that they were similar to another set of steps in Jerusalem: the southern steps to the Temple Mount, the primary entryway up into Herod’s temple! They figured that there must be a



The Pilgrimage Road

connection between the two sets of stairs. They realized they had discovered the ancient Pool of Siloam, one of the most significant biblical heritage sites in all of Jerusalem.

The Pool of Siloam has deep significance for Christians and Jews alike. In the Christian scriptures, the story of the healing of the man born blind took place at the Pool of Siloam. The Bible also mandates that before a person could enter the temple, he first had to cleanse himself by going to a ritual bath, known as a mikveh. The Pool of Siloam was as large as two Olympic-sized swimming pools. Why so big? Josephus said that 2,000 years ago, almost 3 million people participated in the pilgrimage to the temple. That is a lot of people who had to cleanse.

The Pool of Siloam, at the southern end of the City of David, is the largest ritual bath in all of Jerusalem, by far!

BN: And this discovery occurred in 2004?

ZO: Yes; back then we excavated about 3 to 5 percent of the entire pool. Essentially, we exposed a nice set of steps in the northeast corner of the pool. We could see that the steps also extended toward the south. But there was a property line there that we were not able to cross. Unfortunately, the owners of the property at the time, for whatever reason, were not interested in unearthing the rest of the Pool of Siloam.

Recently, the ownership of the property changed. Now, for the first time in over 2,000 years, we are able to excavate the entire Pool of Siloam. Again, this is the size of two Olympic-sized swimming pools—an acre and a half! Excavation has already begun, and we are currently clearing away the upper layers of modern earth.

BN: Right, I noticed some heavy machinery working at the site. I assume you're using that to remove the modern material, right?

ZO: Yes. Let's put it this way: If you're moving fill that has Coke cans in it, you have nothing to worry about. No one has lived on this site for many decades, and debris has built up over time. Once all this modern debris is cleared away, then we dig down and start the archaeology.

Archaeologists with the Israel Antiquities Authority have already dug pilot trenches to get a sense of what will be uncovered. It is pretty exciting. This is one of the most significant heritage sites in all of Jerusalem; we expect to excavate material from not just the Second Temple Period, but even the First Temple Period. This leads to what will be an interesting archaeological question. The archaeologists are going to dig down and presumably find remnants of the pool dating back 2,000 years. However, as Bible scholars know, this is not the original Pool of Siloam.

2 Kings 20:20 tells us that the original Pool of Siloam was engineered by King Hezekiah, who was a direct descendant of King David. This occurred [in the late eighth century B.C.E.] when he was trying to save Jerusalem from the impending Assyrian siege by Sennacherib, king of Assyria. Hezekiah took the waters from the Gihon Spring and diverted the waters of the spring to flow entirely within the City of David, exiting into the Pool of Siloam.

So the question is: Will the archaeologists also find remnants of the original pool built by Hezekiah, or only of the pool dating back to Herod?

BN: Today we have no evidence of the Pool of Siloam from the time of Hezekiah. I guess the archaeologists,



as they dig and remove the upper layers of material, will do some probing to see what lies beneath?

ZO: Yes. There used to be an American game show called *Let's Make a Deal*. So you play some game and let's say you win a TV. Then the host gives you a choice: You can go home with your nice new TV, or you could look behind door number two. But to look behind door number two, you have to give up your TV. Now, behind door number two there might be a brand-new car, or there could be nothing. This is how archaeology sometimes works. Let's say that the entire 2,000-year-old pool is intact—that it's all there. What do you do? Do we stop excavating? Or do we perhaps excavate a portion of the pool to see if there is something deeper?

We could actually uncover, for the first time in history, the original Pool of Siloam dating back 2,700 years. Or we might remove a portion of the [Herodian] pool to find there is no remnant of the older pool. Perhaps when Herod made his pool, he cleared out everything that came before him. That is possible. Thankfully, this isn't my decision to



make. The IAA will have to cross this bridge when the time comes. But it is exciting to think about.

BN: Archaeologists face this question all the time. Often, the importance of the find above will determine whether you continue excavating through it. Most archaeologists would probably be inclined to go through it to see what lies beneath. If they don't find anything, they could always restore the pool. Plus, you might have to dig under the pool to date it accurately.

What is the time frame for the Pool of Siloam dig?

ZO: It will probably take five years or so to unearth the entirety of the pool. As this is being done, we are also excavating the length of the Pilgrimage Road. Imagine, five years from now, a visitor to Jerusalem will be able to visit the fully revealed Pool of Siloam and then walk the Pilgrimage Road north all the way to the Western Wall and southern steps of the Temple Mount. They will be literally walking in the footsteps of the Bible from 2,000-plus years ago. It will be incredible!

When people think of the great wonders of the world, people think of the pyramids in Egypt or the Colosseum in Rome. I believe that when we finish revealing the entirety of the Pool of Siloam and the Pilgrimage Road, they will together be one of the great wonders of the world. But really, they will be in a category of their own. I'll tell you why: When a person goes to see the Colosseum or the pyramids, the person says, "Wow, look at the grandeur of the pharaohs!" or, "Look at the might of the Roman Empire!" But where are the pharaohs today? Where is the great Roman Empire today? The answer is the same: in museums, history books and with some monuments left behind.

But when a person visits Jerusalem and sees the Pool of Siloam, and walks along the Pilgrimage Road, they are not just witnessing a piece of history, but actually the continuation of a story. The people who walked that road and went to that pool thousands of years ago, it is their descendants—who worship the same God, have the same customs, traditions, festivals and in some cases, speak the same language. It is the same Jerusalem,

the same Bible, the same faiths here. Where else in the world do you have that? Not as a "once upon a time" type of thing, but something both as timeless, timely and relevant as it ever was—to billions of people around the world! This is a big privilege: We are living at a time where we are able to bring Jerusalem, its heritage and its history back to life, not only in the sense where it's in a museum and behind glass, but where people can actually engage with it, touch it, walk on it, and see it with their own eyes!

BN: I agree. This is such a special time for archaeology in Jerusalem, and across Israel. We appreciate everything the City of David Foundation has done and look forward to seeing what you uncover at the Pool of Siloam.

ZO: I would just say one more thing. A testament to the work that the Armstrong Institute is doing and what we are doing in the City of David is, how many archaeological excavations are there in the world that in the grand scheme of things matter to people today? Yes, history is important, and we want to know about our past. But how many ancient civilizations really still matter today or are really relevant today? The excavations taking place today—yes, in Israel, but in Jerusalem, in places like the City of David and in the Ophel area—in the biblical Jerusalem envelope matter to billions of people. And that history matters today and will matter tomorrow. To have a hand in that, to be a steward and to unearth this—not just for our benefit but for the benefit of billions of people around the world, and also for future generations—is a big privilege. And I know that it is something that the Armstrong Institute also takes very seriously: that this is not just another dig—it is Jerusalem. ■

Who Was the Pharaoh of the Exodus?

It's a complex and difficult question to answer. And there are countless theories about this man's identity.

BY CHRISTOPHER EAMES

IT'S ONE OF THE MOST COMMON QUESTIONS in the world of biblical archaeology. Egypt's pharaoh during the Exodus is mentioned numerous times in the Bible. Yet his actual name, and his precise place in Egyptian history, has plagued believers, philosophers, archaeologists, historians and scholars for centuries—thousands of years, in fact.

There is no end to the theories about his identity. Prof. Emmanuel Anati believes it was Pepi I, a pharaoh in the 24th century B.C.E. Prof. Israel Finkelstein believes the Exodus account was modeled after Pharaoh Necho II in the late-seventh century. Most films about the Exodus, including Cecil DeMille's 1956 classic, *The Ten Commandments*, favor Ramesses II (13th century B.C.E.).

A favorite among Bible maximalists is Amenhotep II (15th century B.C.E.) Then there are the speculations of the chronological revisionists.

David Rohl believes it was Dedumose II. Immanuel Velikovsky identified him as the otherwise obscure "Tom-Taoui-Toth." David Down opined Neferhotep I. Alfred Edersheim believed it was Thutmose II. Herman Hoeh, originally following a form of Velikovskian chronology, initially believed it was Merenre Nemtyemsaf II; later, following more conventional chronology, Amenhotep II. Isaac Asimov believed it to be Merneptah. According to Sigmund Freud—yes, even the famous psychologist studied the question—it was Akhenaten.

Then there are the theories of the *early* historians. Josephus, the first-century C.E. Jewish author, believed it was one of the pharaohs named Thutmose. Manetho, the third-century B.C.E. Egyptian historian, wrote that it was one of the Amenhoteps. Tacitus identified him as Bakenranef, and Diodorus claimed it was Hatshepsut.

Overwhelmed yet? Amid the endless speculation, one can appreciate the title of John Gee's 1997 journal article, "Who Was *Not* the Pharaoh of the Exodus?"

The Bible names several later pharaohs (in the books of Kings, Chronicles and Jeremiah). But why



doesn't the Torah, the first five books of the Hebrew Bible, name a single one? There is, in fact, a rational explanation (see "Why the Ambiguity of the Exodus Pharaoh?", page 10).

Does answering this question require a vast revision of historical chronologies, as some have done? Conversely, do we have to ignore or dismiss various biblical verses in order to reconcile secular history with biblical history?

Let's dive into one of the most common and complex questions in biblical archaeology.

Identifying the Egyptian Period

Egypt is one of the oldest and best-documented civilizations in human history. From troves of archaeological evidence and numerous historical texts, we can divide its history into periods. A majority of scholars and experts generally agree that the Bible's Exodus account fits within Egypt's "New Kingdom" period, which spanned the second half of the second millennium B.C.E. (circa 1570–1070 B.C.E.), immediately prior to the period

of Israel's monarchy. Chronologically, this time frame encompasses the entire period of the Exodus, Israel's sojourn in the wilderness, and the time of the judges.

This New Kingdom period not only fits tidily with events relating to the biblical Exodus, it also fits with the literary composition of the Torah itself. The Mosaic books are filled with language, references and nuances, from the use of various pharaonic phrases to personal names, that are uniquely associated with Egypt's New Kingdom. (Moses's address recorded in the book of Deuteronomy, for example, is *almost identical* in its layout to dozens of suzerainty treaties common during the New Kingdom period; to learn more about this, read "Searching for Egypt in Israel" at armstronginstitute.org/680.)

The New Kingdom followed a unique period in Egyptian history called the "Second Intermediate Period" (circa 1670–1570 B.C.E.). At this time, Egypt was split in two. Southern Egypt (known as "Upper Egypt" due to its higher elevation) was ruled by native Egyptian pharaohs. Meanwhile, northern Egypt (or "Lower Egypt"), which encompassed the lush Nile Delta (biblical Goshen), was ruled by Semitic "shepherd" kings who had emigrated from Canaan (see page 22). Egyptian history identifies these Semitic shepherds as the "Hyksos."

The rule of the Hyksos in Egypt matches remarkably well with the biblical description of the first part of the Israelite sojourn in Egypt. Even now, 3,500 years later, the connection between the Hyksos and Israel is "frozen in the Egyptian memory to the point that to this day, the average person in Egypt thinks the Hyksos were Jews and associates them with destruction and chaos" (*Jerusalem Post*, July 19, 2020, citing Egyptologist Orly Goldwasser).

For a full analysis of the Hyksos, read "The Hyksos: Evidence of Jacob's Family in Ancient Egypt?" at armstronginstitute.org/835.

The Hyksos era ended in the mid-16th century B.C.E. (this also marked the end of the Second Intermediate Period). At this time, the Hyksos were conquered by a dynasty of native, uber-nationalistic pharaohs ruling from Upper Egypt. These pharaohs subjugated the Hyksos and united the two regions under one government. Egypt's unification, which began with Pharaoh Ahmose I, thrust the kingdom into a "golden age" and marked the beginning of the New Kingdom period.

Egypt's conquest of the Hyksos also has uncanny similarities with the events recorded in Exodus 1. "And the children of Israel were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and multiplied, and waxed exceeding mighty; and the land was filled with them. Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who knew not Joseph. And he said unto his people: 'Behold, the people of the children of Israel are too many and too mighty for us; come, let us deal wisely with them ...'" (verses 7-10).

But Which Egyptian Dynasty?

Israel's oppression and the Exodus fit well within the general New Kingdom period. But we can get even more specific. Historians divide the New Kingdom into three different *dynasties*. The first is known as the 18th Dynasty, or the Thutmosid Dynasty (dynasties were named after the ruling family); this dynasty ruled Egypt from about 1570 to 1300 B.C.E. The second and third (the 19th and 20th dynasties) are referred to as the Ramesside Dynasties, extending from about 1300 to 1070 B.C.E.

One of the most popular theories claims that the pharaoh during the Exodus was Ramesses II, a 13th-century pharaoh. Despite this popular identification, there is no archaeological or historical evidence supporting this conclusion,

and no biblical evidence either. In fact, numerous biblical passages—including the singular verse employed by Ramesside proponents (Exodus 1:11)—reveal that *neither Ramesses II nor ANY of the Ramesside Dynasty pharaohs* could have been the Exodus pharaoh (see sidebar, page 17).

When it comes to biblical chronology, the biblical text clearly indicates the Exodus occurred *during the 15th century B.C.E.*—within the *Thutmosid Dynasty*.

1 Kings 6:1, a verse that connects the Exodus to the construction of Solomon's temple, is key. "And it came to pass in the *four hundred and eightieth year after the children of Israel were come out of the land of Egypt*, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign ... he began to build the house of the Lord." Solomon's reign is universally recognized to date to the middle of the 10th century B.C.E. (More specifically, many estimate that Solomon's temple was constructed around 967 B.C.E.; see ArmstrongInstitute.org/685 for more detail.)

Thanks to 1 Kings 6:1, calculating the date of the Exodus is simple arithmetic: 480 years prior to the early-to-mid-10th century B.C.E. puts the Exodus somewhere in the mid-15th century B.C.E. and places Israel's entrance into Canaan (40 years later) somewhere at the end of that century. Using the widely accepted date of 967 B.C.E. puts the Exodus in 1446 B.C.E. and Israel's entrance into Canaan 40 years later in 1406 B.C.E.

Other verses can be used to cross-check and corroborate the dating of the Exodus to the 15th century.

WHY THE AMBIGUITY ABOUT THE EXO

Why is the history surrounding the identity of early Egyptian pharaohs, especially the pharaoh of the Exodus, so obscure? One obvious archaeological reason is the Egyptian practice of *damnatio memoriae* ("condemnation of memory"). This is the act of *excising* embarrassing acts, individuals and defeats from historical records. Ancient Egyptian leaders are known to be masters at eliminating their own history.

A case in point was revealed in 2003, with the discovery of the 16th-century B.C.E. tomb of Governor Sobeknakht. An inscription in the tomb revealed that Egypt was almost *totally*

wiped out by a Kushite (Ethiopian) invasion. As reported by the *Times*, the surprising discovery of this previously unknown event reveals that the ancient Egyptians "*airbrushed' out of history* one of their most humiliating defeats in battle" (emphasis added throughout). Egyptologist Vivian Davies noted: "Had they stayed to occupy Egypt, the Kushites might have eliminated it. That's how close Egypt came to extinction. [This discovery] changes the textbooks."

But it shouldn't change the textbooks. Why? Because this traumatic event was *clearly documented, at length*, by the first-century B.C.E. Jewish historian Josephus in his

Antiquities of the Jews (2.10.1-2). Unfortunately, due to the lack of *archaeological* evidence, the writings of Josephus—much like the biblical text—were simply ignored by scholars until an artifact was uncovered confirming what he wrote.

Just think: If a near "*extinction*" event like this was so easily "*airbrushed*" from Egypt's history, isn't it possible, even likely, that the events surrounding Israel's Exodus might have suffered the same fate?

But what about the frustratingly obscure name of the biblical pharaoh? Why are *none* of the numerous pharaohs of the Torah mentioned by name? In fact, it is not until the 10th century

For example, Judges 11:26 states that at the time of the judge Jephthah—circa 1100 B.C.E.—the Israelites had dwelt in the land of Canaan for about “three hundred years” (thus putting their arrival around 1400 B.C.E.) There is also the priestly Aaronic genealogical information documented in 1 Chronicles 5 that lists 19 generations from the Exodus to the construction of Solomon’s temple. This is an impossibly large number to fit inside a 13th-century Ramesside reign, yet it fits neatly within the time frame of a 15th-century Exodus during the Thutmosid Dynasty. (To study this particular topic further, read ArmstrongInstitute.org/762 and ArmstrongInstitute.org/350.)

With the biblical time frame of the Exodus established, thus confining our search to Egypt’s Thutmosid Dynasty (circa 1570–1300 B.C.E.), we can look more closely for evidence of events associated with the Exodus and, additionally, evidence that might reveal the identity of Egypt’s pharaoh at the time.

But to do this, we must avoid what I believe to be one of the major pitfalls in this debate: We should not lock ourselves from the outset into an excessively rigid, year-by-year chronological reconstruction. Instead, we should maintain a sensible amount of flexibility when it comes to specific dates. While creating intricate and specific chronologies is fascinating, it’s also fickle. This history occurred 3,500 years ago; without an ancient text or artifact patently identifying a specific date, it’s virtually impossible to settle on absolute dates for most

events. Plus, new discoveries constantly require scholars to tweak and refine chronologies. There is, for example, some significant debate over exact dates during this New Kingdom period (the arguments revolve around *years* and *decades*, however, not the *centuries* of extreme chronological revisionists). Should we adhere to low chronology? High chronology? Variations thereof?

For the purposes of this particular article, fixating on specific dates like this is unnecessary. Going forward, we’ll refer to more general periods of time rather than specific years. (For more detailed specifics about the dating of the following pharaohs, see the sidebar on page 10.)

We have our period: New Kingdom. We have our dynasty: Thutmosid. Now we can look more closely at specific pharaohs.

Akhenaten

We’ll begin with Pharaoh Akhenaten, an early 14th-century B.C.E. ruler (using the high chronology dating), and extrapolate backward.

Akhenaten’s reign marked a time of major upheaval in Canaan, which at this time was loosely controlled by Egypt. The disturbance was primarily due to the violent invasion of the Levant by the *Habiru* people, as documented in the Amarna Letters. The invasion of Canaan by

DUS PHARAOH?

B.C.E. onward, starting with Pharaoh Shishak (Shoshenq I), that pharaohs began to be named in the Bible.

There’s a fascinating historical reason for this, too. *This was not unusual during Egypt’s New Kingdom period*, the setting in which Moses authored the Torah. Instead of using the pharaoh’s official name, it was typical at this time to refer to him only by title. “By the Ramesside period (1300–1100 B.C.E.), ‘Pharaoh’ is widely used,” wrote Egyptologist Prof. James K. Hoffmeier in *Israel in Egypt*. “From its inception until the 10th century, the term ‘Pharaoh’ stood alone, without juxtaposed personal name.” This would fit precisely with the biblical

account, with the emergence of personal pharaonic names during the 10th century B.C.E.

But there is another potential reason for the biblical ambiguity surrounding this pharaoh. A recurring motif in the Bible is the notion of *blotting out the name* of the enemy (i.e. 2 Kings 14:26–27; Deuteronomy 29:19; Psalm 83:5). In Exodus 32:32, Moses himself even discusses with God the possibility of his *own* name being blotted, or erased, “out of Thy book which Thou hast written”!

In the case of the Exodus pharaoh, there are certain passages that conceivably suggest the intentional erasure of his name from the biblical

text. Isaiah 26:13–14 say, “O Lord our God, other lords beside Thee have had dominion over us [i.e. Egypt’s pharaoh]; *But by THEE ONLY do we make mention of THY name.* ... Thou punished and destroyed them, And made *all their memory to perish.*”

Verses like this certainly help explain the level of confusion and disagreement about the identity of the Exodus pharaoh. Yet they do not state categorically that the pharaoh *cannot* be known. As such, we have approached our investigation in the spirit of King Solomon, who wrote, “It is the glory of God to conceal a thing; but *the glory of kings is to search out a matter*” (Proverbs 25:2).

the Habiru fits remarkably well with the biblical account of Israel's conquest of Canaan, which began around 1400 B.C.E. and continued for at least two or three decades. (The Habiru "conquest" actually started during the reign of his father, Amenhotep III.)

To learn more about the Amarna Letters and the astonishing parallels between the *Habiru* conquest of Canaan and the biblical *Hebrew* conquest of Canaan, read "The Amarna Letters" on page 28.

Pharaoh Akhenaten's reign is noteworthy for another reason: During this period, *Egypt's polytheistic religious system was completely removed and replaced by an unprecedented turn toward monotheism* (specifically, the worship of the sun-god Aten; in fact, Akhenaten renamed himself after the god—his original regnal name was Amenhotep IV).

What caused this extraordinary religious transformation? Some scholars believe it was simply an aberration in Egyptian history. Various researchers have labeled

DATING SPECIFICS: PHARAHOHS OF THE

Although the dating of Egypt's New Kingdom period has become much more refined, significant debate still exists. Two opposing chronological frameworks are an earlier "high chronology" and a later "low chronology." As stated, this issue leans toward high chronology. The following are fairly standard high-chronology dates pertinent to this article (low chronology lowers certain of these dates by one or two decades):

Ahmose I = 1570–1546 B.C.E.
Amenhotep I = 1546–1526 B.C.E.
Thutmose I = 1526–1512 B.C.E.
Thutmose II = 1512–1504 B.C.E.
Hatshepsut = 1504–1483 B.C.E.
Thutmose III = 1504–1451 B.C.E.
Amenhotep II = 1453–1426 B.C.E.
Thutmose IV = 1426–1416 B.C.E.
Amenhotep III = 1416–1377 B.C.E.
Akhenaten = 1377–1360 B.C.E.

Prof. Douglas Petrovich agrees that the reign of Amenhotep II began in 1453 B.C.E., with an Exodus date of 1446 B.C.E. (derived 480 years from a temple-construction date of 967 B.C.E.), thus putting the Exodus within Year 9 of his reign. Petrovich further theorizes that Amenhotep II's Year 9 campaign, in which he took over 101,000 captives, was an attempt to replenish his slave base in the months following the Exodus event (see his article "Amenhotep II and the Historicity of the Exodus-Pharaoh,"

2006). It's an interesting theory, but after everything the Bible describes surrounding the plagues—the total destruction and humiliation of Egypt, not to mention the destruction of the pharaoh's elite chariot force—is it reasonable to believe Amenhotep II, only *months later*, had the means to engage in one of the most successful military campaigns in history?

Dr. Hoeh agreed with a 1453 B.C.E. accession date for Amenhotep II ("Notes Regarding Reigns of Kings," 1983), yet placed the construction date of the temple in 964 B.C.E., and therefore, the Exodus in 1443 B.C.E.—Amenhotep II's 10th year, thus immediately following the last significant mention of his reign (the Year 9 campaign), and within his "missing years."

As stated, we have chosen not to lock ourselves into such rigid chronological systems from the outset. There is the debate between high and low chronology, but within these general chronologies, there are significant individual debates regarding regnal length and coregency. Was Thutmose II's reign as long as 13 years, or as short as three? The former is usually preferred—but the latter would significantly adjust ensuing chronologies. What about Amenhotep III and his son Akhenaten? Generally, no coregency is preferred—though some scholars posit a co-regency as long as 12 years. Others

place the beginning of Akhenaten's reign as early as 1482 B.C.E. The list goes on.

Generally, where possible, such chronologies are anchored to astronomical data (such as the Sothic Cycle), referencing astronomical observations documented on inscriptions. But these are rare. Moreover, there is debate about *where* such ancient observations were made (which can radically affect the dating).

In *Studies in the Reign of Amenophis II*, Peter Der Manuelian highlights at length the debate over dating Amenhotep II using astronomical data—including attempts of Egyptologists to "emend" certain inscriptions, artificially *correcting* assumed "errors" in order to iron out contradictions in chronology! This discussion "reveals the diversity of opinion among scholars and the multiple factors involved in dealing with these dates," he concludes. "It is this writer's opinion that the problem *cannot be conclusively solved* from the data presently available. *Too many solutions hang on emendations ...*" (emphasis added throughout). As such, he defers to the least-contested anchor date: a lunar-derived date for the Battle of Megiddo. "On the basis of an unamended Battle of Megiddo, we are left with two choices for Tuthmosis III's dates [from which Amenhotep II's dates are extrapolated]—either an accession in

Akhenaten a “revolutionary,” “heretic” and “fanatic.” Some claim he was “possibly insane.” Some, after reading the Amarna Letters—which document his failure to send military aid to Canaan to defend against the Habiru—call him a “pacifist.” This dismissive name-calling doesn’t explain the major religious upheaval under Akhenaten. Does archaeology provide insight?

A pylon inscription at the Karnak temple complex near Thebes records a jaw-dropping speech by Akhenaten. It reads, in part: “*The temples of the gods are fallen to ruin,*

their bodies do not endure. ... I have watched as they have ceased their appearances, one after the other. All of them have stopped, except the god who gave birth to himself. And no one knows the mystery of how he performs his tasks. This god goes where he pleases and no one else knows his going” (emphasis added throughout).

Pharaoh Akhenaten’s speech reflects the total loss of faith in Egypt’s numerous gods. Is it mere coincidence that within the *same dynasty* and only *decades after the biblical Exodus*—during which Egypt’s various gods were proved powerless—we witness the total overhaul of Egypt’s religious system? Akhenaten’s moving speech is unthinkable in ancient Egypt; it’s a massive historical anomaly. Could this pharaoh’s reforms have been a consequence of what the biblical record identifies as plagues aimed “*against all the gods of Egypt*”? (Exodus 12:12).

18TH DYNASTY

1504 B.C. with death in 1450 B.C. [high chronology], or an accession in 1479 B.C., with death in 1425 B.C. [low chronology].”

Naturally, such a struggle to reconcile astronomical data will prove no surprise for the Bible believer. After all, events such as Joshua 10:13 (“And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed”) and Isaiah 38:8 (“the sun returned ten degrees”) already throw such reliance on astronomical extrapolation into doubt (not to mention the early biblical 360-day-year model versus our current 365.2-day year). From a Bible-literal standpoint, on the basis of such potential astronomical changes, how reliable can astronomical dating be anyway?

It is my opinion, therefore, that the Exodus event *should* best be placed at the *end* of Amenhotep II’s reign (whether that infers a later construction of Solomon’s temple or an earlier chronology for certain 18th Dynasty pharaohs). This is based on Amenhotep II’s Year 23 stele, his comparatively young death, and in particular, the surprise succession of his younger son, Thutmose IV.

Furthermore, regarding his eldest son that predeceased him (a prince of the same name, Amenhotep), Manuelian writes: “According to [Egyptologist Donald] Redford, this prince Amenhotep was born during the first five years of Amenophis II’s reign, *since he held office by the king’s 20th year*, and therefore would have been older (and thus closer in line to the throne) than the future Tuthmosis IV.”

There is some debate about the identity of this Prince Amenhotep—if he was indeed Amenhotep II’s son and intended successor. But if so, this firstborn’s death sometime *beyond* Year 20 of his father’s rule would surely seal the debate, in placing the “death of the firstborn” and the Exodus at the very *end* of Amenhotep II’s reign.



JACOB AND HIS FAMILY ENTER EGYPT
c. 1660

MOSES BORN
c. 1526

<<17TH DYNASTY, EGYPT DIVIDED BETWEEN UPPER AND LOWER EGYPT

AHMOSE I
1570-1546

AMENHOTEP I
1546-1526

THUTMOSE I
1526-1512

THUT-
MOSE II
1512-
1504

HATSHEPSUT / THUTMOSE III
1504-1483 / 1504-1451

1650

1600

1550

1500

14

Amenhotep III

Prior to Akhenaten, Egypt was led by his father, Pharaoh Amenhotep III. Amenhotep III ruled for around 40 years, from the late 15th century into the early 14th. Some Egyptologists actually believe he laid the groundwork for the religious transformation that occurred under Akhenaten.

Like his son, and *unlike* most pharaohs, Amenhotep III is characterized as a “pacifist.” Despite his long reign, he is known to have participated in only *one* military campaign (this was south of Egypt, not east, where several earlier pharaohs had campaigned). Amenhotep III was known for his construction of statues—lots of them. But here too is something unusual: *Six hundred* of the

statues commissioned by Amenhotep III are devoted to Sekhmet, the goddess of healing.

Why the emphasis on HEALING? Why no wars?

Another interesting find emerges from Amenhotep III’s reign: A pylon inscription from his royal necropolis at Soleb refers to a *nomadic* group of people called the “Shasu (Nomads) of YHWH.” No further detail is recorded about this wandering body of people, other than the fact that they were apparently located somewhere east of Egypt (based on the positioning of such pillar inscriptions). Amenhotep’s inscription is the *earliest*-known mention of the famous name of Israel’s God, YHWH.

Is it coincidence that the end of Amenhotep III’s reign and the beginning of Akhenaten’s fits with Israel’s conquest of Canaan? Is it coincidence that the body of

HOW DID THE EXODUS PHARAOH DIE?

Many believe that the Exodus pharaoh died in the Red Sea. Psalm 106:11 says of the Egyptian army that there was “not one” left alive there. But many Amenhotep II proponents—primarily those who date the Exodus event earlier in his reign—believe Amenhotep II survived his army’s defeat at the Red Sea.

In his article “Pharaohs of the Time of the Exodus,” Keith Stump—likewise positing an Exodus during Amenhotep II’s 10th year—briefly explained: “Contrary to the common notion about the Pharaoh of the Exodus, Amenhotep II did not drown in the Red Sea with his army. Read carefully Exodus 14:23-31. Ancient records reveal that Amenhotep II’s reign lasted no less than into his 26th year. ... Sixteen of those 26 years followed the Exodus.”

Similarly, Prof. Douglas Petrovich—in a 2021 *Digging for Truth* podcast

interview titled “Amenhotep II as Pharaoh of the Exodus”—addressed other commonly cited proof texts for the Pharaoh’s death in the Red Sea, such as Psalm 106:11 and Psalm 136:15 (the Hebrew word for “overthrew” David elsewhere applies to *himself*, during his life—Psalm 109:23).

I favor placing the Exodus toward the end of Amenhotep II’s reign and entertain the possibility that it did result in his death. But what about Pharaoh Amenhotep II’s mummy?

Amenhotep II’s mummy (CG 61069) has been identified. His body was scarred by an unusual, potentially widespread disease. A 2016 reanalysis of the 18th Dynasty mummies, M. E. Habicht, A. S. Bouwman and F. J. Rühli expressed certain “reservations” about its identity—though they concluded that it “should be considered as Amenhotep II until proven otherwise” (“Identifications of Ancient Egyptian

Royal Mummies From the 18th Dynasty Reconsidered,” *American Journal of Physical Anthropology*).

Thus, we have two interesting scenarios: The first suggests that this *is* Amenhotep II, with a body bearing the scars of plague or disease. The second suggests that this is someone else entirely from the time period, with the pharaoh’s body remaining at large (perhaps lost in the Red Sea). Based on the collective evidence, the former seems the most probable: that this *is* Amenhotep II. Yet the possibility remains open that Amenhotep II’s body could have been recovered from Egypt’s defeat at the Red Sea and subsequently embalmed in accordance with Egyptian tradition. (Exodus 14:30 indicates Egyptian bodies washed ashore.)

It is interesting to speculate. Either way, the outcome has no bearing on the accuracy of the biblical text.



Amenhotep III's reign fits with Israel's nomadic sojourn? And isn't it interesting that Egypt under Amenhotep III experienced an uncharacteristic *pacifism*, with a peculiar devotion to Sekhmet, the goddess of healing—followed by the eventual complete collapse in Egypt's religious system?

Thutmose IV

Amenhotep III's father and predecessor was Pharaoh Thutmose IV. This pharaoh reigned for only nine years in the second half of the 15th century. Short though it was, Thutmose's rule was a surprise. We know this thanks to the Dream Stele.

The Dream Stele is a nearly 4-meter-tall granite inscription installed between the paws of the Great Sphinx of Giza. This massive stele was erected during the first year of Thutmose IV's reign. The text, commissioned by Thutmose IV, essentially constitutes a unique and unusual *divine justification* for his reign.

Why was Thutmose IV compelled to publicly declare that he was divinely installed? *Because he was not the firstborn, presumptive heir to Egypt's throne.* "It is unfortunate that the events surrounding the accession of Thutmosis IV are so obscure," writes Egyptologist Peter Der Manuelian, "especially since his Dream Stele between the paws of the Great Sphinx suggests that he was NOT THE ORIGINALLY INTENDED HEIR TO THE THRONE" (*Studies in the Reign of Amenophis II*).

What happened to the firstborn whose place Thutmose assumed? Some scholars wonder if Thutmose IV *murdered* his way to the throne. But there's no evidence to support this view, and there are various difficulties with this interpretation. Meanwhile, the fact that Thutmose IV was not the firstborn son and assumed Egypt's throne unexpectedly fits squarely with the biblical account of the 10th plague: *the death of the firstborn, which included Egypt's crown prince.* "And it came to pass at midnight, that the Lord smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the *first-born of Pharaoh that sat on his throne* unto the first-born of the captive that was in the dungeon ..." (Exodus 12:29).

But there's more: The fact that the pharaoh of the Exodus *survived* the 10th plague logically implies that *he too was not a firstborn.* And fascinatingly, Egyptian records reveal that the father of *Thutmose IV*—Egypt's

ruler in the crucial middle part of the 15th century B.C.E.—was *likewise not the firstborn heir to the throne.*

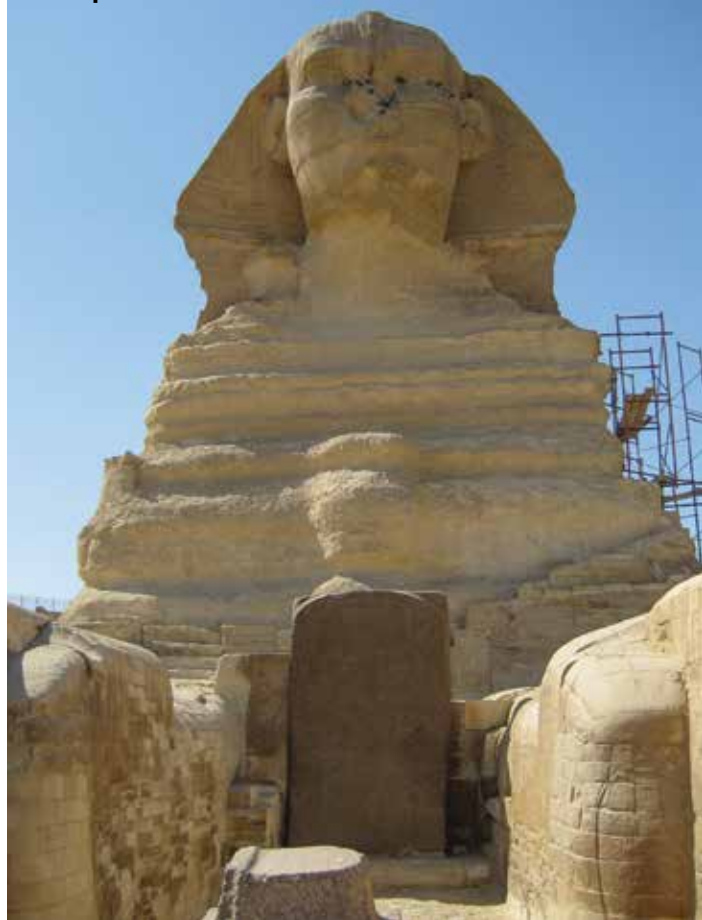
This would logically place Thutmose IV's father as the pharaoh of the Exodus!

Thus far, we have examined the Thutmosid Dynasty pharaohs who came *after* the Exodus. Before we explore the Exodus pharaoh himself, let's consider the pharaohs *before* him—that is, some of the earlier, *pre-Exodus* pharaohs of the Thutmosid Dynasty—to see if we also have a match for the biblical account.

Thutmose I

With the Israelites entering Canaan in the late 15th century B.C.E., during the reign of Amenhotep III, we can use the life of Moses to

Great Sphinx of Giza



develop a time line. The biblical account shows that Moses died at the age of 120, and his life was divided into three 40-year periods: First, he was a prince in Egypt; second, he dwelt in the wilderness of Midian; and third, at the age of 80, he was called to deliver Israel from Egypt and take them, over a period of 40 years, to Canaan (Exodus 7:7; Deuteronomy 29:4; etc).

If Israel entered Canaan at the end of the 15th century, Moses must have been born in the last half of the 16th century B.C.E. Depending on where exactly we anchor his death during the reign of Amenhotep III, this would place the birth of Moses during either the reigns of Thutmose I or Thutmose II.

Pharaoh Thutmose I, the grandson or son-in-law of the New Kingdom progenitor Ahmose I, was a powerful pharaoh known for massively expanding Egypt's borders. Egyptian records show that Thutmose I commissioned

major construction projects throughout Egypt, requiring a massive labor force. Thutmose I's reign, therefore, fits well as one of the pharaohs during Israel's oppression.

The children of Thutmose I are especially intriguing. This pharaoh sired a *fully* royal daughter, Hatshepsut (born through his Great Royal Wife, Ahmose), and a *half*-royal son, Thutmose II (born through his minor wife, Mutnofret). In order to secure his son's rightful place on Egypt's throne, Thutmose I had his 18-year-old son marry his 24-year-old half-sister.

Thutmose II

Thutmose II was a weak and apparently sickly pharaoh. His reign was short; his rule may have lasted barely three years. It might have been brief, but an archaeological discovery shows he was brutal, and that he had a reputation for *killing male children*.

The Aswan Inscription, from the first year of Thutmose II's reign, records the following about a southern campaign against "the vile Kush": "As I live, as Ra loves me, as my father lord of the gods praises me, I WILL NOT LEAVE A MALE ALIVE.' ... [T]his army of his majesty overthrew these foreigners, *they took the life of every male according to all that his majesty commanded; excepting that one of those children of the prince of Kush was brought alive as a live prisoner with their household to his majesty*"

Sound familiar? Exodus 1:22 records the pharaoh's command to destroy male infants born to Hebrew mothers: "And Pharaoh charged all his people, saying: 'Every son that is born ye shall cast into the river, and every daughter ye shall save alive.'" Moses, of course, was miraculously spared from this, placed in a basket on the Nile River, and found by "pharaoh's daughter."

Was this *Hatshepsut*, the royal daughter of Thutmose I, and the wife and half-sister of Thutmose II?

Hatshepsut

Hatshepsut failed to produce a male heir for Thutmose II, who instead conceived his successor, Thutmose III, through a concubine named Iset. Could this lack of a son have provided additional motive for Hatshepsut to adopt Moses? (Notably, the chosen moniker "Mose" or "Moses" was a common Egyptian name and name-element at this time—i.e. *Thutmose*.)

Thutmose III was just 2 years old when his father died, so Hatshepsut initiated a 22-year coregency with Thutmose III and became a powerful pharaoh in her own right. From the reign of Hatshepsut, we glean interesting tidbits that point to her identification as the famous "pharaoh's daughter" mentioned in Exodus. Hatshepsut often referred to herself on monuments as the pharaoh's royal "daughter" (despite her father

Hatshepsut



Thutmose I having been long dead), apparently emphasizing her royal heredity.

Sir William Flinders Petrie (the “father of Egyptian archaeology”) noted that Pharaoh Hatshepsut’s “activity seems to have been entirely given to peaceful enterprises,” in “an age of tranquility to the realm” (*A History of Egypt*, Vol. II). One remarkable inscription on the facade of her temple at Speos Artemidos reads, in part: “my spirits *inclined toward foreign people* ... the people Roshau and Iuu did not hide themselves from me.” Another inscription describes a “heart full of love.” These extraordinary sentiments fit well with the biblical description of a “pharaoh’s daughter” who adopted a foreign child.

Unfortunately, Hatshepsut’s peaceful 22-year legacy was eventually destroyed. By whom? Many scholars identify the culprit as the father of Thutmose IV—the *pharaoh of the Exodus*. This pharaoh *utterly destroyed and defaced* Hatshepsut’s monuments, statutes and inscriptions, plastering over them and re-inscribing them with alternative texts. This act of *damnatio memoriae* was systematic and near-total.

Why the vitriolic excision of Hatshepsut’s legacy? Some scholars propose that it was simply because she was a female ruler. But that seems hardly sufficient. Is there more to the story? Did the Exodus pharaoh seek to eradicate the memory of Hatshepsut because he resented her affection “toward foreign people”? Did he blame Hatshepsut for nurturing Moses in Egypt’s royal court and causing the events that led to Israel’s dramatic Exodus and Egypt’s ruin?

Thutmose III

Counting his coregency with Hatshepsut, Thutmose III reigned 54 years, one of the longest in Egyptian history. As sole monarch, Thutmose III set about forging himself into arguably Egypt’s *greatest*, most powerful pharaoh. Unquestionably, he was Egypt’s greatest *conqueror*. Through his manifold campaigns, this “Napoleon of Egypt” (as he is sometimes called) created the largest empire Egypt had ever seen.

It’s easy to imagine the pharaoh of the Exodus as Egypt’s most impressive ruler. But logically, it makes more sense that this acclaim would have belonged to the pharaoh who preceded him. Indeed, it was in association with the reign of the Exodus pharaoh’s *father*, just prior to Moses’s divine calling to save the Israelites, that the Israelites “sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto God” (Exodus 2:23).

Thutmose III’s rule spanned much of the first half of the 15th century B.C.E. During this time, there is a good chronological fit with Moses being in Egypt’s royal

HOLLYWOOD’S FAVORITE PHARAOH

Proponents of a Ramesside Exodus pharaoh—most commonly Ramesses II—use Exodus 1:11 as evidence for this identification.

This verse says the Israelites built the cities of “Pithom and Raamses.” But note that the name *Raamses* is used in regard to a location, not an individual.

Egyptian history shows that Ramesside pharaohs (including Ramesses II) only arrived on the scene during the 13th century B.C.E., nearly 200 years *later* than the date of the Exodus consistently highlighted by other scriptures. In response, Ramesside proponents dismiss the 480-year period mentioned in 1 Kings 6:1 as merely “symbolic,” Judges 11:26 as “erroneous,” and the chronologies of 1 Chronicles 6 as “artificially extended.”

Yet identifying the Exodus pharaoh as Ramesses II (or any of the other Ramesside pharaohs) based on Exodus 1:11 leads to further issues. Exodus 2:23 states that this earlier pharaoh *died* before Moses returned to save the Israelites. Even if Exodus 1:11 is a link to Ramesses II, Exodus 2:23 would disqualify him from being the pharaoh of the Exodus.

But what about this biblical reference to “Raamses”? Fifteenth-century proponents identify it as a later scribal edit known as an “anachronism”—a more familiar, later term used for a more obscure, earlier name (for example, our common anachronistic use of the term “France” when describing ancient “Gaul”). Such a scribal edit could conceivably have been accomplished by the Prophet Samuel (who lived at the end of the Ramesside period), an individual traditionally ascribed to part of the early compilation of the biblical texts (particularly Joshua, Judges and 1 Samuel), which put an emphasis on place-names as they are “to this day.”

But we need not simply speculate that “Raamses” was an anachronistic term; *we already know* that the term is used anachronistically in the Bible. That’s because this same geographical name is found in the account of the patriarchs Jacob and Joseph (Genesis 47:11, “the land of Rameses”). Should this patriarchal period *also* be brought centuries forward and squeezed into the 13th-century Ramesside period? Certainly not. For a detailed explanation, see our article, “The ‘Raamses’ of Exodus 1:11: Timestamp of Authorship? Or Anachronism?”, at ArmstrongInstitute.org/767.

court, then fleeing into the Midian wilderness where he lived for a significant length of time. Exodus 2:23 says, “And it came to pass in the course of those MANY DAYS [while Moses was in Midian] that the king of Egypt [Thutmose III] died” The phrase “many days” is not only a clear reference to Moses’s lengthy stay in Midian, it’s an obvious reference to the *lengthy* reign of Egypt’s pharaoh at that time. In short, it’s a likely reference to Pharaoh Thutmose III, one of Egypt’s longest-serving monarchs.

If Thutmose III preceded the Exodus pharaoh, then his *firstborn* son and heir-apparent—the royal prince, *Amenemhat*—would presumably be the pharaoh of the Exodus. But in Egyptian records, Amenemhat is barely a historical footnote. Why? *Because Thutmose III’s firstborn son died before his father!* When Pharaoh Thutmose III died, Egypt’s throne was inherited by a non-firstborn son. His name?

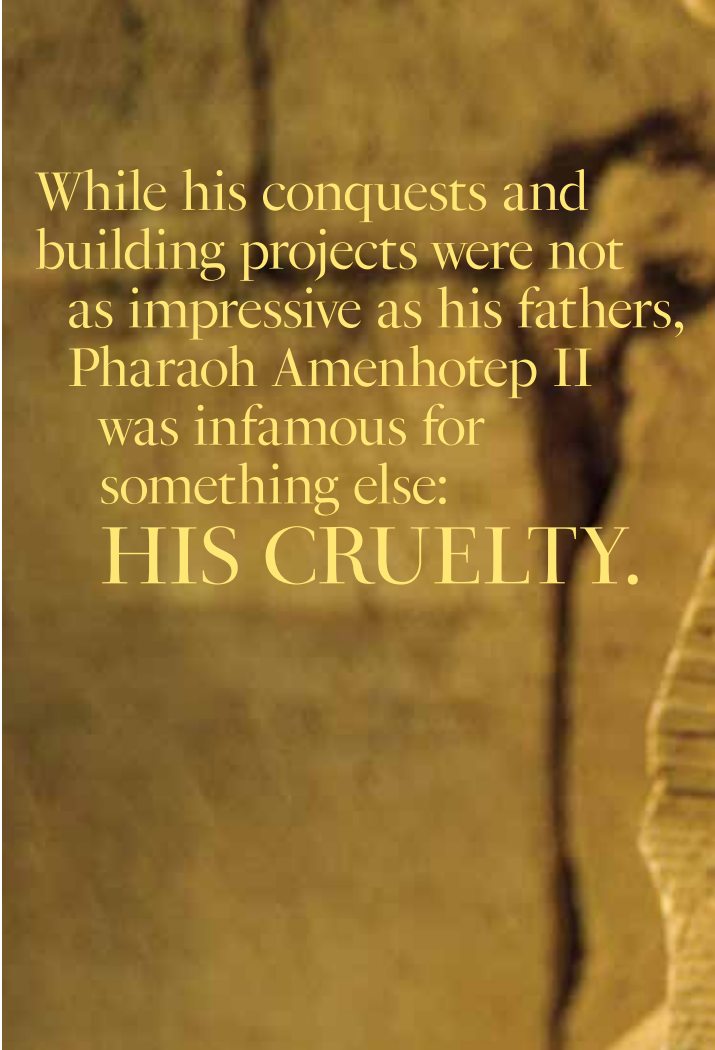
Amenhotep II.

Meet Amenhotep II

Egyptian records show that Pharaoh Amenhotep II assumed the throne when he was 18 and reigned for 26 years. His rule began rigorously as the young king followed in the footsteps of his powerful father. Several royal inscriptions show that Amenhotep II initiated three massive military campaigns; these conquests occurred during the first half of his reign, in years 3, 7 and 9. During his third campaign, Amenhotep II apparently imported more than 101,000 captives from the Levant into Egypt (the highest number of slaves ever brought into Egypt by any pharaoh).

Such a slave force, naturally, requires slave *masters*. And there is none more famous than vizier Rekhmire, one of Amenhotep II’s foremost officials. The walls of his mid-15th-century tomb are adorned with paintings of *Semitic slaves making bricks* from mud, water and chaff (following the precise recipe detailed in Exodus 5). An inscription in Rekhmire’s tomb reads: “Rejoice, O prince, all your affairs are flourishing. *The treasure stores are overflowing*”

Compare this with Exodus 1:11, which says explicitly that Israelite slaves constructed “treasure cities” (King James Version). Interestingly, the third-century B.C.E. Septuagint version of Exodus 1:11 identifies Heliopolis as a key Egyptian treasure city at this time. This



While his conquests and building projects were not as impressive as his fathers, Pharaoh Amenhotep II was infamous for something else: **HIS CRUELTY.**

same city is repeatedly found to be associated with Amenhotep II on ancient inscriptions; several inscriptions refer to the pharaoh as “Amenhotep, the god who rules in Heliopolis.”

While his conquests and building projects were not as impressive as his fathers, Pharaoh Amenhotep II was infamous for something else: *his cruelty*.

This is highlighted at length in Manuelian’s authoritative work on Amenhotep II, *Studies in the Reign of Amenophis II* (“Amenophis” is the classical Greek form of the name Amenhotep). Manuelian writes that the pharaoh’s Amada and Elephantine stelaes “seem to emphasize first and foremost the glorification of the king through examples of excessive cruelty. Though the literary and artistic motif of a pharaoh smiting his enemies enjoys a history as long as that of the unification of the Two Lands itself [the start of the New Kingdom, with the reign of Ahmose I], AMENOPHIS MAY HAVE TAKEN ROYAL RUTHLESSNESS TO NEW EXTREMES [His inscriptions reveal] a penchant for what seems almost a casual narration of the king’s gruesome treatment of his enemies.”



Amenhotep II

Inscriptions documenting Amenhotep II's Year 3 campaign, for example, record how he transported enemy leaders tied upside down to the bow of his royal ship, before nailing them—minus their hands—to the walls of Thebes and Napata.

“Both the Karnak and Memphis narratives give a description of the king's might and brutality,” explains Manuelian. He highlights one “rather macabre affair” in which, on his Year 9 campaign, Amenhotep II ordered trenches to be dug, which he then filled with prisoners whom he *set ablaze in “a fiery holocaust.”* “[S]uch brutal treatment of his enemies [in this Year 9 campaign] should not surprise us in Amenhotep II's case” based on the precedent of his earlier campaigns, Manuelian writes. These textual accounts also go together with various artistic depictions in Egypt of the pharaoh on campaign—scenes that “depict the king in his chariot with bound captives ... tied to the chassis.”

Compare this record with the biblical text, which repeatedly describes the Exodus pharaoh as having a “*hardened heart.*” Is there a better fit than

Amenhotep II—a pharaoh of “excessive cruelty,” who took “royal ruthlessness to new extremes”?

Perhaps the most notable observation about the archaeological record of Amenhotep II pertains to the last half of his 26-year reign. In short, it's virtually *nonexistent!*

What Happened?

Amenhotep II is known for engaging in campaigns in years 3, 7 and 9. But after his third campaign, we have almost no record of his reign. “Of the remainder of his reign,” wrote Sir William Petrie, “*we know nothing.*” In the words of Manuelian, this “silence ... plays too large a role in assessing Amenophis II's policies, *for not a single text has survived which describes a major act or decree of any historical significance.*”

The same is true of his monuments, *NONE* of which, as Petrie wrote, can be “*dated above the fifth year.*” Furthermore, of the monuments we do have from Amenhotep II's reign, some of them are clearly only partially complete. “Nothing strikes us as more extraordinary than the condition of injury and confusion in which the most important buildings of Egypt seem to have remained,” Petrie wrote. “The most imposing works stood amidst half-ruined and unfinished halls for a whole reign; other parts were walled off to hide offensive memorials; other structures were either incomplete or half-ruined” (*ibid.*).

What happened in the latter part of Amenhotep II's reign? Why was his reign so short, at least compared to that of his father? As Manuelian notes, Amenhotep II was young and healthy; he is arguably known as Egypt's most athletic pharaoh. *Yet Amenhotep II died in his early 40s*—an age corroborated by analysis of his mummy (CG 61069, from tomb KV35; see sidebar, page 14).

In 1907, when Amenhotep II's mummified body was unwrapped, scientists noticed the presence of *unusual tubercles all over the body.* Grafton Elliot Smitt, who studied the corpse, wondered whether the tubercles developed during the embalming process or were, rather, *the product of disease.* His exact cause of death is unknown, but evidence of *disease* would certainly fit with the biblical account of the plagues.

There *is* one particular inscription from Year 23 of Amenhotep II's reign. In a peculiar letter to Usersatet, his viceroy in Nubia, Amenhotep II complained about the “completely

PHARAOH PAGE 33 ►

DID THE ISRAELITES REALLY LIVE IN EGYPT?



We know what the Bible says. What does archaeology say?

BY BRAD MACDONALD AND SAM MCKOY

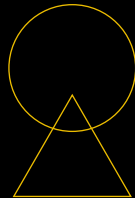
THE BIBLE DESCRIBES ISRAEL'S TIME IN Egypt in remarkable and vivid detail. It tells us roughly when the Semitic descendants of Abraham arrived in Egypt and where they settled. It tells us what the Israelites did while in Egypt and describes their interactions with the Egyptians. Finally, the Bible gives us a good indication of when Israel left Egypt and the dramatic events surrounding its exodus.

Although the biblical text clearly and explicitly documents Israel's sojourn in Egypt, some scholars reject the idea that the Hebrews ever dwelt in Egypt. One primary reason they reject the biblical account as fiction is because of a purported lack of archaeological evidence. "The Exodus is so fundamental to us and our Jewish sources that it is embarrassing that there is no evidence outside of the Bible to support it," wrote archaeologist Stephen Rosenberg in the *Jerusalem Post* (April 14, 2014).

Is that true? Is there really *no evidence outside of the Bible* to prove Israel's sojourn in Egypt and the Exodus?

Before we answer, it's helpful to appreciate why evidence of Israel's sojourn in Egypt can be hard to come by. First, most archaeologists simply cannot agree on *when* the Israelites were in Egypt. Second, only a *tiny fraction* of ancient Egypt has been excavated in controlled excavations. Third, slaves do not usually leave behind scads of evidence. And finally, the ancient Egyptians are infamous for blotting out embarrassing historical events that would tarnish their reputation (which would certainly include the Exodus).

There's also the challenge of the location in which the Israelites lived: Goshen, within the Nile Delta. "The Delta is an alluvial fan of mud deposited through many millennia by the annual flood of the Nile; it has no source of stone within it," writes Egyptologist Kenneth Kitchen. "[M]ud-brick structures were of limited duration and use, and were repeatedly leveled and replaced, and very largely merged once more with the mud of the fields. So those who squawk intermittently, 'No trace of the



THE IBSCHA RELIEF



Hebrews has ever been found' (so of course, no Exodus!), are wasting their breath. The mud hovels of brickfield slaves and humble cultivators have long since gone back to their mud origins

“Even stone structures (such as temples) hardly survive [In this region] 99 percent of discarded papyri have perished forever; a tiny fraction (of late date) have been found carbonized Otherwise, the entirety of Egypt’s administrative records at all periods in the Delta is lost, and monumental texts are also nearly nil” (*On the Reliability of the Old Testament*).

Despite these significant challenges, there is actually a reasonable amount of compelling evidence testifying to Israel’s time in Egypt.

Following are 10 points of evidence. While not every item on this list is irrefutable, the combination of them, in parallel to the biblical record, ought to be enough to cause any open-minded person to at least recognize that there is significant evidence to support the biblical account of Israel’s sojourn in Egypt.

1. THE IBSCHA RELIEF

The Bible mentions several “migrations” of the patriarchs into Egypt, particularly to escape famine events. While Canaan relied on consistent rainfall and was susceptible to drought, the Nile River largely alleviated the threat of drought in Egypt.

The Ibscha Relief is a famous tomb painting discovered at the site of Beni Hasan, an ancient Egyptian mortuary complex on the eastern banks of the Nile River in central Egypt. Belonging to the mid-19th-century B.C.E. tomb of Governor Khnumhotep II, this painting depicts a train of Asiatic (Semitic) men, women and children with goods, wearing unusual, bright, *multicolored garments*, arriving in Egypt from either Canaan or somewhere in the vicinity. The Semites are distinguished in detail by their skin color, hair, beards and clothes, as well as by items on their person (one individual is holding a harp). “This scene is unique in the repertoire of Egyptian funerary art,” explained Egyptologist Janice Kamrin. “Its unusual nature, and the apparent accuracy of its details, renders it very likely to be a representation of, or at least an allusion to, a specific event” (“The Aamu of Shu in the Tomb of Khnumhotep II at Beni Hassan”).

Along with the painting is an inscription that identifies one of the leaders of the procession with a Semitic name and the earliest use of a peculiar title: “Abisha the Hyksos.” The people themselves are labeled the “Aamu of Shu.” Debate continues as to the meaning of this title. *Am* is the most common Hebrew word for “people” or “nation” in the Bible. Whatever the exact meaning, “[t]he bulk of scholarly opinion would thus place the homeland of the Aamu of Shu in the southern Levant,” wrote Kamrin—in other words, in or around *Canaan*.

While the timing of the migration doesn’t match with Jacob, it would be a good fit for his grandfather Abram’s journey to Egypt, as recorded in Genesis 12:10 (see ArmstrongInstitute.org/845 for more information on the dating of Israel’s entry into Egypt).

2. FAMINE STELE

The Famine Stele is a mammoth boulder inscription found on Sehel Island in the Nile River. The inscription is carved in Ptolemaic Egyptian script, probably as late as either the third or second century B.C.E. It recounts a story from Egypt’s distant past of a famine “in a period of *seven years*. Grain was scant, kernels were dried up, scarce was every kind of food. ... Children cried, youngsters fell, the hearts of the old were grieving; legs drawn up, they hugged the ground, their arms clasped about them. Courtiers were needy, temples were shut, shrines covered with dust, everyone was in distress” (emphasis added).

The account proceeds to describe a dream had by the pharaoh for which an answer was provided, in which the “father of the gods” would “make the Nile swell, without there being a year of lack and exhaustion in the whole land, so the plants will flourish, bending under their fruit. ... [E]verything will be brought forth by the million and [...] in whose granary there had been dearth. The land of Egypt is beginning to stir again.”

This account is generally attributed to the reign of Djoser, an early pharaoh traditionally dated to the mid-third millennium B.C.E. Of course, the actual inscription itself was carved thousands of years later. Actually, the account reads remarkably like the one in Genesis 41-47—Egypt suffering “*seven years of famine*” (the problem—and solution—revealed through a pharaoh’s dream, no less). It is against this backdrop that Joseph provides the interpretation to the pharaoh’s dream, is raised in rank, and ultimately paves the way for Israel’s descent into Egypt.



TURIN KING LIST

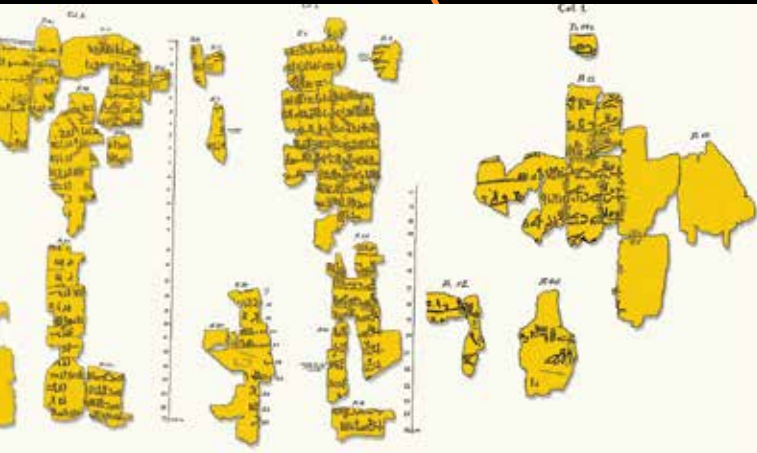


3. TURIN AND MANETHO KING LISTS: RISE OF THE HYKSOS

The Turin King List is an ancient document created during the 13th-century B.C.E. reign of Pharaoh Ramesses II, listing earlier Egyptian rulers. Written on papyrus, this list was discovered at Thebes in 1820 by Bernardino Drovetti, an Italian traveler. Although roughly 50 percent of the papyrus is missing, the names on the Turin King List provide insight into the pharaohs who ruled Egypt during its 15th Dynasty period—the “Hyksos Dynasty.”

This period is particularly elusive in Egyptian annals. While several other king lists have survived (such as the Saqqara Tablet, the Abydos King List, the Karnak King List, the Medinet Habu King List and the Palermo Stone), *only* the Turin King List records Egypt’s rulers during this crucial and fascinating period. Later Egyptian pharaohs erased the history of this dynasty. “Even today, in particular, there are not found any Hyksos written texts, inscriptions and bas-reliefs, tombs, frescoes or sculptures,” wrote historian Evgenii Misetskii. “Everything that could somehow remind of the power of the Hyksos was destroyed in the country by order of the New Kingdom pharaohs” (“From Joseph to Moses: The Key Time of Interaction Between the Cultures of Egypt and Israel”).

Why did later pharaohs attempt to erase the Hyksos from Egyptian history? The Hyksos were a group of *immigrant Semitic rulers from the region of Canaan* who rose to prominence in the northern Delta region of Egypt for a roughly 100-year period, around the 17th to 16th centuries B.C.E. Josephus, the first-century Jewish historian—based on the writings of the third-century B.C.E. Egyptian historian Manetho—directly identified these “Hyksos” as the Israelites and pointed out an interpretation of the name as meaning “shepherd kings.”



4. ARCHAEOLOGICALLY ATTESTED HYKSOS LEADERS

Besides the general Turin and Manethonian king lists, separate specific archaeological evidence of certain leading Hyksos figures has been discovered.

One of these especially prominent Hyksos individuals is a man known from nearly 30 royal scarab seals found primarily throughout Canaan but also in Egypt. These scarabs, believed to date to the 17th century B.C.E., bear the name *Yaqub-har*.

Yaqub is the exact transliteration of the Semitic name *Jacob*. The “har” in *Yaqub-har* is also a Hebrew-Semitic word that can mean hill, mount or mountain. This word is connected with *Jacob* several times in the Bible (Genesis 31:25, 54; Isaiah 2:3). It may have constituted some kind of a familial suffix or “surname” among the Hyksos (as is also attested by the next name). The jury is still out among scholars as to whether *Yaqub-har* was a Hyksos “king” in his own right or simply a highly regarded official. Naturally, the latter would best fit the biblical account.

Another high-ranking Hyksos official is known from a single inscription found on a doorjamb at Tell el-Dab’a. This individual’s name, similarly suffixed, is *Sakir-har*. The word *sakir* means “reward.”

This name closely parallels that of *Jacob*’s son *Issachar*. The biblical name *Issachar*, or *Is-Sakir*, means “there is a reward.” The Bible relates that his mother *Leah* proclaimed when she bore him: “God has granted me a reward [*sakar*] ...’ So she named him *Issachar*” (Genesis 30:18; New English Translation).

“That this nation, thus called shepherds, were also called captives, in their sacred books,” Manetho wrote. Manetho’s king list enumerates six Hyksos rulers. The first is *Salitis*; Manetho described him in the context of coming down into Egypt and gathering *corn* (compare with the actions of *Joseph* in Genesis 41:49). This name, *Salit* (removing the suffix *-is*, a typically added Greek suffix—note that Manetho and *Josephus* both wrote in this language), is identical to a unique title given to *Joseph* as ruler over Egypt. Genesis 42:6 states that “*Joseph* was the *governor* over the land.” This word is not the ordinary one used for “governor” in the Bible. Instead, it’s the unique word *salit*—thus, “*Joseph the Salit*.”

The succeeding ruler on Manetho’s Hyksos king list is *Bnon*, or *Benon*. This matches closely with the name of *Benjamin*—in fact, more closely than at first meets the eye. That’s because *Benjamin* had *two* names—the first given to him by his mother, *Rachel*, just before she died after childbirth: *Benoni* (Genesis 35:18). *Benjamin*, *Jacob*’s youngest son and *Joseph*’s only full brother, would have been a logical successor to *Joseph*’s authority. Genesis 43:34 and 45:22 describe *Joseph* honoring *Benjamin* above his other brothers in the Egyptian court with five times the food, five times the apparel and great riches.

YAQUB-HAR SCARAB



EXCAVATIONS AT TELL EL-DAB'A



5. TELL EL-DAB'A

Classical historians record that the capital city of the Hyksos dynasty was called *Avaris*. Josephus, relying largely on Manetho, relays a significant amount of information about Avaris as Israel's "capital" while in Egypt. He recorded that Avaris was the "ancient city and country" bequeathed to the Hyksos by Egypt. (Even the name of the site bears resemblance to the root of the word "Hebrew," *avar*, suggesting a naming after the people who lived there.)

Archaeologists have identified the ruins of Tell el-Dab'a in northern Egypt with ancient Avaris (fitting with the biblical location of the land of Goshen). Excavations at the site have revealed evidence of a clearly foreign, Semitic population, with housing styles similar to that of

Canaan, along with Levantine-style weapons and pottery. They also found animal remains, notably excluding pig, leading excavators to speculate that some form of "kosher" system was in place. Large food-storage silos were also discovered at the site.

age silos were also discovered at the site.

Much has also been made of a palatial complex within the site containing 12 tombs. One of them is much grander than the others, yet lacks any human remains (compare with Genesis 50:25). A good amount of attention was given to this in *Patterns of Evidence: The Exodus*—in particular, to an unusual statue and tomb Egyptologist David Rohl identifies with *Joseph*.

Also notable is when this city ceased to function. As archaeologist Dr. Scott Stripling notes, "Bietak's stratigraphic analysis [of Tell el-Dab'a] reveals a clear abandonment in the mid-18th Dynasty, during or after the reign of Amenhotep II. ... [T]he latest identifiable pottery dates to the reign of Amenhotep II ..." (*The Exodus: Historicity, Chronology and Theological Implications*).



CARNARVON TABLET

6. CARNARVON TABLET

The Carnarvon Tablet is a mid-16th-century B.C.E. wood-and-plaster inscription discovered in 1908 adjacent to the entrance to a tomb near the Deir el-Bahari mortuary complex. The text belongs to the native Egyptian pharaoh of Upper (southern) Egypt, Kamose.

The text reveals that Kamose feared the Hyksos were getting too powerful and needed to be overthrown. It reads in part: "I should like to know what serves this strength of mine, when a chieftain is in Avaris, and another is in Ethiopia, and I sit united with an Asiatic [Hyksos/Semite] and a Nubian, each in possession of his slice of Egypt ... No man can settle down, when despoiled by the taxes of the Asiatics. I will grapple with him, that I may rip open his belly! My wish is to save Egypt and to smite the Asiatic [Hyksos]!"

The text and geopolitical scene is uncannily reminiscent of Exodus 1:8-10: "Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who knew not Joseph. And he said unto his people: 'Behold, the people of the children of Israel are too many and too mighty for us; come, let us deal wisely with them'"

Kamose did not live to see the complete overthrow of the Hyksos—he was killed by a blow from a Hyksos soldier while in battle. The northern land of Lower Egypt would finally be subdued by his successor, Ahmose I.

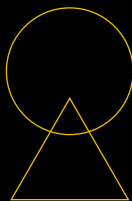


7. REKHMIRE'S TOMB

Depictions of slaves in subsequent decades to Ahmose I's reunification of Egypt have been found at multiple sites in Egypt. On the walls of the Tomb of Rekhmire (the mid-15th-century B.C.E. vizier for Thutmose III and Amenhotep II), painted images depict light-skinned Semitic slaves making bricks out of mud, water and chaff. The Bible also records the Hebrews making bricks in Egypt: "And the Egyptians made the children of Israel to serve with rigour. And they made their lives bitter with hard service, *in mortar and in brick ...*" (Exodus 1:13-14). And, "Ye shall no more give the people straw to make brick, as heretofore. Let them go and gather straw for themselves" (Exodus 5:7).

Another scene in the tomb contains an inscription reading as follows: "Rejoice, O prince, all your affairs are flourishing. The *treasure stores are overflowing.*" This fits well with the biblical account of the Israelites building treasure stores, or "treasure cities," for the pharaoh (Exodus 1:11; King James Version).

BRICKMAKING DEPICTED IN REKHMIRE'S TOMB



8. SERABIT EL-KHADIM

While the biblical account highlights the slavery of brickmakers, numerous classical accounts also make reference to the Israelites being sent to work in mines (see *ArmstrongInstitute.org/868*). Serabit el-Khadim was a sporadically operated Egyptian turquoise mine on the western side of the Sinai Peninsula, in operation between the 19th and 15th centuries B.C.E. The site included significant worship of the Egyptian cow-goddess, Hathor, as well as evidence of the presence of Semitic slaves.

In 1905, Sir William F. Petrie discovered examples of early alphabetic script at Serabit el-Khadim. These "proto-Sinaitic" inscriptions, dating more specifically to the 16th–15th centuries B.C.E., are a precursor to the Hebrew alphabet (and other Levantine languages).

Prof. Douglas Petrovich goes further; he has proposed translations for several of these inscriptions, which he calls "Old Hebrew," based on uniquely Hebrew elements. He identifies certain names, including "Moses," "Ahsamach" (father of Oholiab; Exodus 31:6), and "Asenath" (Joseph's wife; Genesis 41:45), as well as "Hebrews of Bethel" (described in his book *The World's Oldest Alphabet: Hebrew as the Language of the Proto-Consonantal Script*; his conclusions, naturally, have been controversial). Specifics of translation aside, the inscriptions point to a Hebrew-related slave operation at the site during the 16th to 15th centuries B.C.E., alongside a setting of *cow worship* in the same general geographic location that *cow worship* reappears in the biblical account, during the Israelite sojourn in the Sinai wilderness (Exodus 32).

INSCRIPTION AT SERABIT EL-KHADIM





9. IPUWER PAPYRUS

The Ipuwer Papyrus is a scroll dated to the 13th century B.C.E. Written in the hieratic text, it is believed to be a copy of a centuries-earlier account (exactly when is debated). Ipuwer was the name of a royal Egyptian scribe and was a common Egyptian name in the mid-15th century B.C.E. On the papyrus, the scribe records a series of disasters that struck Egypt. The resemblance of these catastrophes to the plagues of Egypt is striking. See below for parallels between the papyrus and the biblical text.

The papyrus levels thinly veiled blame at those who allowed these troublesome shepherds into the land of Egypt: “What the ancestors foretold has arrived [M]en say: ‘He is the herdsman of mankind, and there is no evil in his heart.’ Though his herds are few, yet he spends a day to collect them, their hearts being on fire. Would that he had perceived their nature in the first generation; then he would have imposed obstacles, he would have stretched out his arm against them, he would have destroyed their herds and their heritage.”

IPUWER: Indeed, the river is blood, yet men drink of it.

EXODUS 7:20: [A]nd all the waters that were in the river were turned to blood.

IPUWER: Indeed, [hearts] are violent, pestilence is throughout the land, blood is everywhere, death is not lacking

EXODUS 9:15, 7:19: Surely now I had put forth My hand, and smitten thee and thy people with pestilence [A]nd there shall be blood throughout all the land of Egypt

IPUWER: Indeed, magic spells are divulged; smw- and shnw-spells are frustrated

EXODUS 8:14: And the magicians did so with their secret arts ... but they could not

IPUWER: Indeed, all animals, their hearts weep; cattle moan

EXODUS 9:3: Behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thy cattle ... there shall be a very grievous murrain.

IPUWER: Indeed, everywhere barley has perished

EXODUS 9:31: And the flax and the barley were smitten

IPUWER: The land is without light

EXODUS 10:22: [A]nd there was a thick darkness in all the land of Egypt

IPUWER: Indeed, every dead person is as a well-born man Indeed, the children of princes are dashed against walls

EXODUS 12:29: [T]he Lord smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from

the first-born of Pharaoh that sat on his throne unto the first-born of the captive

IPUWER: Indeed, men are few, and he who places his brother in the ground is everywhere

EXODUS 12:30: [T]here was not a house where there was not one dead.

IPUWER: Indeed, poor men have become owners of wealth, and he who could not make sandals for himself is now a possessor of riches Indeed, gold and lapis lazuli, silver and turquoise ... are strung on the necks of maidservants

EXODUS 12:35, 11:2: And the children of Israel ... asked of the Egyptians jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment. ... [E]very woman [took] of her neighbour, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold.

IPUWER: Indeed, noblemen are in distress, while the poor man is full of joy.

EXODUS 14:8: [F]or the children of Israel went out with a high hand.

IPUWER: [Behold, he who did not know his god] now offers to him with incense of another

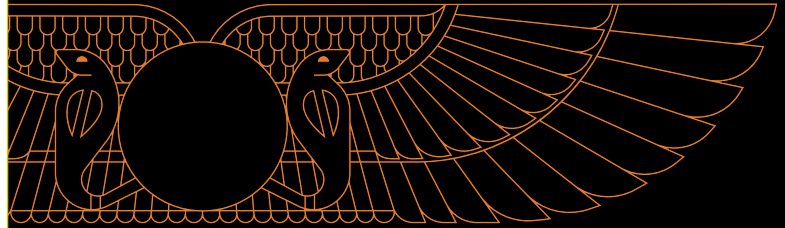
EXODUS 6:3; 10:25: [B]y My name YHWH I made Me not known to them. ... And Moses said [to Pharaoh]: ‘Thou must also give into our hand sacrifices and burnt-offerings, that we may sacrifice unto the Lord our God.

10. 400-YEAR STELE

The “400-Year Stele” is an incredibly enigmatic, large granite monument discovered at Tanis in the year 1863. Installed with permission by an official named Seti during the 13th-century B.C.E. reign of Ramesses II, the partial inscription of the broken stele highlights a 400-year period of the distant past—though the celebration of *what*, exactly, is unclear. What is more evident is its connection to *Hyksos* history.

Egyptologist Peter Feinman wrote of this “400-Year Stele of Ramesses II, honoring the legacy of the Hyksos,” noting that Bible scholar “Baruch Halpern suggests that if the Israelite scribes knew of the 400-Year Stela, that such knowledge is evidence of the portrayal of Israel as Hyksos ...” (described further in “The Hyksos and the Exodus: Two 400-Year Stories”). He further highlighted Egyptologist Jan Assmann’s assessment that the stele “represents the first—and for a long time remained the only—instance of a historical anniversary recorded in the annals of history.”

And a 400-year period, it turns out, is of particular biblical significance to this Israelite sojourn. In Genesis 15, God informs Abraham of what will befall his descendants: “Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them *four hundred years*” (verse 13). ■



WANT MORE EVIDENCE?

In this article we’ve reviewed 10 major threads of evidence pointing to the historicity of the biblical account of Israel’s sojourn in Egypt. Yet these are not even the strongest proof we have that the Israelites dwelled in Egypt.

The greatest proof we have is the Bible itself, which contains a plethora of details about Egypt in the Middle/Late Bronze Age. The Torah contains remarkably accurate details about very specific Egyptian phraseology, names, geography, flora and fauna, and Israelite laws concerning practices that were extant in Egypt at the time. When you consider just how intimately familiar the Torah is with Egypt, it is evident that it had to be written by someone who lived in Egypt—someone who lived the history recorded in the book of Exodus. To learn more about this, read our articles at ArmstrongInstitute.org/680 and [/238](http://ArmstrongInstitute.org/238).



400-YEAR STELE



Selection of Amarna
Letters at the
British Museum

The Amarna Letters: Proof of Israel's Invasion of Canaan?

The ancient Habiru battled their way through Canaan during the 14th century B.C.E. Who were these people?

BY CHRISTOPHER EAMES

THE BIBLICAL ACCOUNT OF ISRAEL'S CONQUEST OF the Promised Land (recorded mainly in the book of Joshua) is full of action and drama. But how much truth is there to the account? This question has been fiercely debated by Bible maximalists and minimalists for centuries.

According to a literal reading of internal biblical chronology, the Israelites began their invasion of Canaan around 1400 B.C.E. (see page 10). Israel's subjugation of the Promised Land occurred in three phases and over a time span of two to three decades.

Over the last 150 years, a trove of literally *hundreds* of 14th-century B.C.E. clay tablets have been discovered in Egypt. Known as the "Amarna Letters," many of these tablets are inscribed with text written by several different regional Canaanite rulers expressing consternation and even terror at the fact that "all the lands" were being overrun by a mysterious people they called the *Habiru*.

This raises the question: Who were the Habiru? Could the Amarna Letters represent eye-witness accounts of the Israelite conquest of Canaan?

The Amarna Letters

The small, blockish clay tablets are named after the location of their discovery in Tel el-Amarna, a major Egyptian city of the 14th century B.C.E. These letters constitute foreign correspondence primarily from the kings (or "mayors") of the Levant—leaders of city-states in the modern-day territories of Israel, Lebanon, Jordan and Syria—to the pharaoh of Egypt, who generally controlled Canaan at the time.

Given that the administrative center of Amarna is known to have been abandoned around 1335 B.C.E., the Amarna Letters archived inside the city have been dated to the decades prior—specifically, to the reigns of pharaohs Amenhotep III and his son, Akhenaten. Over 300 tablets were found in el-Amarna in 1887; since then, more have been discovered, bringing the total number of letters to 382.

Almost all the tablets are from Canaanite rulers, with a handful from Mesopotamia and beyond. For reference purposes, the tablets are registered from EA 1 to EA 382 (EA standing for "el-Amarna") in counter-clockwise geographic order, generally from north to south. The letters cover a broad range of diplomatic subjects.

The letters from the kings of the southern Levant have garnered the most attention. This is because they identify significant tumult arising with a distinct people in the early 14th century. The letters identify this group by the name *Habiru* and describe them conquering Canaanite territories *en masse*.

The messages from the various regional Canaanite leaders to Egypt's pharaoh are filled with desperate

pleas for help. Tablet EA 286 is a plea from Abdi-Heba, the mayor of Jerusalem: "Message of Abdi-Heba, your servant. ... May the king [Egypt's pharaoh] provide for his land! All the lands of the king, my lord, have deserted. ... Lost are all the mayors; there is not a mayor remaining to the king, my lord. ... The king has no lands. That Habiru has plundered all the lands of the king. If there are archers this year, the lands of the king, my lord, will remain."

EA 299 was written by Yapahu, the ruler of Gezer, a Canaanite city situated west of Jerusalem in the foothills of the Judean mountains: "To the king, my lord ... [s]ince the Habiru are stronger than we, may the king, my lord, give me his help, and may the king, my lord, get me away from the Habiru lest the Habiru destroy us."

In EA 288, Jerusalem's mayor once again beseeches the pharaoh. Note the far-reaching extent of the Habiru's conquests: "May the king give thought to his land; the land of the king is lost. All of it has attacked me. ... *I am situated like a ship in the midst of the sea* [N]ow the Habiru have taken the very cities of the king. Not a single mayor remains to the king, my lord; all are lost" (emphasis added).

The Habiru invasion evidently was not localized to a handful of cities. According to the mayor of Jerusalem, these people conquered virtually the *entire* region. And remember, this invasion occurred in exactly the time period Bible chronology shows that the Israelites invaded.

And what about the name given to the invaders?

Is Habiru the Same as Hebrew?

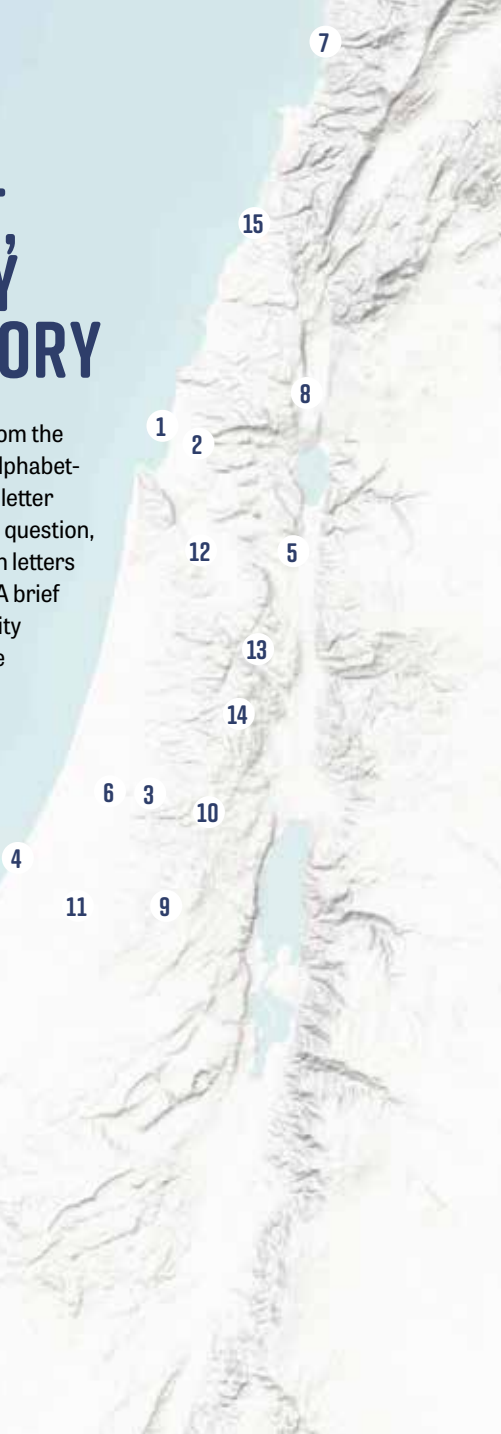
There has been significant debate about the identity of these Habiru (also transliterated as *Hapiru* or *'Apiru*).

This name matches closely with the root of the name *Hebrew*—namely, 'Abar. And the interchangeability of "b" and "p" in the name is readily explained by the fact that these sounds are known as "bilabial stops," used interchangeably across different languages. (Consider, for example, the words *absorb* and *absorption* in English.) It's why Arabic only has the letter "b," which is used dually to represent the "p" sound. It's also why, conversely, the New Zealand Maori language only has a letter "p," used dually to represent "b" sounds. Remarkably, in the context of the name *Habiru/Hapiru/'Apiru*, the word "Hebrew" in the Maori Bible is actually rendered almost exactly the same, as *Hiperu*.

If these were indeed the biblical *Israelites*, why didn't the Canaanite leaders simply use this term? Actually, the collective noun *Hebrews* is used more often in the Bible to this point than the term *Israelites*. The term *Hebrews*, or one of its related forms, is used 22 times—compared with just *twice* for "Israelites." (The literal terminology most commonly used in the Bible is the longer title

CONQUEST, TERRITORY BY TERRITORY

At right is a list of content from the Amarna Letters, arranged alphabetically by city (with either the letter having come from the city in question, or the city being described in letters from rulers of other cities). A brief summary is given for each city or region as described in the Amarna Letters (sometimes contained in more than one letter—EA citations provided) and then compared with the Bible account.



1 ACCO

AMARNA: Acco helps the Canaanite war effort against the Habiru but apparently later “sides” with them and is allowed favor (EA 88, 366).

BIBLE: The Israelites fail to drive out the inhabitants of Acco, allowing them to remain in the land (Judges 1:31).

2 ACHSHAPH

AMARNA: The king of Achshaph comes to fight in coalition against the Habiru (EA 366).

BIBLE: The king of Achshaph joins a coalition to fight a staged battle against the Israelites, but is killed (Joshua 11:1; 12:20).

3 AIJALON

AMARNA: The enemy has control in the countryside of Aijalon (EA 287).

BIBLE: Aijalon features in a major staged land battle, where Israel conquers “Aijalon with the open land about it” (Joshua 10:12; 21:24).

4 ASHKELON

AMARNA: The land of Ashkelon is now in league with the enemy (EA 287).

BIBLE: Ashkelon is taken by the Israelites (Judges 1:18).

5 BETH-SHEAN

AMARNA: A strong garrison is prepared and stationed at Beth-shean—no indication that it is conquered (EA 289).

BIBLE: The Israelites fret about iron chariots stationed at Beth-shean and fail to drive out the inhabitants (Joshua 17:16; Judges 1:27).

“children of Israel.” That the Canaanites preferred “Hebrews” over “children of Israel” is hardly surprising.)

Skeptics of the view that the Habiru should be associated with the biblical Hebrews/Israelites note that individuals with the title *Habiru* are not only referenced as living in Canaan but also in faraway Mesopotamia (though the bulk of the references do pertain to people living in the Levant). *How do you explain the presence of Hebrews in Mesopotamia?* In fact, the book of Genesis says that “Abram the Hebrew” (Genesis 14:13) originally lived with his family in Mesopotamia. Joseph was,

likewise, typically identified by officials in Egypt as “a Hebrew” (Genesis 39:14, 17; 41:12). Again, these verses suggest the term Hebrew was the favored foreign appellation, already an established term, and with a connection even to faraway Mesopotamia.

Some scholars speculate that the term Habiru began as a social category and turned into an ethnic one, theorizing that it may have encapsulated a broad range of then nomadic peoples that included the Israelites (such as the Midianites, Kenites, Shutu, etc). Even this wider appellation would not be contrary

6 GEZER

AMARNA: The king of Gezer fights against the Habiru, but it seems there is a movement by his own people (including his own brother) against him, who appear to overthrow him and end up aiding the enemy (EA 271, 287, 298, 299).

BIBLE: The king of Gezer is killed, but for some untold reason the Canaanites of this area are allowed to remain and give tribute to Israel (Joshua 10:33; 12:12; 16:10).

7 GEBAL (BYBLOS)

AMARNA: The king of Gebal worries about the potential of the Habiru attacking the city. However, there is no evidence that it was (EA 68, 73, 74, 76, 77, 88, 90, 121, 188).

BIBLE: Joshua informs the Israelites that the northern lands, including Gebal, still need to be conquered (Joshua 13:5). However, there is no statement that they ever were.

8 HAZOR

AMARNA: The king of Tyre, writing about neighboring Sidon, notes that Hazor is turned over to the Habiru (EA 148, 228).

BIBLE: Joshua conquers Hazor and chases the enemy all the way to Sidon (Joshua 11:1-13).

9 HEBRON

AMARNA: Hebron, in league with Jerusalem and Lachish, is at war with the Habiru (EA 271, 284, 366).

BIBLE: The king of Hebron, in league with the king of Jerusalem and the king of Lachish, attends a staged land battle where all are defeated (Joshua 10:5). The territory of Hebron is later attacked and conquered (verses 33, 36-37).

10 JERUSALEM

AMARNA: Jerusalem and its territory is apparently one of the last remaining places to be attacked (EA 286, 287, 288). Also note a similar-style, burned Canaanite tablet fragment discovered in Dr. Eilat Mazar's Jerusalem excavations (speculated to be the work of the same scribe of Abdi-Heba's letters, thus dating to the same period).

BIBLE: Jerusalem is one of the last places to be attacked and conquered (Judges 1:8). When the city is eventually conquered at the start of the judges period, it is *burned* (same verse).

11 LACHISH

AMARNA: The Habiru killed a leader of Lachish and gained control of the city (EA 287, 288, 329, 330, 333).

BIBLE: The Israelites killed the king of Lachish in a separate land battle and later conquered the city (Joshua 10:23-26, 31-32).

12 MEGIDDO

AMARNA: Megiddo is attacked and defeated by a group allied with the Habiru (EA 243, 244, 246).

BIBLE: The king of Megiddo is killed, but Canaanites maintain hold of the city (Joshua 12:21; Judges 1:27).

13 SHECHEM

AMARNA: The Habiru are handed the land of Shechem by its ruler, Labayu (EA 289).

BIBLE: There is no description of an attack on Shechem, yet the Israelites are described as having full control over it (Joshua 24:1).

14 SHILOH

AMARNA: The Habiru attacked Shiloh (EA 288).

BIBLE: There is no description of an attack on Shiloh, but the Israelites evidently acquired it and established it as the site of the tabernacle (Joshua 18:1).

15 SIDON

AMARNA: The king of Sidon writes that his surrounding cities have joined themselves to the Habiru (EA 144).

BIBLE: While battle did reach as far north as the borders of Sidon, the Canaanite inhabitants remained in that city (Joshua 11:8; Judges 1:31).

to the biblical account given that Abraham—as a “Hebrew”—was father of the Midianites, Ishmaelites, etc (Genesis 25:1-4). Technically, much of the *Arab* world could therefore be called “Hebrew.”

While certain scholars claim the term evolved from a social reference to an ethnic one, the Bible says the exact opposite. Genesis 11:14 shows the name *Hebrew* is a derivative of Eber (עֵבֶר), the name of Abraham's forefather. We see here that the Bible clearly infers the title *began* as an ethnic one rather than a social one.

Of course, it's true that this appellation has been most

strongly attached to the Israelites in the Bible. And it was Israel, after all, that continued to speak the “Hebrew” language. The references to “Habiru” in various distant locations throughout various points of the second millennium B.C.E. in no way diminish its association with the Israelites or the Bible. Just the opposite: The predominance of the term Habiru around Israelite-occupied areas directly parallels the use of the term Hebrews in the Bible in predominantly referring to the Israelite people.

Beyond the general association of the name *Habiru* with the biblical Hebrews, there is even some evidence

to suggest that the tribe of Judah is specifically mentioned on the Amarna tablets (see sidebar, page 32).

Just ‘Ragtag’ Mercenaries?

Some academics dismiss the Habiru as insignificant brigands or mercenaries. In *The Bible Unearthed*, Prof. Israel Finkelstein and Neil Asher Silberman describe the Habiru as “outlaws or brigands” and as “soldiers for hire.” The authors note, “In one case they are even reported to be present in Egypt itself as hired laborers working on government building projects.”

Finkelstein and Silberman allow that “[i]t is possible that the phenomenon of the Apiru may have been remembered in later centuries and thus incorporated into the biblical narratives.” Still, they describe the

It could be possible to dismiss some of these city-by-city comparisons as mere coincidences. But how likely is it that every single one of them is coincidental?

“ragtag Apiru bands” as being more akin to the “outlaw chief David and his band of mighty men roaming in the Hebron hills and the Judean desert.”

The belief that the Habiru were a largely insignificant, ragtag group of brigands that occasionally pilfered Canaanite towns and incited domestic rebellions is relatively common. Yet it stands in *stark contrast* to the text inscribed on clay tablets by the Canaanite kings who witnessed the Habiru in person!

What was it that the Canaanite mayors wrote to the pharaoh? “All the lands of the king, my lord, have deserted.” “Lost are all the mayors.” “The king has no lands.” “The Habiru have plundered all the lands of the king.” “The Habiru are stronger than we.” “Lest the Habiru destroy us.” “The land of the king is lost.” “The Habiru have taken the very cities of the [pharaoh].” “All are lost.”

How can modern researchers possibly read this and conclude that the Habiru were nothing more than rogues and gangsters?

Beyond the general comparisons of the Habiru with the biblical Hebrews and their conquest of Canaan, does a closer analysis of the acts of the Habiru described within the Amarna Letters correspond specifically with the biblical description of the Hebrew

‘MEN OF JUDAH’ IN THE AMARNA

ONE OF THE AMARNA Letters, EA 39, contains peculiar references to “*ameluti Ia-u-du*” and “*ameluti tsabe Ia-u-du*.” The spelling of *Ia-u-du* is identical to that of later Assyrian cuneiform inscriptions referring to *Judah*. If this is a reference to the Israelite tribe, then the above two passages translate to “men of Judah” and “soldiers of Judah.”

Prof. Morris Jastrow Jr. (1861–1921) first made this observation in his 1893 article “The Men of Judah in the El-Amarna Tablets.” Some small debate circulated at the time regarding the nature and correct interpretation of the inscription. One of the primary issues was that the inscription was related to territory in the extreme north of Canaan (midwest Syria), perhaps around

the region of Tunip—a peculiar place to find “men of Judah.” There was some dissent that this referred instead to a slightly different but similar sounding word, meaning “they have witnessed.” Jastrow, in his paper, refuted this by showing that the context identifies *Ia-u-du* as a proper name for a clan or group.

Still, it’s an important question: What would a southern tribe be doing so far north? Indeed, this tribe did settle in the southern part of Canaan. But the Israelites were to conquer the Promised Land together, as a unit (e.g. Numbers 32). Further, the territory of Israel was intended to expand as far north as Hamath in Syria—a location just east of Tunip (Numbers 34:8).

An interesting northern link to Judah can be found in 2 Kings 14:28,

which states that the territory of “*Damascus, and Hamath ... belonged to Judah*” (King James Version). This was when the northern kingdom of Israel had long been divided from the southern kingdom of Judah—yet the tribe of Judah somehow held an outpost north of Israel. (There is a possible reference to this northern Judahite territory on an Assyrian inscription—see ArmstrongInstitute.org/127 for more detail.)

Unfortunately, the section of EA 39 bearing the text *Ia-u-du* isn’t in great condition, so the debate on the nature of the inscription has continued. Since Jastrow’s work, Norwegian linguist Jørgen Knudtzon’s analysis, categorization and translation of the Amarna Letters has been the go-to standard, particularly his two-volume work

conquest of the Promised Land? In short, *absolutely!* See map on pages 30-31 for a list of parallel city-by-city, Amarna-Bible accounts.

All Just Coincidence?

It could be possible to dismiss some of these city-by-city comparisons as mere coincidences. But how likely is it that *every single one* of them is coincidental? Again, the events recorded in the Amarna Letters happened at the *very same time period* that the Bible says Israel invaded Canaan. Recall that the *latest* possible date that these letters could have been written is 1335 B.C.E.—when the use of the el-Amarna administration area ended. Many, if not most, of its documents date to decades earlier. Meanwhile, the Bible shows that the Hebrews *entered* the Promised Land roughly around 1400 B.C.E. and progressively subjugated the land over the following decades.

If the debate here revolved solely around the semantics of the terms Habiru and Hebrew, it would be harder to draw a clear conclusion. But the semantic similarities, combined with the timing and geography of the Habiru conquests described in the Amarna Letters, align precisely with Israel's conquest of Canaan as recorded in the Bible, thus by weight of evidence showing they are describing the same event: Israel's invasion of the Promised Land! ■

► PHARAOH FROM PAGE 19

worthless” and “untrustworthy” people of the Levant. He warned Usersatet about the foreigners ruled by his viceroy. “Do not trust the Nubians, *but be wary of their people and of their magicians,*” he warned. “Do not listen to their words, and pay no heed to their message.” (Usersatet was evidently so impressed by this letter that he had it engraved in stone—thus preserving the text, known as the Semna Stele of Usersatet.)

Why were the dangers of *foreigners*—and in particular, their *magicians*—on the mind of Amenhotep II so late in his reign? Is it coincidence that the biblical text also describes the abject *failure* of native Egyptian magicians before Moses and Aaron? (i.e. Exodus 8:14-15).

Anyone Else?

In the field of biblical archaeology, scientists sometimes refer to *synchronisms*. This term refers to the convergence of several unique or independent factors supporting an overarching conclusion. A single textual-reference discovery taken in isolation can remain unconvincing or speculative, but a string of such synchronisms narrows down a logical conclusion.

In studying Egypt's history together with the biblical text, one can't help but notice a wealth of synchronisms. Recall Thutmose II's gendercide, Hatshepsut's lack of a son and kindheartedness for foreigners, and Thutmose III's matchless power. Then there's Amenhotep II's cruelty, his destruction of Hatshepsut's monuments, his wariness of foreign magicians, his tubercle-riddled body and the *missing* latter half of his reign. Recall Thutmose IV's surprise accession, the YHWH-worshiping nomads mentioned by Amenhotep III, and Akhenaten's final repudiation of the very name *Amenhotep* and his total rejection of Egypt's many gods (all while Canaan is being conquered by “Habiru”). All of these accounts *directly parallel* the biblical text—not only in *substance* but also in *chronology!*

On the surface, there appear to be plenty of options for identifying the Exodus pharaoh. Dig down into the details, however, and it is evident that no other Egyptian period, dynasty and pharaoh gets nearly as close to matching the biblical text as the *New Kingdom's Thutmosid Dynasty pharaoh, Amenhotep II!*

And so, amid the multiplicity of theories about the Exodus pharaoh's identity from scholars, ancient and modern, should it come as any surprise if the very *earliest* historians to mention his name—*Egyptians*, no less—got it right? More than 2,000 years ago, Manetho and Chaeremon—both Egyptian priests and historians—insisted that the pharaoh of the Exodus was, as they identified him in their Ptolemaic Greek language, Pharaoh *Amenophis*.

Amenhotep (II), pharaoh of the Exodus. ■

LETTERS?

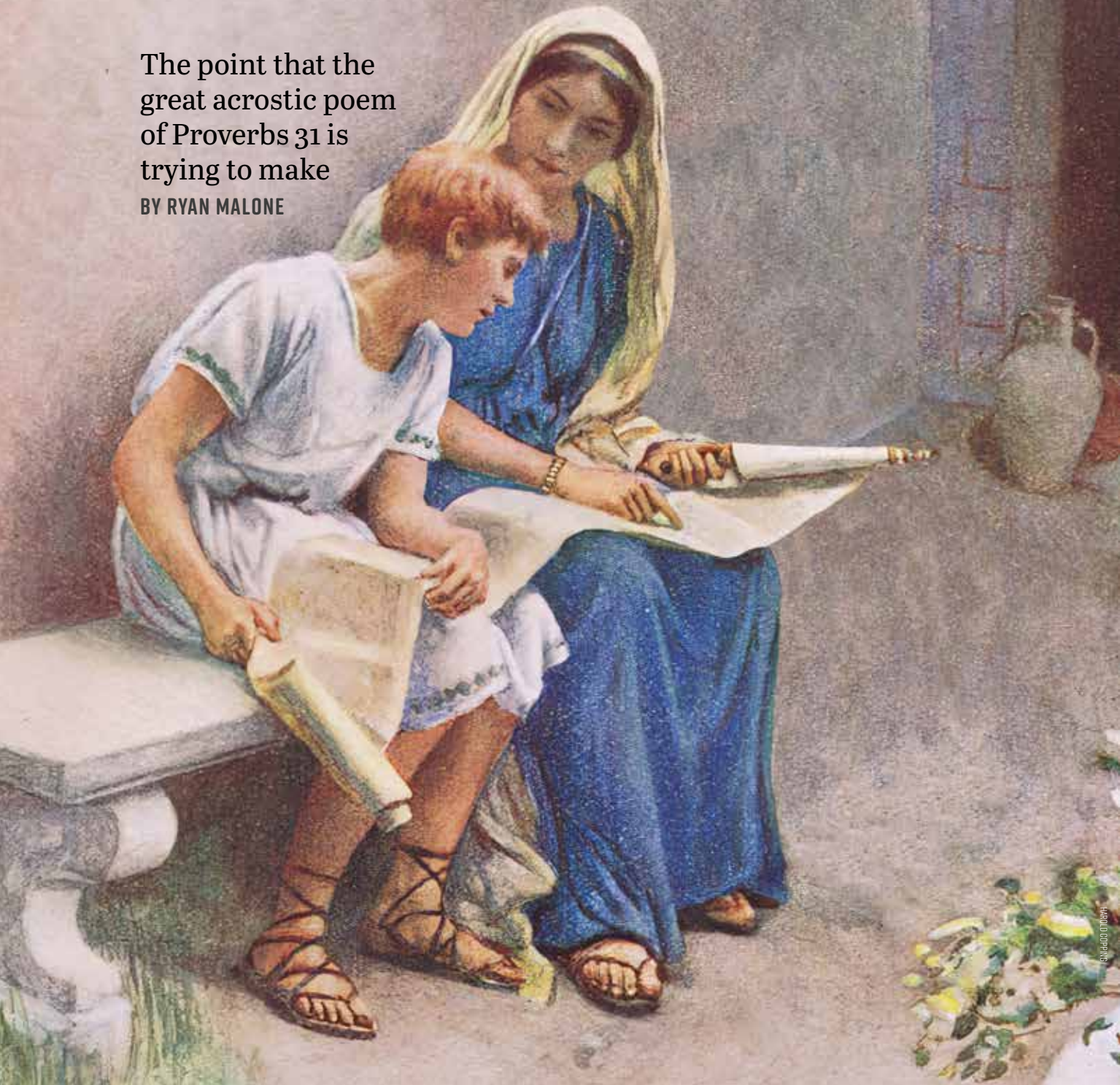
Die El-Amarna-Tafeln (1907 and 1915). Knudtzon translated this word differently, as “s[u]-u-du,” apparently choosing to identify it with a Syrian fortress called Sudu.

Nevertheless, the translation *Ia-u-du* remains an intriguing possibility, and there's biblical justification for such a northern Judahite link. Also, it's not the only such biblical link identified by Jastrow: He further highlighted two clan names mentioned in the Amarna correspondence, *Milkil* and *Habiri*, identifying them as two clans of the tribe of Asher, *Malkiel* and *Heber* (Genesis 46:17; Numbers 26:45; 1 Chronicles 7:31). This pair was mentioned together in correspondence from the Canaanite leader of Jerusalem, Abdi-Heba, to the pharaoh. ■

A POETIC APPEAL FOR FINDING A VALIANT WOMAN

The point that the
great acrostic poem
of Proverbs 31 is
trying to make

BY RYAN MALONE



STUDYING THE DEPTH OF ONE HEBREW WORD IS often akin to the work of an archaeologist. Sifting through the biblical record to see how it is used can open a whole vista of insights.

One word that does this is the Hebrew *chayil*. Some form of it is used 243 times in the Hebrew Bible—usually translated as “army,” “host,” “forces” or related phrases referring to *military* groupings; it can also refer simply to a large number of people. It is frequently translated into words relating to “power” or “strength,” and also words relating to “wealth” or “substance.”

It is used numerous times as “valiant” or “valor”—whether the valor of one (David facing Goliath) or a valiant group (soldiers serving King David). It can refer to one man with the “heart of a lion” (2 Samuel 17:7-10), and it certainly doesn’t have to refer to soldiers at all, as some priests and Levites were also described this way.

The word is also not just confined to men. *One of the most remarkable uses of this word*—given all the above usages—is found in Proverbs 31: “A woman of valour who can find? For her price is far above rubies” (verse 10).

What an amazing woman to be found—the poet uses the same word to describe her as is connected with militaries, valor and abundance.

Female Author, Male Audience

Consider how this verse appeals to the *one searching and finding*. It is not, *Who can BE a woman of valor?*, though any female reader might thusly receive it. Proverbs 31 is more directed at a man, as not only the poem but the setup bears out.

Verse 1 attributes it to the mother of King Lemuel—the figures most likely being none other than Solomon and his mother, Bathsheba—who here “corrected him.”

Biblical chronology shows that Solomon married Naamah the Ammonitess and had Rehoboam before David died. Bathsheba was also still alive for this marriage (Songs 3:11 places her at one of his weddings). By the time he became king, Solomon was known for how much he heeded his mother’s advice (see 1 Kings 2:17-20).

Whenever Proverbs 31 was penned, Bathsheba felt her son needed some stern admonition when it came to finding a valiant woman. The verses that proceed the actual poem show some firm admonition: “Give not thy strength unto women, Nor thy ways to that which destroyeth kings” (verse 3). Interestingly, the king is told not to give HIS *chayil* to a woman, but in verse 10 is told to find a woman of that caliber of strength.

Bathsheba could well have been pointing Solomon to another valiant woman of history—his

great-great-grandmother Ruth. Though *chayil* is used in a few places throughout the Proverbs to describe great women in general, the only woman expressly NAMED in connection with this word is Ruth (Ruth 3:11).

An Alphabetical Argument

To detail this *kind* of woman’s valor, Bathsheba frames her admonishment in the form of an alphabetical acrostic. This doesn’t translate well into English, but try to grasp this poetic device. If someone were making a case to you in this fashion—stating all the benefits of something in English by going A, B, C, etc, you would get the sense that their argument is 1) COMPLETE: that is, *thorough* and comprehensive, as well as 2) LOGICAL: meaning, it is speaking to an intrinsic *order*, rather than subjectivity and emotion. This proverb is appealing to a typical male rationale in approaching and considering major life decisions.

Additionally, an alphabetical acrostic also creates a cumulative heightening, progressing intensification of the argument. The recognizable order gives it a memorable nature, or it could be said that the FIRST WORD of each verse—being in alphabetical order—is FUNDAMENTAL to the poem’s intent. This is lost in English, as the first word of most verses here is “She.” That has no mnemonic value. So consider the first word of each verse!

✠ The first Hebrew word of Proverbs 31:10 (the first verse of this acrostic) is *woman*—a word that starts with the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet: “WOMAN of valor, who can find?” The question is followed up by “her price is far above rubies,” eliciting a monetary comparison.

A quote from the famous British Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli comes to mind: “A female friend, amiable, clever and devoted, is a possession more valuable than parks or palaces; and without such a Muse few men can succeed, and none can be happy.”

In Proverbs 3:15, 8:11 and 20:15, rubies are said to barely compare with divine wisdom. So another layer to this verse is the implication that finding a woman like this is an act of GREAT WISDOM.

✠ *Husband* is the first word of the next verse—which starts with the second letter of the Hebrew alphabet. “HUSBAND’S heart trusts her” Not only has he trusted her with his heart, her trustworthiness also means “he hath *no lack of gain*.” The Hebrew here implies spoil or plunder. Her valor exceeds the value of rubies and the spoils of war.

✠ *Reward* is how the Hebrew for Proverbs 31:12 begins: “She doeth him good [i.e. she will *recompense* him with good] and not evil All the days of her life.” Here

is yet another verse stressing her value to the man: After verses describing rubies and then great spoils of war, this verse underscores the RETURN on the investment. In fact, the remaining verses expound in elaborate detail on that return.

An Invaluable Investment

⚡ **Seeks** is the first word of Proverbs 31:13: “She seeketh wool and flax, And worketh willingly with her hands.” Her industry is wielded with great delight!

⚡ **Merchants** or “trade ships” is the first word of verse 14: “She is like the merchant-ships; She bringeth her food from afar.” This would have resonated with Solomon, who had a massive navy collecting gold of Ophir from the far reaches of the known world (1 Kings 9:26-28).

⚡ **Also** begins Proverbs 31:15: “She riseth also while it is yet night, And giveth food to her household, And a portion to her maidens.” This verse begins with the idea, “PLUS,” she is committed to being productive no matter the time of day.

⚡ **Considers** is the opening to verse 16: “She considereth a field, and buyeth it; With the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard.” That Hebrew word means she is logical, rational and sensible.

⚡ **Girds** opens the next verse: “She girdeth her loins with strength, And maketh strong her arms” (verse 17). She is physically strong and capable of hard work and industry.

⚡ **Perceives** is the first word of verse 18: “She perceiveth that her merchandise is good; Her lamp goeth not out by night.” The man reading the poem would do well to partner with such an informed consumer who knows how to put products to the test.

⚡ **Hand** starts verse 19: “She layeth her hands to the distaff, And her hands hold the spindle.” The Proverbs 31 woman is creative and industrious, she is willing and able to make things by hand if something cannot be purchased.

⚡ **Palm**, as the Hebrew reads, begins the verse that says: “She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; Yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy” (verse 20). The image that *palm* gives shows that her hand is *open*. She is charitable. Her giving nature is a priceless asset to any household.

⚡ Verse 21 begins with a negative: **Not** afraid (“She is not afraid of the snow for her household; For all her household are clothed with scarlet”). She has worked hard to provide for her family (in this respect) and is confident in the work she has done.

⚡ The Hebrew for verse 22 begins: **Coverings** of tapestry (“She maketh for herself coverlets; Her clothing is fine linen and purple”). She is creative. The references

to fine linen and purple evokes images of the TABERNACLE in ancient Israel. She is clothed in the same fabrics found in its composition, as well as on the elegantly dressed priests who served in that environment.

⚡ **Known** is the first word of verse 23—in the sense of being WELL known: “Her husband is known in the gates, When he sitteth among the elders of the land.” She is an asset to his reputation; she enables better public relations.

⚡ Verse 24 opens with **fine linen**: “She maketh linen garments and selleth them; And delivereth girdles unto the merchant.” In this instance of fine linen, we see that she can make it herself to the degree that it can be sold for a profit.

⚡ The English of verse 25 begins with the same word as the Hebrew: **Strength** and dignity are her clothing; And she laugheth at the time to come.” The second half of that verse emphasizes the positive force she is in anyone’s life: Even “at the time to come”—a phrase carrying a meaning of uncertainty—she is known for her OPTIMISM.

⚡ **Mouth** is the first word of verse 26—HER mouth, that is: “She openeth her mouth with wisdom; And the law of kindness is on her tongue.” In the spirit of looking at the return on an “investment,” her mouth’s PROFIT is *wisdom* and *kindness*, more attributes that far exceed monetary gain.

⚡ The Hebrew words beginning verse 27 are rendered in the English as **looks well**—which means to KEEP WATCH: “She looketh well to the ways of her household, And eateth not the bread of idleness.” This woman is capable of taking care of the home independently.

⚡ **Rise** begins verse 28—speaking of the respectful children she rears: “Her children rise up, and call her blessed; Her husband also, and he praiseth her.” Her whole family recognizes what a blessing she is.

⚡ The English of verse 29 begins with the same word as the Hebrew: “**Many** daughters have done valiantly, But thou excellest them all.” “Valiantly” is the Hebrew *chayil*! This man can recognize *chayil* in a lot of admirable women, but the point of this proverb is the responsibility of the man to FIND the one who excels them all.

Timeless Traits

Reflect for a moment on what this Proverbs 31 “checklist” states about physical beauty. To this point, there is nothing about her appearance. There is also nothing in Ruth about her physical appearance, only her industriousness and loyalty. There is some in Proverbs 31 about her physical strength. But that too is largely about work ethic and wisdom. There is some about her wardrobe (more what it represents in her character). But the

only body parts mentioned are the arms, hands, palms, mouth and tongue (the latter two in terms of speech), as well as a girding of the loins.

☞ To put verse 30 in the correct word order, it would read: **Deceitful** is grace. “Grace is deceitful, and beauty is vain; But a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised.” Here is more cautionary wisdom from Bathsheba—for the man to be on guard against things that are fake or temporary. This is the ONLY verse in Proverbs 31 that addresses her beauty, and it says that beauty is LIKE A VAPOR. Beauty did not factor in to the “cost-benefit analysis” that is Proverbs 31. Why? All the benefits—all the returns on the “investment”—are PERMANENT characteristics. Beauty in the physical realm changes: it fades, sags and wrinkles. But our poetess says a godly woman is worthy of lasting praise.

☛ The English of the final verse begins with the same word as the Hebrew: “**Give** her of the fruit of her hands; And let her works praise her in the gates” (verse 31). Again, this is directed to the MAN. He does not lack anything by *giving* to a woman like this! The end of the poem rings with a bit of a warning: You can praise her or not; either way, HER OWN WORKS will speak for themselves—“in the gates,” or the same place where she can make you well known, as verse 23 emphasized.

Let us conclude with one other use of this Hebrew word *chayil*. Though often used in the context of large military organizations, valiant soldiers and wealthy individuals, Ruth 4:11 uses it in the context of MARRIAGE itself—the very marriage Bathsheba was likely referencing in her acrostic masterpiece: “And all the people that were in the gate, and the elders, said: ‘We are witnesses. The Lord make the woman that is come into thy house like Rachel and like Leah, which two did build the house of Israel; and do thou worthily [*chayil*] in Ephrath, and be famous in Beth-lehem.”

This is a blessing on Boaz: *May YOU do valiantly and be famous in Bethlehem*. Though that word was used earlier in the account to describe Boaz’s valor (Ruth 2:1), and though it was used BY Boaz to describe Ruth, here it describes what Boaz is *now* able to do because of this MARRIAGE. He could really act WORTHILY (valiantly, with great substance, power and bravery) because he had found this WOMAN OF VALOR.

Through the above alphabetical argument, the addressee is shown both the tangible and intangible profit of finding, and by implication marrying, a valiant woman. By using this literary device, our poetess has established a complete, ordered, logical, progressing, intensifying argument that not only serves as one of the great acrostic poems of the biblical record, but also has put her argument beyond debate or dispute. ■

FEEDBACK

I’ve been watching your video series on YouTube recently and absolutely loving the content, approach, professionalism and value that you bring to the biblical archaeology scene of Israel.

YAFO, ISRAEL

IN RESPONSE TO A TOUR

Thank you so much for the warm hospitality extended to me during my recent trip—I certainly enjoyed it.

John CHICAGO

IN RESPONSE TO

**“VALENTINE’S DAY—
IN THE HEBREW BIBLE?”**

Greetings from the Philippines! I enjoyed how in-depth the Valentine’s article is. Thank you for putting it up on the site. Thank you for your great work!

Anna Roxanne Romanes PHILIPPINES

IN RESPONSE TO

**“STAMPED INTO HISTORY: THE SEALS
OF THE PROPHET JEREMIAH”**

I may or may not have sent this to a professor in seminary who told me Jeremiah “probably never existed.”

Benjamin SOUTH CAROLINA

IN RESPONSE TO

**“THE HYKSOS: EVIDENCE OF JACOB’S
FAMILY IN ANCIENT EGYPT?”**

Thank you for your good article on the Hyksos. When I read it, I had the thought to read my book again (written in French). I have studied this subject for four years before I wrote my book, and I think also that “Hyksos” is another name for “Hebrews.” All we know about the Hyksos fit with the biblical account. Best regards and shalom!

Jacquy BELGIUM

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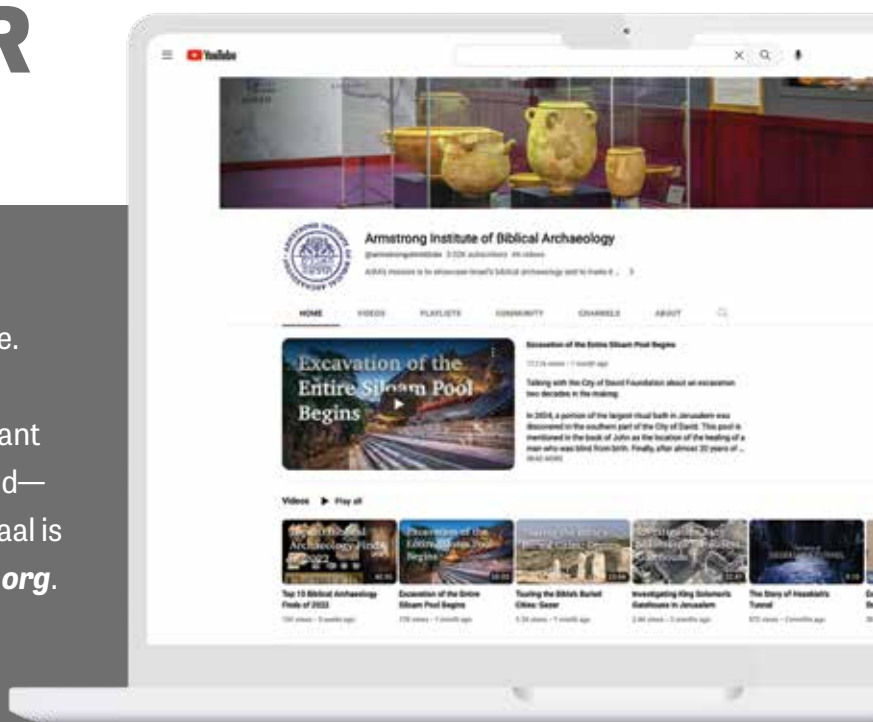
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