

# The Riddle of The Exodus of Israel From Egypt

Compiled By Glen W. Chapman- July 2003

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ANCIENT EGYPT	
Periods	Dynasties
Archaic	PreDynastic
Early Dynastic	1st, 2nd, 3rd
Old Kingdom	4th, 5th, 6th
First Intermediate	7th, 8th, 9th, 10th
Middle Kingdom	11th, 12th
Second Intermediate	13th, 14th, 15th 16th, 17th (The Hyksos)
New Kingdom	18th, 19th, 20th
Third Intermediate	21st, 22nd, 23rd, 24th
Late Kingdom	25th, 26th 27th (Persian) 28th, 29th, 30th
Second Persian	
Greco-Roman	Macedonian Kings Ptolemaic Roman Emperors Byzantine Emperors

The Greek historians were hindered in some measure because they were passing along second hand information. None of them could read hieroglyphs. In fact, by the fourth century, *no one* could read any of the ancient Egyptian texts or monuments since the ability to comprehend hieroglyphs, even by Egyptians, was a lost art. The impact of the Greeks is demonstrated in the name we still attach to this country. It is from the Greek *Agyptos*. Gardiner believes that the word might be a Hellenistic corruption of *Hikufta*, an early alternate name for Memphis, the famous capital near the Nile Delta.

The Mesopotamians knew Egypt as *Musur* or *Metsr*; which is closely related to *Mitzraim*, from the Hebrew. The latter is the Biblical founder Egypt. The ancient Egyptians referred to Egypt, in their native tongue, as *K/iarn* or *K/ian* (the black land). Even this Word points to the Biblical record. Ham was the grandfather of Mitzraim.

## *The Hebrew Vizier*

The actual story of the Exodus is common knowledge to anyone with even a passing interest in the Bible. For the reader who has never read the scriptural account, there might be some holes in the plot. So, let us briefly summarize the dramatic narrative, according to the Torah.

Chapter 37, in the book of Genesis, reveals how and why the family of Jacob first migrates to Egypt. It begins with a dream. Joseph, the son of Jacob, is sold into slavery by his own brothers and later acquired by an Egyptian high priest. Joseph is wrongfully imprisoned. During his incarceration, the king of Egypt is troubled by a dream that he cannot understand. Joseph wins his release when the ruler is told that the young Hebrew prisoner can interpret dreams.

From Joseph, the troubled monarch learns that his dreams foretell seven years of plenty followed by seven years of famine. Joseph boldly outlines a detailed plan to save the country. Recognizing Joseph's wisdom, Pharaoh promotes him to Viceroy, second only to the King. Joseph gains the mantle of power at the age of 30. The young Hebrew soon distinguishes himself as an intelligent and skilled administrator. He organizes a national effort to store enough produce for the expected disaster.

The seven-year famine arrives and its effects are felt well beyond the borders of Egypt. Because the ravages of the famine are so severe, most Egyptian landowners sell their property to the crown. Joseph develops an ancient feudal system allowing the former landowners to stay on their property. As the nations come to Egypt for its abundant grains and bountiful produce, the country's economy is further enriched.

After two years of distress, the need for food brings Joseph's brothers to Egypt to buy grain. Joseph, realizing that his fate was all a part of God's plan forgives his brothers. They are reunited and the entire family immigrates to Egypt. The young Hebrew vizier sends word to his father Jacob,

*"God has made me master of all Egypt. Come to me without delay."*  
Genesis 45:9

Jacob's household settles in *Goshen*, located in the rich Nile Delta region. There, the families of the Twelve Tribes flourish. His talents as an administrator, an architect and military leader have a vital impact on the culture of Egypt. Through his leadership the country becomes a rich and powerful world empire that weathered the ravages of nature. Joseph rules as Viceroy for eighty years, dying at the age of 110.

### ***Bondage***

In the first chapter of the book of Exodus we are told that the Egyptians believed that the growing Hebrew population posed a threat to the nation's stability. Because of their endurance and their vast numbers Pharaoh's advisors were convinced that the Hebrews would eventually destabilize the nation, overthrowing the crown.

The Jewish Oral Tradition reveals that the Children of Israel were enticed to join the Egyptians in a massive public works project to fortify the borders and to expand the garrisons at Pithom and Rameses. The Hebrews enthusiastically joined in, motivated by patriotism that grew from their gratefulness to a country that had once welcomed them with open arms. It was the Egyptians who should have been grateful, but they eventually withdrew their own workers leaving only the Israelites. Soon, the Hebrew tribes were under guard in their own communities. The stone barriers that the Egyptians had convinced them to fortify over the years became prison walls.

"The Egyptians appointed conscription officers over [the Israelites] to crush their spirits with hard labor. [The Israelites] were to build up the cities of Pithom and Rameses as supply

centers for Pharaoh.” — Exodus 1:11-12

Rabbi Yaacov Culi in *Me'am Lo'ez* relates that the above verse uses the word *miskenoth* to describe this building project and points out that it is related to *sakanah*, a word denoting danger. The walls of these garrisons were so high that falling from one meant instant death.

If you really reflect on what was happening, the Egyptians had created the first concentration camps complete with *ccipos* who would spy on their own people.

At the time of their greatest suffering, God sent the Children of Israel a Deliverer. He was Moses, born of the priestly Tribe of Levi. It was his birth that prompted the Egyptians to implement an ancient form of eugenics to further thin the ranks of the Israelites. The Oral tradition relates that the astrologers of pharaoh discerned that a Hebrew child had been born who would destroy Egypt. These seers had also determined that the downfall of this hero would come by water. Thus, a decree was issued to throw the newborns into the Nile River. Probably under the guise of population control, thousands of infant Hebrew males were drowned.

“Pharaoh then gave orders to all his people:

“Every boy who is born must be cast into the Nile, but every girl shall be allowed to live.”

— Exodus 1:22

Fully aware that the astrologers did possess a limited grasp of prophecy, the parents of Moses hid their newborn son in a secure basket launching it into the Nile. Later, when the king's seers consulted the stars again, they would see that the child had surely been “thrown into the Nile” and ceased to search for him.<sup>1</sup>

Miriam, the faithful older sister of Moses, watched from the banks as the little reed ark floated along the Nile.<sup>2</sup> The child is found by king's own daughter and raised in the palace, the very seat of power. As a young man, Moses witnesses an Egyptian overseer beating a Hebrew slave. He kills the overseer and flees for his own life. Years later, he finds his way to the house of Jethro, the High Priest of Midian. Moses eventually marries Zipporah, one of Jethro's daughters and settles down to a life of domestic bliss. While watching the flocks of Jethro near Mount Sinai, God beckons to Moses, speaking from a burning bush. The Creator reveals to Moses his true destiny and also the reason that he must deliver Israel from bondage.

“You must say to Pharaoh, ‘This is what God says: Israel is My son, My firstborn. I have told you to let My son go and serve Me.’”

— Exodus 4:22

At the age of eighty, Moses returns to face a new Pharaoh. He asks the ruler to allow the Israelites to go into the desert to worship God. The king refuses. A year of miraculous but frightening plagues follows. The tenth and final plague causes the death of every firstborn male whether man or beast. Finally, Pharaoh allows the slaves to go free. A weary, defeated Egyptian populace gives their gold, silver and their finest clothing to the departing Hebrews.

“I will give you status among the Egyptians, and when you all finally leave, you will not go empty-handed. Every woman shall borrow articles of silver and gold, as well as clothing, from her neighbors or from the woman living with her. You shall load this on your sons and daughters, and you will thus drain Egypt [of its wealth].” - Exodus 3:21-22

Basically, the Israelites are paid their back wages for their years of bondage.

As they set out on their journey Pharaoh changes his mind and dispatches his army to stop the Israelites. God intervenes once again. When the advancing Egyptian army threatens to overtake them, the sea divides allowing the Hebrews to cross on dry land. The army follows the fleeing Hebrews through the parted sea. They are utterly destroyed when the massive walls of water come crashing down. Forty-five days after their departure from Goshen the Israelite tribes arrive at the foot of Mount Sinai. Five days later, Moses receives the Ten Commandments and Israel becomes the first nation in history to be established under the authority of the Creator of time and space.

### ***Who Was the Pharaoh of the Exodus?***

When did this pivotal event in the history of the Jewish people occur? If we can establish the proper time frame, possibly we can begin to unravel this riddle. The popular idea that the Exodus happened during the time of Rameses can be discarded for any number of reasons. First of all, there is nothing recorded during or after his reign that resembles the scope and the impact of the Exodus. The Biblical account makes it clear that the Ten Plagues that accompanied the Exodus sent the Egyptian empire into ruin. This is nowhere evident in the time of Rameses II.

“Rameses reigned sixty-seven years, and at his death he left Egypt one of the largest and most powerful kingdoms on the earth...”

One of the real prizes on display at the Cairo Museum is the so-called Israel Stele commissioned by 19th Dynasty Pharaoh *Merneptah*. It bears the oldest known extra-Biblical reference to ancient Israel. The stele is, for me, solid evidence that neither *Merneptah*, nor his father, Rameses the Great had anything to do with the Exodus. First of all, the mummified corpses of both pharaohs are with us today. Even if Pharaoh was the Twelve Tribes fled from Egypt they were simply known as Hebrews. The Creator ordained them as a kingdom of priests at Mount Sinai but the rest of the world did not recognize Israel as a geopolitical entity until the time of they had a king, well over four-hundred years after the Exodus.

Some historians have attempted to pass off a minor slave revolt as the kernel of a story that grew into a Hebrew myth. I believe the language of the Torah gives us a clue as to the proper time frame. At this point, it might be useful to tackle a curiosity of the text regarding the names of the pharaohs. Though the Egyptian monarchs influenced the lives of the Biblical patriarchs in significant ways, there is no name given for any of these rulers in the five books of the Torah. In the later books of the Bible we find many Egyptian monarchs named such as Shishak, Necho and Hophra.

The answer might be found in the Torah precept that forbids uttering the name of any idol.

*“Be careful to keep everything that I have said to you. Do not pronounce the name of another deity. You must not let it be heard from your mouth.” - Exodus 23:13*

This could include a person who is worshipped as a god. There is no doubt that during the Old Kingdom the pharaoh was considered godlike.

*“...he was from the first regarded as divine, although a little below the gods, but by the 5th Dynasty he came to be thought of as the actual son of the sun god. In the early years there was a tremendous chasm between him and his subjects which lessened in time for a variety of reasons.”*

The Egyptians of the Old Kingdom were taught that their king was born of a virgin. The sun god, known as Ra, would impregnate the queen. Thus it was also taught that *'the blood of Ra flowed through the veins of every king.'* This cosmology was in place during the Egypt's so-called Early Dynastic and Old Kingdom periods. Since such a belief is an affront to the God of the Bible it could explain why the Torah refers only to title of Pharaoh while later Egyptian kings are specifically named in the later books of the Bible.

Prior to the Exodus, the Egyptian people actually believed that their pharaoh was a god. That blind devotion changed after witnessing pharaoh's downfall at the hands of the God of Moses. The utter destruction of their empire by God's hand surely must have put their ruler in a less flattering light. Egyptologist Cyril Aldred informs us that in the years following the decline of the Old Kingdom, in the dynasties known as the Middle Kingdom, the populace definitely viewed their monarch in more down to earth terms.

*"The prestige of the pharaoh as a divinity, already sadly eroded from the last years of the Old Kingdom, suffered further decay with the ascendancy of Osiris as the deification of the idea of kingship. From now on, all men who were worthy had the promise of immortality..."*

Aldred further comments that these Middle Kingdom rulers resorted to a kind of primitive public relations campaign to repair their tarnished image. They commissioned a series of fictional works such as *The Prophecy of Neferti*, *The Teaching of King Ammenemes* and the *Story of Sinuhe* that all portrayed the pharaohs as heroic characters.

*"These and some minor works, hymns in praise of the kings and so forth, form the classical literature of Egypt, and helped to enhance the prestige of the pharaoh during the Middle Kingdom."*

Prior to Exodus, the common people regarded the king divine. Historically, this was also the status of the pharaoh up until the end of the Old Kingdom. Even though subsequent Egyptian monarchs would continue to claim a godly ancestry, their subjects must have only acknowledged this conceit for political expediency. This drastic change in the way the Egyptian ruler was regarded, points to the Old Kingdom as the time of the Exodus.

### **"Let It Be Written... Let It Be So."**

We can thank Cecille B. DeMille for reminding people that God gave the Torah to Israel but we can also charge him for propagating certain misconceptions that continue to color our understanding of this event. For his production, DeMille hired Henry Noerdlinger to research the script for the epic production. His exhaustive work led the scenarist to write the book, *Moses and Egypt* which was published shortly after the release of the feature film in 1956. It was Noerdlinger's belief that Rameses II was the Pharaoh of the Exodus. This 19th Dynasty king was, like many tyrants, just a tad egomaniacal. The ancient public works devoted to keeping his memory alive must have been vast because the number of surviving monuments is still impressive. The name and image of Rameses the Great is found on everything in modern Egypt from hotels to military installations.

But there is nothing in his stony legacy that suggests anything like the Spielbergian events of the Exodus. If Rameses the Great was the Pharaoh of the Exodus where is it recorded during

his reign?

Libraries and bookstores are stocked with countless editions that declare Rameses II as “Pharaoh of the Exodus”. This misconception is either a misreading of the Biblical text but more often it is simply an educated guess. It is theory based wholly on the notion that a rich parcel of land located in the Nile Delta was named after the ruling pharaoh of that period — that Pharaoh being Rameses.

In the Bible, the name Rameses appears in exactly five places. Each time it is *only employed as a geographical reference*. Turn to chapter 47 of Genesis and read how Joseph, the interpreter of dreams becomes vizier, a sort of prime minister of all Egypt. He also saved the country from famine and a grateful pharaoh invites Joseph’s family to settle in the choicest region. In verse 6, pharaoh instructs Joseph, “The land of Egypt is at your disposal. Settle your father and brothers in the best area. Let them settle in the Goshen district.”

Reading down to verse 11 we learn that Goshen is known by another name.

*“Joseph found a place for his father and brothers to live. He gave them an estate in the Rameses region, in the best area, as Pharaoh had ordered.”*

It is obvious from the Biblical text that Goshen and Rameses are one and the same. Hundreds of years after Joseph invites the entire family to settle in Goshen we find their descendants enslaved while toiling away at two sites as described in Exodus 1:11 as Pithom and Rameses.

These two separate verses negate the theory that one of these cities was named for Rameses the Great. According to the existing Egyptian records, the name Rameses does not appear until the 19<sup>th</sup> Dynasty. The founder of that Dynasty, Rameses I only ruled two years. His son Seti ruled around eleven years and his son Rameses II (aka Rameses the Great) was king for sixty-five years. These three kings ruled for a total of seventy-eight years.

The span of time from the first pharaoh Rameses and his grandson is less than eighty years. The duration between Joseph and the Exodus is far longer. This imagined timeline is also problematic because Joseph was Prime Minister of Egypt for eighty years. Chapter 16 of Exodus makes it clear that after Joseph’s death, the Hebrews flourished and grew in numbers and that “there arose a new king who did not know Joseph.”

If the office of prime minister were bestowed on Joseph during the reign of Rameses I then he would still have been serving the crown when Rameses II took the throne. The Bible makes it very clear, in the above verse that Joseph had passed away long before the arrival of the ruler who would oppress and enslave the Israelites.

### ***The Upright Book***

Let us consult an ancient Jewish source handed down for centuries entitled *Sefer Ha Yashar*. It is also known as the *Book of the Generations of Adam*. The first century Jewish sage known as Rabbi Eliezer, son of Hyrkanos quotes liberally from this nearly forgotten text. My personal library contains two versions of *Sefer Ha Yashar*, one published in 1993 and distributed by KTAV Publishers. The editor of the latter, Avraham Davis, maintains that though the origins of the work are uncertain, Jewish scholars have cited it for ages.

The first known printing was in Naples in 1553. *Sefer Ha Yashar* is also quoted throughout

the exhaustive nineteen volume Torah anthology called *Me'Am Loez* written nearly 250 years ago by the great Sephardic sage Rabbi Yaakov Culi. The language of this text reflects a grasp of geography that is definitely post-Biblical with references to locales such as Lombardy and Tuscany.<sup>1</sup>

The first English translation of *Sefer Ha Yashar* was published in 1840 and is now available from Artisan Press in Muskogee, Oklahoma. The original translation contains numerous letters from Hebrew and Biblical scholars attesting to the authenticity of the work. Those commendations are missing from the newer editions but thanks to the tireless efforts of author Wayne Simpson, those endorsements have been reprinted in an edition called *The Authentic Annals of the Early Hebrews*. I recommend Simpson's edition, not only for its reader friendly format, but also for his own thought provoking commentaries in the book's appendix section.

The English title, *Book of Jasher*, often confuses those unfamiliar with Hebrew. Some construe *jasher* as the author's name. However, the word is a translation of *yashar*, meaning straight or upright. I have checked this latter version with many of the specific events mentioned in *Me'Am Loez* and found them to be consistent. Historians will immediately object to my turning to what they consider an obscure text. Even using the Bible and related sources for historical research is always considered problematic. I will be warned that I am on shaky ground relying on such "legendary" sources. They will question my drawing from material derived from religious sources. However, the very origins of Greece and Rome are handed down to us from Herodotus, Eusebius and Titus Livius. These authors of antiquity all had to depend on legendary material. It is a fact that many ancient cultures cannot decisively pinpoint their own beginnings. For instance, much of Rome's early history is really the province of poets like Virgil and Ennius. I have to agree with historian Will Durant who said,

*"We must not ignore these stories., they may contain more history than we suppose; and they are so bound up with Greek poetry, drama and art that we should be at a loss to understand these without them."*

*Sefer Ha Yashar* is a work rich in plot and equally dense in detail. If screenwriters drew from the accounts as we find them in this Midrash, their scripts would burst with dramatic imagery. In the chapters devoted to birth of Moses we learn of a certain advisor to Pharaoh by the name of Reuel. When the Egyptian king decides that the Children of Israel might soon become a threat, Reuel reminds Pharaoh of all the good that the Hebrew Joseph had done for Egypt. Unhappy with this advice, the king turns to his other advisors, Balaam and Job. While Balaam tells Pharaoh to throw the Hebrew children into the Nile, Job takes a neutral position allowing that Pharaoh should do what he thinks is best.

Reuel realizes that he has fallen out of favor with the crown and decides to leave. He immigrates to the land of Midian where he becomes known as a High Priest called Yithro( Jethro).

Years later, when a full-grown Moses visits Yithro he discovers a sapphire rod planted in the great seer's garden. Moses is told that no man can pull this rod from the ground except the one who would deliver the Children of Israel from their bondage. Many had tried and failed but Moses plucks the rod from the earth. Engraved on the rod was the Tetragrammaton, the holy, unpronounceable name of God.

## *No Term Limits in Antiquity*

The harsh burdens inflicted on the Hebrews began with ascension to the throne of a king described in the book of Exodus as one “who knew not Joseph”. In *Sefer Ha Yashar*, we learn that the name of this Pharaoh is **Melol**. Due to the severity of his decrees, the Hebrews called him **Meror**, a name taken from the root word for bitterness. He had commanded that all Hebrew male children should be thrown into the Nile. Pharaoh further decreed that if any slave failed to meet their daily quota of bricks, the overseers were to take the youngest child of the slave and use the infant in place of bricks and mortar. Melol is known as the Pharaoh of the Oppression.

What is most remarkable about this tyrannical king is the length of his reign.

*“Melol was twenty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned for ninety-four years.”*

It was the daughter of this king who would later discover Moses in the river and raise him as a Prince of Egypt. During the last ten years of his life, Pharaoh Melol was smitten with severe skin disorders and intestinal problems. He believed that bathing in the blood of Hebrew infants would cure him.

When Melol finally died in agony, his body was in such a state of decay; no one wanted to approach it. His first-born, *Othri* should have succeeded him on the throne, but he was found to be mentally incompetent. His brother *Adikam* was selected to reign.

### ***The Son Also Rises***

*“Adikam was twenty years old when he reigned over Egypt, he reigned four years.”*

*Sefer Ha Yashar* also relates something unusual about the physical aspect of young Adikam. The populace nicknamed him *Ahuz*, their word for “short”. He was said to stand only a cubit and a span in height. It is apparent that Melol was very old when he fathered Adikam. According to modern medical authorities, the chances of a child being born a dwarf can increase dramatically when the father is advanced in years.

It was during the final twelve months of Adikam’s reign that the Ten Plagues occurred, climaxed by the death of the firstborn. Remember, his older brother *Othri* was supposed to rule but was found to be incompetent. This would explain why Pharaoh Adikam did not perish during the death of the first-born. Adikam would survive that calamity but he would witness the might of his armed forces drowning in the Sea of Reeds.

### ***Searching the Egyptian Records***

Every student of Egyptology knows Manetho’s *History of Egypt*, but the original work does not exist today. Fragments of Manetho’s work survive through four other ancient historians: Josephus, Africanus, Eusebius and Herodotus. However, they only quote fragments of the original. Manetho recorded the names of the ancient Pharaohs and the length of their reigns. Thanks to the years of extensive digging in Egypt, there is an abundance of ancient textual and archaeological sources to aid us in the search for the father and son who fit the description of the

Pharaoh of the Oppression and the Pharaoh of the Exodus.

Abydos is known today as Abtu. Security logistics make it necessary to first journey south from Cairo to Luxor (about 8 hours by car) then drive back north under police escort the 90 miles to the temple site.

Seti, the father of Rameses built the temple to carry on the worship of Osiris. It was first excavated in 1864. Near the rear of the temple, on a wall covered with *cartouches*, is the King's List of the early Pharaohs of Egypt. It is a record of seventy-five kings from the First Dynasty up to the Nineteenth Dynasty. It was Rameses the Great who commissioned this ancient roll call to pay homage to his forerunners. This gallery bears the prenomen of Neferkare, also known as *Pepi II*.

The Turin Royal Canon is actually a papyrus discovered in 1822. The hieratic text also lists many of the pharaohs from the First to the Nineteenth Dynasties. It was also written during the time of Rameses the Great. Manetho's Dynastic list found some corroboration thanks to the Turin Royal Canon. An Italian tourist, Bernardino Drovetti, discovered it in 1822. This scroll derives its name from the museum in Turin, Italy where it remains on display.

Written in a cursive form of hieroglyphs called hieratic, the Papyrus also lists many of the Pharaohs and the length of each reign. In these ancient Egyptian catalogues we can discover a startling correlation between the Jewish and Egyptian records. These chronicles list a Sixth Dynasty ruler known as *Pepi II*. He was also called *Neferkare Phiops*, *Merenre* and *Nemtimsaf I*. This pharaoh is well known for having ruled longer than any king in all of Egyptian history, an astonishing 94 years.

This is an important detail about the king because it matches what the Jewish Midrash relates about *Melol*, the king who enslaved the Hebrews. He was the pharaoh "who knew not Joseph." *Melol* is called the Pharaoh of the Oppression and he ruled 94 years!

If we look at the listing of kings that comes to us from the Egyptian historian Manetho we find another possible connection to this family of Sixth Dynasty pharaohs. His name is *Qthoes* which sounds very much like *Othri* who should have succeeded his father on the throne but found to be mentally unstable. The son who would reign was *Adikam*. According to *Sefer Ha Yashar* he only ruled for four years. Looking again to the Egyptian records we find that the son of *Pepi II*, Neferkare the *Younger* succeeded him on the throne. He was known variously as *Merenre* and *Nemtimsaf II*. His reign was only a one year.

Here we have two fascinating parallels between two very different sources: The Egyptian chronicles carved in stone at Abydos and the ancient papyrus now housed in Turin both echo what we find in the Jewish Midrash. Why are the names of these rulers so dissimilar?

The confusion comes from the *fact* that the ancient kings of Egypt had as many as five names. Some are titles while other appellations are various forms of the birth name, expressed as the Prenomen and Nomen, the Nebty name, Horus name, and the Golden Falcon name. The ancient Egyptians were very superstitious in this regard. Since they were concerned with the afterlife, they wanted to insure that their name was not forgotten. Even if a carved likeness of the deceased was left behind it was of no use unless it bore their name.

"Without a naming inscription either on the statue or nearby, a statue represented no one. Without a name an ancient Egyptian did not exist. The possibility of losing one's name and therefore one's existence was a very real fear, so much so that a prayer for remembrance was included in the Book of the Dead."<sup>4</sup>

It is therefore no surprise that the kings of antiquity had so many names. Apparently they suffered from a bit of insecurity. Five or more names will go a long way in the afterlife. The Old Kingdom rulers might possess other names that we have not yet learned. There is an interesting linguistic problem that may reveal another link between the name of Pharaoh *Pepi II* and *Melol*. The Egyptian tongue had difficulty with the “l” sound and the “r” sound. The hieroglyph could be articulated either way. Since *Pepi II* was also known as *Merer*, it might be translated as something akin to *Melel*, or as he was known to the Hebrews, *Melol*.



Picture of the  
Dwarf  
Pharaoh  
Khnumhotep

Whatever these two Sixth Dynasty kings were called, it is intriguing to consider that *Pepi II* may have been the Pharaoh of the Oppression who enslaved the Israelites and his son, *Neferkare the Younger*, the Pharaoh of the Exodus. This possibility leads us to another extraordinary parallel and that is the climactic downfall of the Old Kingdom.

### ***Twilight of the Old Kingdom***

Egyptologists draw a demarcation line at the close of the Sixth Dynasty. They say it is the culmination of an epoch known as the Old Kingdom.

*“The Old Kingdom brought about the full appearance of Egyptian civilization on the world stage. We see it as a stable entity insured of longevity by its well-rooted traditions and well-balanced economy. The brilliance of achievements in engineering, in the creation*

*of businesslike writing as an adjunct to hieroglyphs, the firm religious philosophy, the moral code, the technology which made use of raw materials, and above all the enormous agricultural productivity — made Egyptian culture increasingly dominant over all others in the vicinity and for a considerable distance beyond.”*

The Egyptian empire was experiencing a golden age and that is what makes its fate all the more surprising. At the close of the Sixth Dynasty, sometime after the rule of a Pharaoh known variously as *Pepi II*, *Merenre* and *Neferkare*, Egypt exited the world stage. It fell as a world empire. On this point, most Egyptologists agree.

*“At this distance of time, the overthrow of the Old Kingdom at the end of the Sixth Dynasty has all the appearance of being sudden and complete”*

“Conflicting as these accounts may appear, they convey an impression of the same historic fact: the morrow of the passing of Pepy II witnessed a lapse into political anarchy.”

“After the death of Nefer-ka-ra, Egyptian history is involved in darkness and confusion.”

All the sources point to a time of upheaval that marked the demise of the Old Kingdom. There was not even a standing army! The king’s lists attest to this rapid decline with Manetho reporting that seventy kings ruled in seventy days.

“Anarchy, violence and poverty were followed by famine, plague and utter depression. The old people who had lived through the peace and security of the Old Kingdom must have suffered the most, but no one was safe from marauding thieves, hunger and fear. It was a topsy-turvy world.”

Oddly, these calamities allegedly resulted from the gradual erosion of the pharaoh’s power base. Most Egyptologists can only surmise that the culture imploded and fell prey to the onslaught of aggression from beyond its borders. Since the debate is still open on this point, we can entertain another possibility. The answer is readily offered by the graphic depiction of the events that preceded the departure of the Israelites from Egypt.

Consider the fate of Egypt as recounted in the Biblical narrative:

- The land and people suffer through twelve months of dreadful plagues that destroys crops, livestock and other resources.
- Still reeling from those hardships the populace witnesses the death of every first- born male throughout the land of Egypt.
- The Egyptians voluntarily hand over their fortunes in gold and silver to the Israelites.
- The nation’s total labor force, the Hebrew slaves departs and with them a mixed multitude.
- Finally, with the drowning of the Egyptian military leadership in the Sea of Reeds, the country is rendered completely defenseless and the male population is further depleted.

What nation, even today, could survive such an unrelenting series of blows? I believe these factors, cited above, all contributed to the utter ruin of the empire, bringing the nation to its knees and plunging it into a dark age that continued for hundreds of years, as attested to in the Egyptian

sources. This is echoed in the Biblical record. Not until the time of Solomon do we encounter the Egyptians as a world power again—over four hundred years after the Exodus.

There is no denying that the end of the Sixth Dynasty and the Old Kingdom saw Egypt plunged into a time of chaos. Some of the previously quoted sources give the impression that it came during the reign of *Pepi*

*II*. However, the final chapters of that epoch actually played out during the rule of his son, *Neferkare the Younger*, or as he is also known, *Nemtimsaf*

### ***Queen for a Day?***

On the southwest corner of the Giza plateau is another possible connection to the Exodus. It is known as the Pyramid of *Mykenirus*. This is the so-called Third Pyramid. It supposedly belongs to a Fourth Dynasty king. The historian Manetho claims that “the third pyramid was built by Nitocris.” This seeming discrepancy could be explained by the fact that the monument was first built by *Mykenrius* and later enlarged by *Nitocris*. The pyramid contains two burial chambers. The remains of *Mykenirus* rested within a wooden coffin in the lower vault while the upper contained a blue basalt sarcophagus. It is possible that this stone crypt was the final resting place of *Nitocris*.

*Nitocris* is also known by her prenomem *Menkaura* which sounds very close to *Mykenrius*. Manetho further claims that *Nitocris* was the last ruler of the Sixth Dynasty. Her name was a Greek corruption of *Netiquerti* which is how she is listed on the ancient canon called the Turin Papyrus. She may have been the first woman pharaoh in the history of Egypt.

Egyptologist Barbara Mertz believes that the sudden appearance of a female on the throne was notable.

*“The ultimate ruler of the (6th) dynasty was a woman; any man, including Manetho, could tell you that this was a bad sign. If it were not for a reference to this lady, whose name was Nitocris, in the Turin Papyrus, I would be inclined to suspect her of being apocryphal as are the stories the Greeks collected about her.”*

Until the reign of *Nitocris* the scepter of power had passed to the male heir.. .after all, the pharaoh was known as the Son of the Sun. If we factor in the Torah account of the death of the first born along with the drowning of the Egyptian army there would be a serious lack of male heirs for the throne of Egypt. The Torah and Midrash make it very clear that the Pharaoh of the Exodus did not return from the Sea of Reeds. Is it not conceivable that *Nitocris* reigned in his stead?

Since her ascension to the throne coincides with the disastrous final days of the Sixth Dynasty we can add this occurrence as another intriguing parallel to our Exodus account. If *Pepi II* and *Neferkare the Younger*, are respectively *Melol*, the Pharaoh of the Oppression and *Adikam*, the Pharaoh of the Exodus, then we should be able to find documents from the end of the Old Kingdom era that describe the shattering events of the Exodus Plagues.

#### ***The Amazing Papyrus at Leiden***

*“The sound of Your thunder was in the whirlwind: the lightnings lightened the world: the earth trembled and shook. Your way is in the sea, and Your path in the great waters, and Your footsteps are not known. You led your people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron.”*-- Psalms 77:18

God sent Ten Plagues against the nation of Egypt, each more devastating than the last. The Egyptians would endure these calamities for twelve months. It is an epic marked by howling storms, seismic events and possibly volcanic activity. Elsewhere in the Bible we can find descriptions of the disasters that accompanied the Ten Plagues. If we look more closely at the Biblical account of the Exodus we see a time of massive upheavals in the natural order of the world. Surely the Ten Plagues and the attendant chaos would have been memorialized in some fashion? We may just have such a record.

Housed in the Museum of Leiden in the Netherlands is a crumbling papyrus first unearthed near the pyramids at Saqqara in 1822. The museum purchased them in 1828 from a private collector named Anastasi. The text, a lengthy diatribe against the king by a priest named Ippuwer, was translated into English in 1909 by Egyptologist Sir Alan Gardiner and published as *The Admonitions of an Egyptian Sage*. Gardiner in his *Egypt of the Pharaohs* was adamant regarding the nature of the text,

*“This extremely tattered papyrus in the Leyden collection dates from no earlier than Dynasty XIX, but the condition of the country which it discloses is one which cannot be ascribed to the imagination of a romancer, nor does it fit into any place of Egyptian history except that following the end of the Old Kingdom.”*

While other translators believed that the discourse of Ippuwer was prophetic in nature, Gardiner demonstrates, in his introductory remarks to his own translation, that the descriptive passages were far too detailed to be taken as predictions. *“There is a limit to the minuteness with which future things may be foretold.”*

Gardiner further dispels this notion by noting that the terrible state of things is familiar to those Ippuwer is addressing — that the miseries were foretold by the ancestors. That the sage was speaking of his present condition is further underscored by his pleas to take some kind of action. Another interesting aspect of this document is the fact that Ippuwer places the blame for his nation’s ills squarely on the shoulders of the pharaoh. The King’s advisors do the same in the Bible.

*“Pharaoh’s officials said to him, “How long will this man be a snare to us? Let the people go, so that they may worship the Lord their God. Do you not yet realize that Egypt is ruined?”*

-- Exodus 10:7

The papyrus, written in the cursive form called hieratic is an exhaustive litany of woes. Here, Ippuwer, addresses the court and mourns for the fallen state of his nation and people:

*“Mirth has perished and is no longer. There is groaning throughout the land mingled with lamentations.. .the land is in darkness”*

*“Forsooth, the land turns round as does a potter’s wheel.. .Upper Egypt is waste.. .All is ruined.. .Oh that the earth would cease from its noise.”*

The most striking characteristic of this record is how the text details a chain of calamities that are strikingly similar to events found in the Biblical plagues.

Let’s compare some of the Biblical descriptions with the language of the Ippuwer Papyrus:

## **plague of Hail**

Compare still more frightening events in Exodu ~jth the words of Ippuwer,

*“Moses pointed his staff at the sky, and God caused it to thunder and hail, with lightning striking the ground. God then made it hail on the land of Egypt. There was hail, with lightning flashing among the hailstones.”* –Exodus 9:23-24

Papyrus 2:10

*“Forsooth, Gates, columns and walls are consumed by fire.”*

## **Plague of Darkness**

*“Moses lifted his hand toward the sky, and there was an opaque darkness in all Egypt, lasting for three days”*-Exodus 10:22

Papyrus 9:8-10

*“Destruction. . . the land is in darkness”*

## **Death of First Born**

The most devastating blow of all was the death of the first born which occurred at midnight as we read in Exodus 12:29:

*“It was midnight. God killed every first-born in Egypt, from the first-born of Pharaoh, sitting on his throne, to the first-born of the prisoner in the dungeon, as well as every first-born animal.”*

Sefer Ha Yashar tells that this punishment even extended to their stone images of the first-born and even the buried remains of the recently departed firstborn of the Egyptians.

Now, note the vivid similarity in the descriptions found in the Ippuwer Papyrus:

Papyrus 2:13

*“Forsooth, men are few. He who places his brother in the ground is everywhere”.*

## **Plague of Insects**

*“The locust covered the entire surface of the ground, making the ground black. They ate all the plants on the ground and all the fruits on the trees, whatever had been spared by the hail. Nothing green remained on the trees and plants throughout Egypt.”* Exodus 10:15

Papyrus 6:2-4

*“Forsooth... no fruits or herbs are found.. Forsooth grain has perished on every side.”*

## Water to blood

In Exodus 4:9, God instructs Moses,

*“...you shall take some water from the Nile and spill it on the ground. The water that you will take from the Nile will turn to blood on the ground.”*

Papyrus 7:4

*“Behold Egypt is poured out like water. He who poured water on the ground, he has cap-hired the strong man in misery.*

Papyrus 2:6

*Plague is throughout the land. Blood is everywhere.*

Papyrus 2:10

*“Forsooth, the river is blood.”*

Papyrus 4:3

*“Children of Princes are dashed against walls. The offspring of nobility are laid out on the high ground.”*

Papyrus 7:4

*“The residence is overturned in a minute.”*

## Spoiling Egypt

Finally, before their departure from Egypt, the Israelites are told to take the gold and silver from the Egyptians.. .sort of back wages for their years of unpaid labor.

*“The Israelites did as Moses had said. They requested gold and silver articles and clothing from the Egyptians. God made the Egyptians respect the people, and they granted their request. [The Israelites]drained Egypt of its wealth]*

-- Exodus 12:35

Ippuwer again documents a parallel to this event.

Papyrus 2:4

*“Forsooth, poor men have become the owners of good things. He who could not make his own sandals is now the possessor of riches.”*

Papyrus 3:3

*“Gold, blue stone, silver, malachite, carnelian, bronze and Yebet stone and . . . .are fastened to the necks of female slaves.”*

Papyrus 8:2

*“Behold the poor of the land have become rich, and [the possessor] of property has become one who has nothing.*

## **The Mixed Multitude**

As the Israelites took leave of Egypt they were joined by a “mixed multitude” as described in Exodus 12:38,

*“And a mixed multitude went up also with them; and flocks, and herds, even very much cattle.”*

The *erev ray* or mixed multitude comprised the Egyptian families who cast their fate with the Israelite tribes and departed with them. Though Gardiner found this next line from Ippuwer “hopelessly obscure”, it makes perfect senses when compared to the above passage from Exodus 12:38.

Papyrus 3:14

*“Those who were Egyptians have become foreigners.”*

### **Pillar of Fire**

Now compare the description of Israel’s flight from the land and the miraculous clouds that accompanied them with another line from Ippuwer,

*“God went before them by day with a pillar of cloud, to guide them along the way. By night it appeared as a pillar of fire, providing them with light.” -Exodus 13:21*

Papyrus 7:1

*“Behold the fire mounted up on high. Its burning goes forth before the enemies of the land.”*

These are but a few of the countless verses found in Lieden papyrus which capture the wonder, terror and misery of Egypt in the wake of the Ten Plagues and the departure of the Israelites.

Papyrus 4:2

*“Noise is not lacking in span. . . There is no end to the noise.”*

Papyrus 6:1

*“O that the earth would cease from noise, and tumult be no more!”*

And finally, could the following line describe the loss of the pharaoh who failed to return from his pursuit of the departing Hebrew slaves at the Sea of Reeds?

Papyrus 7:2

*“Behold things are done, that have never happened for long time past: the king has been taken away by poor men.”*

## *Splitting the Sea*

Though the Bible offers a compelling account of Israel's departure from the crumbling Egyptian empire, scholars cannot agree on the actual route taken by the Twelve Tribes. Within this debate is the question of just where the miracle of the Reed Sea crossing occurred. By consulting both the Torah and the Midrash we can reasonably retrace the path. Remarkably, with the help of modern science it is also possible to mark the site where Israel crossed through the sea and witnessed the drowning deaths of the advancing Egyptian hordes. Before introducing you to the scientific aspect of this event, let us consider what the text reveals. Beginning with Chapter 13 in the book of Exodus we find several geographical hints.

*“When Pharaoh let the people leave, God did not lead them along the Philistine Highway, although it was the shorter route. God’s consideration was that if people encountered armed resistance, they would lose heart and return to Egypt.”- Exodus 13:17-18*

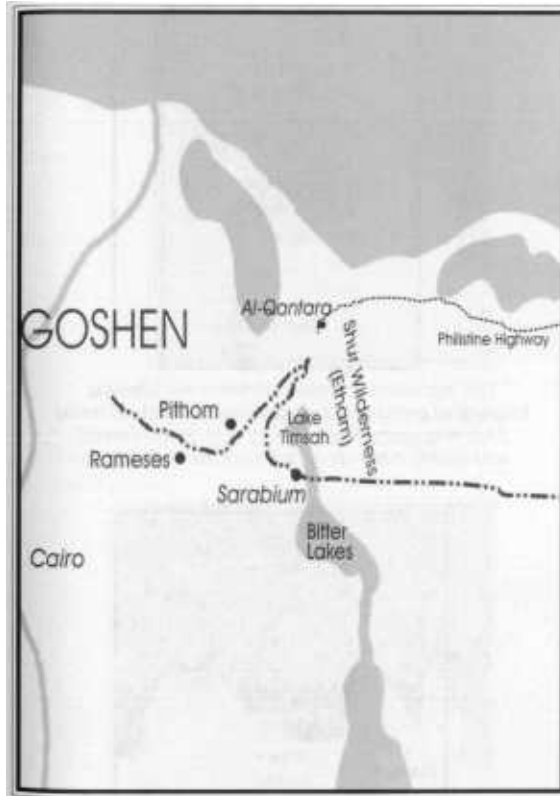
### ***The Direct Route***

Taking the “Philistine Highway” located due east of the Nile Delta would give them speedy access to their destination. They are commanded not to travel this ancient corridor running along the Mediterranean Coast because the Israelites might turn back, fearing war. The Hebrew rendering is *re-eh milchamah*, literally “see war.” *Sefer Ha Yashar* sheds even more light on what could evoke such alarm.

Thirty years prior to the Exodus, a large contingent from the Tribe of Ephraim decided that the time of their redemption had arrived. They remembered that God had told their ancestor Abraham that his descendants, after being enslaved, would be set free. They knew from this promise that four hundred years would elapse before the prophecy would be fulfilled. They erred by counting the four hundred year exile from the event described in Genesis 15:13 when Abraham was seventy years old. However, the prophetic clock would not start ticking until the birth of Isaac, thirty years later. The departure of the men of Ephraim, coming too soon, would literally have grave consequences.

*Sefer Ha Yashar* goes on to relate that these men of Ephraim took no provisions thinking they would buy what they needed from the locals living along the road. The route was the Philistine Highway, surely the quickest, straightest path to Canaan. Their journey did not go as planned because the villagers along the way refused to sell food to the men of Ephraim. Fighting broke out and the locals called on the nearby Philistines for aid. In the battle that followed, thousands of men of the Tribe of Ephraim were slaughtered. The brutal Philistines piled the dead into one massive forbidding heap. This grim memorial was still there, thirty years later when the Exodus began and would have surely struck terror into the hearts of the departing Israelites. This is another reason that the people did not travel the shortest route to their destination, east along the shores of the Mediterranean.

Heading due north would take them straight into the Mediterranean. Obviously, traveling west would lead them away from their destination. They would have to travel on a southerly course. However, there was another hazard with journeying too far south. It would lead them into the thick of populated Egypt.



***The Direct Route Was Close To Goshen***

This little detail reveals a very basic truth about the location of Goshen, home of the Hebrews during their exile in Egypt. If the Philistine Highway was close at hand, as the Biblical text relates, then the Land of Goshen must have been due west of this ancient thoroughfare. Sir Flinders Petrie, long considered the Father of Egyptology, believed that Rameses and Pithom, the store cities built by the Hebrew slaves, were Tel Rotab and Tel al Muskhuta, west of the modern town of Ismailia, on the Suez Canal. Just 20 miles northeast of Tel al Muskhuta (Pithom) is Al Qantara. This was the beginning of the old caravan route to ancient Syria and known to us as the Philistine Highway.

***God Led Israel Down to the Sea***

Another key element in this narrative is the amount of time that elapsed from Israel's departure until their arrival at the Sea. The Torah gives a specific date for the beginning of their journey.

*“The Israelites] left Ra’meses on the 15th of the first month.” — Numbers 33:3*

They trekked to Sukkoth and from there they moved onto to Etham, “at the edge of the wilderness.” Israel was commanded to travel from Etham to Pi Hahiroth. The name of the latter site can be translated variously as “*the mouth of freedom*” or “*Freedom Valley*.”

The *Sefer Ha Yashar* states that, on the following day, a contingent of Egyptian

nobles was dispatched to this new campsite. The Egyptians were anxious to know when the Hebrews would return from their worship.

*“Now, therefore this makes five days since you went, why do you not return to your masters?”*  
- *Sefer Ha Yashar* 81:14

Of course, Moses made it clear that they would not return to their former situation. The Egyptian squad informed Pharaoh of Moses' refusal. Encouraged by Israel's position as sitting ducks, the king mounted an assault on Israeli. The Egyptian chariot fleet arrived at Pi Hahiroth on the 6th day of Passover. The frightened camp looks back to see the Egyptian horde. We learn from Exodus 14:19 that the Pillar of Cloud moves to their rear, shielding the Israelite camp from the Egyptians all night long.

Now, the Biblical narrative takes on an epic flavor as the Creator harnesses the forces of nature with awful and wonderful results.

*“Moses extended his hand over the sea. During the entire night, God drove back the sea with a powerful east wind, transforming the seabed into dry land. The waters were divided. The Israelites entered the seabed on dry land. The water was on their right and left like [two] walls.”*

-- Exodus 14:21

Classical Jewish Bible commentators such as the Rambam and Ralbag both teach that one of the reasons that God sent a strong east wind was so that the Egyptians would believe that they were simply witnessing a natural occurrence. They further comment that the Creator always minimizes miracles and alters the laws of nature only when it is of the great consequence. If this event can fall into the realm of understandable phenomena, how could we explain it?

#### *A Little Help from Our Friends*

Dr. Frank J. Little, Jr. is an Ecologist and Oceanographer who is, according to one of his peers, “an immensely talented scientist.”<sup>4</sup> It was Dr. Little who introduced me to something known as “wind set-down,” which can only occur when specific geophysical and meteorological elements are in place. This rare oceanographic phenomenon results in literally the parting of waters, creating a path on dry ground. It also creates an accompanying hazard called a seiche wave that allows those same waters to return with rapid, dangerous force sweeping away anything or anyone in its path. Dr. Little bases his unique view on the earlier work of Swedish oceanographer Bo Hellstrom. As Little states in his research,

*“Our purpose is to return Hellstrom's Exodus hypothesis to the scientific community, plus quantify and update it in light of newly synthesized evidence.”*

Hellstrom first published a Swedish language paper on the subject in 1924 entitled “*Israels Tag Genom Roda Havet*” which was translated into an English version in 1950 as “The Israelites' Crossing of the Red Sea”. Since this paper is quite rare today, Dr. Little was kind enough to supply me with copies of both reports. The nearly forgotten Hellstrom was a pioneer in his field who studied the effects of wind moving across the water. His interest regarding the Biblical splitting of the sea came after his frequent visits to Egypt and Saudi Arabia. Hellstrom also

searched the ancient accounts of historians Herodotus, Diodorus, Pliny and Strabo. Hellstrom notes that most coastal people are familiar with the fact that wind can affect the level of water. Though it is rare, he also cites several historical incidents where wind set-down was responsible for creating a path through *an inland body* of water. Here he quotes an historian, Picot, from his history of Geneva, Switzerland.

*“On the ninth of January, 1495 such a strong wind was blowing that the waters of the Rhone were forced as much as a quarter of a mile into the lake, and it looked as though it was a mountain of water, which maintained itself for a whole hour.”* (emphasis added)

*“On the second of January, 1645, between seven and ten o’clock in the morning, after a storm had been raging all night, a hurricane arose which was so violent that, in places, the waters of the Rhone were again driven into the lake, so that for an hour, several persons went dry shod right up to the chains which enclosed the harbour, while others walked across an arm of the Rhone which divides la Monnaie from l’Ile.”*

It should be noted that both of these events took place in the wintertime when the lake level is lower than usual. A relatively shallow body of water is one of the fundamentals necessary for wind set-down to occur. For Professor Hellstrom, the Lake Geneva accounts are a model for the miracle at the Sea of Reeds. More importantly, as Dr. Little points out, the northern end of what we now call the Red Sea is a perfect candidate for wind set-down. Such a long shallow body of water is prone to exaggerated wind-driven level changes.

Hellstrom learned that prior to the construction of the Suez Canal, the western arm of the Red Sea reached farther north up to the present day Lake Timsah, near the town of Ismailia. The building of the dam eventually drained this section of the gulf creating the Great Bitter Lakes and exposing the strip of land between the Great Bitter Lakes and Lake Timsah. This was supported by a study of the region’s geology by Theodor Fuchs who found that Lake Timsah consisted of recent marine deposits from the Red Sea.<sup>7</sup>

Since the geologic record proves that modern-day Lake Timsah was the northern shore of the ancient sea why didn’t the Israelites travel around it? According to chapter 14, God led the departing Hebrews back towards the sea. Apparently this was a diversionary tactic.

*“God spoke to Moses, saying, ‘Speak to the Israelites and tell them to turn back and camp before Freedom Valley, between Tower and the sea, facing Lord of the North. Camp opposite it, near the sea. Pharaoh will then say that the Israelites are lost in the area and trapped in the desert.’”* - Exodus 14:1-2

The Hebrew word used for “turn” is *shuv*, which is literally “to return.” The above verse employs the word *bukh* meaning “confusion”. Instead of traveling around the northern shore of the sea, the Hebrews were led south to camp beside a place called *Pi Hahiroth*. Israel seemed to be caught between Migdol (“tower”), Baalzephon (“Lord of the North”) and the Sea. The late Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan describes the place where the Hebrews camped as a large plain, in a valley, between two massive pillars of stone that blocked their way out. This scheme would ensure that Pharaoh would receive reports that the slaves appeared to have gotten lost and boxed in by these formations.

According to Professors Little and Hellstrom the actual locale, once under water is now dry ground. It is a five-mile wide strip of land that runs approximately one mile from west to east at present day *Serapeum (Sarabium)* on the banks of the Suez Canal. This site is perfect because the

massive weather front could have blown in from the east (from Israel!) and collided with the prevailing northerly winds. These winds would have lowered the level of the sea, exposing the land bridge and piling the water up in the same manner as witnessed twice in Lake Geneva in later centuries.

Some might object to what appears to be a minimizing of the miracle at the Sea of Reeds, by speculating that it occurred at the sight of a natural underwater bridge. But we must remember that if the splitting of the sea had taken place in extremely deep water, the Israelites could have very likely been faced with descending into an exposed shoreline that dropped off sharply. This could make for a difficult descent onto the dry sea floor and even harder ascent on the opposite exposed shoreline. For me, the real miracle is in the timing of these events. God had to reveal to Moses exactly when and where the sea would be divided.

The Bible, along with the Oral Tradition, tells us that the waters of the sea were like walls. There is a hint in this tradition that the east wind actually froze the waters on each side of the divide. The freezing is implied in the victorious Song of the Sea in Exodus 15:8 that states *kaf'u tehomot*, the “depths became dense”. The phrase can also be rendered as “congealed” or “frozen.” This and the aforementioned Plague of Darkness is consistent with the descriptions of the raging gales and unusual atmospheric phenomenon recorded in the Bible as well as the Ippuwer Papyrus. The Jewish historian Josephus, in his Antiquities of the Jews, adds his own description of violent torrential conditions that accompanied the drowning of the Egyptians in the Sea of Reeds.

*“Showers of rain also came down from the sky and dreadful thunders and lightning, with flashes of fire. Thunderbolts also were darted upon them; nor was there anything which used to be sent by God upon men as indications of his wrath which did not happen to them at this time, for a dark and dismal night oppressed them.”*

Other ancient chronicles attest to a period of chaotic weather conditions. Herodotus writes of a legendary battle in the skies between Zeus and Typhon that ended in Egypt. Pliny the Elder speaks of a terrible comet seen from Egypt to Ethiopia. The comet was called Typhon. (This may be the origin of the raging storm at sea called a typhoon). Hevelius states that the very year that Israel departed from Egypt, a comet was seen in Syria, Babylon and India.

By consulting the records of Herodotus, Diodorus, Pliny and Strabo, Helistrom concluded that this natural land bridge at Serapeum was under the waters of the Red Sea from 1300 BCE to 1200 BCE, a time frame wholly consistent with that of Jewish Chronology which places Exodus at 1312 BCE.

### ***Monument to a Miracle***

Journey about seventy miles northeast from Cairo *and you will* arrive at the little town of Ismaifia, near the Suez Canal. If inquire about the local color you might be directed to a small museum that holds a tidy collection of antiquities. Housed in the main hall is a curious relic made of black granite and covered with hieroglyphs. It is a *naos* or shrine first discovered near El Arish in the 1860's.

In 1890, F.L. Griffith published a translation of the text on the stone. It can be found in the pages of a book bearing the exhaustive title *The Antiquities of Tell el Ychudiyeh and Miscellaneous Work in Lower Egypt During the Years 1887-1888*. This artifact gives a most extraordinary account of the land of Egypt in the grip of nature gone rampant.

*“Evil fell on the earth... the earth in great affliction.. .great disturbance in the residence...*

The narrative speaks of a tempest so dark and thick with debris that,

*“... neither man nor the gods could see the faces of those next to them...”*

This description recalls the ninth plague as described found in Chapter 10 of the book of Exodus— a darkness that was palpable in its effect. Verse 22 relates that it lasted three days but does not state that it ended after that period. The great Jewish Bible scholar, the Rambam, teaches that all of the plagues lasted seven days, including the plague of darkness. The first period of darkness fell prior to the death of the first born and lasted six days but the seventh day of total darkness did not occur until Israelites crossed the Sea of Reeds.

Returning to the text of the granite *naos* at Ismailia we learn that the king and his men fight, *“the evil ones at the Place of the Whirl pool.”*

The text calls this site *“Pi-Kharoti,”* as it relates the frightful fate of the king,

*“There at Pi-Kharoti the Pharaoh is thrown by a whirlwind high into the air and seen no more.”*

Compare this extraordinary account with the dramatic splitting of the sea found in Exodus 14:9. The Torah teaches that the Children of Israel had made their miraculous passage through *Yarn Suf* (Sea of Reeds) while camped at a place called *Pi Ha Khiroth*. Notice the similarity of the Egyptian *Pi-Karoti* on the *naos* and Biblical *Pi-Ha Khiroth*.

The monument speaks of a king called Pharaoh Thoum. Before he is snatched from their midst, the pharaoh exhorts his men to follow him and promised they would again *find light*. Can this be the Sixth Dynasty king we know as Neferkare the Younger?

We have already learned that pharaohs were known by many names. We must also remember that the vowels found in the translations of the names are little more than educated guesses.

There are two ways to connect Thoum with Neferkare the Younger. The Turin Papyrus lists Neferekaré's other name as Nem-tam-saf II. This name may have been a shortened form. The latter name does contain the requisite consonants of 't' and 'rn' and could be rendered as 'Thoum'.

We can turn to the works of the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus. He survived the Roman campaigns against Israel and later wrote a history of the Jewish People. It was published around 93 CE. Another of his works was *Against Apion* in which he defends Judaism while taking to task earlier historians, notably the Egyptian Manetho. It is Josephus who preserves some of the words of Manetho that were lost when the Alexandrian Library was destroyed. He does take issue with much of what Manetho says about the Jewish people and rightly so. Manetho's references have a strong anti-Semitic flavor and he freely mixes historical events with fancy to fashion his own case against the Jewish people. However, there is an intriguing name that matches the narrative found on the black granite stone in Ismailia. Manetho writes,

*“There was a king of ours, whose name was Timaus. Under him it came to pass, I know not how, that God was averse to us, and there came, after a surprising manner, men*

*of ignoble birth out of the eastern parts, and had boldness enough to make an expedition into our country and subdued it by force...*

Josephus quotes Manetho's lengthy rant regarding the invaders. They sound very much like the warring, bloody hordes of Arnalek. The people of Amalek are the Bible's first terrorists, attacking the rear guard of the departing Israelites. Manetho labels the invaders as *Hyksos* or Shepherd Kings and states that they held sway over Egypt for five hundred and eleven years. They should not be confused with the Israelites. It must be remembered that no Israelite, not even Joseph, was ever crowned a king of Egypt. Nor did the Israelites take the country by force -- and they certainly did not spend over five hundred years in Egypt. Manetho also reports that *the Hyksos numbered in the thousands when they entered the country by force*. That is a far cry from the mere seventy that comprised the family of Jacob when they arrived to settle in Goshen.

Manetho speaks of his nation falling into decline during the time of a pharaoh called Timaus. This name is very similar to Pharaoh Toum on the black granite *uaos*. An additional link to the aforementioned pharaoh Thom can be found in the Torah, in the first chapter of Exodus.

*“Therefore they did set over them taskmasters to afflict them with their burdens. And they built for Pharaoh treasure cities, **Pithom and Ramases.**”*

The prefix “Pi” can be found attached to other ancient Egyptian cities and roughly translated means “city of” or “dwelling of”. The above verse from the book of Exodus could very well be referring to the “City of Thom.”

#### ***Will the Real Mount Sinai Please Stand?***

Where is the mountain the Bible alternately calls Sinai and Horeb? It would take another book to completely do justice to this subject and there are already a number of books published that offer a variety of locations for the “Mountain of God”. At present, there are about eleven proposed sites for Mount Sinai. Here is a quick survey of the most popular, with my accompanying criteria and my objections.

### ***Jebel Musa***

This mountain, elevation 7,497 feet, in the Southern Sinai Peninsula, is best known for St. Catherine's Monastery located at its base. The building was commissioned by Justinian of Constantinople and yielded an early Greek version of the scriptures known as the *Codex Sinaiticus*, found in 1844. *Jebel Musa* is the least likely of all sites because of the ruggedness of the surrounding terrain. It would have been almost impossible for the Israelites to camp among the craggy outcroppings and canyons. It should be remembered that they did indeed encounter hardships along the way but the actual topography of the Sinai range, almost unchanged since the time of the Exodus, would thwart the movement of any large group of travelers.

### **Jebel Sinn Bishr**

A location some 60 miles due east of the present-day Bitter Lakes. Professor Menashe Har-El who began his initial research in 1956 believes this is the most likely location. He decided on *Jebel Sinn Bishr* after climbing ten other mountains in the region. Har-El cites the historical migration of quail near the mountain as one proof. This recalls the incident in Numbers,

chapter 11, when Israel complains about the manna, and God sends quail from the sea. Har-El also believes the Arabic name for the site provides another clue because it means “the mountain of the giving of the message” Dr. David Faiman, says that the *Jebel Sinn Bishr* is the Biblical Sinai because it is said to be a three day journey from the Delta region of Egypt. He bases this on Moses’ statement to Pharaoh that Israel required a three day trek to worship in the wilderness. However, the real Sinai was certainly more than three days away since a simple reading of Exodus 19:1 and Numbers 33:3 reveals that the Twelve Tribes arrived at Mount Sinai at *least 45 days after their initial departure from Egypt.*

### ***Serabit el-Khadem***

In antiquity this mountain was situated near the Egyptian copper mines. It could be reached by traveling south and east along the Sinai Peninsula. Among the rocks in this region, Sir Flinders Petrie had discovered pictographs and inscriptions written in what is now termed Proto-Sinaitic. Like the rest of the Sinai, the inhospitable terrain of the area makes it a poor choice for a large mobile encampment. Since there is ample evidence that this was an active mining region and heavily garrisoned by the Egyptians. That might have been reason enough for the Israelites to avoid it.

### ***Jebel a! Lawz***

Site made popular by Howard Blum’s bestselling *The Gold of the Exodus*. The book follows the exploits of Larry Williams and Bob Cornuke on their way to *Jebel al Lawz* in Saudi Arabia. Blum’s book is a real page-turner but fails badly on Biblical facts. The duo’s theory that the Israelites crossed the sea at the Straits of Tiran is based on an imaginary time span. As the two of them got closer to the straits, Cornuke surmised,

“If the Israelites had gone nineteen days before they came to the Red Sea, then that’s more proof the crossing took place a good distance out of Goshen. It supports our theory completely.” -

Their math is pure speculation and completely ignores what the Jewish sources reveal. *Sefer Ha Yashar* states the Egyptian spies caught up with Israel when they were already camped beside the sea on the fifth day of the Exodus: After Pharaoh was given the news he responded by mounting an attack. Israel walks through the divided Reed Sea and the Egyptians are drowned, according to *Seder Ha Olam* on the 21st day of the First month -- seven days into the Exodus.

Remember, the Israelites were instructed to turn back toward the Reed Sea so that Pharaoh would believe that they had become lost (see chapter 11 of this book). The path proposed by Williams and Cornuke fails to mention the diversionary tactic of turning back as referenced in Exodus 14:2-3.

### ***Up against the Wall***

:Another vital clue ignored by our dangerous duo concerns the *Shur* Wilderness and how it impacted the path taken by Israel as they departed from Egypt. This can get complicated, so pay attention as we establish the general locale of *Shur* and why it is important. Genesis 25:18 reveals that *Shur* was a boundary for the descendants of Ishmael.

“His descendants lived in the area **from Havilah to Shur, which borders Egypt, all the way to Assyria.** They overran all their brethren.”

Initially it might appear that this encompasses modern Saudi Arabia but the final words of the above verse reveal that the Ishmaelites historically have dominated all of the Middle East. It is also important to note that Egypt's western and southern boundaries are unimportant to our thesis because Israel had to leave by heading out either north or east. Egypt's northern boundary has always been the Mediterranean. The Gulf of Suez was another natural barrier. As mentioned earlier, prior to the building of the Suez Canal, the Gulf extended much farther north than it does today.

According to Numbers 33:6-8, Israel entered a region called Etham before they journeyed to *PiHahiroth* (Freedom Valley). It was at *Pi Hahiroth* that they would experience the splitting of the sea. After that they would return to Etham. Since this matches the route as described in Exodus 15:22 ("Israel traveled for three days in the Etham Desert and camped in Marah") we can conclude that Etham and Shur are basically the same region.

*"Moses led the Israelites from the Red Sea and they went out into the Shur Desert. For three days they traveled in the desert without finding water. Finally they came to Marah, but they could not drink the any water there."*

Exodus 15:22-23

Here is where *Gold of the Exodus* really runs into a wall. Williams and Cornuke cite the aforementioned Biblical verses. The duo then concludes that the Israelites cross the Straits of Tiran and make their way north in present day Saudi Arabia. But Williams and Cornuke fail to reference any verse revealing that *Shur* was on the border of Egypt. There are several Biblical passages that lead us to the location of Shur. The book of Genesis details Abraham's decision to move from the plains of Mamre after the utter destruction of Sodom.

*"Abraham migrated from there to the land of the Negev, and he settled between Kadesh and Shur. He would often visit Gerar."*— Genesis 20:1

In the chapters that follow, Abraham has dealings with Abimelech, a Philistine king. The patriarch eventually forges a covenant with the king at Beersheva, now in Israel's southern desert, the Negev. Genesis 21:34 states very plainly,

*"Abraham lived there in the land of the Philistines for many days."*

Abraham made his home in Philistine-occupied Canaan. It was between Kadesh and Shur. This is important because the many Biblical references to the Philistines cite their being a coastal people. There is no place in the Bible that we find Philistine influence anywhere near present-day Saudi Arabia.

Compare the two separate accounts of Hagar and Sarah. Hagar was an Egyptian princess who became a handmaiden to Sarah. Hagar gave birth to Ishmael. When Sarah sends them away, the book of Genesis records her fate in two separate passages. Genesis 16:1 relates that it happens while Abraham is living in Canaan.

*"An angel of God encountered her by a spring in the desert, in the oasis, on the road to Shur."*

--Genesis 16:7

Hagar is on the road to Shur. This daughter of Pharaoh has been living in the tent of her master Abraham but she has been sent packing. By any turn of logic she has to be heading back home to Egypt. So she has taken the road to Shur. And why not -- since Shur borders Egypt?

The very same story is related in chapter 21 of Genesis. It begins, in verse 9, telling of Sarah's wish that Hagar and Ishmael be sent away. Reluctantly, Abraham agrees. The mother and child depart.

*"She left and roamed aimlessly in the Beersheba desert."* — Genesis 21:14

The account continues in the same vein as the 16th chapter of Genesis. Hagar encounters an angel and is told that her son will become a great nation.

I have given a rather lengthy exposition to establish:

- These accounts took place in an area occupied by the Philistines.
- Part of this region is known today as the Negev, specifically near Beersheba.
- The region was between Kadesh and Shur.
- The road to Shur was nearby.
- Shur was a border of Egypt
- The Israelites marched *from the Sea of Reeds into the Desert of Shur*.

By looking at the map and factoring in the above geographical data from the Biblical text we have to conclude that Shur was closer to an area roughly east of the present Suez Canal and not, as Williams and Cornuke would have us believe, somewhere in present day Saudi Arabia.

Even the meaning of the word *Shur* provides another clue as to its location. It is the Hebrew word for "wall." Just after the turn of the century, Egyptologist Heinrich Brugsch-Bey wrote of this wall in his *Egypt Under the Pharaohs*.

*"The list of defenses which were intended to protect the country. Still further to the north-east, on the western border of Lake Sirbonis, was another important frontier stronghold, called Anbu, that is, 'the wall' or 'rampart'. The Hebrews knew it as Shur and the Greeks as Gherron. Whoever traveled eastwards out of Egypt was obliged to pass 'the walls' before being allowed to enter the 'way of the Philistines' on his further journey."*

He also quotes a tattered papyrus containing the report of a royal scribe who tracks two fugitives from the capitol all the way to Khetam (which is probably the Biblical Etham). The scribe adds that he had *missed* the two escapees because they had already passed the "ramparts" or "walls" that were near Khetam. These ancient geographic designations seem to offer more evidence that the Desert of Shur was named for a fortified wall that protected Egypt's eastern frontiers, near the Way of the Philistines. It also convinces me that the Israelite camp did not take the route suggested by Williams and Cornuke.

But the author Howard Blum, also gets low marks for poor research. He writes Israel took "three arduous months" to reach Sinai. This reveals a misunderstanding of the Biblical text.

Exodus 19:1 states that Israel and their camp arrived *on the first day* of the Third month. Rabbi Nathan Bushwich in his *Understanding the Jewish Calendar* states that a month is simply defined as the time between the appearance of one new moon to the next., an average of 29 1/2 days. And since the Hebrews departed from Egypt on the 15th day of the First month and arrived at Sinai on the P<sup>t</sup> day of the Third month only 45 days had elapsed.

It is vital to remember that it was only five days later that the Torah (the Ten Commandments or Ten Utterances) was given to Moses. This was the 50~ day. It has been celebrated for thousands of years as the Jewish feast *Shavuoth*, literally “weeks” and coincides with one of three annual harvest festivals that Israel is commanded to keep.

*“Shavuot commemorates the awesome event experienced by the Children of Israel seven weeks after their exodus from Egypt.”*

#### *You Can't Get There From Here*

All of the aforementioned sites do not meet a simple acid test found in the text of the Torah. You will recall that as the Hebrews, along with the mixed multitude, departed from Egypt they were instructed not to take the most accessible route — although it was nearer.

Ultimately, the Promised Land would be Israel's final destination, but their first stop was always Mount Sinai where they would receive the Torah. Many of the commandments given in the Torah are conditional on their being in the Land of Israel and are preceded with the phrase, “When you enter the land.” So, there was a genuine prerequisite for Revelation at Sinai. The Twelve Tribes and mixed multitude were to receive instruction before their arrival at the borders of Israel. Their Bill of Rights, Constitution and Deed were all wrapped up in the Torah. The above verse makes it clear that the more direct path was along the ancient Philistine Highway, running along the Mediterranean coast. None of the aforementioned sites are reached by taking that route.

An Italian archaeologist, Professor Immanuel Anati, offers another possible location for Mount Sinai in Israel's Negev desert, just four miles from the Egyptian border. The site is called *Har Karkom*. After crossing the Sea of Reeds, the Israelites generally traveled in an easterly direction, arriving at *Har Karkorn* (Mt. Saffron). If Israel took such a route they would naturally be approaching the site from the west. It is interesting to note that the mountain can only be reached by traversing a large valley to the west of Karkom.



Anati remarks on the amazing quantity of these surrounding sites that mark the mountain as a setting frequented by pilgrims, even from antiquity. Many of the pieces of rock art depict people in worship. The many ruins and evidence of settlements at *Karkom* are notable for matching the descriptions found in the Torah for certain landmarks. For instance, Anati discovered twelve pillars erected near the mountain.

*“This group of 12 pillars and the platform nearby vaguely reminded me of a passage in the Bible. I went on to our camp and took out a Bible and found the passage: ‘And Moses.. rose up early in the morning, and builded an altar under the hill, and 12 pillars, according to the 12 tribes of Israel’ (Exodus 24:4)”*

At the top of *Karkom*, Anati discovered a small cave. He points out that the desert region is full of such caves -- but they are a rarity on the mountaintops of the region. This small cave vividly recalls Exodus 33:22 where Moses is granted a request to view the glory of God and is placed within the cleft of a rock for his protection. In addition to the evidence of numerous dwellings all over the site, there is also an abundant supply of water. Anati even found a well and what appeared to be small man-made channels that connect water holes at the foot of *Karkom*.

### ***Dating the Exodus***

*“Judaism is a religion of time, aiming at the sanctification of time.. Judaism teaches us to be attached to the holiness in time, to be attached to sacred events...”* — Abraham Joshua Heschel

Hopefully, we have demonstrated a logical connection between the Biblical Exodus story and the end & the Old Kingdom period in Egypt. Now, we should be able to pinpoint this pivotal event in time. But whose chronology should we consult? The timetables of other cultures of the Near East and even our own calendar~ have all been subjected to constant revision. However the Jewish historical chronology, known as *Seder Hi Olam*, differs from secular timetables in one important respect. It has *never* changed. Commemorating events and keeping time permeates the worship of Judaism beginning with marking the Sabbath as the seventh day. The above quoted religious philosopher, Heschel eloquently expresses this idea as he relates how holiness was attached, at the very beginning, to time.

*“Now what was the first holy object in the history of the world? Was it a mountain? Was it an altar? It is, indeed, a unique occasion at which the distinguished word *kadosh* (holy) is used for the first time: in the Book of Genesis at the end of the story of creation. How extremely significant is the fact that it is applied to time: ‘And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy’ [Gen.2:3]. There is no reference in the record of creation to any object in space that would be endowed with the quality of holiness.”*

God reinforces this concept by commanding Israel to remember the seventh day *to keep it holy*.

The Jewish year revolves around holy festivals such as Sukkoth, Rosh Ha Shanah, Yom Kippur and, of course, Passover. It is incumbent on God’s people to track time. Their very survival depends on it. So it is not surprising that the Jewish people have kept a meticulous record of their very origins. They can trace milestones in their history to the month and day. The events as cataloged in *Seder Ha Olarn* reckon the flow of years from the first man, Adam. For example, the year 1948 would be 5708 or five thousand seven hundred eight years from Adam. The

Exodus? The date of the first Passover, marking the freedom from slavery of the Israelite people is still memorialized as the 15th day of first month (now called Nissan) in the year 2448. This and other pivotal dates can be found in *Seder Ha Olam*.

My reference for the *Seder Ha Olam* comes from the impressive work of Eliezer Shulman who published an English language version, in the form of charts and tables, as *The Sequence of Events in the Old Testament*. Shulman carried out this remarkable work while exiled in Siberia. With much time on his hands, he studied his copy of *Seder Ha Olam*, the *Tanakh*, and other Jewish sources to compute the many dates and genealogies as recorded in the Bible.

Timetable of History  
(based on *Seder Ha Olam*)

Event	Jewish Chronology	Gregorian Date	
Death of Adam	930	2830BCE	
Birth of Noah	1056	2704BCE	
Birth of Shem	1558	2204BCE	
The Flood	1656	2104BCE	
Birth of Abraham	1948	1812BCE	
Peleg dies, Earth divided,			
Tower falls	1996	1764BCE	
Death of Noah	2006	1754BCE	
Birth of Isaac	2048	1712BCE	
Death of Abraham's father, Terah	2083	1683 BCE	
The Binding of Isaac,			
death of Sarah	2085	1675 BCE	
Birth of Jacob & Esau		2108	1652 BCE
Abraham dies, Esau kills Nimrod,		2 123	1637 BCE
sells the birthright to Jacob			
Shem, son of Noah dies		2158	1602BCE
Jacob marries Leah		2192	1568BCE
Birth of Levi		2195	1564BCE
Birth of Joseph		2199	1561BCE
Joseph becomes Vizier of Egypt		2229	1531 BCE
Jacob and his family settle in Goshen		2238	1522 BCE
Jacob dies in Egypt		2255	1505 BCE
Joseph dies in Egypt		2309	1451 BCE
Levi dies and the Hebrews are enslaved		2332	1428BCE
Moses is born		2368	1392BCE
Exodus		2448	1312BCE

Comparing these figures to those in *Seder Ha Olam* revealed a seamless corridor in time through the ages to the present.

Consulting this timetable gives us some remarkable insights to the events recorded in the Torah. For instance, we learn the flood of Noah had taken place 1656 years from Adam. Three hundred forty years later, in 1996, the continents shifted apart, an event that also caused the fall of the Tower of Babel.

*“Eber had two sons. The name of the first was Peleg, because the world became divided in his days — Genesis 10:25*

Abraham was only forty-eight years of age at the time and was witness to the massive tectonic activity that split the continents

The chronology spans the years from creation right through the Diaspora. I have only listed a few of the dates from the death of Adam up until the Exodus. A complete listing from *Seder Ha Qiam* is outside the scope of this book, but I wanted to mark some of the milestones from this amazing timetable. I have also listed the years as they occur on our present calendar. Take the time to compare some of the dates and discover for yourself some very intriguing revelations. You will note that Jacob and Esau were only fifteen years old at the time that Esau sold his birthright for a mess of pottage.

Another important lesson drawn from this chronology is the actual number of years of exile promised to Abraham’s descendants. This is critical to any study of the Exodus. Scholars often stumble over this vital point. At one place, the Biblical text seems to relate that from the time that Jacob and his family arrived in Egypt until the day that Moses brought the Israelites out of bondage was four hundred years. At yet another point in the Book of Exodus, it seems to state clearly that Israel spent four hundred thirty years. The Oral Tradition teaches that the Egyptian exile only lasted two hundred ten years. At first glance it would seem that we have three contradictory times spans. However, as you will see, all three are correct.

At the beginning of chapter fifteen of Genesis, as Abram sacrifices three kosher animals, God makes a promise to the patriarch. Note also that the patriarch is still called Abram and he has not yet fathered Isaac.

*“God said to Abram, ‘Know for sure that your descendants will be foreigners in a land that is not theirs for four hundred years. They will be enslaved and oppressed. But I will finally bring judgment against the nation who enslaves them, and they will then leave with great wealth.’ — Genesis 15:13*

The language of God’s promise to Abraham can be divided into three time periods and three levels of exile.

- Abraham’s seed would be a *ger* (a foreigner) in a land not theirs.
- They would be *abad* (a worker)
- They would be *anali* (oppressed, humbled) and depart with wealth.

If we look at the lives of Abraham's son and grandson, Isaac and Jacob we can see that the words of Genesis 15:13 were fulfilled. Isaac was always a foreigner, leading an almost nomadic life. Isaac was sixty when Jacob was born:

In the case of Jacob, his years working under his shifty uncle Laban could definitely be characterized as humbling servitude. And when Jacob departed, in haste, he had become a man of substance. Jacob's experiences would be the template for the events in the lives of his descendants. Jacob also relocated several times and eventually settled in Egypt when his son Joseph became viceroy. Jacob was one hundred thirty when he arrived in Egypt.

God told Abraham that his offspring would be a stranger, so the counting of the 400 years *begins with the birth of his son, Isaac*:

From Isaac's birth until the birth of Jacob	60years
From Jacob's birth until his arrival in Egypt:	+130years 190years

210 years of exile remain for the descendants of Abraham. We can determine the 400 year exile by taking the above figures and adding them:

Number of years from the birth of Isaac until Jacob enters Egypt	190years
Actual length of exile	+210years 400Years

*Seder Ha O/am* gives us an exact chronology based on the years as recorded in the exile.

Exile begins when Jacob and his entire household migrate to Egypt	2238
Exodus from Egypt occurs with the departure of Israel from Egypt	- 2448
Subtract the difference from these dates and you get:	210

Is there a contradiction between the four hundred years mentioned in Genesis 15:13 and the four hundred thirty year span in the following verse?

*“The lifestyle that the Israelites endured in Egypt had thus lasted 430 years. At the end of 430 years, all of God’s armies left Egypt in broad daylight.” — Exodus 12:40*

*There is no discrepancy according to Seder Ha Olam. It reveals that the added thirty years is reckoned by counting from the time that the promise was given to Abraham.. .a promise made thirty years before the birth of Isaac. Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan’s use of the word “lifestyle” is a more accurate rendering of the text. If I may be allowed to further clarify the text, it could be understood in the following manner:*

*“Israel endured a life of exile while in Egypt. That kind of existence had begun 430 years earlier when Abraham began his life in exile.”*

### ***Remembering Joseph***

The story of the Exodus really began with Joseph. Had this son of Jacob not been sold into slavery and eventually come to rule Egypt there could not have been an Exodus. The last chapter of the book of Genesis relates how God used Joseph to not only save his own people but the entire nation of Egypt from starvation.

The wisdom granted Joseph allowed him to enrich the throne and to build Egypt into a world empire. We are told in the Torah that he was called *Zafanth PaAnnekh*, a title that meant he was a revealer of secrets. These secrets were not only the hidden things of the cosmos they were what we call technology. Surely his achievements must have found their way into the annals of Egypt. If we have shown that the Exodus occurred at the end of the Sixth Dynasty, we should be able to find evidence of Joseph in one of the previous dynasties.

In the Third Dynasty, during the reign of the Pharaoh known as *Djoser*, we find a noble figure that exhibits amazing talents. He was called *Imhotep*. He was a competent administrator for the crown but he apparently excelled in architecture and medicine.

*Imhotep* is best known today as the designer of the famous Step Pyramid at Saqqara. Could this be Joseph?

Two additional facts make *Imhotep* a strong contender for the Biblical Joseph. Remember how Joseph saved Egypt from a famine that would last for seven years? Inscribed on a rock near the first cataract of the Nile, at Sehel, is the account from the time of King *Djoser*. The inscription relates that pharaoh was deeply distressed because of a seven-year famine. He sought the counsel of the wise *Imhotep*.

A Chamber found at Saqqara, close to the famous Step Pyramid may belong to *Imhotep*.. The tomb is interesting because it was never completed. If Joseph was, indeed, the legendary designer of the pyramid it might account for the unfinished state of the monument. We know from the Bible that Joseph was only interred on a temporary basis. Genesis 50:25 relates his deathbed wish that his remains be carried out of Egypt when God remembered His promise to the Children of Israel to free them from exile and lead them into their own land. At Bet Khallaf in Upper Egypt, *Djoser* appears alongside another individual called *Zanakht*. No pyramid has ever been found for *Zanakht* and it has been suggested that the Step Pyramid may have been originally intended for him. Could *Zanakht* be a linguistic corruption of Joseph’s title, *Zafanth PaAnnekh*, as found in Genesis 41:45?

Joseph and *Imhotep* also share another remarkable similarity.. .they both lived to the ripe old age of 110. There was a proverb passed down through the centuries among the Egyptians. It

was said that to achieve perfect wisdom one should live to the age of 110. According to Arab historians, when Joseph was 100, he was asked by younger, envious court officials to prove his worth by converting a stretch of arid desert into fertile ground. He amazed Pharaoh and his rivals by engineering a feeder canal from the Nile to create a body of water that would provide irrigation for the parched desert.

Today, southwest of modern Cairo is *Birget Qarun*, a large, freshwater lake in a natural basin. This region, called the *El Fayoum*, is actually a man-made oasis. An ancient canal that has existed since the days of the Pharaohs feeds the lake. Since antiquity that waterway has been called *Bahr Yousef* the Sea of Joseph.

There is another possibility for our Joseph.

### *The Inscription of Weni* \_\_\_\_\_

In 1860, digging in the dusty vaults of Abydos, Auguste Mariette found a stone slab inscribed with the events in the life of a nobleman called *Weni*. He came from humble birth and was raised to one of the most exalted positions in all of Egypt as Viceroy to at least three Pharaohs. He was so trusted by the king that he was enlisted to hear cases involving secret matters in the King's harem. The king's trust in this matter recalls Joseph's own experience with his master's wife. He would not succumb her charms, even though it meant the dungeon for him.

Among the other accomplishments of *Weni* was the engineering of a series of canals fed by the Nile. He also waged war with the so-called Sand Dwellers. These exploits are remarkably similar to those of Joseph as told in *Sefer Ha Yashar*. It recounts Joseph's military campaign for pharaoh in the Land of Havilah and his victories there against the people of Tarshish.

According to the Inscription of *Weni*, he lived during the reigns of Teti, Pepi I and Mererire. Some Egyptologist are troubled that *Weni* would have been well over 60 years of age by the time he entered the service of Merenre. But, *Sefer Ha Yashar* relates that Joseph was 71 years of age when a pharaoh, called Magron, took the throne.

Which of these legendary figures is Joseph? Is it *Imhotep* or is it *Weni*? I propose that they are one and the same.

We noted earlier that the Old Kingdom had been a period of remarkable stability. With such a strong government positioned in Memphis for the Third, Fourth and Sixth Dynasty it makes no sense to move the seat of power hundreds of miles south to Elephantine during the Fifth Dynasty and then back to Memphis. The pharaohs of the Third and Fourth Dynasties could have ruled from Memphis while the kings listed in the Fifth Dynasty from Elephantine were actually their contemporaries serving as co-regents.

By aligning the Fourth and Fifth Dynasties we also shorten the span of time between the Third Dynasty ruler *Djoser* and Sixth Dynasty king Merenre, thus allowing our *Joseph/Imhotep/Weni* to serve all of them.

There is room for such an alignment. Remember, the catalog of Kings are drawn from sources such as the List at Abydos, The Turin Papyrus, the Tablets at Sakkara, the Palermo Stone and Manetho? Egyptologist Barbara Mertz points out,

*“In some cases we cannot see any evidence that a particular royal line ended where Manetho says it did.”*

This list is probably inflated due to the possibility that some names are those of princes and other nobles. The chart on the following page is taken from the *Cambridge Ancient History* (1971) and is not immune to conjecture, opinion, agendas and other forms of scholarly meddling.

Joseph would serve as viceroy for 80 years. That length of time would have allowed Joseph to be in the service of a king from Elephantine called *Unas*. In Saqqara, near the pyramid of *Unas* there is a causeway featuring various scenes carved in low relief. The most curious of these is block of limestone with a relief featuring starving foreigners. Since the relief is not carved in hieroglyphs, the pictorial is meant to commemorate some important event that sounds very much like the seven years of famine as described in Genesis.

“Unfortunately this unique scene is incomplete and it is difficult to imagine its context; even the nationality of the figures cannot be identified with a certainty. Since, however, tomb reliefs depicted only incidents or events which the dead owner wished to perpetuate, it must be supposed that the starving people were not Egyptians and that the missing portion contains scenes of provisions being sent to them by *Unas*.”

In the tomb of *Unas* there is a startling inscription on the east wall of the antechamber of his burial place. Typically, the virtues of the dead pharaoh are inscribed along with words of praise for him as he carries out various tasks alongside Re, Atum and the other gods of Egypt. The most curious line on this east wall reads as follows,

“*Unas* will judge with Him-whose-name-is hidden on the day of the slaying of the eldest”

Is it possible that the aging vizier Joseph, during one of his audiences with this pharaoh, told the king that the Egyptians would one day forget what Joseph had done — how he saved the nation from starvation? In the final chapter of the book of Genesis, Joseph’s deathbed promise to ensure that the departing Children of Israel would transport his remains demonstrates that he was fully assured that the Exodus would occur. He could have revealed all of this to *Unas*, telling him that judgment would come on Egypt’s first-born as a result of the nation’s crimes against Joseph’s people. The death of the first-born, the eldest, would come at the hands of a God whose name would never be uttered in the presence of pharaoh. To Pharaoh, a worshipper in many gods, the God of Joseph would most certainly be “Him-whose-name-is-hidden.”

It was this deathbed oath that would provide Moses with one of the proofs that he was indeed the deliverer sent by God to bring Israel out of bondage. Joseph’s final words are very appropriate for a man known as a “revealer of secrets”. He provided his surviving brothers with a coded phrase that they were to pass down to the tribal leaders. They were to look for the coming of one who knew the secret phrase because it would mark him as their deliverer.

“*Joseph then bound the Israelites by an oath:  
When God grants you special providence you  
must bring my remains out of this place.*” — Genesis 50:25

The text employs the phrase *pakod yifkod* and it is the first time these words appear in the Bible. As with all of the Torah there are several permutations found in the meaning of the words. *Pakod yifkod* can imply paying a debt or in another context, to keep an appointment. We could expand the meaning of the above scripture to express that God would keep his word, at the appointed time, at the end of the 400 years from Isaac. There was a tradition among the Israelite leadership that the true redeemer would know a variation of this phrase as *pakod pakad-ti*. At

the Burning Bush, the Creator instructed Moses in this secret code.

*“Go, gather the elders of Israel, and say to them, ‘YHVH, The God of your fathers, appeared to me — the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He said, ‘ I have granted you special providence [pakod pakad-ti] regarding what is happening to you in Egypt.’ - Exodus 3:16*

King	Length of Reign
<b>3rd Dynasty</b>	
Nebka	19
Djoser	19
Teti	6
	24
<b>4th Dynasty</b>	
Sneferu	24
Cheops	23
Redjedef	8
Chephren	25(?)
Baufre (Years of his reign are missing from lists)	(?)
Mycerinus (This span is in doubt)	28
Sepsekaf	4
Dedefptah (name is missing from some lists)	2
<b>5th Dynasty (Ruling from Elephantine)</b>	
Userkaf	7
Sahure	14
Neferirkare	10
Shepseskare	7
Neferefe	7 (?)
Nyuserre	31
Menkauhor	8
Djedkare	39
Unas	30
<b>6th Dynasty</b>	
Teti(aka Othoes)	12
Userkare	1 (1)
Phiops I (aka Pepi 1, some say he was the older brother of Pepi II)	49
Merenre (aka Nemtimsaf 1)	14
Phiops II (aka Pepi II, Neferkare, Merire)	94
Merenre II (aka Nemtimsaf II, Neferkare the Younger)	1
Netjerykare	(?)
Nitocris (aka Menkara, Netiqerti)	12 (?)

We have reached a place in present day history in which the Jews are facing an appointment. But how can they keep that appointment if they do not call it to mind. They must see the Exodus experience as a genuine turning point in time that culminated in the giving of the Torah.

Ultimately, it is this occurrence at Sinai as witnessed by literally millions of Jews that sets them apart as a nation ordained by God. They are to be priesthood and it is their holy task to minister to the needs of the entire planet. May God grant it speedily in our time.