

34 Is There Any Evidence Of the Exodus?

We often hear the secular magazines telling us that there is no evidence for the Israelites occupying Egypt, and especially no evidence of the great plagues. The problem is that these people already have a preconceived notion of when these things took place. Therefore, they only look at the 18th dynasty of rulers which puts them in the wrong time zone to find evidence of the Exodus. Interestingly, there is more information recorded about the 18th dynasty than any other. One would think that somewhere it would at least allude to one of these events. Often, the Christian explanation is that the Pharaohs didn't record the bad news of the kingdom because it put them in bad light. It is true that this did happen, however, with so many remarkable events from Joseph's famine all the way to the Exodus, it seems to be a stretch that this explanation can work in this case.

The secular position is that the first dynasty began about 3100 BC and goes up to 332 BC. However, new evidence (even being supported by secular Egyptologists) shows that the reign of Egypt went from 2100 BC to 332 BC. Here are some reasons for this change. The exodus occurred in 1445 BC. According to secular thinking, the 18th dynasty was ruling at this time with the capital city being Luxor. However, the Bible clearly tells us Memphis was the capital (800 km from Luxor). Memphis, however, was the capital during the 12th dynasty of Egypt.

The secular timing of Egyptian dynasties comes from an Egyptian priest named Manetho who lived from 323 -245 BC. When Ptolemy ruled in Egypt he hired Manetho to record the kings of the past and their dates of rule. Now, this being a royal decree, Manetho wouldn't say "I don't know," therefore, he filled in the blanks with what he thought best. It is also important to realize that we do not have any book by Manetho. All we have are his works being quoted by other historians.

Manetho admitted that there were many cases in which there were two Pharaohs ruling at the same time; one over the north and one over the south. Egypt was a 1000 km long stretch and only a few miles wide. It was impractical, if not impossible, for one Pharaoh to rule over that kind of distance in those days. In short, rather than Pharaohs ruling consecutively, they ruled contemporarily. Knowing this, we automatically begin to shorten the dates of Egyptian rule according to secular thinking.

In addition to this there is the TIP, or Third Intermediate Period, which takes place between the 18th and last dynasty. It is called the Dark Ages of Egypt because we know nothing about it. In fact, many extremely reputable Egyptologists are beginning to say it never existed. Getting rid of this period also shortens up the secular timeframe for Egypt. In all, we shorten the reign of the Pharaohs about 1000 years and end up with the 12th dynasty in power during the time of the Exodus. Let's see how this fits historically with the Bible.

If Sesothis I was Pharaoh during the time of Joseph we may have a good indication that Joseph was actually also called Mentuhotep. After all, he certainly wouldn't have been called his Hebrew name and add to the fact that many Pharaohs were called by two names. One record of this man says, "When he also held the office of chief treasurer, as did the powerful vizier Mentuhotep under Sesothis I, the account which he could give of himself . . . read like the declaration of the king's power" (History of Egypt. Breasted, p. 166). This sure sounds like Joseph whose word was like that of

Pharaoh. In Genesis we read, “Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, ‘I am Pharaoh, but without your word no one will lift hand or foot in all Egypt’” (Gen 41:44-45).

Other evidence of Joseph in Egypt is a canal that even today is called Bar yusef, which means, Joseph’s canal. No one knows how it got that name, but its roots go back beyond tracing out.

In the city of Beni Hassan lie the tombs of Ameni from the time of Sesostris I. The recorded message there is, “No one was unhappy in my days, not even in the years of famine, for I had tilled all the fields of the Nome of Mah, up to its southern and northern frontiers. Thus I prolonged the life of its inhabitants and preserved the food which it produced” (Egypt under the Pharaoh’s, Brugsch, p. 158). This seems to be good support of a famine and people being preserved through the famine just as the Bible says in the days of Joseph.

Still other evidence comes from the tomb of Kanuhotep of the 12th dynasty. Here we see pictures of what look just like Israelite men coming to trade with the Egyptians. Therefore, we have evidence of Semetic people in Egypt during this time, exactly what the Bible says.

In Exodus 1:8 we see a new king came onto the scene that knew not Joseph. Sesostris III was a very mean king. In fact, his statues always have his outer lips descending down into a stern face. He is no doubt the nastiest looking of all the Pharaohs. His son was Amenemhet III, who reigned for 48 years and he, too, was a nasty looking fellow. According to the timeline, this Pharaoh would have been the one who reigned during the time that Moses was growing up and who eventually wanted to kill Moses.

Not far from the pyramids of Sesostris is an interesting city of the 12th dynasty called Kahun. Rosalie David (a secular Egyptologist) writes about this city in her book, Pyramid Builders of Ancient Egypt. It was excavated in 1890 and found to be a very well organized and laid out city. Apparently there were Semitic people living there and they just seemed to have disappeared for no reason. Does this sound like Jews leaving in an Exodus? On page 91 Rosalie states, “It is apparent that the Asiatics were present in the town in some numbers, and this may have reflected the situation elsewhere in Egypt. . . their exact homeland in Syria or Palestine cannot be determined. . . The reason for their presence in Egypt remains unclear.”

Furthering support for the Biblical Exodus during the 12th dynasty we go to the Manchester Museum that has displayed a wooden box. Several such boxes were found in many of the homes in the city of Kahun. The boxes were in the floor of the houses and Rosalie writes, “Larger wooden boxes, probably used to store clothing and other possessions, were discovered underneath the floors of many houses at Kahun. They contained babies, sometimes buried two or three to a box and aged only a few months at death.” Many of the babies that were killed by Pharaoh’s edict were likely taken home and buried and this could be evidence of that very thing.

Even the daughter of Amenemhet III is recorded to have had no children. This could explain why she was so willing to take the baby Moses to be her own. In fact, this could be why she went along the Nile, a fertility god, and believed that the gods answered her prayers. Her name was Sebeknefrure and her statue was only discovered a few years ago.

The Ipuwer Papyrus in the Leiden Museum also records evidence that sounds like the Exodus in the 12th dynasty. “Nay, but the heart is violent. Plague stalks through the land and blood is everywhere. . .Nay, but the river is blood. Nay, but gates, columns and walls are consumed with fire. . .Nay but men are few. He that lays his brother in the ground is everywhere. People are stripped of clothing, perfume and oil. Everyone says, “there is no more.” The storehouse is bare. . .It has come to this. The king has been taken away by poor men.” This could certainly be talking about the hatred of the Israelites (heart is violent), the plague of blood, Passover (brother laid in the ground), the plundering of Egypt (stripped of clothing and perfume) and even the army drowning in the Red Sea (king taken away by poor men).

Again, in her book, Pyramid Builders of Ancient Egypt, Rosalie writes, “It is apparent that the completion of the king’s pyramid was not the reason why Kahun’s inhabitants eventually deserted the town, abandoning their tools and other possessions in the shops and houses” (pg 195). This is exactly what the quick Exodus of Israel would produce. Rosalie concluded, “There are differing opinions of how this 1st period of occupation at Kahun drew to a close. . .The quantity, range and type of articles of every day use, which were left behind in the houses may indeed suggest that the departure was sudden and premeditated” (pg 199). Scripturally speaking, we may have the answer because when the Exodus took place, the Jews left in a hurry and this is exactly what is shown to have happened in this town.

Finally, another support is seen with the Hyksos dynasty that came in after the 12th dynasty and the Exodus. Manetho recorded “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 with ease subdued it by force, yet without our hazarding a battle with them” (Josephus against Ap. 1:14). How could a country come in and take over Egypt without a battle? What if there wasn’t an army? If Pharaoh and the army were at the bottom of the sea, there would be no army left to defend the country allowing them to walk right in. Manetho even recorded that God was averse to them, giving reason for this attack.

As I mentioned at the beginning, I don’t believe one can be absolutely sure as to which Pharaoh ruled when, however, to say that there is no evidence in Egypt for the Exodus and the plagues is simply an outright denial of the truth. If people will stop looking into the secular position of the 18th dynasty for evidence and move to the 12th dynasty, I believe even more evidence will be found. Scripture says, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but the fools despise wisdom and discipline (Prov 1:7). The bottom line is that secular archaeologists are making a lot of mistakes because they ignore the Bible.