

# The Place of the Exodus in Egyptian History

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## Abstract

Egyptian history will be explored, looking for potential shortenings, with a view to putting the Exodus at the end of the Old Kingdom, a time when Egypt collapsed. This could neatly link with the Conquest of Canaan at the end of the Early Bronze period when the city states of Canaan collapsed. However, the end of the Old Kingdom is normally dated c. 2150 BC, much earlier than the typical biblical date given for the Exodus, c. 1450 BC. Such a placement of the Conquest was proposed by Osgood (1986a, b, c; 1988a, b, c) in the first issues of a forerunner of this journal but the idea has been forgotten and, increasingly, evangelical writers have accepted orthodox Egyptian dates at least back to the New Kingdom. In section 1 we will attempt to shorten '2150' BC to 1450 BC. In section 2 we will speculatively work backwards through time from the Old Kingdom to Abraham and the Flood. It will be shown that if the Exodus is placed in the New Kingdom with normal New Kingdom dates, then early Egyptian history would extend back before the biblical Flood date, and this would therefore conflict with biblical history.

**Keywords:** Chronology, Exodus, conquest, Egypt, Israel, archaeology

## Introduction

Orthodox historical dates for Egypt extend back well beyond the apparent biblical date for the Flood, but are the Egyptian dates correct? Back in the 1980s, in the first issues of the *Creation Ex Nihilo Technical Journal* (a forerunner of *Answers Research Journal*), John Osgood had a series of articles outlining his scheme for the archaeology of Palestine and neighbouring regions. He placed Joshua's Conquest of Canaan at the end of an archaeological period called Early Bronze III (hereafter EB III; also similar abbreviations for later archaeological periods<sup>1</sup>) at which point numerous Canaanite fortified towns were abandoned or destroyed. Osgood did not discuss Egyptian history but he referenced Courville (1971) who had already put the Conquest at this point. Archaeologists dated the end of the Old Kingdom (end of Dynasty 6; see below for a list of periods and dynasties) and the end of EB III to roughly the same time period. Thus, on the scenario suggested here, Egypt was devastated by the Exodus plagues causing the loss of much of its food supply, its firstborn sons, its army and king in the Red Sea, and about 40 years later Canaan was devastated by Joshua's Conquest. However, the end of the Old Kingdom is normally dated c. 2150 BC and a massive shortening of

Egyptian History is required to redate it to c. 1450 BC, the probable biblical date for the Exodus.<sup>2</sup> Courville attempted to achieve this shortening by extensive overlapping of dynasties so that the Old and Middle Kingdoms ran partly in parallel, and the First and Second Intermediate Periods were combined as one. Recently, Osgood (2020) proposed a similar scheme to Courville's.<sup>3</sup> In the opinion of the present author, this is impossible because it would contradict archaeological sequences both stratigraphically and in terms of pottery styles. However, there are other possible shortenings that Courville and Osgood were unaware of and these will be outlined below.

Nowadays, some evangelical historians tend to avoid shortening Egyptian history in its later parts, and accept that orthodox dates are correct back to early in the New Kingdom. They put the Exodus in the time of Dynasty 18 in the reign of either the famous conquering pharaoh Thutmose III (typically dated 1479–1425 BC) which seems unlikely for such a powerful pharaoh, or more plausibly in the reign of his son Amenhotep II.<sup>4</sup> There is a problem with such schemes in that they leave a great amount of proven Egyptian history to fit in between the Flood and the Dynasty 18 Exodus, not to mention the stone age and some allowance for geological time. Below, in section

<sup>1</sup> Middle Bronze will be abbreviated MB and Late Bronze as LB. There is an EB IV-MB I period, a kind of intermediate period that also goes by various other names; it is assumed here, with Osgood, to include the culture of the early Israelites. Although referring to the metal bronze, these periods are normally nowadays identified by styles of pottery.

<sup>2</sup> 1450 BC is based on the 480 years from the Exodus to Solomon (1 Kings 6:1) plus the typical dates for Solomon. It assumes that some of the Judges ruled partly in parallel and that the 40 year periods in Judges included the oppression periods. It may be relevant that prior to the establishment of Neo-Assyrian chronology and its connections to the Israelite monarchies, the Exodus tended to be dated to c. 1490 BC, but 1450 will be accepted here unless Neo-Assyrian chronology can be shown to be wrong.

<sup>3</sup> Dr. Osgood kindly sent me a copy of his book. Both Courville and Osgood put the Exodus in Dynasty 13 but while Courville paralleled 13 with 6 as a sub-dynasty (1971, Vol. 1, 104, fig. 2), Osgood had Dynasty 8 as the probable sub-dynasty (2020, 248).

<sup>4</sup> This kind of scheme was recently accepted by Turpin in *ARJ*. He references Petrovich who is the best known advocate of Amenhotep II as the Exodus pharaoh (Turpin 2021, 48).

1, we will see how far it is possible to shorten Egyptian history back to our proposed Exodus in Dynasty 6. In section 2 it will be shown that a Dynasty 18 Exodus does not allow enough Egyptian time for the Flood at c.2300BC, the apparent Masoretic text biblical date. The aim of this article is not to prove the idea of Exodus at the end of the Old Kingdom and Conquest at the end of EB III, but to update it and “keep it on the table.” Otherwise, the idea is in danger of being forgotten although it potentially matches well with biblical history.

Briefly reviewing Egyptian history, we have the following orthodox sequence with Dynasties and typical dates BC. Dates are slightly modified from *Ancient Egyptian Chronology*,<sup>5</sup> henceforth ‘AEC’. This article largely accepts the sequence but greatly shortens parts of it.

Stone Age		
<i>Predynastic Period</i>		
Early Dynastic	Dynasties 1–3	2900–2545 BC
Old Kingdom	Dynasties 4–6	2545–2150 BC
First Intermediate Period	Dynasties 7–early 11	2150–1990 BC
Middle Kingdom	later Dynasty 11–12	1990–1760 BC
Second Intermediate Period	Dynasties 13–17	1760–1530 BC
New Kingdom	Dynasties 18–20	1530–1077 BC
Third Intermediate Period	Dynasties 21–25	1077–664 BC
Late Period	Dynasties 26–30	664–332 BC

The Old, Middle and New Kingdoms are periods that are fairly well understood with known sequences of pharaohs, their reign lengths often approximately known from the spread of contemporary documents (the Egyptians dated by year numbers of the reigning pharaoh). Thus, there is only limited scope for shortening the Middle and New Kingdoms, rather more for the Old Kingdom. Each Kingdom is followed by an Intermediate Period during which the central government broke down, and it is in these periods that there is major potential for shortening history. However, it is difficult to shorten the intermediate periods enough for an end of Old Kingdom at c.1450BC. My own attempt fell about a century short at c.1550BC (Porter 2017, and see below). However, the attractions of the end of Old Kingdom Exodus (Egypt in chaos) plus end of EB III Conquest (EB cities destroyed or abandoned) are such that it may be best to get the synchronism right and then work on reducing Egyptian dates. Interestingly, two leading archaeologists accepted that the Conquest

took place at the end of EB III but they both used orthodox dates and assumed that biblical chronology needed greatly lengthening.<sup>6</sup>

## 1. Egyptian History in More Detail: From the End of the Old Kingdom (Exodus) Onwards

There are various ancient king lists which are all very unreliable. The best known are Manetho’s from the third century BC and the Turin Canon which is a very fragmentary papyrus from the New Kingdom. Some aspects of these lists are correct but they will only minimally be used here for chronology building. Supposed astronomical calculations which have been used by Egyptologists in attempts to fix dates for the Middle and New Kingdoms will not be used (see footnote 12). What *can* be used are contemporary writings (inscriptions, papyri, tomb paintings, etc) and archaeological evidence such as pottery sequences (just as we can all tell a 1950s car from a modern one, so experts can recognise pottery from different periods). Egyptian archaeology also provides stratigraphical sequences, e.g., if houses with plentiful New Kingdom pottery are found to have been built above a layer of building debris with plentiful Middle Kingdom pottery, then it follows that the New Kingdom came after the Middle Kingdom.

In the following we will try, period by period, for a maximum shortening of Egyptian history back to the end of the Old Kingdom in order to match the Exodus at c.1450BC. We will estimate the minimum lengths of the periods from that point all the way to 609BC when King Josiah fights Pharaoh Necho II who fights Nebuchadnezzar, and dates are secure. Estimated minimal lengths in years for each period will be shown in italics type so that they can be totalled at the end; and brief comments will be added regarding the Israelites in Canaan. For orthodox dates AEC will be used; AEC was just early enough that most dates were not distorted by carbon dating.<sup>7</sup> Readers may wish to skip some of the detail in the following paragraphs. Places mentioned in the text can be located in Fig. 1.

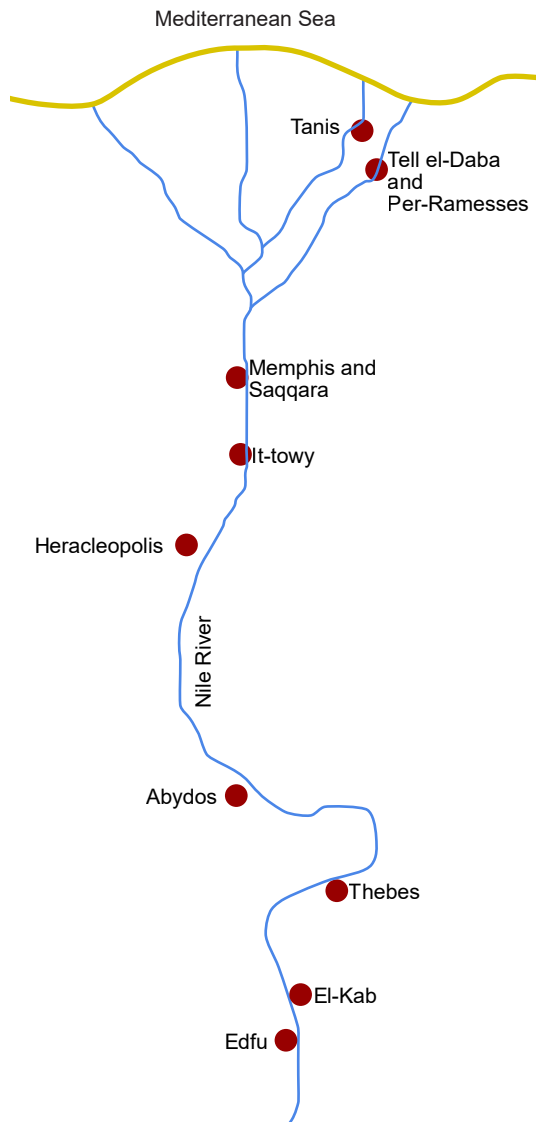
### The End of the Old Kingdom

At the end of the Old Kingdom the last important pharaoh was the long reigning Pepi II of Dynasty 6 (fig. 2). His almost unattested son and successor, Merenre Nemtyemsaf II, is given only one year in the Turin Canon, and, on the scheme suggested here, he may have been the pharaoh of the Exodus.

<sup>5</sup> Hornung, Krauss, and Warburton 2006. Date tables are on pages 490–494. There are various other dating schemes but this is the most recent one that is not significantly influenced by radiocarbon dating which gives older dates for the more ancient times.

<sup>6</sup> Anati 1985, 1986, 2015; Cohen 1983. Some other archaeologists have noted the similarity, e.g., Mazar thought that some memory of the end of EB III might have been orally transmitted through many generations and that “attempts to relate Genesis narratives to Early Bronze Age features cannot be completely excluded” (1990, 143).

<sup>7</sup> Carbon dating has to be calibrated by dendrochronology (tree rings) but the relevant dendrochronology remains unpublished and unavailable (Porter 2020).



**Fig. 1.** Sketch map of the Nile River showing places mentioned in the text.

The Admonitions of Ipuwer, an Egyptian literary work with uncertain date of origin (probably Middle Kingdom), is generally believed to describe the chaotic period which followed the end of the Old Kingdom.<sup>8</sup> It refers to hunger, theft, servants overthrowing their masters, death everywhere, pestilence, the Nile becoming blood and invasion by desert dwellers—“All is ruin.” The description could well match the chaos that might be expected after Egypt lost its pharaoh and most of its crops, animals and army in the biblical plagues and Exodus. The mention of invading desert dwellers may refer to the biblical Amalekites who fought against Israel in Sinai following the Exodus.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> For example, Gardiner 1961, 109–110. For a full translation: Lichtheim 1973, 149–163. The papyrus is a damaged Dynasty 19 copy but Gardiner, the leading British Egyptologist of his day, wrote, “the trustworthiness of the Leyden [i.e. Ipuwer] papyrus as a depiction of Egypt in the First Intermediate Period is indisputable” (110).

<sup>9</sup> If the Amalekites subsequently invaded the greatly weakened Egypt, it could explain the puzzling mention of Amalek as “the first of the nations” in Numbers 24:20. Courville and Osgood proposed this idea but they also equated the Amalekites with the Hyksos who are from a later period (see below).



**Fig. 2.** Statue of Queen Ankhnes-meryre and her son Pepi II as a child; probably the pharaoh that Moses fled from. Egyptian Alabaster (39.2cm high), Brooklyn Museum, Charles Edwin Wilbour Fund, 39.119. Creative Commons-BY.

### First Intermediate Period

The First Intermediate Period (FIP; AEC, Ch. II.6) is here taken as Dynasties 7 to earlier 11 (to the point when Egypt was reunited). There is no hard evidence that Dynasty 7 ever ruled any part of Egypt. Manetho gives Dynasty 7 as having “70 kings in 70 days”, so zero years will be assumed here. There is some contemporary evidence for Dynasty 8 and AEC guesses 32 years but admits that it was “a relatively short and obscure period”. Ten years of sole reign for Dynasty 8 will be arbitrarily assumed here, during which Dynasty 9/10 was getting established at Herakleopolis and Dynasty 11 at Thebes. Dynasty 9 is often grouped with 10 as both reigned from Herakleopolis and next to nothing is known of 9. Their length is unknown although they are typically allowed over a century, but much or all of this time runs parallel to Dynasty 11. There is contemporary evidence for a few of the rulers of Dynasty 10 and for its wars with earlier 11 whose

fifth ruler, Mentuhotep II, defeated 10 and reunited all Egypt. Following the opinion of von Beckerath, a leading German Egyptologist, it will be assumed here that Dynasty 9/10 was entirely contemporary with earlier 11<sup>10</sup> and therefore adds nothing to the overall chronology. Earlier Dynasty 11 consists of a possible Mentuhotep I, then Inyotef I, II and III, and the first part of the reign of Mentuhotep II, a sequence which seems to be confirmed by inscriptions except that Mentuhotep I may have only retrospectively been referred to as a king. Two of the early Dynasty 11 pharaohs, Inyotef II and Mentuhotep II, are given surprisingly long reign lengths by the Turin Canon (49 and 51 years respectively) but long reigns seem to be confirmed by contemporary inscriptions. At some unknown point in the mid reign of Mentuhotep II, he conquered Herakleopolis, reuniting all Egypt. This point is reckoned as the start of the Middle Kingdom and it will be assumed here to be at his Year 25. Ignoring Mentuhotep I and allowing just a few years for Inyotef I (who does not have any known inscriptions of his own), 50 for Inyotef II, 8 for Inyotef III (a figure from Turin Canon) and 25 for the first half of the reign of Mentuhotep II gives a total of about 90 years. Adding to this the above assumed 10 years for Dynasty 8, gives *100 years* for the FIP. This is considerably less than the c.165 years of AEC, and might be further reduced if it later proves possible to shorten the long reigns of Inyotef II and Mentuhotep II. During the FIP Israel would have been in the wilderness and early Judges period, archaeologically late EB III to EB IV-MB I (with MB IIA beginning in Canaanite coastal and northern regions).

### Middle Kingdom

For the Middle Kingdom AEC, Ch. II.7 gives c. 225 years from mid Dynasty 11 to the end of 12. This figure includes several coregencies and some reigns which have been shortened in recent decades. AEC's figure of c. *225 years* for this fairly well documented period will be accepted here. Israel would have been in the Judges period during the Middle Kingdom, corresponding archaeologically to EB IV-MB I to MB IIB (but in some Canaanite parts, MB IIA to MB IIB).

### Second Intermediate Period

The complicated Second Intermediate Period (SIP) is taken here as the time between the Middle and New Kingdoms. The SIP (AEC, Ch. II.7) has been defined as Dynasties 13–17<sup>11</sup> and is typically given about 220 years. This is mainly based on two astronomical dates<sup>12</sup> which supposedly fix the dates of the Middle and New Kingdoms, thus fixing the length of the period in between. Dynasties 13–17 have been adjusted and overlapped to fit that space. It is assumed that Dynasty 13 follows on from 12, both ruling from It-towy and that in the second half of Dynasty 13 it became subject to the Hyksos of Dynasty 15. The so-called Hyksos originated somewhere in Syria or Palestine and had a capital in the East Delta at Avaris (modern Tell el-Daba). They were eventually defeated by the Theban king Ahmose of Dynasty 17, who then became the first pharaoh of Dynasty 18 of the New Kingdom. The little known Dynasties 14 and 16 are assumed to parallel the other dynasties. Egyptologists have accepted that for a short period all five dynasties (13–17) reigned in parallel.<sup>13</sup>

There has been much debate in Egyptology about the correct arrangement of the numerous royal names of this period which are listed in the fragmentary Turin Canon, but that debate can be little more than speculation without contemporary evidence. Although there is contemporary evidence for many of the rulers (sometimes just names on scarabs), that evidence is seldom enough to put them in a sequence or to establish what they were actually ruling over. The king lists give long lengths for each of the five dynasties which caused Sir Flinders Petrie to try to add many centuries into Egyptian history. At the other extreme, Raymond Weill, France's former leading expert on the SIP, tried to reduce it to just a few decades by increasing the overlaps and extending them into the preceding Dynasty 12.<sup>14</sup> Weill is partly supported by recent excavations at Edfu in southern Egypt which showed that Sebekhotep IV of mid Dynasty 13 and Khyan of mid Dynasty 15 were contemporary whereas they have normally been placed about a century apart (Moeller and Marouard

<sup>10</sup> AEC 165–166, but AEC disagreed with von Beckerath.

<sup>11</sup> Often nowadays the term SIP is just used for the later part of the period (late Dynasty 13 plus remaining dynasties). This is on the assumption that Egypt in the earlier 13th continued much as in the 12th.

<sup>12</sup> The astronomical fixes use Sothic Dating, a method which relates to annual observations of the star Sirius, or Sothis. The Egyptian civil calendar had only 365 days and so was a quarter of a day short, resulting in a calendar that apparently moved slowly around the seasons in a cycle that took about 1,460 years (4×365). It is questionable whether the Egyptians actually used such a system continuously for most of their history without ever making any adjustments. AEC comments that “the Sothis and lunar dates in Egypt have repeatedly demonstrated the problems of the astronomical dates and contributed to the primacy of the purely historical dates” (9).

<sup>13</sup> For example, *The Cambridge Ancient History* has all five dynasties ruling in parallel from 1650 to 1633 BC (Edwards et al. eds. 1973, 818–819).

<sup>14</sup> Weill 1953. The title is *XIIe Dynastie, Royauté de Haute-Égypte et Domination Hyksos dans le Nord*, which translates as ‘12th Dynasty, Royalty of Upper-Egypt and Hyksos Domination in the North’, with the implication that all three were running parts of Egypt at the same time.

2011). Another point in Weill's favour is the lack of information on government or administration in Thebes during later Dynasty 12 (Grajetzki 2006, 58–61). Perhaps during late Dynasty 12, Thebes was governed by Dynasty 13, notably by the Neferhotep I to Sebekhotep IV group of kings (and also parallel to Khyan in the north), as Weill thought.<sup>15</sup>

The first 20 kings of Dynasty 13 are given only 38 years in AEC (following the Turin Canon), an average reign of less than two years each which, if true, would likely have caused instability and collapse of the state. At least one of these kings, Kendjer, seems to have been a genuine pharaoh as he had a pyramid at Saqqara and year dates indicating at least four years of reign. Others were likely kinglets or princes under Dynasty 12 as Weill suggested. Following the initial 20 or so names of Dynasty 13, comes the Neferhotep-Sebekhotep group who are well attested but, according to the abovementioned Edfu results, they paralleled Dynasty 15 (Hyksos). The Hyksos capital at Tell el-Daba has yielded numerous sealings of Khyan who was clearly an important ruler because items with his name have been found as far away as Crete, Babylon and Anatolia. The only other well attested Hyksos ruler was Apophis who has various monuments in Egypt, a date of Year 33 on a papyrus, and he is named as the enemy on a stela by the penultimate pharaoh of the Theban Dynasty 17. There seems little hard evidence for other Hyksos rulers. Perhaps we could assume 15 years for Khyan and 35 for Apophis. However, if we follow Weill, the Hyksos would already have been reigning in late Dynasty 12, so perhaps the SIP was only about 40 years.<sup>16</sup> During the SIP, Israel would still have been in the Judges period, archaeologically MB IIB and perhaps beginning of MB IIC (the boundary between B and C is fuzzy).

### New Kingdom

AEC, Ch. II.8 gives the New Kingdom 463 years. This has been whittled down by a few decades from

higher figures given 50 years ago. Now, another 13 years can be subtracted because Egyptologists have shortened the reign of Horemheb (last king of Dynasty 18) from 27 to 14 years (Van Dijk 2008). This came about because his tomb contained wine jars dated to years up to his year 14 and no further (on the chronology suggested here, Horemheb was a contemporary of King David). Some further slight reductions may be possible; a coregency between Amenhotep III and his son Akhenaten was once popular among Egyptologists (e.g., Aldred 1968, Ch. 7) and a few other short Dynasty 18 coregencies have occasionally been suggested. A shortening of the exceptionally long reign of Ramesses II, supposedly 66 years, might be desirable.<sup>17</sup> From these various suggestions we could assume a further 15 years reduction. Another reduction, considered possible by a few Egyptologists, can be made at the end of Dynasty 20 when Ramesses IX and X may have partly paralleled Ramesses XI, a saving of about 16 years.<sup>18</sup> AEC's total of 463 years might therefore be reduced to  $463 - 13 - 15 - 16 = 419$  years. During the New Kingdom, Israel would have progressed from Judges to the United Monarchy period and into the Divided Monarchy.<sup>19</sup> Archaeologically this would be MB IIC, LB and Iron Age.

### Third Intermediate Period

The Third Intermediate Period (TIP; AEC, Chs. II.9–10), like the other intermediate periods, is accepted to have dynasties running in parallel. Dynasties 22–25 all run in parallel at one point and Dynasties 23 and 24 are accepted to be entirely overlapped by other dynasties. There is much documentation for the TIP but sorting out who was reigning where and when is difficult. The main potential shortenings, not accepted by Egyptologists,<sup>20</sup> come by overlapping Dynasties 21 and 22, by shortening Dynasty 22 and by increasing the overlap between Dynasties 22 and 25. It is assumed here that the rise of Dynasty 22 was during the chaotic period at the end of the New

<sup>15</sup> Fold-out chronology table opposite page 52 of Weill 1953.

<sup>16</sup> A long SIP is thought to be proven by genealogies relating to the governors of el-Kab, a town in southern Egypt. Orthodox scholars have arranged these genealogies to give eight generations from Sebekhotep IV to Ahmose (first of Dynasty 18) but it has been shown that this can be reduced to about four generations (Porter 2013). Weill too used the el-Kab genealogies but shortened the timescale even further by overlapping them into early Dynasty 18 (1953, 39–40) a couple of generations later than in my own article which was mainly intended to support the contemporaneity of Sebekhotep IV and Khyan.

<sup>17</sup> This is not accepted by Egyptologists although some have proposed a short coregency with Ramesses' father. Doubts have been raised about Ramesses' second decade of reign for which there are few clear attestations (Schmidt 1973, 33–36, 104–105; see also Kitchen 1990, 71 and note that a number of texts are of uncertain attribution). Schmidt did not try to shorten the reign but made the unlikely suggestion that Ramesses spent a prolonged absence in Syria while Egypt rebelled (177–179). A 66 year reign, if correct, would make Ramesses II the longest reigning king in ancient history, assuming Pepi II's 90+ years is incorrect (see below).

<sup>18</sup> Dodson 2012, 9–13; and see below for a possible overlap with the Third Intermediate Period.

<sup>19</sup> Here approximately following the scheme of Rohl 1995. Rohl equates King Saul with Labayu who figured in the Amarna Letters (Ch. 9), and Ramesses II with Shishak who looted Jerusalem in the reign of Rehoboam (Ch. 7; short forms of the name Ramesses were Sysw, Sese, etc, which may have been confused with Shishak). However, not following Rohl's datings for Joseph or the Exodus, etc.

<sup>20</sup> Except Lieblein (1914). Lieblein, who founded the study of Egyptology in Norway, linked the end of Dynasty 20 to the beginning of 22 (359–361) and he ran Dynasty 21 in parallel to 22 (366) but he did not shorten Dynasty 22. See also his fold-out summary chart after page 384.

Kingdom, with rival kings in Thebes (Ramesses IX to X of Dynasty 20), Tanis (Smendes, first of Dynasty 21), and Ramesses XI (Dynasty 20) somewhere in the north (Per-Ramesses or Memphis). In this situation, Shoshenq I (founder of Dynasty 22) may have taken control over the other kings and declared the rebirth (Egyptian *whm mswt*) that took place in Year 19 of Ramesses XI's 30 year reign. This gives an overlap between Dynasties 20 and 22 of about 11 years if Shoshenq counted his reign from the rebirth. Shoshenq I is normally taken to be the biblical Shishak in the time of Solomon and Rehoboam but, on the scheme suggested here, Shishak would have been Ramesses II of Dynasty 19.<sup>21</sup> Instead, Shoshenq I may have been the biblical saviour of Northern Israel in 2 Kings 13:5 at roughly 800 BC (James 1991, 385, n. 134.). At the end of the TIP, in the reign of Taharqa (last main king of Dynasty 25) Egyptian chronology becomes approximately secure as he links with Hezekiah of Judah and Sennacherib of Assyria (2 Kings 19:9).

Dynasty 21 is given 133 years in AEC but is assumed here to have been initially subject to Shoshenq I of Dynasty 22, the two dynasties then continuing in parallel. Egyptologists may have been misled by Manetho's dynastic numbering (21 before 22) or perhaps Dynasty 21 at Tanis really did start slightly before 22. Also, Egyptologists use a cluster of inscriptions to show that Psusennes II at the end of Dynasty 21 was father-in-law of Osorkon I of early Dynasty 22, apparently showing that Dynasties 21 and 22 were approximately sequential.<sup>22</sup> However, none of these inscriptions specify which Osorkon, and so it could have been Osorkon III of Dynasty 23, not Osorkon I of Dynasty 22.<sup>23</sup>

There are possible reductions within Dynasty 22. In recent decades it has become accepted that the pharaohs Takelot II and Shoshenq III reigned in parallel,<sup>24</sup> saving about 20 years, but Egyptologists then lengthen other reigns in order to keep Shoshenq I early enough to be the biblical Shishak at c. 925 BC. Thus, Osorkon II gets 31 years instead of 20+, and Osorkon I is given 35 years whereas the highest known year definitely attributable to him is his Year 12 (Jaquet-Gordon 1967). Additionally, it has been shown from priestly genealogies that Osorkon I was likely a contemporary of Osorkon II, not Osorkon II's grandfather (Porter 2008). After the above mentioned parallel reigns of Takelot II and Shoshenq III, there is a fixed sequence of Dynasty

22 reigns extending from Shoshenq III through Shoshenq IV and Pimay to Shoshenq V (but with other kings in parallel). Shoshenq V's 38 year reign is thought to terminate before the Kushite Dynasty 25 took control of Egypt, but it is assumed here that he was subject to Dynasty 25 and reigned alongside it. In late Dynasty 23 there is supposed to have been an Osorkon IV but this Osorkon was probably a duplication of Osorkon III (James 1991, 254–255; Porter 2011).

During Dynasty 25 and continuing in 26, Egypt interacted with Assyria culminating in Necho II's unsuccessful attempt to rescue the Assyrians from the Babylonians at Carchemish. On the way to Carchemish, Necho defeated Josiah at Megiddo in 609 BC and thus biblical dates are precisely connected to Egypt. Egyptian dates are secure back to at least the beginning of Dynasty 26 in 664 BC (the end of the TIP). From the above, there is considerable scope for shortening the TIP from AEC's 413 years (Dynasties 21–25). Here, we have approximately 810 BC for the start of the reign of Shoshenq I<sup>25</sup> to 664 BC (end of Dynasty 25)=146 years, from which must be subtracted the 11 year overlap with the New Kingdom, giving *135 years for the TIP*. Extending this to 609 BC for the biblical connection (Necho kills Josiah) adds a further 55 years, making *190 years*. During this whole period Israel was in the later divided monarchy (archaeologically continuing in the Iron Age).

### Totals and Interim Conclusion

Totalling up our minimal estimated years (in italics above) from the end of the Old Kingdom to 609 BC, gives  $100+225+40+419+190+609=1583$  BC. Many reigns will not have completed their final year, averaging only six months each in those final years, so perhaps we could assume a further 25 years to be removed, giving approximately *1560 BC for the Exodus* at the end of the Old Kingdom. This is a lot later than AEC's 2150 BC but over a century too early for the preferred biblical date. I have compressed Egyptian history as much as I can at present but further shortenings might eventually be found. In any case, it is better to synchronise Egyptian and Israelite history correctly and worry about exact dates later.

## 2. The Old Kingdom and Preceding Periods

So far we have only considered the post Exodus

<sup>21</sup> Admittedly, the name Shishak is a good match to Shoshe(n)q if one allows for vowel shifts and that the ancient Egyptians sometimes dropped the 'n' (see also n. 19 above). The biblical date of Shishak's looting of Jerusalem (1 Kings 14: 25–26) is a key point in fixing the orthodox Egyptian dates of Shoshenq I.

<sup>22</sup> Jansen-Winkel 1995, 145–146. See also Dodson 2012, 95–96.

<sup>23</sup> As proposed by Lieblein 1914, 373 and fold-out table.

<sup>24</sup> Originally proposed by Aston 1989, 143 and 148.

<sup>25</sup> Admittedly, 810 BC is a guesstimate.

period (post Old Kingdom), but now we will work backwards from the Old Kingdom through Egyptian history to Abraham and the Flood. Most of this section will necessarily be very speculative.

### Old Kingdom

How much time must be allowed for the Old Kingdom (Dynasties 4–6 in AEC, Chs. II.4–5)? With a shortage of contemporary historical texts,<sup>26</sup> and the unreliability of king lists or carbon dating, this is a tricky question. Many kings and their sequences are known from contemporary texts although there is less information on their reign lengths. Most OK pharaohs had pyramids, many at or near Saqqara, and all but one within a 20 mile stretch along the edge of the Nile valley, thus it is difficult to argue that they were ruling different parts of Egypt in parallel dynasties. It is of interest that Pepi II, the last major king of Dynasty 6 was for many years thought to have reigned for a ridiculous 90+ years on the basis of the Turin Canon and Manetho. This is nowadays reduced to a still rather long 60+ years. Old Kingdom reign lengths are sometimes estimated according to the number of regular cattle counts (counted for taxation). These have been thought to be biannual but it now seems that many were annual (Kanawati and Swinton 2018, 37–38) which could halve some reign lengths. In the absence of clear evidence, a reasonable approach might be to give all kings an average of 15 years each (allows for brother successions, usurpers, etc). Dynasties 4–6 have 22 kings; at 15 years each this gives *330 years* (AEC gives 423 years). During this period, Israel would have been in Egypt, and Canaan was in the EB II–EB III periods. Of necessity it is assumed here that the sojourn in Egypt was 430 years (Exodus 12:40) rather than accept Paul's apparent 430 years between the promise to Abraham (or to Jacob?) and the Exodus (Gal. 3:17) which results in a sojourn of only about 215 years.<sup>27</sup>

### Early Dynastic Period

For the Early Dynastic period (Dynasties 1–3) AEC lists 20 kings (Chs. II. 2–3). The lavish burials of the 3rd to 8th kings of Dynasty 1 have been found at Abydos, and further large monuments from their times at North Saqqara also include the second king. The first king, Narmer, is known as a conqueror from designs

on impressive slate palettes and from inscriptions reaching as far afield as Palestine, so these eight kings clearly reigned, apparently over all or most of Egypt. However, there is little evidence for the exclusive rule of the seven kings of Dynasty 2<sup>28</sup> although two, Peribsen and Khasekhemwy, have left major remains at Abydos. Perhaps we could therefore assume that five of the kings were parallel and/or subject to Dynasty 1. AEC lists five kings for Dynasty 3, the first being Djoser who built the famous step pyramid. His successor, Sekhemkhet, also started a pyramid but it was not finished, and one other king has been linked to a particular pyramid. The remaining two kings will be arbitrarily reduced to one giving 4 reigns. This gives the Early Dynastic a total of  $8+2+4=14$  reigns, and again assuming 15 years per reign, we get *210 years* (AEC gives 357). If a 430 year Israelite sojourn in Egypt is correct, then Joseph and the famine would have been about the beginning of Dynasty 3. This might permit the identity of Joseph with Djoser's high official, Imhotep, as some have suggested (e.g., Strickling 1977). Canaan was in the EB I–EB II periods.

### Predynastic

The Predynastic period (AEC, Ch. II.1), i.e. before the unification of Egypt by Narmer (first king of Dynasty 1), does have a few known royal names but for this period we enter the realm of material culture sequences (stone tools, pottery, etc) lasting, supposedly, thousands of years. Today, Egypt is mostly desert with cultivation mainly in the Nile valley. During or after the Ice Age, the present day deserts had rainfall and Stone Age peoples hunted there as shown by their stone tools and rock paintings. However, the deserts dried up and people moved to the Nile valley, initially as hunter-gatherers. During these times there was a chronological succession of different styles of stone tools, and eventually villages developed with pottery as well as stone, and farming appeared. Some time is necessary for this succession of material culture, so maybe we should allow *200 years*. It was probably towards the end of this period that Abraham visited Egypt, a time before Egypt was unified when there was a local king in the East Delta and Canaan was in the Chalcolithic period.<sup>29</sup> Note that in the Bible, Abraham travels around in a thinly populated

<sup>26</sup> The Palermo Stone and associated fragments have often been thought to give a detailed but fragmentary list of Old Kingdom years and rulers. However, Egyptologists have sometimes raised doubts about when it was written or even if it was a modern fake. Wilkinson (2000) concluded that it was written for religious and political purposes rather than as a reliable source of history.

<sup>27</sup> Turpin also supports a long sojourn in Egypt (2021, 48–49).

<sup>28</sup> AEC goes so far as to say, “the history of the second half of Dyn. 2 is unclear, insofar as kings might have ruled simultaneously and not successively” (486).

<sup>29</sup> This is approximately the placement of Osgood, 1986a (77–87) (summary page 87).

world, whereas in later periods he and his herds would have been ‘treading on the toes’ of already established peoples.<sup>30</sup>

### Geological Sequence

Many readers may not agree to my speculations here, but depending on where in the geological sequence one puts the Flood, some allowance must be made for geological strata and for mankind to multiply on the face of the earth. The Flood was said to have covered all the high hills (Gen. 7:19, KJV). During the Tertiary geological period (supposedly from about 65 to 2 million years ago), the world’s major mountain ranges were pushed up. Presumably the Flood could not have covered the Himalayas, otherwise where has all the water gone? It follows that the Flood was before the formation of the major mountain ranges. If the Flood was before the Tertiary period, then time must be allowed for the necessary geological processes of continental drift and the resulting mountain building. Speculating, let’s shorten this 60+ million year period to a mere 250 years. During this time of frightening geological upheavals, Noah and his descendants were probably living somewhere on the large stable land mass of Eurasia.

### Totalling the Years Back to the Flood

If we assume that the end of the Old Kingdom will eventually be corrected to 1450BC to match the usual biblical Exodus date, then the Flood would be at  $1450+330+210+200+250=2440$ BC which is already earlier than the often suggested date of c. 2300BC. However, we have assumed above a 430 year long sojourn in Egypt which would put the Flood earlier at about 2500, easily encompassing 2440BC.

Now consider where we would be if we had accepted orthodox dates for Dynasty 18, as some evangelicals do in order to have Amenhotep II as pharaoh of the Exodus. Allowing 100 years for the early part of Dynasty 18,<sup>31</sup> 40 for the SIP, 220 for the Middle Kingdom, 100 for the FIP, 330 for OK, 210 for Early Dynastic, 200 for Predynastic and 250 for geological time, this puts the Flood at  $1450+100+40+220+100+330+210+200+250=2900$ BC. That assumes the shortenings used above but is much too early for a Masoretic text Flood date. The Septuagint text would have to be adopted with the Flood at c. 3300BC.

### Conclusion

In Section 1 it was shown that placing the Exodus at the end of the Old Kingdom in Egypt and the

Conquest at the end of Early Bronze III in Canaan fits nicely with the Bible. By applying various potential shortenings of Egyptian chronology, it was shown that the date for the end of the Old Kingdom could be greatly reduced compared to the orthodox chronology although without so far achieving the apparent biblical date of c. 1450BC.

In Section 2 speculative estimates were made for earlier Egyptian history and the Egyptian placement of Abraham, and for how much further time was needed back to the Flood. It was shown that a Masoretic text Flood date would be difficult using orthodox Egyptian chronology for the New Kingdom, as some evangelicals nowadays propose.

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<sup>30</sup> For example, when Abraham’s and Lot’s herds became too great for them to stay together, he suggested that they separate and go where they wished, as if the land was still fairly empty (Gen. 13:9—“Is not the whole land before you?”).

<sup>31</sup> From mid reign of Ahmose (AEC c. 1527BC; it is not known exactly when in Ahmose’s reign he overthrew the Hyksos) to the beginning of Amenhotep II’s reign (AEC 1425 BC).



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