THE EXODUS AND CONQUEST:
MAIN PROBLEMS AND A NEW PROPOSAL

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Table of Contents

Setting the Stage of The Quest for Biblical Israel's Background....3
Numbers and Narratives: Some Introductory Remarks....5
Precise Numbers Make It Difficult: What Is "The Biblical Chronology?"....5
Glorious Narratives Are No Better: Joshua and Biblical Propaganda....7
Great Numbers Are Even Worse: A Smaller Exodus is Inevitable....8
The Elusive Exodus: Was It Meant to be Found?....9
The "Hard" Evidence and the Two Major Maximalist Theories....10
Israel in Egypt....10
Israel in Canaan....11
The Show Begins: An Early Exodus and Variegated Conquest....13
Bibliography....17

Setting the Stage of The Quest for Biblical Israel's Background

Stories of the exodus and conquest, as recorded in the Hebrew Bible, are stories from ancient past, which aspire to be read as a history. The problem with this aspiration, as seen by historians and biblical scholars, is that the story itself doesn't disclose enough details, which would place it into a distinct historical period. We are not even told names of the Pharaohs in question![1] This elusiveness of the biblical history's background, so pervasive throughout the Pentateuch and beyond, causes a heated disagreement between different scholars who attempt to paste the biblical story onto different places on the ancient world's time line. Provisional labels minimalists, maximalists, and centrists have already been around for some time. Minimalists do not appreciate the Bible as an essentially historical document. They are "deriving a minimum of credible history from the biblical materials themselves."[2] Maximalists, on he other hand, insist that the Old Testament is "not only a theological but also a historical work."[3]

In order to understand this controversy, let us review two examples. Firstly, Philip Davies, a minimalist, rejects pre-exilic origin of biblical Israel, because he doesn't find an appropriate historical setting for it's emergence anywhere in the pre-exilic period. Israel's emergence is not understood through the Bronze Age events, as maximalists would have it, but as a result of "the political and religious events of the 6th and 5th centuries."[4] Davies contends that the biblical Israel is not the historical Israel[5] and that "biblical narratives were meant as literary pieces rather than historiographical material."[6] A completely different view is that of a radical minimalist approach of Russell Gmirkin, who proposed that the exodus story was composed with the help of and as a polemic with Manetho in 273-72 BC, just before the Septuagint was translated.[7] On these two examples, two main questions have surfaced. (1) Firstly, does literary sophistry of the biblical historical accounts impede it's historical value? And (2) secondly, how to tell which background for the biblical stories is the best. Unlike minimalists, maximalists (1) do not think that "literary craft and an accurate historical representation are incompatible."[8] As a result, they (2) judge plausibility of

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[1] The reason for this omission is unclear. See James K. Hoffmeier, *Israel in Egypt: The Evidence for the Authenticity of the Exodus Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 110. Tremper Longman III, *How to Read Exodus* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), 69. Ronald Hendel, "The Exodus in Biblical Memory," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 120, no. 4 (2001), 604-5.

[2] Garnett H. Reid, "Minimalism and Biblical History," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 155, no. 620 (1998), 396. Some scholars who have been described as minimalists are Gösta Ahlström, Robert B. Coote, Philip R. Davies, Niels Peter Lemche, Thomas L. Thompson, John Van Seters, and Keith W. Whitelam. See also Michael A. Grisanti, "Old Testament Poetry as a Vehicle for Historiography," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 161, no. 642 (2004), 170.

[3] Eugene H. Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests: A History of Old Testament Israel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 9-10 (ebook).

[4] Philip R. Davies, "The Origin of Biblical Israel," in *Essays on Ancient Israel in Its Near Eastern Context: A Tribute to Nadav Na'aman*, ed. Yaira Amit and Nadav Na'aman (Winona Lake, Ind: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 147. K. P. Hong, "Once Again: The Emergence of »Biblical Israel«," *Zeitschrift Für Die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 125, no. 2 (January 2013), 279.

[5] Philip R. Davies, *In Search of "Ancient Israel,"* Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 148 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 17 passim.

[6] Grisanti, "Poetry as a Vehicle," 166.

[7] Russell E. Gmirkin, *Berossus and Genesis, Manetho and Exodus: Hellenistic Histories and the Date of the Pentateuch* (New York: T&T Clark, 2006), 187 passim. The date provided on p. 245.

[8] Grisanti, "Poetry as a Vehicle," 166, 178. Halpern points out that "literary questions dominate this discussion, because studies of Israelite historiography focus on its literary integrity, as an argument, in some cases, to it's concoction and insincerity. But a competent presentation of history will exhibit literary integrity,

historical models by their alignment with historical and chronological data given in the Bible itself.

How to decide this? Conservative biblical scholars should realize that it is not inadequate to recognize multiple literary layers of the text, some of which bear marks of much later periods than those typical of the Bronze Age. But even if we allow for an exilic, post-exilic, or even anti-Manethean polemical layer in Exodus, we are by no means arriving at a clue for judging the original antiquity of the exodus tradition. In the words of Richard Friedman, minimalist assertions "have nothing to do with whether the story is based on something that happened!"[9] Once we grant that the biblical text, in spite of it's artfulness, contains a germ of historical reality, which has been expanded throughout a complicated formation, we may accept it as a witness, not unlike that of other ancient histories (such as Manetho!).[10] In this particular light, the error of the radical minimalists, as I can see it, is not that they seek for possible contexts of a biblical text, but that they divorce archeology and history from biblical textual evidence.[11] The contention that minimalists "appeal to what they see as more objective, scientific sources of historical data, namely, the results of archeology and social science,"[12] may be subjectively correct, but not helpful as a definition. It's not that minimalists appeal to "more objective data," it's just that based on the evidence, which is intrinsically neutral to any model of ancient Israel's origin, minimalists deny biblical history as self explanatory and try to revise it's dating.[13] In other words, as well as maximalists, minimalists, too, seek for plausible backgrounds of the exodus story. It's just that the time frames they seek in are different.

Centrists, as the word suggests, tend to remain somewhere in the middle.[14] Israel Finkelstein, a self-defined centrist, believes that biblical history may contain "germs of historical memories from the formative days of early Israel."[15] He doesn't buy into the whole biblical narrative of the exodus story, but he does admit that the story might derive from a collective Canaanite memory, possibly from the horrendous memories of the Hyksos incomers to their violent expulsion from Egypt.[16] While not necessarily agreeing with Finkelstein in every detail, his approach is essentially sane. Instead of trying to paste the whole biblical story onto a time line and say "this is it" (so many minimalists and maximalists!) we should recognize multiple historical backgrounds given by the fact of long canonical formation.[17] Delineation of this virtue, which not even Finkelstein thoroughly attains, is beyond the scope

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however little it concocts." Baruch Halpern, *The First Historians: The Hebrew Bible and History* (Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010), 13.

[9] Richard E. Friedman, "The Exodus Based on the Sources Themselves" (Out of Egypt: Israel's Exodus Between Text and Memory, History and Imagination, University of California, San Diego, 2013), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H-YlzpUhnxQ. time 3:00.

[10] See similar historiographical remarks in Robert D. Miller, "Yahweh and His Clio: Critical Theory and the Historical Criticism of the Hebrew Bible," *Currents in Biblical Research* 4, no. 2 (February 1, 2006), 160. Lester L. Grabbe, "Are Historians of Ancient Palestine Fellow Creatures - or Different Animals?," in *Can a "History of Israel" Be Written?*, ed. Lester L. Grabbe (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 24.

[11] Longman III, *Exodus*, 77.

[12] Reid, "Minimalism," 396.

[13] Miller, "Clio," 156.

[14] Centrists who contributed to this study are Dever, Finkelstein, Friedman, Na'aman, Hendel, etc.

[15] Finkelstein in an interview for BAR. "The Devil Is Not So Black as He Is Painted," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 36, no. 3 (2010), 48-58.

[16] Israel Finkelstein and Neil A. Silberman, *The Bible Unearthed: Archaeology's New Vision of Ancient Israel and the Origin of Its Sacred Texts* (New York: Free Press, 2001), 68-9.

[17] This term is, as far as I know, never used by Finkelstein, and is not associated with his scholarship. Finkelstein's thought, however, gives it much space. It has been popularized by Brevard Childs.

of this paper, too. Figuratively speaking, I will now only attempt set the stage for the original exodus tradition to surface and propose a choreography for it's historical debut.

Numbers and Narratives: Some Introductory Remarks

Precise Numbers Make It Difficult: What Is "The Biblical Chronology?"

A great amount of ink has been spilled on the issue of "the biblical chronology." Such a chronology would attempt to set absolute dates of biblical events by synchronizing relative biblical chronological records with points of reference in the 1st millennium BC. One of these absolute biblical dates, which seem to be fairly settled, is the beginning of Solomon's reign in 970 BC.[18] This date is arrived to with the help of chronological records in the books of Kings. Now given that biblical chronological records do not end with Solomon, many biblical scholars and historians feel compelled to elaborate biblical chronologies beyond the scope of the Hebrew kings back into premonarchical period and to calculate date of the exodus. Bryant Wood, for example, insists that if we follow 1 Kings 6:1, we can arrive to exact date of the exodus by subtracting 480 years from Solomon's fourth regnal year (966 BC).[19] Wood strongly insists that after "recognizing that the biblical [chronological] data are true and correct," one shall immediately learn that "the Israelites left Egypt in 1446 BC and, after forty years in the Sinai, began the conquest of Canaan in 1406 BC."[20]

This approach is somewhat rigid and therefore, in my opinion, doomed to oblivion. Let me illustrate my point. The Bible tells us more than once that the length of Israel's sojourn in Egypt was 400 years or more (cf. Gen 15:13; Ex 12:40). We also read that when Joseph found favor in the Pharaoh's eyes, he was allowed to "ride in the chariot of his [Pharaoh's] second-in-command" (Gen 41:43).[21] It is significant that horses and chariots were probably introduced to Egypt by Hyksos, because they are first mentioned in Egyptian accounts from the Hyksos expulsion.[22] These Hyksos were Amorite immigrants to Egypt,[23] who gained control over the eastern Delta by about 1720 BC. By 1674 BC, they occupied Memphis, but they never managed to subjugate the Upper Egypt. Hyksos adopted big clusters of Egyptian culture and took over important public offices. Their rulers are known as pharaohs of fifteenth and sixteenth dynasties of the so called Second Intermediate Period (henceforth SIM).[24] Pharaoh Ahmose I from Upper Egypt brought Hyksos rule to it's end by

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[18] Longman III, *Exodus*, 71. For a comprehensive explanation of chronology in historical books see Edwin R. Thiele, *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings* (Kregel Academic, 1983), 80 passim.

[19] Bryant G. Wood, "The Rise and Fall of the 13th-Century Exodus-Conquest Theory," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 48, no. 3 (2005), 477-8. Also Merrill F. Unger, *Archeology and the Old Testament* (Zondervan, 1954), 141. Gleason L. Archer, *A Survey of the Old Testament Introduction* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1964), 212. Merril, *Kingdom of Priests*, 49 (ebook).

[20] Rodger C. Young and Bryant G. Wood, "A Critical Analysis Of The Evidence From Ralph Hawkins For A Late-Date Exodus-Conquest," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 51, no. 2 (2008), 243. See also Wood, "The Rise and Fall," 477.

[21] All biblical quotations in this paper are from the New Revised Standard Version.

[22] Hoffmeier, *Israel in Egypt*, 64; John Van Seters, *The Hyksos: A New Investigation* (Wipf & Stock, 2010), 183-85. See also Joel J. Forman, "Glimpses of the Past in Genesis-Exodus," *Jewish Bible Quarterly* 36, no. 1 (January 2008), 49-53. Pharaohs of the Upper Egypt adopted Hyksos weaponry and war tactics in order to rule them out. Horses and chariots were probably one of these tactical technologies.

[23] Kim S.B. Ryholt, *The Political Situation in Egypt During the Second Intermediate Period, C. 1800-1550 B.C.*, CNI Publications (Carsten Niebuhr Institute of Near Eastern Studies, University of Copenhagen, 1997), 127-28.

[24] Nahum M. Sarna, "Exploring Exodus: The Oppression," *Biblical Archaeologist* 49, no. 2 (June 1986), 70.

defeating them and ruling them out back to Canaan.[25] Now if the exodus took place in 1446 BC, as literal interpretation of 1 Kings 6:1 suggests, the year of Jacob's descent to Egypt is approximately 1877 BC, which is too early for Joseph to ride a chariot. If Joseph rode a chariot, then either was Israel's sojourn in Egypt shorter (as indicated in Gen 15:16), or the exodus occurred later than 1446 BC. Who can decide this?[26] Even if Umberto Cassuto was right while saying that "when the Bible gives us technical or statistical data, it frequently prefers the ascending order,"[27] which is the case of 1 Kings 6:1, what do we do with the Septuagint, which tells us that the construction began "in the fortieth and four hundredth year," not "in the four hundred eightieth year," as the Masoretic text would have it.[28] Wood rightly observes that the Septuagint "certainly does not support a 13th-century exodus date."[29] But neither does it confirm that the exodus happened in 1440's! I side with James Hoffmeier in that there is not a single "orthodox" biblical chronology.[30]

Those who search the exodus on the 13th century background (so Hoffmeier and Kenneth Kitchen) are fast to exclaim that the figure in 1 Kings 6:1 is symbolical, representing 12 generations of 40 years each.[31] Hoffmeier further argues that this figure is a so called *Distanzangabe*, i.e. a "given distance," which signifies a symbolical block of years rather than an exact time span.[32] Let's silence Wood for a while, and also others who think that "there is no basis for such an interpretation."[33] Let's grant that. But what on earth can convince us that the real number behind the symbolical figure is actually smaller, as these scholars propose? There is a complicated chronology in Judges, which might support an ultra high date of the exodus, if taken literally.[34] There is Jephtah's appeal to the king of Ammonites that Israel has been living on the disputed territory for three hundred years (Jgs 11:26). And there is witness of 1 Chronicles 6:17-22, which lists as many as 19 generations

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[25] Sarna, "Exploring Exodus," 70. Cf. Janine Bourriau, "The Second Intermediate Period (c.1650-1550 BC)," in *The Oxford History of Ancient Egypt*, ed. Ian Shaw, New ed (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 199.

[26] The double measure in this decision making is compromised by Mark W. Chavalas and Murray R. Adamthwaite, "Archaeological Light on the Old Testament," in *The Face of Old Testament Studies: A Survey of Contemporary Approaches*, ed. David W. Baker and Bill T. Arnold (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999), 85.

[27] Umberto Cassuto, *The Documentary Hypothesis and the Composition of the Pentateuch* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, Hebrew University, 1961), 52. Wood, "The Rise and Fall," 486.

[28] Cf. "εν τω τεσσαρακοστω και τετρακοσιοστω" (so LXX) with "בִּשְׁמוֹנִים שָׁנָה וְאַרְבַּע מֵאוֹת שָׁנָה" (so MT) in 1 Kings 6:1.

[29] Bryant G. Wood, "The Biblical Date for the Exodus Is 1446 BC: A Response to James Hoffmeier," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 50, no. 2 (2007), 249.

[30] James K. Hoffmeier, "Rameses of the Exodus Narratives Is the 13 Century B.C. Royal Ramesside Residence," *Trinity Journal* 28, no. 2 (2007), 281. James K. Hoffmeier, "What Is The Biblical Date For The Exodus? A Response To Bryant Wood," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 50, no. 2 (2007), 226-230.

[31] Kenneth A. Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 307.

[32] Hoffmeier, "Response to Wood," 236-8. Hoffmeier notes that "the number 40 … occurs 33 times in the OT." For example regnal periods (1Sam 4:18; 1Kgs 2:10; 1Kgs 11:42), periods of peace (Jgs 3:11; 8:22) etc. Hoffmeier's example of Distanzangabe is the case of Tukulti-Ninurta, who declared that his reconstruction of Ishtar Temple in Ashur occurred 720 (12 x 60 or 45 x 16) years after it's construction, which was obviously way too high number. Another example given is the so called "400 years stela of Ramesses II."

[33] Wood, "The Rise and Fall," 484. Wood, "Biblical Date," 253. Chavalas & Adamthwaite, "Archaeological Light," 85.

[34] Ralph K. Hawkins, "The Date of the Exodus-Conquest Is Still an Open Question: A Response to Rodger Young and Bryant Wood," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 51, no. 2 (2008), 35.

between Solomon and the exodus.[35] Does the biblical chronology not support an earlier date then? Maybe not. But my present solution is to accept Hoffmeier's (and Kitchen's) skepticism concerning symbolical numbers and apply it consistently to all suspicious chronological records in the Pentateuch. No further benefit of the doubt is allowed for the mysterious numbers of the exodus and conquest. Even the 40 years of Israel's sojourn in the wilderness (e.g. Ex 16:5; Nu 14:33f), which Kitchen and Hoffmeier paradoxically take at face value,[36] is not an exception. Was it longer, or shorter? We can't tell![37] This is not to deny historicity of the respective traditions, it's just to clear up this methodological havoc. No number in the Hebrew Bible is given the benefit of the doubt, no symbolical number can neither confirm nor deny any historical theory, and there is therefore no undisputed biblical chronology.

Glorious Narratives Are No Better: Joshua and Biblical Propaganda

Another lynchpin of maximalist historical considerations is the conquest of Canaan. In Joshua 9-12, Israelites are said to have conquered the whole Canaan. Some have pointed out that close reading of Joshua suggests that the book does not witness to a massive destruction.[38] K. Lawson Younger has also presented compelling evidence that the conquest narrative in Joshua is carefully structured and composed to meet standards of the conquest account of the day. (For an instance, in Joshua 10:11 we read that Yahweh "threw down huge stones from heaven" on those who dared to flee from the raging Israelites. Younger demonstrates that this detail strongly resembles 8th century conquest accounts of Sargon I.[39]) Younger further demonstrates that the conquest narratives in Joshua are very carefully structured.[40] The question as to what is the text's real plain meaning is thus still open.

Careful structure and ancient parallels evidenced by Younger could indicate certain religious bias. Such a conclusion might be disturbing for those who tend to insist on historical veracity of plain reading of these texts. It is, on the other hand, quite relieving for those who otherwise would regard these accounts as a major challenge for the doctrine of God's omnibenevolence. Douglas Earl has pointed out quite poignantly that "the horrors of religiously motivated violence ... makes Joshua profoundly troubling reading."[41] In an attempt to account for God's straightforwardness in Deuteronomy 7 and in Joshua, conservative interpreters have often attempted to demonstrate that the purported חרם imposed on Canaanite

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[35] Wood, "The Rise and Fall," 477, 486

[36] Kitchen, *Reliability*, 159, 307, 359. Hoffmeier, "Response to Wood," response, 243. Kitchen gives 1260/50 for the exodus and 1220/10 for conquest. Hoffmeier gives 1270/60 for the exodus and 1230/20 for the conquest.

[37] It could seem in the light of Deuteronomy 8:4 and 29:4 that it was rather a shorter period of time. Joshua 5:6 would, however, indicate much longer period, if the entire previous generation had to pass away.

[38] Iain W. Provan, V. Philips Long, and Tremper Longman, *A Biblical History of Israel*, 1st ed (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 174-89. See also close reading of Terrance A Clarke, "Complete v. Incomplete Conquest: A Re-Examination of Three Passages in Joshua," *Tyndale Bulletin* 61, no. 1 (2010), 89-104. Clarke argues that the hyperbole theory is not always necessary to explain a total annihilation passage (p. 93).

[39] K. Lawson Younger, *Ancient Conquest Accounts* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990), 210.

[40] K. Lawson Younger, "The Rhetorical Structuring of the Joshua Conquest Narratives," in *Critical Issues in Early Israelite History*, ed. Richard S. Hess, Gerald A. Klingbeil, and Paul J. Ray (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2008), 11.

[41] Douglas S. Earl, *The Joshua Delusion?: Rethinking Genocide in the Bible* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2010), 4.

population was deserved[42] and, as Albright has suggested, even desirable, because it was a victory of morally superior Israel over the inferior Canaanites.[43] Minimalist Keith Whitelam deems it embarrassing that even "after the full horrors of the Holocaust had been exposed, Albright felt no need to revise his opinion that 'superior' peoples had the right to exterminate 'inferior'."[44] Indeed it seems to me that those who hesitate to revise biblical history in order to preserve the doctrine of inspiration[45] should also think about preserving the doctrine of God's omnibenevolence, which is as scriptural and orthodox as any other doctrine!

All of this is, on the other hand, not to prove that there was no combat in the beginning of ancient Israel. Neither do I suggest to dismiss all biblical conquest accounts as unhistorical. It's just that we need some more sophisticated reading strategies before we take our text to the dig. There is, for example, an etiological agenda, which transcends the whole of the Deuteronomistic history. This agenda wants to show how Israel won her land during the time of Joshua because of her obedience (Josh 23:6), and how she had lost it because of her transgression (2Kgs 22:13).[46] Does that mean that the book of Joshua is a tale? Not at all, the Deuteronomist's agenda, as any other, needed some well preserved memories, a "common knowledge!" Does that mean that Joshua was an Israelite Napoleon? In the Deuteronomist's thought he was, but there might have been more to it.

Great Numbers Are Even Worse: A Smaller Exodus is Inevitable

Exodus 12:37 and Numbers 2:32 tell us that there were about "six hundred thousand men on foot" who journeyed out of Egypt through the wilderness. This would result in approximatelly 2 million people including women and children. On other places, however, Yahweh Himself points out that Israel is not bigger than other peoples (Dt 7:7) and that He will therefore drive their enemies out "little by little" (Ex 23:29f). This is apparently at odds with any possible ancient background. For example, by the end of 11th century, there was "a total of about 40,650 sedentary inhabitants for the known sites west of the Jordan River."[47] Earlier centuries were not more densely populated.[48] It is not necessary to give a large list of difficulties with these large numbers, some quite humorous, but all very serious.[49] It shall

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[42] Unger, *Archeology*, 159. Alfred J. Palla, *Tajemství Bible* (Rybnik: Betezda, 2002). Archer, *SOTI*, 261.

[43] William F. Albright, *From the Stone Age to Christianity: Monotheism and the Historical Process* (Johns Hopkins Press, 1957), 214.

[44] Keith W. Whitelam, *The Invention of Ancient Israel: The Silencing of Palestinian History* (London: Routledge, 2003), 84.

[45] Such a preservation is suggested by Grisanti, "Poetry as a Vehicle," 178.

[46] Joachim J. Krause, "The Book of the Torah in Joshua 1 and 23 and in the Deuteronomistic History," *Zeitschrift Für Die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 127, no. 3 (January 1, 2015).

[47] Israel Finkelstein, *The Archaeology of the Israelite Settlement* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1988), 332-4. Finkelstein acknowledges that these estimates don't include nomadic groups. See also Elizabeth Bloch-Smith and Beth A. Nakhai, "A Landscape Comes to Life: The Iron Age I," *Near Eastern Archaeology* 62, no. 2 (1999), 77.

[48] William G. Dever, *What Did the Biblical Writers Know, and When Did They Know It?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), 82 (ebook).

[49] Eryl W. Davies, "A Mathematical Conundrum: The Problem of the Large Numbers in Numbers I and XXVI," *Vetus Testamentum* 45, no. 4 (1995), 449-69. Lester Grabbe, "Adde Praeputium Praeputio Magnus Acervus Erit: If the Exodus and Conquest Had Really Happened," *Biblical Interpretation* 8, no. 1 (January 1, 2000), 28-9. Friedman, "The Exodus Based on the Sources Themselves," time 6:00. According to Friedman, John Colenso has calculated that the amount of residuum left after that much of people would make the Sinai wilderness fertile. It has been seriously suggested that a large group of people would have left some significant remains on Sinai, such as graves, which it did not. See Graham Hagens, "Exodus and Settlement: A Two Sojourn Hypothesis," *Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses* 36, no. 1 (March 1, 2007), 87. Finkelstein &

suffice to say that we can no longer imagine 600 000 men marching against a several dozen times smaller enemy and still fear him (Nu 13). In an interesting attempt to resolve this issue, Colin Humphreys suggests that the word for "thousand" (אלף) can also mean "leader" or "group." By substituting "leader" for "thousand," he is able to uncover original census data in Numbers 2, which have been misunderstood by an editor, who lamentably copied his wrong numbers all around the Pentateuch. Total number of Israelites in Humpreys's recovered census would be approximately 20 000.[50] While sympathizing with this approach, such a number is still quite large[51] and I lean towards complete agnosticism in these matters. Humpreys's recovered census is a census recorded by Priestly source,[52] which, as commonly recognized, is rather latter and less precise when it comes to hard data. This assertion itself would, as I do recognize, deserve further explanation.[53] For now let us at least acknowledge that a smaller exodus is better than two Pragues camping next to to each other, neatly encamped around the Mishkan (Nu 2:2f).[54]

The Elusive Exodus: Was It Meant to be Found?

It has been noted that the Bible doesn't give us names of Pharaoh's, which would help us to date the story. While explanation of this phenomenon may vary,[55] it seems to be endemic for the whole narrative that it just doesn't provide us with solid historical points of reference, so that every historical parallel is possible at best, never .[56] Archeologists could expect to find some substantial break or fast transition in material culture of 15th-12th century,[57] but the Bible gives us almost no warrant for such an expectation. Israelites haven't built anything, except for a cloth Mishkan and an altar "of unhewn stones" here or there (Dt 27:1-6; Josh 8:30-32).[58] On the contrary, the Lord has promised to give them "large cities that [they] did not build" (Dt 6:10). This gift was to be gradual, "not in one year" (Ex 23:29) and it eventually wasn't even delivered (Jgs 2:3)! This makes me think that changes in material culture that are observable by archeologists should not be ascribed to the "arrival" or "emergence" of early Israelites. Right after Joshua's generation, Israelites were caught in

Silberman, *Bible Unearthed*, 62-3.

[50] Colin J. Humphreys, "The Number of People in the Exodus from Egypt: Decoding Mathematically the Very Large Numbers in Numbers 1 and 26," *Vetus Testamentum* 48, no. 2 (1998), 196-213. See also an interesting discussion in Jerry Waite, "The Census of Israelite Men after Their Exodus from Egypt," *Vetus Testamentum* 60 (2010), 487-91. Cf. Kitchen, *Reliability*, 263-65.

[51] Hagens, "Exodus and Settlement," 92-4. Hagens admits that "it is possible that the Exodus did not involve a single assembly some 10,000 strong, but as others have suggested, several smaller groups could have made the passage over an extended period of time."

[52] Richard E. Friedman, *The Bible with Sources Revealed: A New View into the Five Books of Moses* (San Francisco: Harper, 2005), 241f.

[53] For example, I would have to explain, how has the misinterpreted census of Numbers 2 made it to e.g. Exodus 12:37, which belongs to (earlier) Elohist source. See Friedman, *Bible Revealed*, 140.

[54] The total population of Prague to this date is approximately 1.2 million people. "Population of Municipalities of the Czech Republic, 1 January 2016" (Czech Statistical Office), https://www.czso.cz/documents/10180/32853387/1300721603.pdf, 14.

[55] Hoffmeier, *Israel in Egypt*, 110. Cf. Longman III, *Exodus*, 69. Hendel, "Biblical Memory," 604-5.

[56] See for example parallels given by Kitchen, *Reliability*, 245 passim. Possibility, which Kitchen evidences, is not evidence as such and therefore should not be confused with probability.

[57] E.g. Ralph K. Hawkins, "Propositions for Evangelical Acceptance of a Late-Date Exodus-Conquest: Biblical Data and the Royal Scarabs from Mt. Ebal," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 50, no. 1 (2007), 32, 36-38.

[58] Needless to say that biblical unhewn stones are probably quite difficult to recognize from ordinary unhewn stones on a "dig."

copying religious practices of their neighbors and violating the law (Jgs 2:11; 17:6; etc.). We can also suspect that even a faithful Israelite shared a good part of his conceptual world with his pagan neighbor.[59] There are very few biblical texts which can convince us that ancient Israel has left a distinct archeological footprint in early stage of it's development.[60] And even these texts, such as burning of Jericho, Ai, and Hazor (Josh 6:21-24; 8:18f; 11:10f), should not be burdened with an exact chronological localization, as demonstrated above, and should be subject to narratological scrutiny. This argument, which suggests that ancient Israel was either invisible or unrecognizable among her neighbors, is indirectly supported by theories of a smaller exodus and maybe a not so dramatic conquest. It also explains why there is no direct mention of Israel during the Egyptian occupation of Canaan in 15th-13th century.[61]

The "Hard" Evidence and the Two Major Maximalist Theories

Apart from some idiosyncratic theories, two major approaches dominate today's maximalist biblical scholarship. The first one is situating the exodus into 15th century, the second one into 13th century BC. Notion of "the true biblical chronology" has been refused above. In spite of that, a solid case could emerge in favor of an earlier date of the exodus.

Israel in Egypt

Location of Pithom and Rameses (Ex 1:11) is subject to endless discussions. There seems to be no consensus concerning the location of Pithom and a number of voices have proposed that all of it's possible locations were uninhabited during the entire New Kingdom period.[62] Another reason is that biblical Rameses, which has been identified with Pi-Ramesse,[63] was mainly built by Rameses II, which would point to the 13th century date. Exodus narrative also seems to require the Lower Egypt on the background, because Israelites resided in the eastern Delta (Ex 8:22). Pharaohs of the New Kingdom, however, resided in the Upper Egypt and it was only Ramses II who decided to move to the eastern Delta.[64] Prior to that move, Pharaohs of 18th and 19th dynasties resided in Memphis or even in Thebes. Being aware of this issue, a defender of 15th century date Eugene Merril argues that

[59] Genesis 33:20 just betrays that Canaanite cult of El was partly adopted by the biblical Israel. Cf. for example Gordon J. Wenham, "The Religion of the Patriarchs," in *Essays on the Patriarchal Narratives*, ed. A. R. Millard and D. J. Wiseman (Wipf & Stock, 2008).

[60] Similar point is being made by Young & Wood, "Critical Analysis," 239-40. Longman III, *Exodus*, 78. Finkelstein's and Silberman's optimism about "modern archaeological techniques," which "are quite capable of tracing even the very meager remains of hunter-gatherers and pastoral nomads," is to be forwarded to the 24th century or so. Finkelstein & Silberman, *Bible Unearthed*, 63.

[61] The first verified reference to Israel belongs to the Merneptah stele (ca. 1310 BC). For evidence of egyptian presence in Canaan see Amihai Mazar, "Palestine in the Iron Age," ed. Eric M. Meyers, *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Archaeology in the Near East: Volume 4* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 218. Nadav Na'aman, "The Exodus Story: Between Historical Memory and Historiographical Composition," *Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religions* 11, no. 1 (September 1, 2011), 52 passim.

[62] So William G. Dever, *Who Were the Early Israelites, and Where Did They Come From?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 17 ebook. Hoffmeier takes an extensive issue with various theories and concludes that the search for this city may be "futile." James K. Hoffmeier, *Ancient Israel in Sinai: The Evidence for the Authenticity of the Wilderness Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 62-3. Cf. also Sarna, "Exploring Exodus," 72. Kitchen, *Reliability*, 258.

[63] E.g. Finkelstein & Silberman, *Bible Unearthed*, 58. Kitchen, *Reliability*, 126, 255-56. But cf. Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests*, 51.

[64] Sarna, "Exploring Exodus," 71. Yurco, Frank J., "Merenptah's Canaanite Campaign and Israel's Origins," in *Exodus: The Egyptian Evidence*, ed. Ernest S. Frerichs, Leonard H. Lesko, and William G. Dever (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1997), 46.

Amenhotep II, his proposed pharaoh of the exodus, "was at home in Memphis," which "placed him in close proximity to the land of Goshen and made him readily accessible to Moses and Aaron."[65] This is obviously not too likely, as Google Maps indicate that the distance from Memphis to Pi-Ramesses is 137 kilometers on foot.[66] Kitchen is much more persuasive in his claim that there was no royal center in the vicinity of Pi-Ramesses since the time of Hyksos (1550 BC) until ca. 1320 BC. "An exodus before 1320," Kitchen explains, "would have no Delta capital to march from."[67] Those who acknowledge that biblical Rameses was Pi-Ramesses and still hold to an earlier exodus must therefore deal with two issues. Firstly, there has not been a royal residence in eastern Delta for Moses and Aron to attend since the end of SIM until Rameses II. Secondly, the city was probably named after Rameses II. The second objection can be explained as an editorial updating.[68] The first issue seems to be critical.[69]

To tie the score, we should note some problems of 13th century date, too. According to Exodus 2:23, Pharaoh of the oppression is necessarily different from the Pharaoh of the exodus.[70] Now if Ramesses II has yoked Israelites by forcing them to build his city, then it must have been his son Merneptah, who didn't want to let God's people go. The Merneptah stele, however, indicates that Merneptah challenged Israel in Canaan by the year 1208 BC. Saying that Merneptah's campaign to Canaan began only five years after his enthronement, there would be extremely little time for Israel to move to Canaan and to settle there.[71] Obviously, a lot of reasoning is lurking behind these summarizing statements. But the point is that both theories are problematic.[72] It is important to note (at least for the sake of my own proposal below) that all commonly proposed locations of Pithom and Rameses (Tell ed-Dab'a for Rameses, Tell el-Maskhuta or Tell el-Retabeh for Pithom) were inhabited during SIM.[73]

Israel in Canaan

Both of the two major maximalist theories are joining the exodus with conquest of Canaan, just as the Bible does. This prerequisite is quite burning for both of them, because excavations in Palestine yields minimal evidence in support of the biblical conquest accounts. There are three cities, which should display some traces of conflagration: Jericho, Ai, and Hazor (Jos 6:21-24; 8:18f; 11:10f). When it comes to Jericho, it is commonly thought that it has been destroyed by Egyptians around 1550 BC "in the course of expelling the Asiatic 'Hyksos' from Egypt" and that it hasn't been resettled up till ca. 1200 BC.[74] Both of these assertions have been questioned. John Bimson is not quite sure about Egyptian involvement

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[65] Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests*, 47.

[66] See https://goo.gl/ognFCn. I do appreciate Merrills scholarship in many details, but to inerrantism there must be an end.

[67] Kitchen, *Reliability*, 310. See also Wood, "The Rise and Fall," 482-83.

[68] So Unger, *Archeology*, 149-50. Charles F. Aling, "The Biblical City Of Ramses," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 25, no. 2 (1982), 129-30, 136. Longman III, *Exodus*, 72. Hoffmeier doesn't think so, but his reasoning is unconvincing. Hoffmeier, "Response to Wood," 234.

[69] To be sure, Wood does suggest a possible 15th century royal evidence at Ezbet Helmi. The documentation, however, seems to be in it's infancy. Wood, "The Rise and Fall," 482-84.

[70] Chavalas & Adamthwaite, "Archaeological Light," 87

[71] Chavalas & Adamthwaite, "Archaeological Light," 86

[72] Plausibility of the 13th century date is well evidenced in Kitchen (2003) and Hoffmeier (1997, 2005). Implausibility, on the other hand, is explained in Finkelstein & Silberman (2001).

[73] Dever, *Early Israelites,* 17-8.

[74] Dever, *Early Israelites,* 41 ebook.

in Jericho's MBA destruction[75] and Wood has been reinterpreting the evidence so that it would fit his 15th-14th century conquest.[76] The prevalent opinion is that there was nothing substantial to destroy or conquer neither in 15th nor 13th century.[77] The case of Hazor is somewhat brighter. There are two possible destruction layers, one in 15th and one in 13th century. It would seem better to reserve the earlier date for Joshua, because if Joshua destroyed it in 13th century, there would be no Hazor for Jabin to rule in Judges 4:2.[78] Contrary to what Hoffmeier suggests, Hazor does fit the biblical profiles in both 15th and 13th century.[79] As with Ai, the situation is completely hopeless for now. It's traditional location at Et-Tell does not yield any plausible results and most maximalists are withdrawing it either in favor of another site (so Wood), or towards some provisional agnosticism (e.g. Kitchen).[80] Further discussion on biblical references to Canaanite cities and their occupation is beyond the scope of this paper. The reader should, however, note that the problems has only begun. Mark Chavalas and Murray Adamthwaite note that most sites mentioned in Numbers were "according to the archaeological picture, uninhabited in the Late Bronze period, either early or late." It is therefore not only their, but also my contention that "the Late Bronze era should be ruled out as a chronological setting for the exodus-conquest."[81] Before providing an alternative solution, I need to make two more remarks.

(1) Settlement shifts and other phenomenas in Iron Age I. Various scholars have explicitly or implicitly associated Israel's arrival to or emergence in Canaan to the settlement shifts in the beginning of Iron Age.[82] The Canaanite highlands indeed have experienced a dramatic increase in population shortly after the end of Late Bronze Age. New pastoral, small, unfortified villages, and doubling of population is evidenced thence.[83] But these shifts, as Bimson objects, could at best indicate Israel's sedentarization, not it's emergence.[84] Quite similarly, it is commonly held among the maximalists, who dare to allow for a little bit of higher criticism, that the earliest biblical testimonials to the exodus and emergence of ancient Israel is the Song of the Sea (Ex 15:1-21) and the Song of Deborah (Jgs 5).[85] These are

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[75] John J. Bimson and David Livingston, "Redating the Exodus," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 13, no. 5 (1987), 40-48, 51-53, 66-68 (online).

[76] Wood proposes 15th century date as usual. Bryant G. Wood, "Did the Israelites Conquer Jericho? A New Look at the Archaeological Evidence," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 16, no. 02 (1990), 44-59 (online). Hoffmeier, *Israel in Egypt*, 6-7.

[77] Piotr Bienkowski, "Jericho Was Destroyed in the Middle Bronze Age, Not the Late Bronze Age," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 16, no. 05 (1990), 45-46 (online). Bienkowski seems to be allowing a small, insignificant settlement in 1400-1275 BC. Cf. Finkelstein & Silberman, *Bible Unearthed*, 81-82. Kitchen embraces significant skepticism as to what archeology is able to prove. Kitchen, *Reliability*, 187.

[78] Wood, "The Rise and Fall," 487.

[79] Yigael Yadin, "Hazor," ed. Ephraim Shtern, *The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land: Volume 2* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society & Carta, 1993), 595, 603. Yadin attributes the earlier destruction to Ahmose (p. 606). This does not support 15th century date, but it does support Bimson's and my theory (see below). See also Hoffmeier, "Response to Wood," 244.

[80] Wood, "The Rise and Fall," 487. Wood proposes Khirbet el-Maqatir as the new location of Ai. Kitchen, *Reliability*, 188-9.

[81] Chavalas & Adamthwaite, "Archaeological Light," 83.

[82] So e.g. Hagens, "Exodus and Settlement," 89, 100. Bloch-Smith & Nakhai, "Iron Age I," 77. These changes in settlement are attested by Finkelstein, *Israelite Settlement*, 332-33.

[83] On population see Bloch-Smith & Nakhai, "Iron Age I," 77. See also Dever, *Biblical Writers*, 37, 82 (ebook).

[84] John J. Bimson, "Merenptah's Israel and Recent Theories of Israelite Origins," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 16, no. 49 (February 1, 1991), 19. Bimson & Livingston, "Redating the Exodus," 87.

usually dated to the late twelfth or early eleventh century BC.[86] But again, we should not think that these approximations can help us to determine the actual date when these traditions originated.

(2) Habiru and El Amarna letters. An interesting witness to Israelite presence in Canaan in the Late Bronze Age is found in El Amarna letters. These letters contain diplomatic correspondence of 18th dynasty Pharaohs with their Canaanite vassals.[87] Among many other things, some Canaanite cities in these letters are appealing to the Pharaoh to help them protect themselves against a group called Habiru (e.g. EA 271, EA 286, EA 287-9).[88] The term Habiru was a general and inclusive term denoting not a nation, but slaves or outlaws of ignoble origin.[89] On the other hand, there is an indication that the term Habiru might have offered lexical basis for the name Hebrew.[90] It is extremely significant for the present discussion that the vassal states, which play a part in El Amarna correspondence, are exactly those that are not recorded in the Bible as having been subdued by Joshua.[91] This evidence is obviously not entirely compelling. But still it does suggests that if there is a period, when biblical Hebrews could be labeled "Habiru" with at least a little bit of certainty, it's during the reign of Akhenaten and his father Amenophis III (14th century).[92]

Summa summarum, archeology does not provide us with a good shelter for none of the two classical maximalist theories. Kitchen's repeated skepticism about abilities of archeology are probably correct. This cheerless condition of classical maximalist scholarship should not prevent us from experimenting with new solutions. On the contrary, it should unleash our imagination!

The Show Begins: An Early Exodus and Variegated Conquest

An interesting approach is presented in separate articles by Ronald Hendel and Nadav Na'aman. Both of them note that after Thutmose III (18th dynasty), "Canaan became an Egyptian province"[93] and that Egyptian presence in coastal area and inner plains is attested up

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[85] Frank M. Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 123. Cross suggests that the Song of the Sea "is the primary source for the central event in Israel's history, the Exodus-Conquest." (123) "The poem conforms throughout to the prosodic patterns and canons of the Late Bronze Age." (121) Cross further suggests "a tenth-century date or earlier for its being put first into writing." (123)

[86] Bloch-Smith says that "Faint traces of the Iron I Israelite ethnos are discernible in material remains interpreted in conjunction with biblical testimony." (p. 425) Elizabeth Bloch-Smith, "Israelite Ethnicity in Iron I: Archaeology Preserves What Is Remembered and What Is Forgotten in Israel's History," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 122, no. 3 (2003), 401-25. Cross, *Myth and Epic*, 124 passim.

But for a critical stance see Thomas L. Thompson, *Early History of the Israelite People: From the Written & Archaeological Sources* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 19.

[87] We can be sure that the correspondence can't be dated earlier than to 1330's, when Akhenaten's death was succeed by a political turmoil and abandonment of the city along with it's archives. See Jacobus Van Dijk, "The Amarna Period in the Later New Kingdom (c.1352-1069 BC)," in *The Oxford History of Ancient Egypt*, ed. Ian Shaw (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 281.

[88] Chavalas & Adamthwaite, "Archaeological Light," 90. James B. Pritchard, ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, 3rd ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 1992), 486-90.

[89] Chavalas & Adamthwaite, "Archaeological Light," 90. Kitchen, *Reliability*, 165. Hoffmeier, *Israel in Egypt*, 113-14.

[90] Pritchard, *ANET*, 22.

[91] Chavalas & Adamthwaite, "Archaeological Light," 90. Archer, *SOTI*, 257-59

[92] William L. Moran, ed., *The Amarna Letters* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), xxxiv.

[93] Na'aman, "Memory and Composition," 43. Cf. also Chavalas & Adamthwaite, "Archaeological Light," 80.

till the first part of 12th century BC.[94] During this occupation, Egypt demanded slave tributes either for their purposes in Egypt, or for the forced labor in Egyptian copper mines at Timna etc.[95] For many Canaanites, Canaan in 15th-12th century might have become a "house of bondage." Now not only that Canaanite cow-cities were exploited, but nomadic peoples identified as Habiru and Shasu were constantly decimated as a potential threat for Egyptian dominance and profit.[96] In this vein, Hendel exclaims that the peculiar omission of Pharaoh's name is effectively extending the story "to all who had felt the oppression of Pharaoh at any time in the remembered past."[97] This could mean that biblical story of the exodus is not mere collection of historical facts, but rather memories on this past, because "the past as people remember it is the meaningful past, the past as perceived and colored by subjective concepts, hopes, and fears."[98] In the words of Davies, it's "a collection of snapshots of how Israel has been remembered,"[99] maybe rather a "mnemohistory," which along with a historical germ also reflects history of this germ's reception.[100] Now if the roots of this germ tradition reach back to earlier times, why does it contain no memory about Egypt's rule in Canaan, which gradually intensified for 350 years after Thutmose III? Na'aman contends that "the Egyptian presence in Canaan was absorbed within the Exodus tradition and thus disappeared from the collective Israelite memory."[101] The miracle of the withdrawal of the Egyptians, Na'aman explains, was "a kind of miracle," which they attributed to their God.[102] This approach of Hendel and Na'aman is most interesting and quite cogent. It is, however, persuasive only as far as it allows for at least some sojourn of Israelites in Egypt. It would be quite strange for highland chieftains to build Avaris style houses and to fabricate a religious identity with an Egyptian founder, who accommodated their Yahweh in an Egyptian-style Tabernacle.[103] Let's grant that the exodus story was reinforced throughout Egyptian occupation of Canaan during 15th-12th centuries. But let's not forget that there must have been a real, historical exodus event.

Let's now take another look on the Na'aman's previous question. If the exodus tradition was reinforced by Egyptian presence in Canaan, why is their presence never even alluded to in the Bible? After their departure from the Sea of Reeds, Israelites are only concerned with Amalek (Ex 17:8) and "the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites" (Ex 13:5). Nowhere up till the time of Rehoboam do we read about significant Egyptian power and nowhere in the desert murmurings, many as they are, do

[94] Mazar, "Palestine in Iron Age," 218. Na'aman, "Memory and Composition," 52 passim.

[95] Hendel, "Biblical Memory," 605. Hendel explains that "From the conquests of Thutmose III (1479-1425 B.C.E.) through the reign of Ramesses III (1186-1154 B.C.E.) or Ramesses IV (1154-1148), the land of Canaan was a province of the Egyptian empire." Cf. Na'aman, "Memory and Composition," 48.

[96] Na'aman, "Memory and Composition," 44-49, 53. Ramesses III (reigned 1186-1155 BC) for example writes that he "destroyed the people of Seir among the Shasu tribes."

[97] Hendel, "Biblical Memory," 604-5.

[98] Hendel, "Biblical Memory," 621.

[99] Philip R. Davies, "The History of Ancient Israel and Judah," *The Expository Times* 119, no. 1 (October 1, 2007), 15-21. I borrowed Davies's words although he was not in dialogue with Hendel or Na'aman and his views differ from theirs.

[100] Mnemohistory, as Assman writes, it "is reception theory applied to history." See Jan Assmann, *Moses the Egyptian: The Memory of Egypt in Western Monotheism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 9. Hendel, "Biblical Memory," 603.

[101] Na'aman, "Memory and Composition," 64.

[102] Na'aman, "Memory and Composition," 65.

[103] Moses and many Levites had an Egyptian name. See e.g. Ogden Goelet, "Moses' Egyptian Name," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 19, no. 3 (2003), 50-51. Kenneth A. Kitchen, "The Desert Tabernacle," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 16, no. 6 (2000), 14-21. Also cf. Finkelstein & Silberman, *Bible Unearthed*, 55.

Israelites fear it. On the contrary, they need to be constantly reminded not only that it was Yahweh, who brought them out of Egypt, but, more importantly, that Egypt was an essentially unpleasant place. It was "the house of slavery" (e.g. Ex 13:3; 20:2; Dt 5:6), not a free of charge grocery store, as some of them imagined (Nu 11:5)! Why? There are two possible reasons, which do not exclude each other. (1) Theologically speaking, Egypt is finished in Exodus 15. It's "horse and rider" are "thrown into the sea" (Ex 15:1) and there is therefore no need to mention Egypt again, although Canaan is still soaked with her influence up till 12th century. (2) Historically and exegetically speaking, it is quite possible that Egypt itself was not Israel's arch enemy. In Genesis 15, when Yahweh "cuts" a covenant with Abram, he says that Abram's offspring "shall be aliens in a land that is not theirs, and shall be slaves there," but that He "will bring judgment on the nation that they serve" (Gen 15:13f). This is a clear allusion to Israel's sojourn in Egypt. One important detail, which strikes me heavily, is that the nation of those vicious slavers of verse 13 is not named. However, a group of people that is named just a few verses later is that of Amorites, whose "iniquity" is yet to be completed (v. 16). Various people, and even Israelites, were doing all kinds of iniquities those days. But the devastating, unforgivable sin, which God of the Bible and especially Yahweh of Genesis will always punish, is the sin against His chosen ones. It has been pointed out that Joseph must have been brought to Egypt in SIM or later in order to drive a chariot.[104] What remains to be stressed it that "a new king" who "did not know Joseph" (Ex 1:8) might not have been a New Kingdom Pharaoh, but a Hyksos, a "ruler of the foreign country." This Hyksos king of the declining eastern Delta kingdom knew that 20 000 Israelites were "more numerous and more powerful than we" (Ex 1:9), which a New Kingdom Pharaoh would never say.[105] This makes me think that the whole Israelite sojourn in Egypt took place in SIM.

It was a Hyksos Pharaoh who enslaved the children of Israel.[106] But who were Hyksos? They were Israel's semitic cousins, who most likely, as is thought today, could be described as Amorites![107] "The iniquity of the Amorites" was not complete in Genesis 15, because it didn't even begin yet. It is proleptically stated there as a reference to the return of Abram's progeny to the Promised Land. This sheds some further light on the conquest. Victory over Sichon and Og may not have been so paradigmatic because it was the first important confiscation of the land, but because these kings were Amorites (Josh 9:10). The first really important victory in Canaan was against the Amorite coalition (Josh 10:5). The second most important victory was against the Northern coalition in Hazor (Josh 10:5). I admit that neither the Bible nor archeology answers the question of ethnicity of Hazorites,[108] but the narrative seems to suggest that Amorites, not Canaanites, were among those whom Joshua has conquered in the North (Josh 11:3).[109] We could also assume that there was an

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[104] Hoffmeier, *Israel in Egypt*, 64. Van Seters, *Hyksos*, 183-85. See also Forman "Glimpses." Rulers of the Upper Egypt adopted Hyksos weaponry and war tactics in order to rule them out.

[105] Redford, Donald B., "An Egyptological Perspective on the Exodus Narrative," in *Exodus: The Egyptian Evidence*, ed. Ernest S. Frerichs, Leonard H. Lesko, and William G. Dever (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1997), 62. See also Hagens, "Exodus and Settlement," 86.

[106] Bimson & Livingston, "Redating the Exodus," passim.

[107] Ryholt, *Political Situation*, 127-28.

[108] Amnon Ben-Tor and Sharon Zuckerman, "Hazor at the End of the Late Bronze Age: Back to Basics," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, no. 350 (2008), 2.

[109] From Joshua's standpoint in Josh 11:3, "the Canaanites [were] in the east and the west, the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, and the Jebusites in the hill country." Joshua's campaign then continued straightly to the North, where he "chased them as far as Great Sidon" (Josh 11:8). Compared with Joshua 13:4, this could be understood as repression against Amorite influence from the North.

Amorite influence from the North.[110] I want the reader to notice that my conclusions align quite well with those of John Bimson. The difference would be that while Bimson changes the end date of Middle Bronze II from 1550 BC to about 1420 BC, so that he might have a conquest in 15th-14th century,[111] I don't feel the same need. On the contrary, my model requires Israel to be like a chameleon among the Hyksos in the 16th century, invisible to the native Egyptians, but oppressed by their Amorite cousins. Apart from this difference, I can follow Bimson in placing the exodus and conquest at the end of Middle Bronze Age II, i.e. to the end of SIP. I can also rejoice with Bimson in finding "a remarkable correlation between Biblical tradition and archaeological evidence."[112] This means that the cities mentioned in the book of Joshua really were inhabited when Joshua entered Canaan and that he could have destroyed them. Such a destruction could be interpreted as a just war, as a payback to the brutal slave masters.

Apart from these similarities, it must be pointed out that while Bimson redates the Middle Bronze Age in order to find the biblical events, I am redating the exodus in order to "hide" the Israelites. Our methodologies and aims thus differ. I can see a plausible support of my argument in a centrist assertion that "the echoes of the great events of the Hyksos occupation of Egypt and their violent expulsion from the delta resounded for centuries, to become a central, shared memory of the people of Canaan."[113] I would just add that it was not memories of the Amorites, but memories on them, which formed the exodus tradition. In order to close the circle, I would add that this model is quite ironically (and irenically!) closely related to that of the radical minimalist Gmirkin.[114] If Manetho asserted that Israelites were actually Hyksos, Jews felt compelled to oppose that idea. Just as the 18th dynasty Egyptians, Manetho, too, didn't recognize Jews from Hyksos. This was obviously wrong. Israelites were no Amorites!

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[110] Itamar Singer, "The 'Land of Amurru' and the 'Lands of Amurru' in the Šaušgamuwa Treaty," *Iraq* 53 (1991), 69-74. Pritchard, *ANET*, 256.

[111] Bimson & Livingston, "Redating the Exodus."

[112] Bimson & Livingston, "Redating the Exodus."

[113] Finkelstein & Silberman, *Bible Unearthed*, 68-9. Paraphrasing Redford.

[114] See above. Gmirkin, *Hellenistic Histories.*

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