

Lesson 5: The Exodus

MOSES



Fig 1. Thutmose I

“Pharaoh’s daughter, Thermuthis, was walking along the river bank. Seeing a basket floating by, she called to her swimmers to retrieve it for her. When her servants came back with the basket, she was overjoyed to see the beautiful little infant inside . . . Thermuthis gave him the name Moses, which in Egyptian means saved from the water. . . Having no children of her own, she adopted him as her son.”

- Josephus says the daughter of pharaoh was Thermuthis (fig. 2), very similar to the royal name Thutmose.
- According to history, Pharaoh Thutmose and his wife Queen Ahmose had one child, a daughter, Hatshepsut, who later became supreme ruler. Hatshepsut married her stepbrother Thutmose II as arranged by her father. After her father’s death, her husband Thutmose II became pharaoh, but Hatshepsut was really in power.

According to [Exodus 7:7](#) Moses was 80 years old when he spoke to Pharaoh. Adding 80 years to the date of the Exodus, 1446 BC, equals 1526 BC, the approximate year in which Moses was born.

- The ruler of Egypt at this time was Pharaoh Thutmose I, 1539-1514 BC, (fig. 1). If you remove **THUT** from his name you are left with **MOSE**.
- The name “Moses” finds meaning both in Hebrew and Egyptian. In Hebrew *mosheh* means “drawn out” and in Egyptian *mos* means “child,” it being the same element as found in Thutmose, which means “child of Thoth.”

1. Early Home

Thutmose I’s order that all male children of the Hebrews be thrown in the Nile to drown ([Exod. 1:22](#)), did not keep one very important person from entering Israelite history, Moses.

- Moses’ father, Amram, and his mother, Jochebed, were both descendants of Levi ([Exod. 6:16-20](#)). They already had two children: Aaron, three years old, and Miriam, about seven. Jochebed hid him in a basket in the reeds along the bank of the Nile. While Pharaoh’s daughter was bathing she found him and raised him as her son.
- Although the Bible never records her name, the Jewish historian Josephus writing in the first century does. He states:



Fig 2. Pharaoh’s Daughter

She co-reigned with her husband from approximately 1504-1482 BC. She was one of Egypt's greatest rulers.

- Pharaoh's daughter hired Jochebed to care for the child until he should be weaned. Jochebed thus had her son back and was even to be paid for caring for him.
 - o In perhaps four or five years, however, she had to give him up to the palace where he became the legal son of Pharaoh's daughter.

2. Hatshepsut, Pharaoh's Daughter?

This daughter, Thermuthis, may have been the renowned Hatshepsut (fig. 3), who in time came to declare herself supreme ruler in Egypt. Two prior queens in Egypt's history had assumed supreme leadership, but neither had posed and dressed as a man as did Hatshepsut.

Her relief's and statues depict her often in masculine clothing and wearing a ceremonial beard.

- She had a strong personality, which she used to claim the throne. She proclaimed herself ruler of both Lower and Upper Egypt and took a king's name, Kamare.
- Hatshepsut was the only living child of Thutmose I and his chief wife, Ahmose, who could be identified as the daughter of Pharaoh who found Moses.
- It is possible that this daughter may have been of a lesser wife. However, it seems more than coincidental that one of Hatshepsut's stature, who could provide every advantage for Moses, lived at this very time. Also, it would have taken someone of her daring to rescue a Hebrew baby.
- Because she was not male, Hatshepsut could not accede to the throne directly. A son of Thutmose I by a lesser wife was married to Hatshepsut, so that her legal title might work in his behalf. He took the name Thutmose II (1514-1504). This man was weak in comparison to Hatshepsut and was dominated in his rule by her.



Fig 3. Hatshepsut

One daughter only, Nefrure, was born to Thutmose II and Hatshepsut, and so again a son of the Pharaoh by a lesser wife was brought forward as successor. This successor assumed the name Thutmose III (1504-1450). It was after Thutmose II had died, Thutmose III was about 10 years old, when Hatshepsut took the daring step of assuming full control of the kingdom.

- During her reign, Egypt enjoyed prosperity. She built extensively in Thebes, like her temple, Deir el Bahri (fig. 4), and other cities. She restored neglected sanctuaries. She added courts and halls to the temple of Karnak. She also increased the mining of copper and turquoise.
- Thutmose III clearly had been crowned before she took control and reigned perhaps a year. But then she seized his crown; and it was not until her death 22 years later (1503-1482), that he was finally able to take the throne back again.
 - o That Thutmose III harbored great bitterness toward her as a result is witnessed by his multiple defacements of her name and representation from monuments and temples. For example, at

Hatshepsut's temple complex at Deir el Bahri the names and figures of Hatshepsut were destroyed wherever found. He wished to erase her memory from the minds of the people.

3. Moses at the Palace

We can picture Moses in the palace at Thebes as Hatshepsut's adopted son.

- Hatshepsut was married to Thutmose II just before his accession in 1514 BC.
- Moses did profit greatly as verified by Stephen in the book of Acts.

AC 7:22 "Moses was educated in all the learning of the Egyptians, and he was a man of power in words and deeds.

Acts 7:22 (NASB)

- Hatshepsut's own daughter, Nefrure, died while a child, which left Moses to receive all of Hatshepsut's attention.
- Born c. 1526 BC, Moses would have been 22 years old when Thutmose III was made king in 1504.

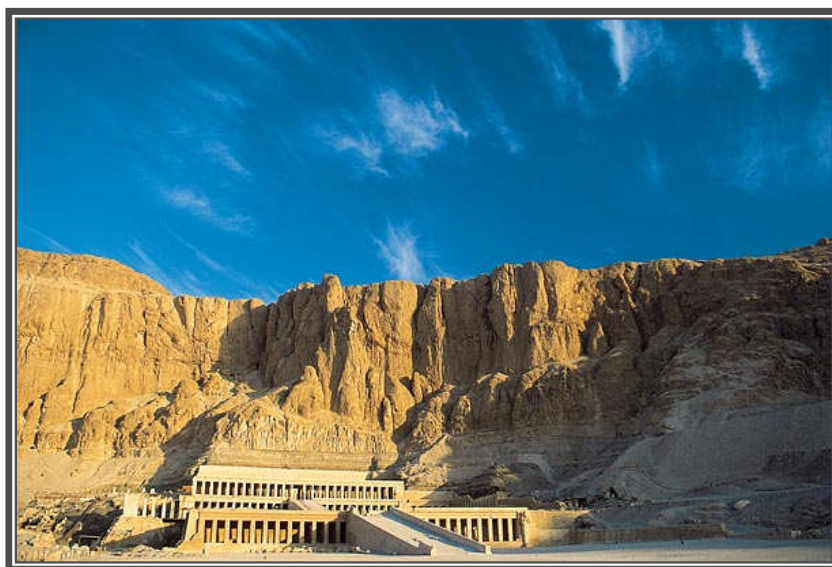


Fig 4. Deir el Bahri

In the animated movie "The Prince of Egypt" the Pharaoh is identified as Rameses, Moses' brother. But according to the Bible, Rameses could not have been the Pharaoh of the Exodus.

- Rameses is usually portrayed as the Exodus Pharaoh because of the Bible passage *Exodus 1:8-11*.

EX 1:8 Now a new king arose over Egypt, who did not know Joseph.

EX 1:9 He said to his people, "Behold, the people of the sons of Israel are more and mightier than we.

EX 1:10 "Come, let us deal wisely with them, or else they will multiply and in the event of war, they will also join themselves to those who hate us, and fight against us and depart from the land."

EX 1:11 So they appointed taskmasters over them to afflict them with hard labor. And they built for Pharaoh storage cities, Pithom and Raamses.

Exodus 1:8-11 (NASB)

- The Bible says that the Israelites built Raamses, and since Rameses II, who ruled between 1304 and 1238 BC, built a royal city named Pi-Ramesses, many assume him to be the pharaoh of the Exodus.
- However, excavations at Raamses indicate that the Egyptians occupied this city much earlier. The name Raamses itself has also been found inscribed on a burial tomb painting from Pharaoh Amenhotep III, who ruled nearly 100 years before Rameses II.
- After the death of Thutmose II, his son, not by Hatshepsut, became pharaoh. Thutmose III co-reigned with Queen Hatshepsut until her death in 1482 BC. He then ruled alone until approximately 1450 BC.
- Thutmose III was the greatest conqueror in Egyptian history. During his reign he had recorded that he subdued the Ethiopians.
- Although the Bible does not mention these events, the historian Josephus states the following:
"A state of war broke out between the Egyptians and the Ethiopians. At this time Moses had grown to be a man. The two sides fought a great battle in which the Ethiopians were triumphant, and they pushed to conquer all of Egypt. The Egyptians looking for help inquired of their priests.

The priests revealed to them that they should make Moses their general . . . Moses then became the commander of a great army . . . In a surprise attack against the Ethiopians, Moses led his troops to victory.”

MOSES CHOICE

According to [Hebrews 11:24](#).

[HEB 11:24](#) By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter,
[Hebrews 11:24 \(NASB\)](#)

- That is, he turned down opportunities this position afforded. This occurred when he was 40 years old. He chose instead to help his own people.
- Had he not done so, some have suggested that Hatshepsut might even have tried to make him Pharaoh to succeed her, especially in view of the bitterness between herself and the young deposed Thutmose III (fig. 5).

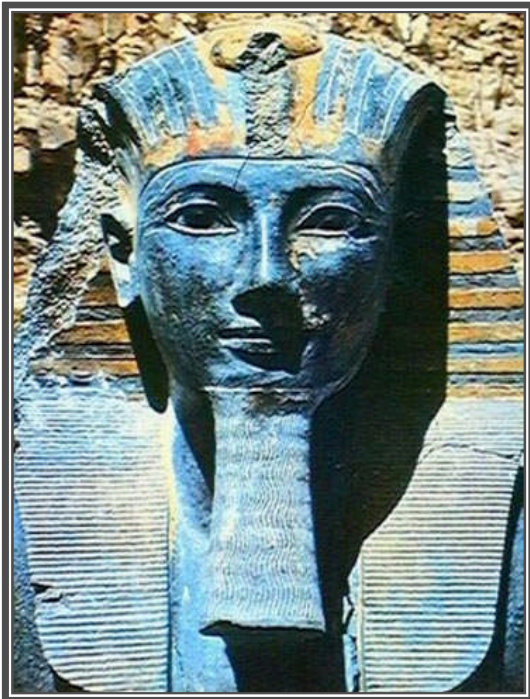


Fig 5. Thutmose III

Having made the commendable choice, however, Moses did not carry it out wisely. He went out among his people, saw one abused by a slave master, and killed him. He hid the body, but the next day when he attempted to settle a difference between two struggling Hebrews he learned that his action of the previous day was known.

- Moses fled the country, giving up in a moment what he had achieved through nearly 40 years. He knew the danger from Thutmose III if he stayed. The animosity existing between Thutmose III and Hatshepsut would have been shared by the two men. Thutmose III would have been about 28 years old. This rival of many years would now have all the excuse necessary to take Moses' life. Moses would not be able to defend himself, having shown his identity with the enslaved foreigners. He saw safety only in flight.
- Moses escaped into the Sinai Peninsula to the home of Jethro a priest of Midian ([Exod. 2:15-22](#)). He married his daughter, Zipporah, and became a shepherd.
- 40 years passed in quietness.

MOSES RETURNS TO EGYPT

Most of Moses' 40-year period in the desert had elapsed when Pharaoh Thutmose III died ([Exod. 2:23-25](#)). God called Moses as he tended sheep on Mount Horeb the very mountain where God would later give Moses The Law.

- Using the miracle of the burning bush as a sign, the Angel of God informed Moses that he was to go back to Egypt and lead Israel out from bondage.
- Instructed by God, Aaron met Moses in the Sinai. Moses shared God's instructions with him, and the two made their way to Egypt.

Josephus also writes:

"The Pharaoh, from whom Moses had fled, died, and a new Pharaoh had become ruler. Moses traveled to his palace and told him of the victories he gained for Egypt in the war against Ethiopia . . . He also spoke to Pharaoh about what had taken place on Mount Sinai, and when Pharaoh laughed, Moses showed him the signs."

THE CONTEST WITH PHARAOH

Moses and Aaron went to see Pharaoh, now Amenhotep II, son of Thutmose III, who ascended the throne at the age of 18 in 1450 BC. He would have been about 22 in 1446 BC at the time of the Exodus.

- Moses requested that Israel be permitted to take a three-day journey into the desert to offer sacrifices to God (Exod. 5:1-3).
 - o The king flatly refused the request and imposed increased hardship on the Israelites.
- As a sign for Pharaoh, Moses then turned his staff into a serpent (Exod. 7:10-13).
 - o Pharaoh's magicians were able to duplicate the miracle, which left pharaoh unconvinced.

1. The Ten Plagues (Exodus 7:14-12:33)

Pharaoh had been given an opportunity to grant Moses' request without the use of force, but now Moses would proceed with the second step, in which force would be used. Ten severe plagues were brought upon Egypt. God gave particular instruction regarding each as the time came to bring it:

1. The water turning to blood (Exod. 7:14-25)
2. The frogs (Exod. 8:1-15)
3. The lice (Exod. 8:16-19)
4. The flies (Exod. 8:20-32)
5. The cattle disease (Exod. 9:1-7)
6. The boils (Exod. 9:8-12)
7. The hail (Exod. 9:13-35)
8. The locusts (Exod. 10:1-20)
9. The darkness (Exod. 10:21-29)
10. The death of the firstborn (Exod. 12:29-33)

God gradually increased pressure on Pharaoh to accede to Moses.

The Ipuwer Papyrus (fig. 6)

- In the early 19th Century an ancient papyrus was found in Egypt. It was taken to the Leiden Museum in Holland and interpreted by A.H. Gardiner in 1909. The papyrus describes violent upheavals in Egypt, starvation, drought, escape of slaves (with the wealth of the Egyptians), and death throughout

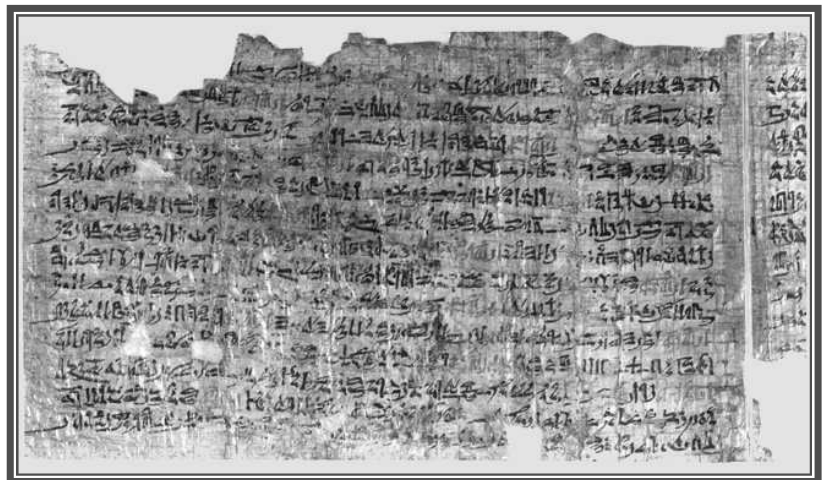


Fig 6. Ipuwer Papyrus

the land. The papyrus was written by an Egyptian named Ipuwer and appears to be an eyewitness account of the effects of the Exodus plagues. The account parallels the Book of Exodus.

- **Papyrus 2:10** - The river is blood.
 - **Exodus 7:20** - ...all the waters that were in the river were turned to blood.
- **Papyrus 4:14, 6:1** - Trees are destroyed. No fruit nor herbs are found.
 - **Exodus 9:25** - ...and the hail smote every herb of the field, and brake every tree of the field.
- **Papyrus 2:10** - Forsooth, gates, columns and walls are consumed by fire.
 - **Exodus 9:23-24** - ...the fire ran along the ground.... there was hail, and fire mingled with the hail, very grievous.
- **Papyrus 9:11** - The land is not light....
 - **Exodus 10:22** - ...and there was a thick darkness in all the land of Egypt.
- **Papyrus 4:3, 5:6, 6:12** - Forsooth, the children of princes are dashed against the walls. Forsooth, the children of princes are cast out in the streets.
 - **Exodus 12:29** - And it came to pass, that at midnight the Lord smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sat on his throne unto the firstborn of the captive that was in the dungeon.

2. The Tenth Plague

The tenth and final plague was the slaying of Egyptian firstborn. The eldest male child of every Egyptian household was killed (**Exod. 11:5**) during the night. Only the firstborn of Israel escaped.

- Even Pharaoh's son was included in the slaughter, a fact possibly confirmed by an extrabiblical text.

- An inscription was left by the successor of Amenhotep II, Thutmose IV. Since the eldest son of Amenhotep II would have died on that night, Thutmose IV must not have been the eldest. The inscription supports that conclusion. Written on a granite stele placed between the paws of the great Sphinx of Giza (fig. 7), it states that the god Harmakhis, with whom the Sphinx was identified, had promised the young man in a dream that the kingship would be his if he uncovered the Sphinx from the desert sand.
- The point is that, in order for the young man to have been emotionally conditioned to have such a dream, and to record it in this way, he must have been fearful that he would not receive the throne. But he would not have been fearful if he had been the eldest son, for heirship to the crown was all but automatic.

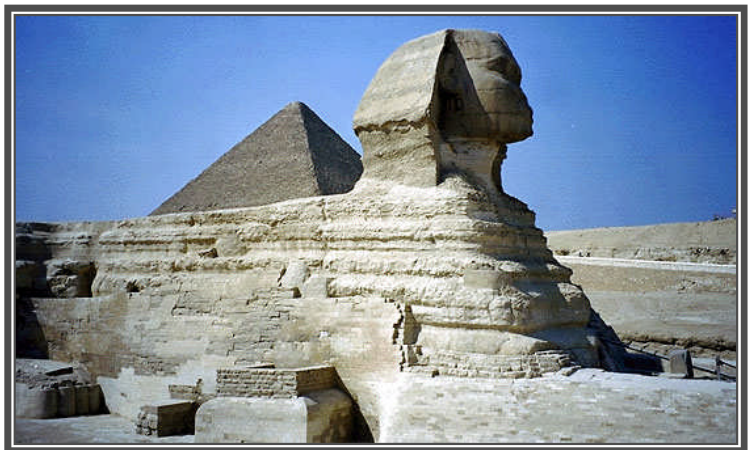


Fig 7. The Sphinx

- The severity of the tenth plague brought quick results from Pharaoh ([Exod. 12:29-36](#)). He called for Moses and Aaron that same night and told them that Israel could leave the land.
- The next day all Israel began the long awaited move out of Egypt.

DEPARTURE FROM EGYPT

1. Route Through Egypt

Israel's assembly point was the city of Raamses ([Exod. 12:37](#)).

- The route taken from Raamses led through Succoth ([Exod. 12:37; 13:20](#)), which is identified with Tell el-Maskuta. This Tell lies 32 miles southeast of ancient Tanis, in the likely direction of Israel's march.
- Israel then came to Etham, which is unknown, but may be the name of a district lying along both sides of the northern end of the Red Sea. The area through which Israel traveled south for three days after crossing the Red Sea is also called Etham ([Num. 33:6-8](#)).

Here some change in direction of travel occurred as instruction

came to "turn back" and "encamp near Pi-hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, before Baal Zephon" ([Exod. 14:2](#)), these places being unknown. **Both Pi-hahiroth and Migdol are found mentioned in Egyptian inscriptions, but have not been identified.**

- At this point they were on the shore of an extensive body of water that barred further progress. This body of water is called *yam suph*, meaning "Sea of Reeds" ([Exod. 13:18](#)).
- Three matters argue that the body of water was not the Red Sea proper (Gulf of Suez):
 1. The Gulf of Suez is too far south to have provided a logical place of exit from the country.
 2. The biblical account ([Exod. 13:20-14:3](#); [Num. 33:6-8](#)) implies that the *yam suph* divided between productive Egyptian soil and the desert. If the people went as far south as the Gulf of Suez, they would have encountered much desert before reaching it.
 3. When they had crossed this body of water, they found themselves in the "Desert of Shur" ([Exod. 15:22](#)), which was in the northern part of the Sinai Peninsula, hardly as far south as the Gulf of Suez. Shur is mentioned five other times in the Old Testament and always as located just south of Canaan or on the way to Egypt ([Gen. 16:7; 20:1; 25:18; 1 Sam. 15:7; 27:8](#)).



Fig 8. Sinai Peninsula

- A more likely identification for *yam suph*, is the water of the Bitter Lakes, which may even have been an extension of the Gulf of Suez in that day.

2. The Plight at the *yam suph*

On reaching the *yam suph*, the people were barred from further progress by the extensive body of water. They learned that they were being pursued. Pharaoh, hearing of the direction in which they were headed and calculating that they would encounter the water, had changed his mind and sent his chariot corps after them (Exod. 14:6-10). At this point, God intervened to deliver His people with three distinct miracles:

1. **Moving the Cloud (Exod. 14:19-20).** The first was a shift in position of the cloud, which had been leading. From standing out over the water before the camp, it now moved directly overhead to stand behind it. This accomplished two things: it stopped the Egyptians, settling down on them like a fog so that they could not see, and it provided light on the Israelite side so the people could see better.
2. **Parting the Sea (Exod. 14:21-22).** The second miracle was the dividing of the water so that the people could cross to the other side. We are told that as part of the miracle, God “all that night drove the sea back with a strong east wind” (Exod. 14:21). The wind is said to be particularly effective on the Bitter Lakes in changing water levels (fig. 9).
3. **Closing the Sea (Exod. 14:23-31).** The third miracle was the closing of the water so that the pursuing Egyptians were drowned. As the last of the Israelites moved into the dried path, the cloud began to move ahead of the Egyptians so that they could once more see to take up the chase. God released the waters and they rolled down upon the helpless Egyptians.



Fig 9. Parting the Red Sea

Did Pharaoh Drown in the Red Sea?

There are two possibilities:

1. Amenhotep II did not die at this time; he lived another 22 years after this. His mummy was found in the Valley of the Kings in 1898. In one of the side rooms of his tomb were found nine other royal mummies, including those of Thutmose IV, Amenhotep III, and Merneptah.
 - Exodus 14:6 suggests that Pharaoh personally assembled the army and possibly even accompanied them at the start, but no indication is made that he was involved in the closing waters. He is not mentioned after Exodus 14:10.

- [Psalm 136:15](#) says that Pharaoh and his army were overthrown, not necessarily requiring that Pharaoh was killed.

2. According to the Bible, after the ten plagues God sent against Egypt, Israel departed, but Pharaoh led his army in pursuit of them at the Red Sea. The Bible records the following:

[EX 14:23](#) Then the Egyptians took up the pursuit, and all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots and his horsemen went in after them into the midst of the sea.

[EX 14:24](#) At the morning watch, the LORD looked down on the army of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and cloud and brought the army of the Egyptians into confusion.

[EX 14:25](#) He caused their chariot wheels to swerve, and He made them drive with difficulty; so the Egyptians said, "Let us flee from Israel, for the LORD is fighting for them against the Egyptians."

[EX 14:26](#) Then the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the sea so that the waters may come back over the Egyptians, over their chariots and their horsemen."

[EX 14:27](#) So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to its normal state at daybreak, while the Egyptians were fleeing right into it; then the LORD overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea.

[EX 14:28](#) The waters returned and covered the chariots and the horsemen, even Pharaoh's entire army that had gone into the sea after them; not even one of them remained.

Exodus 14:23-28 (NASB)

The Bible also says in Psalm:

[PS 136:13](#) To Him who divided the Red Sea asunder, For His lovingkindness is everlasting,

[PS 136:14](#) And made Israel pass through the midst of it, For His lovingkindness is everlasting;

[PS 136:15](#) But He overthrew Pharaoh and his army in the Red Sea, For His lovingkindness is everlasting.

Psalm 136:13-15 (NASB)

- Some people do not believe that the Pharaoh perished in the waters of the Red Sea because the tombs of both Pharaoh Thutmose III and his successor, Amenhotep II, have been found. But if one reads Exodus 14:30 carefully it states the following:

[EX 14:30](#) Thus the LORD saved Israel that day from the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore.

Exodus 14:30 (NASB)

o This passage indicates that the dead bodies of the Egyptians were deposited on the shore of the Red Sea. This would have allowed the Egyptians access to his body for burial.

o This is support for the Exodus Pharaoh being Thutmose III.

DATE OF THE EXODUS, 1446 BC

Although the Bible never specifically identifies the pharaoh of the Exodus by name, it does tell us the exact date of the Exodus.

- [1Kings 6:1](#) states that Solomon began building the Temple in the fourth year of his reign, 480 years after the Exodus. Most bible scholars agree that the fourth year of Solomon's reign was 966 BC. So the date of the Exodus can be calculated: $966 + 480 = 1446 \text{ BC}$.

According to history, Rameses II did not begin his reign until around 1304 BC, so he could not have been the Exodus pharaoh.

1. Direct Biblical Evidence

- a. [1 Kings 6:1](#). The first reason listed for the 1446 date is the statement of [1 Kings 6:1](#) that the Exodus preceded the time when Solomon began to build the temple (c. 966 B.C.) by 480 years. Adding 480 years to 966 BC gives the date 1446 BC.

- b. Jephthah's statement.** The second reason listed is that Jephthah speaks of Israel as having possessed the land of Palestine, at his time, for a period of 300 years ([Judg. 11:26](#)). Jephthah was the eighth judge of Israel.
- The total years represented by Samuel's time of leadership, the kingships of Saul and David, and four years of Solomon's reign must be added to the date 966 BC, when the construction of the temple began, to arrive at Jephthah's date. This works out to approximately 1100 BC, which is just three hundred years after 1400 BC, the time of the conquest.
- c. Historical correlations.** The third reason listed concerns a better correlation between the events of Scripture and Egyptian history. The biblical account of the Exodus fits Egyptian history well if the Exodus occurred in the fifteenth century, not if it was in the thirteenth.
- The identity of the king who died while Moses was in Midian ([Exod. 2:23-25](#)). The rationale for the mention of his death in the biblical record is that the death made possible Moses' return to Egypt, which strongly suggests that the one who died was the same as the one from whom Moses fled 40 years before ([Exod. 2:15](#)).
 - Whenever the Exodus occurred, then, a Pharaoh who had ruled at least 40 years must have just died. Such a death had just occurred; namely of Thutmose III, who died in 1450 BC, just four years before the date of Exodus (1446 BC). Also, he had ruled alone since 1482 BC, and before this he had ruled jointly with his aunt/stepmother Hatshepsut (1504-1482), long enough to be the one from whom Moses had fled.

2. Extrabiblical Evidence

- a. Pithom and Raamses.** The first concerns the building of Pithom and Raamses by enslaved Israelites. In spite of the chronological difficulty in harmonizing the biblical statements with Egyptian history in the thirteenth century, many late-date adherents say that this reference in [Exodus 1:11](#) supports their position. Since [Exodus 1:11](#) uses the name *Raamses* for the city ordered built by the Pharaoh, this one must have been Rameses II.
- This is an impressive argument, but the Raamses site was occupied much earlier. In addition, the name *Raamses* had already been used by the Hyksos kings many years before the Nineteenth Dynasty. Therefore, it was probably the Hyksos who forced the Israelites to build Pithom and Raamses.
- b. The Amarna Tablets.** The Tablets are letters written between c. 1400 and 1367 BC to the Egyptian courts of Amenhotep III and Akhenaton, mostly by Canaanite city-kings. The letters reveal a chaotic condition of plot, counterplot, and contradictory accusations between Canaanite rulers. There is also frequent mention of trouble from a people called Habiru. Since there is possible equivalency in name between "Habiru" and "Hebrew" and since the disturbances wrought by these people are approximately at the time of the Israelite conquest, it is possible to identify these Habiru with Joshua's invading forces (fig. 10).

<http://www.truthnet.org/biblicalarcheology/>

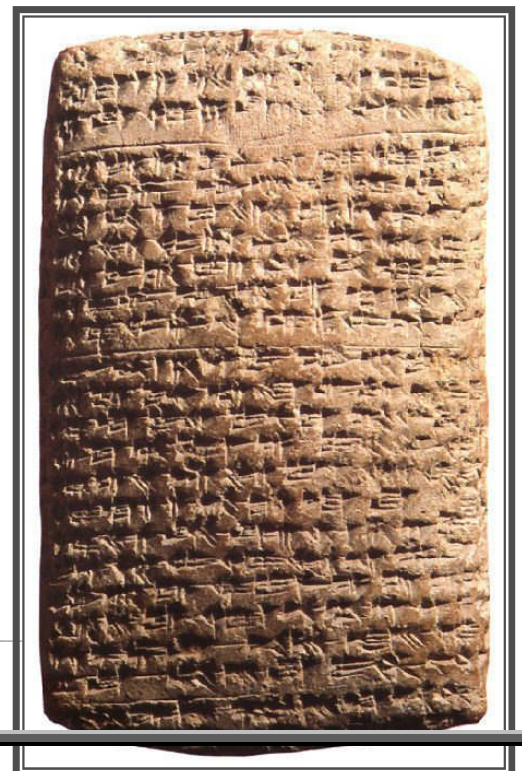


Fig 10. Amarna Tablet

- c. **Military campaigns of Seti I and Rameses II.** The last matter to notice concerns the Palestinian military campaigns of two Egyptian Pharaohs, Seti I and Rameses II. Late-date adherents argue that, if Israel were in Palestine at the time of these campaigns, which would have been true on the early-date basis, the campaigns should be mentioned in the Book of Judges, a book given largely to military activities; and, since they are not, Israel must not yet have been there.
- **The evidence.** Seti I campaigned northward already in his first year (1316 BC), encountering enemy forces in northern Palestine and slightly beyond. In a later campaign he pressed as far as Kadesh on the Orontes River, where he made a treaty with the Hittite king, Muwatallis. Rameses II followed with other campaigns, notably in his fifth and 21st years, in the last of which he made his famous treaty with the Hittite Hattusilis III (1283 BC). In each of these campaigns, the Egyptian army had to march through the length of Palestine and must have come in contact with Israelites, if indeed they were there.
 - Both Seti I and Rameses II also appear to have engaged in actual warfare in Palestine itself. At least both left a stele at Bethshan; and Seti I tells of his clashing with Apiru near that city, a reference certainly to the Hebrews in which the term “Habiru-Apiru” is used again. These Palestinian activities do make the question pertinent as to why, if Israel was in the land at the time, the Book of Judges gives no record of them.
 - **The explanation.** In reply, two observations may be made. First, later military inroads into Palestine by Merneptah (1238-1228) and Rameses III (c 1195-1164) are not mentioned in the Book of Judges either, and the campaigns of each did follow the time of Israel’s entrance into Canaan, even on the late-date basis. Merneptah, as already noted, claims to have wrought extensive havoc in Palestine, stating that “Israel is laid waste, his seed is not” on the Merneptah Stele (fig. 11). Rameses III of the Twentieth Dynasty boasts of having reduced both the “Tjeker and the Philistines” to ashes. He even had scenes of the campaign he conducted into Palestine depicted on the walls of his famous temple of Medinet Habu. He seems to have had a major interest in the Bethshan area.
 - It is clear that both Ramses III and Merneptah centered attacks on the Palestine sector itself and did not merely pass through, as was true mainly for both Seti I and Rameses II (whose activities are likewise omitted in the Book of Judges).
 - One may conclude from this that, if their campaigns are not mentioned when Israel surely was in the land, then that the earlier campaigns are not mentioned need not be evidence that Israel was not in the land at this time.



Fig 11. Merneptah Stele

ISRAEL IN THE WILDERNESS

Israel's task, now that she was out of Egypt and across the *yam suph*, was to go to Canaan. The shortest way to Canaan lay northeast. From Israel's present location on the east side of the *yam suph* to southern Canaan was approximately 150 miles, which had the people gone directly would have taken less than a month to traverse.

ISRAEL'S ROUTE OF TRAVEL

The route of Israel runs south along the Red Sea for over 100 miles and then diagonally inland toward modern Jebel Musa (Mount Sinai) nearly 50 miles. From this point, where Israel remained for nearly a year, it leads north to Kadesh-barnea at the southern end of Canaan.

- The key to determining the route is the location of Mount Sinai. The traditional view identifies it with Jebel Musa in the southern Sinai Peninsula (fig. 12).



Fig 12. Mount Sinai

TO MOUNT SINAI

1. Marah, Elim, Wilderness of Sin

- Water (Exod. 15:22-27).** Israel watched the overthrow of the Egyptian army from the eastern shore of the *yam suph*; paused to give praise to God (Exod. 15:1-21), and proceeded to follow the directing cloud southward. Three days they traveled without finding water. They finally came to a small oasis called Marah, but its water was bitter. Marah has commonly been identified with modern Hawarah, where the water is still bitter. Moses, at God's direction, cast a piece of wood into the water, and it immediately became sweet and drinkable.
 - The people moved on to Elim, which is believed to be present-day Wadi Ghurundel, about six miles south of Hawarah, where plenty of sweet water is still to be found.
 - Then the people moved on to a region called "Desert of Sin" (Exod. 16:1). This is best identified with a sandy, easily traveled plain along the shore of the Red Sea, since the terrain just inland is rugged.
- Manna (Exod. 16:1-36).** It was here that Israel's food supply ran out. The Israelites became anxious and cried to Moses. Where would adequate food be found in such a desolate region?
 - God's provision turned out to be a nourishing food in the form of "thin flakes like frost," described as white, like coriander seed and tasted like wafers made with honey, which the

people called “manna” (Exod. 16:14, 15, 31). It lay on the ground fresh each morning except the Sabbath.

2. Rephidim and Mount Sinai (Exodus 17:1-19:3)

From the wilderness of Sin, Israel turned inland, perhaps moving up Wadi Feiran, which leads toward Jebel Musa, and came to a place called Rephidim, sometimes identified with Wadi Refayid. Rephidim was near Mount Sinai, for it was here that God told Moses to smite the “rock in Horeb” to bring water for the people.

- a. **Water from the Rock (Exod. 17:1-7).** At Rephidim the people found their water depleted. The people complained to Moses, who brought the need to God. Following instructions, Moses struck the rock of Horeb, and water in great quantity gushed forth. The people’s thirst was satisfied.
- b. **Amalekite Battle (Exod. 17:8-16).** Also at Rephidim, the Israelites encountered a roving band called Amalekites in battle. This band may have descended from Esau (Gen. 36:12), even as the Edomites (Gen. 36:1). Though not directly stated, the Amalekites apparently had been attacking the weak and stragglers of Israel since the crossing of the *yam suph* (Deut. 25:17-18). Consequently, Moses instructed Joshua, one in whom he had learned to place confidence, to choose men for engaging the raiders in battle.
 - The battle was fought the following day, and God gave a victory. Moses, observing from a nearby hill, raised his arms toward God in a gesture of supplication, and, as long as his arms were held upright, Joshua’s troops advanced, but when his arms tired and were lowered, his soldiers were forced to retreat. Finally, Aaron and Hur, standing on either side of Moses, assisted their leader in maintaining his arms upright until full victory was achieved.
 - Hur was Moses’ brother-in-law, the husband of Miriam, as Josephus states.
“...and Hur their sister Miriam’s husband.”
- c. **Arrival at Mount Sinai (Exod. 19:1-2).** The next stop was at Mount Sinai, best identified with one end of a mountain ridge about two miles long and one mile wide. Only the southern peak of this mountain is Jebel Musa (7,363 feet high), while the northern peak is called Ras es-safsafah (6,540 feet). During this time the Law was to be given and the tabernacle built.



Fig 12. The Ten Commandments

GIVING THE LAW

1. The Ten Commandments (Exodus 19:3-20:17)

The first aspect of God’s communication to Israel at Sinai was His proclamation of the Ten Commandments (Exod. 20:1-17). God began to speak audibly from the mountain so that all could hear. When the Voice ceased, the people urged Moses to act as their mediator, so that they would not have to hear more in this direct, fearful manner (Exod. 20:19).

- a. **First Forty Days (Exod. 24:12-18).** God called Moses up the mountain to begin a period of revelation lasting 40 days. Moses took Joshua with him, leaving Aaron and Hur in charge of the camp. For six days Moses stayed at a point only part way up the mountain, apparently still with Joshua, but on the seventh day God called him on alone. He remained in God's presence continuously for 40 days as God revealed the Law to him. At some point during this time, God also inscribed the Ten Commandments on two tables of stone.
- b. **Golden Calf (Exod. 32).** On the 40th day, God told Moses that the people had sinned in making a golden calf as an object of worship. Moses immediately returned to camp and in a display of righteous indignation, broke the two inscribed stone tablets in the sight of the people, utterly destroyed the gold calf, reprimanded a flustered Aaron who had consented to the sin, and instructed Levites to slay guilty Israelites, which they did to the number of three thousand.
- c. **Second Forty Days (Exod. 34:1-35).** Moses was now instructed to cut two more tablets of stone and return to the top of Sinai. He did so the following morning, and for 40 more days God revealed the Law to him.

THE LAW

The Mosaic Law includes the Ten Commandments given orally to all the people, the "Book of the Covenant" given to Moses alone later the same day, and the lengthy, detailed regulations revealed to Moses, during the two 40-day periods on Mount Sinai. The total content may be divided into moral, civil, and ceremonial law.

COMPARISON WITH OTHER LAWS

The Mosaic Law has been compared with other legal codes. Six are known:

1. The Urnammu Code, c. 2050 BC, from the Third Dynasty of Ur.
2. The code of Bilalama, c. 1925 BC, from Eshnunna.
3. The code of Lipit-Ishtar, c. 1860 BC, from Isin.
4. The code of Hammurabi, c. 1700 BC, from Babylon.
5. The Hittite code, c. 1450 BC, from Boghazkoi.
6. The Assyrian code, c. 1350 BC, from Assur.

The analysis of these codes has revealed numerous parallels with the laws of the Old Testament. The recognition of similarities does not negate the uniqueness of Old Testament law. God used compatible cultural forms to frame the elements of His Word. This uniqueness is to be found in the context of God's covenant relationship with Israel.

- The laws of the Old Testament are to be understood as the stipulations assigned to the subject people by the Great King, who in this case is God. What they teach us is that God is concerned with humanity's relationship with Him, but is also concerned that the relationship demonstrates itself in justice and equitable treatment of one person by another.

THE TABERNACLE (Exodus 25-31; 35-40)

One of the main subjects in God's communication to Moses was the tabernacle. In contrast to Egypt and

other countries where many temples existed, Israel was to have only one place of worship.

- For the period of wilderness travel, and also for many years after occupying Palestine, this place was to be a portable sanctuary called the tabernacle, for which God gave Moses the plan.
- Bezaleel of the tribe of Judah and Aholiab of the tribe of Dan were to lead in the construction (Exod. 35:30-35). Freewill offerings of the people quickly provided ample building material (Exod. 35:4-29). The importance of this structure was stressed by the large place given to it in the Law and its assigned central location among the tribes.

1. Description

The tabernacle (fig. 14) consisted of a portable building located within a rectangular court. The court measured 150 feet by 75 feet, and was enclosed by linen curtains hung from silver hooks on silver-covered rods attached to posts of acacia wood.

- Entrance was from the east through a gate of curtains. Two articles of furniture were located in the eastern half of the court. Nearest the entrance was the brazen altar where the priest offered sacrifices for the people. It measured 7.5 feet square and 4.5 feet high, was made of acacia wood covered with bronze, and had horns at each corner. Beyond the altar was the laver. This was made of bronze and was the place where priests washed.



Fig 14. The Tabernacle

In the western half of the court stood the tabernacle proper, a rectangular building 45 feet long, 15 feet wide, and 15 feet high, constructed of 48 frames of acacia wood covered with gold. The building had four layers of covering: the first of linen, the second of goat's hair, the third of dyed rams' skins, and the fourth of dugong skins. It consisted of two compartments:

- The first, called the Holy Place, comprising two-thirds of the area and containing the seven-light lamp stand, the table of showbread, and the altar of incense.
- The second, called the Holy of Holies, containing the Ark of the Covenant (fig. 15), which supported two golden cherubim with outstretched wings.
- The ark contained the Ten Commandments, a gold pot of manna, and later Aaron's rod that budded (Num. 17:1-13; Heb. 9:4).

2. Location

God directed that the tabernacle be located in the exact center of the tribes, when encamped during the wilderness journey. When marching the tabernacle furniture was to be kept in the center, though the tabernacle itself was to go earlier so that it might be erected in time for the furniture to be set in place on



Fig 15. The Ark of the Covenant

arrival ([Num. 10:21](#)).

- One item of furniture went before all, the Ark of the Covenant, which led the way, with the priests carrying it as they followed the pillar of cloud moving overhead.

3. Service instituted

The next matter was the consecration of Aaron and his sons, Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar, to act as priests for ministering at the tabernacle ([Exod. 29:1-37; 40:12-15; Lev. 8:1-36](#)). All five were washed with water, clothed in the prescribed priestly garments, and anointed with oil.

THE PROMISED LAND, ALMOST

SINAI TO KADESH-BARNEA

Eleven months and five days had elapsed at Sinai ([Num. 10:11](#)) when the pillar of cloud lifted, leading Israel north in the direction of Canaan. A covenant had been made between God and the people, an organization established, and the tabernacle built. The people were ready to move on to the Promised Land.

1. The Route

The route north led to Kadesh-barnea, a city located at the southern extremity of Canaan. Its location is reasonably sure between two sites lying about 50 miles southwest of Beersheba, Ain Qudeis and Ain Qudirat. The first retains the name *Kadesh*, both are only five miles apart.

On the way an incident occurred with insubordination by Aaron and Miriam ([Num. 12:1-15](#)). These two, already enjoying places of honor, rejected Moses' marriage to an Ethiopian and wanted greater authority, claiming that God had spoken by them as well as by Moses.

- God called all three before the tabernacle, and, speaking out of the pillar of cloud, made known His appointment of Moses, saying that Moses had been honored above even the prophets in being privileged to speak with God "face to face." He then brought punishment on Miriam by smiting her with leprosy for one week.

Moses marriage to Zipporah had occurred over 40 years earlier. Zipporah had probably died and Moses married again. The marriage was not contrary to the Law, which forbade marriage to Canaanites ([Exod. 34:16](#)).

- Josephus also mentions that Moses married an Ethiopian woman:
"Because of the bravery of Moses, The daughter of the king of Ethiopia, Tharbis, saw Moses and fell madly in love with him. She sent to him a delegation of her most trusted servants to propose marriage. He accepted, on the condition that she would surrender the city over to him . . . After Moses had punished the Ethiopians, he praised God and then celebrated his marriage."
- The Bible also mentions his Ethiopian wife in Numbers 12:1.
[Nu 12:1](#) And Miriam and Aaron spake against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married: for he had married an Ethiopian woman.
[Numbers 12:1 \(KJV\)](#)

2. Refusal to Enter the Land

When Israel arrived at Kadesh, the first matter of business was to reconnoiter Canaan. God directed the appointment of 12 men, one from each tribe, to act as spies. These were instructed to investigate the food production of the land and the people's strength for self-defense.

- For 40 days the 12 traversed the land as far north as Rehob, located near the city of Laish, later called Dan (Judg. 18:28-29). All agreed in their report. The land was good for food supply but would be very difficult to conquer because the people were strong, giants lived in the land, and the cities were walled (Num. 13:27-28).
- They differed in their evaluation. Ten said the difficulties were too great, which meant returning to Egypt (Num. 13:31-33); two, Caleb and Joshua, asserted that God could give victory in spite of the difficulties, pleading that Israel not rebel against God by refusing to enter the land (Num. 13:30; 14:6-9). The people heeded the ten, even threatening to kill the two, and began planning to return to Egypt under new leadership, if need be.
- As a result, God threatened to annihilate Israel in punishment, but again Moses interceded for the people, this time on the basis of God's own reputation (Num. 14:11-20).
- God then said the nature of the punishment would be that the entire nation, rather than entering the land, would remain in the desert wilderness for a total of 40 years and that every Israelite 20 years and older, with the exception of Caleb and Joshua, would die during this time and never enter the Promised Land (Num. 14:20-35).

FORTY YEARS OF WANDERING

At this point, Israel began approximately 40 years of fruitless wandering in the Sinai desert. Very little is recorded from these years, for clearly this was a time intentionally devoid of profit or progress for a disobedient people. The nation had been given opportunity to move into the land of blessing but had refused. Now the people should wander in unpleasant conditions, with nothing positive accomplished, until all over 20 years of age had died.

- Only one incident is recorded from all these years. That was a revolt of 250 people led by two Reubenites (Dathan and Abiram) and the Levite Korah (Num. 16-17). These leaders desired places of authority along with, or in place of, Moses and Aaron.
- God vindicated Moses and Aaron by opening the earth to swallow Korah, Dathan and Abiram, along with their households and bringing fire to consume the 250 supporters of the rebels. When many Israelites complained at this harsh treatment, God sent a plague through the camp, which took the lives of 14,700 of these complainers (Num. 16:23-35, 41-50).
- Further, to show Aaron's approved position, God caused Aaron's rod, placed in the tabernacle at God's direction, to bud, in contrast to the rods placed there by other tribal heads (Num. 17:1-11).

KADESH-BARNEA TO THE JORDAN

1. Water Again from a Rock (Numbers 20:2-13)

On arriving back in Kadesh at this time, the people lacked water once more. The reply was that Moses and Aaron were to gather the people at a certain rock; water would flow from it, as had occurred earlier at Rephidim.

- This time, however, God instructed Moses only to "speak" to the rock, saying nothing about striking

it. But Moses struck it twice, and cried to the people, “Must we bring you water out of this rock?” Water came forth, but Moses’ action and words made it appear as though his human effort had helped to produce it.

- God was displeased and pronounced punishment on Moses, stating that now he would not be permitted to enter the Promised Land (Num. 20:12; 27:12-14; Deut. 32:48-52).

2. Request to Pass Through Edom (Numbers 20:14-21)

While at Kadesh, Moses sent messengers to the King of Edom requesting passage through his land. The plan now was to skirt the southern end of the Dead Sea, march north on its east side, and enter Canaan heading west. Moses promised to stay strictly to the “King’s Highway.”

^{Num 20:17} Please let us pass through your country. We will not go through any field or vineyard, or drink water from any well. We will travel along the king’s highway and not turn to the right or to the left until we have passed through your territory.”
Numbers 20:17 (NASB)

- Using this term, Moses is referring to an ancient, well-known, north-south road, identified in recent times and traced as far north as Syria. It had been used by the four eastern kings of Genesis 14, was later paved by the Romans, and is today followed closely by a modern Jordanian highway (fig. 16).
- Even though Moses promised not to stray from this “highway,” the Edomite king refused passage. This meant a tedious journey south to Ezion-geber again (Deut. 2:8), where the people had been only shortly before (Num. 33:35), and then a return on the eastern side of Edom.

3. Death of Aaron

En route Aaron died on Mount Hor at the age of 123.

- Aaron died the first day of the fifth month of the fortieth year (Num. 33:38), just five months after Miriam’s passing. Instructed of God, Moses accompanied Aaron, with Eleazar, Aaron’s son and successor, to the top of the mountain, and there he placed Aaron’s clothes on Eleazar before Aaron’s life was taken. The people remained in mourning at Mount Hor for 30 days.
- While they were there, a brief battle occurred (Num. 21:1-3). Arad, king in the southern part of Canaan, led an assault against Israel. Initially defeated, Israel looked to God for help and then thoroughly routed the foe, even pressing on to destroy several of the cities in Arad’s kingdom.

4. Return North and Victory over Sihon and Og (Numbers 21:10-35)

Following God’s instructions not to interfere with the Edomites (Deut. 2:4-5), Israel skirted their territory on the east and again made her way northward. Coming to the brook Zered, Moab’s southern boundary, God forbade interference with Moab also (Deut. 2:9). Israel obeyed and followed a path well to the east.

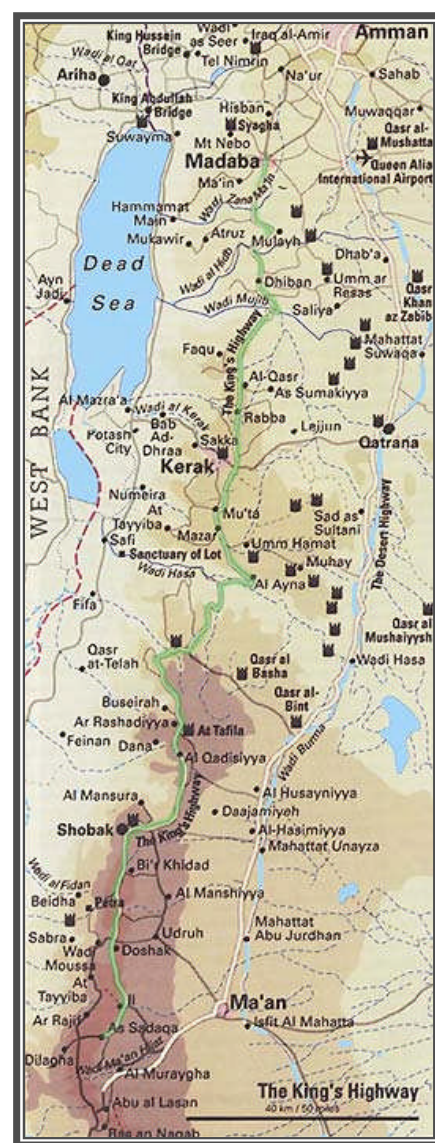


Fig 16. The King’s Highway

- The Zered is a small stream that flows into the southern extremity of the Dead Sea from the southeast.

Interference from King Sihon's kingdom was unavoidable. His land stood between Israel and the Jordan River. Moses asked for permission to cross the land but was refused. Sihon mustered his army at Jahaz, and Moses met and defeated him. Then Israel occupied all Sihon's territory to the Jabbok River.

- With this victory Israel's forces were not far from the country of Og, the powerful king of Bashan, who ruled from the Yarmuk River as far north as Mount Hermon. Now Moses took the offensive and defeated Og at his important city, Edrei (Num. 21:33-35), before moving on to occupy his land.

Israel now controlled most of the land from the Arnon River in the South (Moab's northern boundary) to Mount Hermon in the north, a distance of 130 miles.

- The defeat of these kings was really the beginning of the conquest, for the territory east of the Jordan would eventually be allotted to Gad, Ephraim, and half of the tribe of Manasseh. These victories were important, too, in impressing the Canaanites across the Jordan with the power of God exercised on Israel's behalf (Josh. 2:9-11; 9:8-10).

AT THE JORDAN

1. Balaam and the Moabites (Numbers 22-25; 31)

With these significant victories won, Moses assembled the army near the Jordan River opposite Jericho. Here Balak, king of Moab, viewed Israel as a menace to his country and, in cooperation with elders of Midian, sent messengers far north to Pethor on the Euphrates River to bring Balaam, a prophet whose reputation had reached this far south, to place a curse on Israel (Num. 22-24).

- However, once with Balak, Balaam only blessed Israel instead of cursing her.
- Then after Balak had dismissed him in disgust, Balaam uttered yet a fourth message (Num. 24:14-25), in which he gave a prediction regarding the coming Messiah and future blessing of Israel.
- Finally, however, the prophet did work in Moab's favor. He advised Balak to entice Israelite men to take part in the cult activities of Baalpeor (Num. 25:1-18). Balak followed Balaam's advice and many Israelites were ensnared. As a result of this excursion into idolatry, God sent a punishing plague, which took 24,000 Israelite lives.
- Moses then dispatched an army of 12,000 to punish Midian, which had been partner with Moab from the start. The Midianites were defeated, and all the males, the kings of Midian, and Balaam himself were killed (Num. 31:1-54).

Has Evidence of Balaam been found?

Balaam came from Pethor, a Mesopotamian city, identified with Pitru of Assyrian texts, located 12 miles south of Carchemish, about 400 miles away. Balaam was a diviner-prophet. An ancient text found at Deir Alla, Jordan, in 1967 tells about the activities of a prophet named Balaam. Could this be the Balaam of the Old Testament? The text makes it

<http://www.truthnet.org/biblicalarcheology/>



Fig 17. Balaam Text

clear that it is.

- Three times in the first four lines he is referred to as “Balaam son of Beor,” exactly as in the Bible.
- The remarkable text found at Deir Alla consists of 119 fragments of plaster inscribed with black and red ink. It was among the rubble of a building destroyed in an earthquake. It seems to have been one long column with at least 50 lines, displayed on a plastered wall.
- Written in Aramaic, the text begins with the title “Warnings from the Book of Balaam the son of Beor. He was a seer of the gods.” It is in red ink, as are other portions of the text where emphasis is desired. The reference to the “Book of Balaam” indicates that the text was part of a pre-existing document and therefore the original date of the material is much earlier than the plaster text itself. Balaam goes on to relate a vision concerning impending judgment from the gods.

2. Anticipatory Matters

Moses now did several things in anticipation of Israel’s entrance into the land.

- First, he had another census taken ([Num. 26](#)). Thirty-nine years of wilderness wandering (with 1,200,000 deaths) had transpired since the census at Mount Sinai. There was need to know Israel’s present manpower as she faced the challenge of Canaan. The number counted this time was 601,730 men 20 years and older, in comparison with the earlier 603,550 ([Num. 1:46](#)).
- Another important matter was the appointment of a new leader. Someone had to be selected to take the place of Moses and lead Israel across the Jordan. God’s choice was Joshua ([Num. 27:15-23](#)). He and Caleb were the only older men who could enter the land, for all others their age either had died or would die before that time.
 - o Joshua had led in battle against the Amalekites ([Exod. 17:8-14](#)). He had accompanied Moses part way up Mount Sinai at the time of receiving the Mosaic Law ([Exod. 24:13](#)). He had assisted Moses following Israel’s repentance regarding the sin with the golden calf ([Exod. 33:11](#)). He had served as one of the twelve spies of Canaan and urged advance into the land along with Caleb ([Num. 13:8; 14:6-9](#)). In all these instances, Joshua demonstrated responsibility and leadership.
 - o God revealed the selection of Joshua to Moses, who then made proper announcement to the people and gave appropriate charge to the new leader.

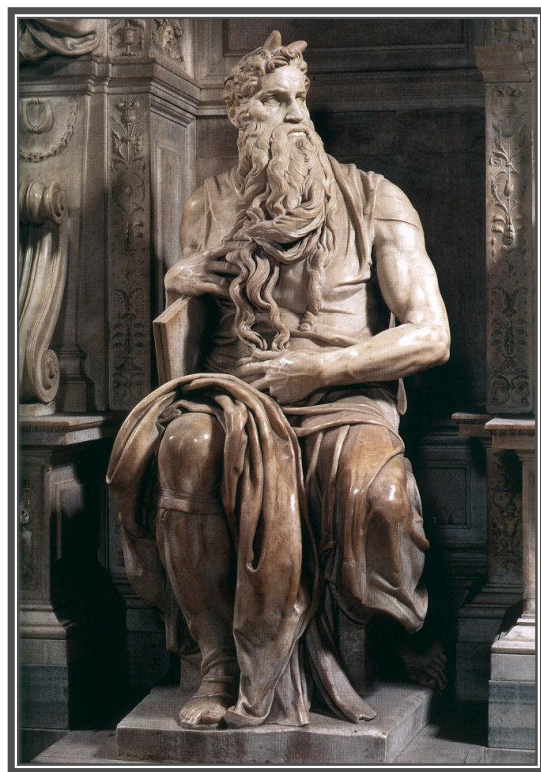


Fig 18. Moses

Conclusion

With the work both of leadership and writing complete, and a replacement now appointed, Moses, at age 120, was ready for God’s call to heaven. Few men in all history could claim to have had so rich an experience; few so used of God. He was gifted and trained as perhaps none other of his day, and he was entrusted with a task probably greater than any other person of any day. But now his work was done.

According to God's instruction, he climbed "to the top of Pisgah, across from Jericho," surveyed the promised Land, heard God remind him that this was indeed the land that had been promised long before, and then was taken in death by God. He was buried in an unknown grave in a nearby valley (Deut. 34:1-7).

References

1. *Archaeology & The Old Testament* by Alfred J. Hoerth, 1998
2. *A Survey of Israel's History* by Leon J. Wood, 1986
3. *All the Men of the Bible* by Herbert Lockyer, 1958
4. *All the Women of the Bible* by Herbert Lockyer, 1967
5. *Bible Believer's Archaeology, Historical Evidence that Proves the Bible* by John Argubright, 2003
6. *Bible Believer's Archaeology Volume 2, The Search for Truth* by John Argubright, 2003
7. *Archaeology of the Old Testament* by Dr. James Borland, 1976 (Liberty Bible Institute cassette tapes)
8. *Archaeology of the New Testament* by Dr. James Borland, 1976 (Liberty Bible Institute cassette tapes)
9. *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary*, 1980
10. WebBible Encyclopedia online at <http://www.christiananswers.com/dictionary/home.html>

