

# THE SOJOURN OF THE ISRAELITES IN EGYPT

## And Its Relation to Secular History.

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**W**HILE much has been written in recent years about the condition of things in Egypt during the sojourn of the Israelites in that country and the identification of the Pharaohs of Joseph and of the oppression and Exodus with different monarchs, a good deal of uncertainty and of obscurity has surrounded the subject, partly because of the incomplete character of the ancient records, and partly because of different schools of interpretation of Biblical chronology.

Many have insisted that the children of Israel were in Egypt four hundred years, while others set the time at two hundred and fifteen years, and obviously the difference of two centuries makes a tremendous difference.

Now we have the claim based on Professor Garstang's investigations at Jericho, corroborated by Sir Charles Marston, that the date of the fall of Jericho must have occurred about 1400 B.C. The reason for this is that the scarabs of Egyptian kings found in the tombs of Jericho terminate in the reign of Amenhetep III, 1413—1377. A series of some eighty scarabs of various Pharaohs were found in the tombs, but none later than the date of Amenhetep III. The evidence of the pottery discovered in Jericho corroborates the dates of the scarabs.

The list of the Kings of the Eighteenth Dynasty is as follows :\*

Aohmes I .. ..	1573—1560 B.C.
Amenhetep I .. ..	1560—1539 „
Thotmes I .. ..	1539—1514 „
Thotmes II .. ..	1514—1501 „
Thotmes III.. ..	1501—1447 „
Amenhetep II .. ..	1447—1423 „
Thotmes IV .. ..	1423—1413 „
Amenhetep III .. ..	1413—1377 „
Akhenaten .. ..	1377—1361 „

If these be correct, the fall of Jericho occurred in the reign of Amenhetep III, 1413—1377. The Exodus occurred forty years before in the reign of Amenhetep II who reigned from 1447—1423. This forces the period of Joseph back into the time of the "Middle Kingdom," which brings us up to a point where it is absolutely necessary

\* *The New Knowledge About the Old Testament*, by Sir Charles Marston, p. 116.

for us to make up our minds as to the Biblical interpretation of the length of the sojourn in Egypt.

**THE DURATION OF THE SOJOURN IN EGYPT.**

By Genesis xv. 13—Thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them ; and they shall afflict them—four hundred years.

This is often taken to mean the affliction in Egypt was to last four hundred years. The Hebrew text as we have it makes a pause before “four hundred years,” which refers to the time of sojourning, as well as “affliction.”

Exodus xii. 40, LXX version.—The sojourning of the children of Israel, who dwelt in Egypt AND CANAAN was four hundred and thirty years.

Galatians iii. 17.—The Covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the Law which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul.

St. Paul makes the Covenant promise to Abraham four hundred and thirty years before the giving of the law at Sinai.

Lastly, Genesis xv. 16.—In the fourth generation they shall come hither again.

Jacob	Judah
Levi	Zerah
Jochebed	Zimri or Zabdi
Moses	Achan

Joshua vii. 1, I Chronicles ii. 4-7.

Moses died one month before the entrance to Canaan ; Achan less than a month after. The four hundred and thirty years between the Covenant of Abraham and the Giving of the law at Sinai divides exactly into two hundred and fifteen years in Canaan, and two hundred and fifteen years in Egypt.

Genesis xii. 4.—Abraham was seventy-five when he entered Canaan and one hundred when Isaac was born—Genesis xxi. 5.

He sojourned 25 years in Canaan and begat Isaac.

Isaac sojourned 60 years and begat Jacob.—Genesis xxv. 26.

Jacob sojourned 130 years when he entered Egypt—Genesis xlvii. 9.

Total . . 215 years.

If Israel spent four hundred and thirty years in Egypt and the Bible figures are correct (which we contend they are), the Mother of Moses must have been some two hundred and fifty-five years old when Moses was born, for Levi, the Father of Jochebed, died at one hundred

and thirty-seven, some ninety-four years after Jacob and his sons entered Egypt. Moses was eighty at the time of the Exodus, which makes the whole interval between the death of Levi and the birth of Moses somewhere about two hundred and fifty years.

We conclude, therefore, with Josephus, the late Sir William Dawson and others that Israel was in Egypt only two hundred and fifteen years. Counting back from the Fall of Jericho, this brings us into the "Middle Kingdom" which, according to the Cambridge Ancient History, terminated within a few years of 1580 B.C.\*

The Exodus took place in the reign of Amenhetep II, 1447—1423. Two hundred and fifteen years takes us back to 1663—1638 as the time during which Jacob came into Egypt. Joseph was thirty-nine when Jacob came into Egypt and one hundred and ten when he died, fifty-four years after Jacob. Taking the earliest possible date for Jacob's entering into Egypt as 1663, this would bring us to 1592, or twelve years before the termination of the "Middle Kingdom" or Hyksos Dynasty. If we take the later date, 1638, it brings us to 1567, or thirteen years after the King arose who "knew not Joseph," which leads us to the conclusion that the Exodus occurred fairly early in the reign of Amenhetep III; in fact, there is no very obvious reason why Moses and Aaron should not have appeared at his court at the beginning of his reign and demanded the release of their people.

#### THE HYKSOS DYNASTY.

The following notes on the Hyksos Dynasty are gathered from the Cambridge Ancient History, volume I; direct quotations are indicated by inverted commas.

"The Hyksos conquest was the greatest national disaster that ever befell the Egyptians until the Assyrian conquest a thousand years later. Its memory was never forgotten and it left on the minds of the Egyptians an enduring hatred of the Asiatics."

"The Hyksos were doubtless chiefly Semites of the northern Syrian type."

"It was to the horse and chariot as well as to superior weapons that the invaders owed their victory."

When we come to enquire into the duration of this Dynasty, the names of its Kings in historical succession and the possible identification of the Pharaoh of Joseph, we are confronted with apparently insurmountable difficulties, but accepting as reliable the dates of the Eighteenth Dynasty and the conclusion already drawn from the Biblical chronology, we can find some corroboration from what is known of the general character of the Hyksos period from Egyptian records with the impression formed of the character of the Pharaoh of Joseph and the Egyptian monarchy described in Genesis, and, similarly, from what is known of the Eighteenth Dynasty compared with the picture which we gather from the earlier chapters of Exodus. Anything revealed as to the character and customs found in Egypt recorded in the Book of Genesis belongs, on the view advocated, to the Hyksos Dynasty, and anything revealed in the Book of Exodus concerning Egypt and its Kings belongs to the Eighteenth Dynasty.

\* *Cambridge Ancient History*, volume 1, page 315.

If it be correct that the Hyksos period lasted some two hundred years, and it cannot have been much less, and the Israelites left Egypt in the reign of Amenhetep III, our Biblical records in Genesis and Exodus probably stretch over the whole of the two Egyptian periods, of the Hyksos and the Eighteenth Dynasty, for Amenhetep III was the last but one of the Kings of the Eighteenth Dynasty, and his successor, Akhenaten, reigned some sixteen years.

In religion, the Hyksos Kings were monotheistic. The religion of Egypt at the time of the plagues was definitely polytheistic. It is stated in the Cambridge Ancient History that, with the above exception, monotheism was unknown to the native religion of Egypt. The story in Exodus definitely presents the struggle between the Israelites and the Egyptians as a religious conflict. Moses goes to Pharaoh and requests him in the name of the Lord to let the people go three days' journey into the desert to sacrifice to the Lord their God (Exodus v. 3). When Pharaoh proposes that the Israelites should perform their religious rites in Egypt, Moses refuses on the ground that the thing they would sacrifice was the object of Egyptian worship (Exodus viii. 26).

The abomination of the Egyptians "is their idol, the Sacred Bull."

In the Genesis story, Chapter XLI, Pharaoh himself (verse 38), says to his servants, "Can we find such a man as this in whom God's spirit is?" and again (in verse 39), "since God has caused thee to know all this." This would not exclude some idolatry amongst these Hyksos Kings, though there is no mention of anything of the kind, but we find, Jacob, on his return from Syria, carefully collecting all the idols from among his family and burying them (Genesis xxxv. 2-4).

Rachel, Jacob's favourite wife, born in Syria, stole her father's sacred images, so that apparently, while the Syrians recognized one supreme God, they were not entirely free from idolatrous worship.

It is quite evident from what is known of the Hyksos Kings that part of their unpopularity was due to their religious worship, which differed from that of the Egyptians. Thus, when the new king arose that "knew not Joseph," and the Hyksos Kings were driven out and the old Egyptian idolatries were restored, the Israelites would be very unpopular with the Egyptians, and the Israelites, in their turn, as the oppressions continued, would almost certainly become contaminated with Egyptian idolatry.

This we know to have been the case, and when Moses disappeared for forty days during the sojourn in Sinai, two months after the Exodus from Egypt, Aaron makes the golden calf, attempting to symbolize the proper worship of Jehovah under the most popular idolatrous emblem of Egypt.

St. Paul in Romans directs our attention to the significance of the conflict in Egypt. Romans ix. 17, "The Scripture saith unto Pharaoh, 'even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew in thee my power and that My name might be declared throughout all the earth'."

In regard to the plagues, it is quite easy to see their religious significance in relation to Egyptian idolatries. The God of the Hebrews

is, indeed, in every direction more powerful than the gods of the Egyptians.

The fragmentary character of the records of the Hyksos Dynasty must, in part, be accounted for by their great unpopularity in the succeeding Dynasty. Evidently their records were largely destroyed. Manetho gives the names of their first Kings : Salitis, Bnōn, Apakhnas, Apophis, Iannas, and Aseth. There were certainly several Kings of the name of Apophis, or, in Egyptian, Apopi.

There were two, Yekeb-hal ("Jacob is god") and Yekeb-ba'al ("Jacob is lord"). We are strongly tempted to suggest that these persons were named in honour of Jacob. Was the mourning of the Egyptians for Jacob emphasized in Genesis 1. 3 and 9-10 for the sake of Joseph, or had the venerable patriarch so impressed the Egyptians and the Hyksos Kings that they named their sons in his honour? When Jacob was introduced to Pharaoh, he blessed him. In New Testament times, it is asserted that, "without contradiction, the less is blessed by the better"; from the oriental viewpoint, Jacob was a greater person than Pharaoh.

We do not know the name of the last King of the Dynasty, but that he came to an end shortly after the death of Joseph seems practically certain, and in that long period of some one hundred and sixty years the movement began which reduced the Hebrew immigrants from the proud position which they had occupied as the honoured guests of the Hyksos Kings to the miserable position of serfdom depicted in the earlier chapters of Exodus. Between the expulsion of the Hyksos and the birth of Moses there was a period of eighty years, and Moses was eighty years old when he returned to Egypt to deliver the people. The period thus falls into two equal parts. The more intense persecution with the effort to annihilate all the male children began shortly before the birth of Moses.

We must not, however, forget that we have twenty-seven years of the reign of Amenhetep II in which to place the Exodus, and at present it does not seem possible to fix the dates much more closely than that. If we accept as certainly fixed the accession of Aohmes I as 1573, and assume no interval between that event and the expulsion of the Hyksos, we might reason thus : Aohmes is the King who arose who "knew not Joseph," therefore Joseph was dead. He died at the age of one hundred and ten. He was thirty when he stood before Pharaoh and his father did not come down to Egypt till sometime in the third year in the famine, that is, nine years later (Genesis xlv. 6). Therefore, Joseph was going on for forty when Jacob arrived.

The children of Israel were two hundred and fifteen years in Egypt, and for seventy years were under the protection of Joseph, which leaves one hundred and forty-five to the Exodus, which brings us to 1428, that is to say, in the reign of Amenhetep II, but five years before his death.

This constitutes an independent corroboration of Sir Charles Marston's presentation of the evidence for the date of the Exodus, working back from the destruction of Jericho, which seems eminently satisfactory.