

ANCIENT FICTIONALITY: Moses, Exodus and the Conquest of Time.



Like Sargon the Great, Moses found in bulrushes and adopted. *'Travelling down water is a symbol of new epochs and change.'*

The conquest of Time, the claim to and proof of antiquity, has and still does engulf all three members of the Abrahamic religions; each is predicated towards ideas, of various intensity, of community controls and the sacred nature of community values; a fixed concept of Natural Morals; a fluctuating belief in charity and aiding the weak; a desire to legalise a core of violence; constructing its past on great, legendary figures; re-constructing history in order to fit parochial aims and religious ideologies; obsession with sex, especially if engaged in by others, and festishising through

clothes-labouring under the belief that the sexual act and procreation are connected in a holy alliance; basing their concepts on narrative, from which other narratives and ideas are extrapolated, such as the iconoclasm of the proto-Hebrew figure of Abraham in pseudepigrapha close to the Christian era, in probable reaction to the Greeks; the idea of iconoclasm is formed and new tales are made of Abraham's attachment to this idea. The powerful effect of writing, a growing technology, with the attendant magical belief in its reality-creating attributes enables new narratives on ancient religious personalities to be believed, and new religions, such as Islam created from this fictional invention. Time, for the Abrahamic religions, is a religious construct.

The construction of the idea of Faith may have been generated by these religions and their adherents; Faith as an actuality stronger and greater and more authentic than any kind of empirical understanding of the world, one that developed the emotional force of fanaticism, and, at times, generates extreme violence. The Abrahamic narratives and myths provide the dynamo's for these beliefs. Michael Allen Gillespie¹ holds that Faith consumed history as *historia rerum gestarum*, a totality of events recorded and understood, determining that all events are considered within specific tautologies, and that imagination or Faith determined actuality. The lack of evidence for Moses and his conquest adventures means nothing in the face of belief: the actuality remains Faith and evidence or empiricism plays no part in deciding what happened in the past. The capacity of pagan religions to exchange ideas through syncretism seems healthier if indeed it may have ensured their demise.

Modern believers in the stories involving Abraham, Moses, Jesus and even the far more recent Muhammad either accept without concern or beaver away exhaustively to convince themselves and others of both the reality of their heroes and of the events they participated in creating additional Millennium BCE to justify their rearranged reality. For many years now, evidence has largely been preferred to imagination, the effects of literature on the human mind, and therefore a different more considered actuality has been dominant. Proving for example the actuality of Moses through acceptance of the actuality of Abraham and Joseph, is evidence of the latter. Dating assumes authentication of both events and belief.

The Abrahamic religions are the child and grandchild of writing and the singular properties of the written word,² its capacity to create an alternative reality-often constructed from the imaginative remnants of the real world of events happening simultaneously and separately³. Religion can be and often is the overarching exponent of literature and its copyist. The Exodus must be situated within the literature and cultural exchange evident in the 2nd millennium BCE and from

¹ Hegel, Heidegger, and the ground of History. University of Chicago Press. 1984.

² Galbraith, Torrance, Hallam. Effects of Writing on Conceptual Coherence.

³ Crisotomo, Jay. C. Language, Writing and Ideologies in Contact: Sumerian and Akkadian in the Early Second Millennium BCE. Sumerian and Akkadian in the Early Second Millennium BCE. Koninklijke Brill, NV, Leiden 2016. This provides modern technical concepts.

approximately 8th century onwards in the 1st millennium BCE. Knowledge of Mesopotamian, Canaanite, Hurrian, Urartu, Old Hittite and Egyptian stories were probably widespread and were available to the Old Testament scribes and compilers.

Religious authenticity and Time:

The problem with Time is a problem with authenticity. As ancient peoples became more aware, they became more concerned with their own histories and anything that would throw a light on their hoped-for antiquity. Growing evidence of Egyptian antiquity had perhaps fuelled a competition in the ancient world. Whose civilisation was the oldest? Whose ethnic identity was strongest? Greeks, Jews, Egyptians? Or, the new kid on the block, the Christians? For William Adler⁴, Moses was part of that debate as in his very person he was located in distant times and in his relationship to other ancient heroes, such as Sargon and Gilgamesh. As historical writing and research was very young, the competition was centred around or included Egypt, therefore Moses' birth, upbringing and conflict with Egypt provided evidence of great antiquity.

The Greeks joined the debate through the antiquity of the siege of Troy, and the semi-divine nature of their early culture heroes, but of course were well-beaten by the Egyptians. The immense antiquity of Mesopotamian culture was not then known, or only through transplanted myths such as Adam and Eve, Noah, and the Tower of Babel. Artapanus,⁵ a Hellenistic Jew, was an early supporter of Moses who sanctioned Moses' part in universal culture. According to Adler, by proving the antiquity of Moses the Jews could prove their own antiquity. This was also the rationale for Genesis, YHWH was at the very beginning of reality and Time, and for Abraham, who predates Moab and Ammon and was connected to Sumer and Egypt. Sumerian culture heroes, such as *Ziusudra/Atrahasis*, were transformed into Jewish figures such as Noah, confirming antiquity. The baton was passed with reluctance to the Christians, who while claiming antiquity through the Jews, claimed it also on their own behalf through Jesus and his putative long list of apparent ancestors. By proving its antiquity, a state or group proved its superiority to another state or group; the Jews proved they were better than the Greeks and Egyptians; the Christians to the Jews; the Moslems to everyone else.

Josephus, moved by scholarship, guilt and pride, employed Moses to categorically prove the greater antiquity of the Jews over the Greeks.⁶ His culture hero was far older in time than their culture heroes. As the Romans were always subservient in Time to the Greeks, and had always admitted it, their great poet Virgil having only recently constructed the myth, Aeneas, that placed them closer in time than reason

⁴ Moses, the Exodus, and Comparative Chronology. Scripture and Traditions. Brill. 2008.

⁵ C. R. Holladay, ed., *Fragments from Hellenistic Jewish Authors*, Volume 1: Historians (Chico, Ca.: Scholars Press, 1983), 189–243. This has been purloined from William Adler.

⁶ The Antiquities of the Jews. Translated by William Whiston.

October, 2001. The Project Gutenberg. Etext of The Antiquities of the Jews***

allowed.

Eusebius, the Christian writer and apologist, used all this evidence, according to Adler (2008), to stake Christianity's claim to antiquity. He was up against some of the best minds and needed to make a particularly strong case for Christian scholarship, as he did in *Praeparatio Evangelica*, as well as creating Christian antiquity. Interestingly, Islam managed the same task by changing the game; antiquity did not only consolidate the debate but a different kind of scholarship based on annotation rather than comparison. The power of words became more important than evidence and ideas.

Eusebius too used the figure of Moses to prove Christian antiquity, clearly believing he needed to do so with intelligent pagans. First, he had to prove when Moses' lived in comparison to and with other events.

A chronology had been established by the Greeks from the date of the first Olympiad. Before this assured date (Adler, 2008: 49) events were considered to belong to pre-history, occupying myth not fact. The various scholars of the period, including Josephus, strived to construct a comparative chronology based upon the appointment of ephors and kings in Greece before the Olympiad. This method could not truly survive faced with Egyptian claims, which, by their own notion, went back 8000 years.⁷ The Egyptians also claimed that all other civilisations were seeded by them,⁸ specifically the Greek. If the Greek, why not the Jews? Manetho, the Hellenistic Egyptian historian, was then referenced by Josephus, who latched onto his claims of shepherd-people leaving Egypt-probably a reference to the Hyksos but as likely contemporary, referencing migration into and out of Egypt during the Hellenistic period.

Abrahamic Time:

Before continuing, this paper will briefly consider Time as developed by Abrahamic religions.

Time changed with the acceptance of the YHWH myths and texts; they are now invariably, where the Abrahamic religions prevail, linked to History, that is some recognised and recorded event agreed upon by others rather than an era. The Chinese and earlier Eastern civilisations connect and connected past with present and future, in that the past becomes both. Time is fused. In the Abrahamic religions Time has several beginnings focused as it is on certain achieved episodes, such as the Hebrew takeover of the hill country- within the uniformity paradigms of YHWH worship achieved within the equally persistent paradigm of religion-induced infinity, when Time effectively ends. Time is consumed by the relationship of god and human beings.

⁷ Plato.

⁸ We now suspect that Egyptian urban-life was begun by traders from Mesopotamia.

Prior to the dominance of the Abrahamic religions, Time was expressed, by the Greeks certainly, through the idea of moral equilibrium in comparison to a golden past, although the consequent morality involved courage, manliness, and virtue. Going back to these meant that in effect the past was the future (see above). The Abrahamic religions view the past, YHWH's dominance (or Allah's) as slowly coming into fruition again, but once it does Time will no longer be relevant. For the Greeks, action and Time were linked, in that the greater the state or endeavour (according to Michael Allen Gillespie⁹), apropos the Trojan War, the greater the hero. The idea of a prior Golden Age can be found in Hesiod's *Work and Days* which speaks of the temporal decline of people through 5 time periods. Alexander's activities were linked of course to the past, referencing and renewing a golden age connected to that distant imaginary war: a time of greater actuality because the Greeks were then united in a single purpose. The Persians, constructed by the Zarathustra religion, saw Time as taking place within paradigms of conflict between good and evil, the positive and destructive, and the resolution of that conflict the completion of Time.

Gillespie posits a Greek and Roman attachment to Time and State, reflected in the Golden Age concept above in the former, with time periods representing moral decline from other time periods. Morality, determined by polis or national state, signified overall perspectives on Time (Gillespie, page5).

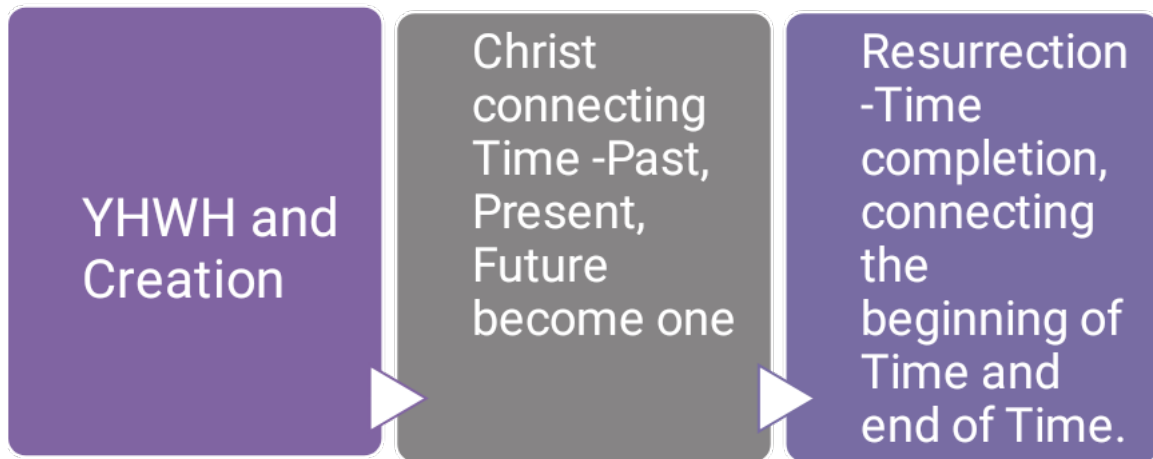
Abrahamic religions hold that the past effects both present and future through YHWH's agents and agency. Moses exists within Time, and exists within the present and future. His actions were/are non-specific in terms of Time.

Gillespie makes pertinent points about Christian Time, which can be seen as different from Judaic time, as within Christianity the Christ figure is expected to return and thereby Time end. As a surrogate YHWH, the above perspective applies, but is focused upon a critical event. He specifies that Christianity created a Time that was no longer transient in that every moment became important and filled with meaning, or in his words *sub specie aeternitatis*-no longer governed by caprice or destiny, but the unfolding of eternity backwards and forwards out of the moment of creation, i.e, out of the *kairos* in which Christ comes into the world. He continues: History in this sense becomes prophetic. While in a sense he is correct, that History acquired a consistent rationale, more so in Judaism, it only can become so if the predicted Second Coming occurs, otherwise such conclusions are in abeyance. Islam's concept is more interesting in that Muhammad can be represented as the eternal present and within his arrival exists both past and present, equivalent at the same time to Judaic and Christian interpretations of Time.

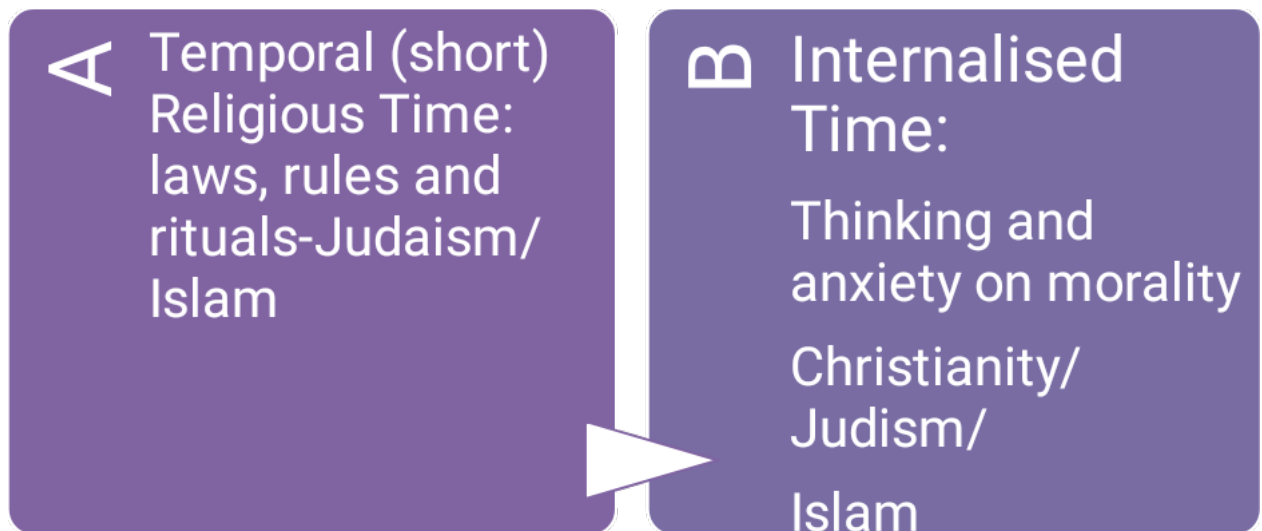
Gillespie makes an equally interesting statement, whereby as history becomes concerned with god's purposes all history must be universal and ecumenical, with Time wrapped up in those purposes, excluding all other (page 7). The pagan past becomes an irrelevant Time-form with no or little consequences for the present. Islam rejects it all, positing itself as the beginning of real Time and History.

⁹ Hegel, Heidegger, and the ground of History. The University of Chicago Press. 1984: Page 7.

The overall narcissism, using modern terms, rejecting all but itself, is extraordinary.



The Christian concept of Time is dependent on the Resurrection to fulfil its potential.



Temporal Time/Religious Time
Broken up and structured into small segments

The effect of the Abrahamic religions on daily time schedules.

Moses/A Chronos?:

It was during this early period of competition between cultures for pre-eminence in terms of Time or antiquity that Moses was linked to Thutmose-although there seems no profound reason for this decision except the arbitrariness of ancient scholarship (Adler: 53). Adler brings into the mix Saint Clement of Alexandria¹⁰, acquainted with both Greek and Hebrew thinking, who himself brought in the Assyrians. In fact a number of historians had involved themselves with dating not only the period of Moses but also Ezra and Jeremiah. Whatever else this did, it served to provide credibility to the Jewish books as genuine history. The upshot of this deliberation was Eusebius' conviction that all the heroes of Greece, real or imagined, existed after Moses.

Modern belief in the actuality of Biblical events stem from this period as before the acceptance of its actuality was not subject to concerns with authenticity. The dialectic between Greek pagan ideas and Faith encouraged reality, in the form of accepted dates for events, to be connected to belief. Thereby, Moses and the Exodus required a specific date to be absolutely real.

Modern scholars see Moses as merely a literary product.¹¹ There seems absolutely no evidence of his celebrated career beyond twisting fact and chronology to express every possible time period and every possible existence, including alien. What might, in this context, seem appropriate is to view him as occupying a different reality, undefined by history and yet defined by it. He occupies metaphor and symbol, leading to other possible truths. In this he can be justifiably compared with Gilgamesh, one clear inspiration, reflecting his liminal existence between the natural and supernatural world, between myth and reality. Or King Arthur, as I have stressed on many occasions, whose legend was written many centuries after the possible dates he may have inhabited, who was created from a composite of Dark Age personalities including Clovis I, King of the Franks, who like Arthur was described as defeating a Roman army. Most stories on Arthur originated on the European continent.

Otherwise, more insidious factors can be seen of an elite group who have, unaware to them and unacknowledged, constructed an alternative reality that enforces their own power and ideologies. This happens all the time¹² in human culture, and largely

¹⁰ Stromata (Misc) 1.21, 104.

¹¹ Ehrlich, Carl S. Moses, Torah, and Judaism. The Rivers of Paradise. Moses, Buddha, Confucious, Jesus and Muhammad as Religious Founders. Ed. Freeman, David Noel, McClymond, Michael J. 2001. William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company. Grand Rapids Michigan/Cambridge UK. Page 24.

¹² Out of Egypt *The Archaeological Context of the Exodus* By James

goes unnoticed. Religion is merely one way to achieve the preservation of power and entitlement, among which is patriarchy. Usually, for example, the most rigid interpreters of religious script can be men of limited intelligence and imagination who gain from a mere accident of birth an entitlement enforced by their religion. White uneducated Christian males were often the most bigoted enforcers of black slavery quoting books or religious literature. Neither the Gospels nor the Qur'an disowns slavery. It is from secularism that such ideas as anti-slavery were formed.

This paper will consider each much-employed argument in order to unravel their merits:

- 1) Attempts to place Moses, see above, amongst Semitic settlers, traditionally the Hyksos, in Egypt from 1800-1200 BCE,
- 2) the monotheism of Akhenaten,
- 3) the problems from 1200 BCE involving the Sea Peoples,
- 4) the Victory Hymn of Merneptah, which appears to indicate early Israeli settlers of the 12th century BCE.
- 5) Early possible appearance of Hebrew writing.

While each of the above occupy a particularised time-frame others chop these matters around placing the Hyksos closer to Akhenaten or further away, at all times avoiding the reality of a low population numbers in the hill-country and apparent lack of written material. These papers have attempted to avoid the seductions of the Biblical stories, which can more logically be seen as fabrications from the post-exilic period, and trace the reasons for their having been written-and possibly why such often violent stories should still be accepted as evidence of the Abrahamic god's existence. Of course I bear in mind that many in the Abrahamic world still hold that Abraham existed and that the added stories of his activities is true, but these will be considered later. To conclude: immense energy has gone into finding archaeological proof for the Exodus and absolutely none has been found. We need to look at other answers for the event other than actuality.

Hyksos:

The Hyksos were West Semitic groups who migrated into Egypt c1800 and became sufficient in numbers to take over Lower Egypt, and create a capital at Avaris situated northeast of the Delta. They had the advantage of a better technology than the Egyptians, who may still have used flint weapons. Although it tends to be assumed that an actual invasion is unlikely, this paper holds that it was possible but as Lower Egypt was probably only loosely governed by the Egyptian King any invasion might have been only lightly opposed. As Hyksos means '*rulers of foreign lands*', elite groups are indicated and therefore an actual invasion is a strong

possibility. The Hyksos may have included Hurrian groups¹³ pushed out of Syria by the Hittites and other expanding empires. Palestinian groups appear not to have been involved. We cannot actually be sure that the Semitic migrants that settled in Egypt from c 1800 were connected to the largely Semitic invaders that arrived later. The Old Kingdom had long had contact with Canaanite cities, and was on mainly friendly terms with a number of them, especially Byblos.

Hyksos rule lasted just over a century before they were ousted by Ahmose. The Egyptians then, presented with large armies that suddenly had no purpose, invaded Canaan. There was an element of revenge and the need to protect themselves from future invasions from the Levant and Syria in their actions, accounting for the later oppression of the Canaanite population. The connection of Hyksos and Exodus originated with Josephus and requires much contortions of history and evidence to be even vaguely credible.

Semitic migrations into Lower Egypt would appear to be reflected in biblical stories, with Abraham migrating there temporarily, and Joseph going there permanently with his family, the clan of Israel. This group, and the stories connected to them, represented the original narratives of Israel while Abraham did so of Judah (Hoffmeier, page 7). Throughout the Middle and New Kingdom Egypt was subject to the coming and going of different Semitic groups, from urban areas and pastoralists. The limited evidence available at present places Hyksos' origins in the Levant¹⁴ but possibly the city areas, and most certainly not the hill country, which by and large was sparsely inhabited. The tendency of nomad groups to visit Egypt for its resources during times of climate-induced crisis or from tradition or through trade seems to have persisted into the 1st millennium. Extrapolating the existence of a Hebrew group into the 2nd millennium is therefore not necessary to explain the recording of these activities. The anachronistic appearance of camels in the Abraham narrative confirms this.

The idea that early Hebrews were nomadic pastoralists is written into people's minds, even though Abraham apparently came from an urban background. It is not necessarily true; it may instead be rather a romantic image or a way of the writers to not situate the Abraham family-group in Canaan until it became theirs, avoiding cities as described in the story of Lot and his family. As YHWH had promised the land to Abraham's descendants, occupying foreign polities, squatters in effect, who were the real reason for the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, would have proved incomprehensible to the writers. Nevertheless, of course those who attempt to look for the truth of early Hebrews often search for pastoralists in the record-the Habiru for example, who true were less pastoralists than anti-city or anti-urban, or Shasu who were nomads and were involved with Egypt at various times but who are normally associated with the Transjordan. Pastoralists of the Late Bronze Age and

¹³ Bernal, Martin. Black Athena: The archaeological and documentary evidence. Rutgers University Press. 1987.

¹⁴ Ryholt, K. S. B/Bulow-Jacobsen, Adam: The Political Situation in Egypt During the Second Intermediate Period c 1800-1550 BC. 1997. Museum Tusculanum Press.

Iron Age I were unlikely to be Hebrew anyway as the ethnic group fitting that picture did not emerge until later. The remark made by Merneptah on the victory stela may indicate that *Israel* references a geographic place in which groups of people lived, possibly the hill-country of later Hebrew Israel, although I would argue that even then their Hebrew ethnicity was questionable, and that the area consisted of mixed groups that even under the later militaristic Omride kings, like the socio-political situation in Moab, formed a loosely formed state. YHWH was a royal god and there may therefore have been a family or clan connection with a similar group in Judah. The Hebrew/YHWH/Monotheistic state was post-exile.

Although it is possible that the Exodus itself might symbolise the ejection of the Hyksos¹⁵, only some might have been forcibly ejected, not all. Being Egyptian depended on language and state of mind not ethnicity. Joseph of course, written by an educated scribe with some knowledge of Egypt, was a rehash of the Egyptian story of Anubis and Bata', which again details the dangers of flighty, treacherous wives, and seems connected to the Persian story of Siyavosh, a mythical leader (with more than a nod to Moses' story). Both stories follow the same outline based upon trials overcome, character development, and discovering the genuine characters of others.¹⁶ Joseph von Rad identified the Joseph story as a wisdom novella,¹⁷ although its impact goes beyond wisdom literature, stressing the nature of character within a religious context-as with Abraham. Its wisdom sections could have emerged directly from Egyptian or Mesopotamian literature, especially the father to son advice of not getting involved with married or flighty women. In that context, both fit the same or similar genre, one shared by other cultures of the time, with perhaps its template in Gilgamesh and Adapa. As wisdom literature, the Joseph story also concerns how the politically weak should deal with the strong, a typical Egyptian concern seen in many stories including *The Eloquent Peasant* and one revealed by the tendency of the Patriarchs to lie and trick their superiors. Like the Abraham story, the Joseph story appears to exist outside of time if not location. It fits no historical period exclusively. It is possible that both the Abraham story and the Joseph story were written by the same scribe, or school of scribes. As with the Abraham story, it seems likely it was written in the Persian period, not earlier.¹⁸ Although commentators such as Donald Redford place it no earlier than the 6th century, this seems generous.

The late composition of the Exodus and Joseph stories, the continued practices of Palestinian and nomad groups in visiting Egypt at times of crisis, and the inversion of events of the Moses story and Hyksos conquest of Egypt suggests an unlikely connection. As mentioned, the placing of the story in the time period seems an artificial construct.

¹⁵ Bietak, Manfred, / Prell, Silvia. The Enigma of the Hyksos. This project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (Grant Agreement No 668640).

¹⁶ Bashiri, Iraj. Ancient Iran: Cosmology, Mythology, History. San Diego, CA: Cognella, 2002.

¹⁷ Michael V. Fox. Wisdom in the Joseph Story. Brill. 2001.

¹⁸ Redford, Donald. A Study of the Biblical Story of Joseph. Brill. 1970.

Enslavement:

Hebrew enslavement is considered by Hoffmeier but the examples given indicate corvee labour not enslavement, and, in Egypt the kind of slavery proposed would be unusual. In fact, the evidence suggests¹⁹ the usual capture of workers common in the period during wars, or from vassal kingdoms as it seems tribute. So from Syria-Palestine 702 workers were delivered to Egypt. Some 1,588 captives were given to Karnak Temple to make linen and do work in the fields. The Amarna letters concerned a statement from King Birdiya/Biridiya of Megiddo that seems to suggest he has supplied people to cultivate fields in Shunem (Sunama) on the orders of the Pharaoh.²⁰ Langer describes children²¹ working in Amun production/industrial centres, but many were the children of beaten kings or princes held as hostages. As Egyptian kings of the New Kingdom functioned within an ideology of property owner/slave in relation to the suppressed Canaan population this has to be expected. Langer described a scene where Nubian children are assessed as Temple property. He later establishes as many as 2,200 children taken as war booty to aid Temple production. The areas particularly itemised were Syria, Nubia and Libya, places with which Egypt was at frequent war. The processes remain unclear, and straightforward slavery should not be assumed. There is evidence that children were offered to the Egyptian king, and it might have been seen as a privilege. Langer (page 59) itemises the work allocated to these human spoils of war, much of it was probably agricultural, some became domestic servants, brewers, possibly bakers and construction workers for Temples and private individuals. Many of the children were of foreign elite groups, so the processes are not clear. None of the work may have been burdensome. Langer demonstrates that such children received an education while in Egypt, perhaps to inculcate them with Egyptian values.

Egypt requested workers from other states when necessary. Egypt also appears to have dealt with rebellious or otherwise difficult populations by deporting them to other areas, probably within Egypt where they could more easily be controlled. How many of these fitted the idea of slavery is disputable, although clearly slavery did exist. In a world where people belonged to a king, he may have received money or some reimbursement for sending labour to Egypt. Did oppressed slavery exist, as the Bible described? Probably not. It may not have been severe due to the concept of Ma'at, of justice and balance, and most *foreign workers* were perhaps exactly that, as in countries like the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia but in the earlier instance supplied by their own political authorities.

Therefore, although there does appear to be institutional slavery in Egypt, it mainly involved captives as a penalty of war, and international corvee labour as a means of

¹⁹ Langer, Christian. Forced Migration in New Kingdom Egypt: Remarks on the Applicability of Forced Labour Studies Theory in Egyptology. Global Egyptology. Negotiations in the Production of Knowledges on Ancient Egypt in Global Contexts. Golden House Publications. 2017.

²⁰ Samet, Inbal. Canaanite Rulership in Late Bronze Age Megiddo. EA 365 (Rainey 1970: 24-27); Moran 1992: 363. Tel Aviv University. Faculty of Humanities. 2009. Academia.edu

²¹ Matic, Uros, 2017.,, The best of the booty of His Majesty “:Evidence for foreign child labor in New Kingdom Egypt. In Global Egyptology. Negotiations in the Production of Knowledges on Ancient Egypt in Global Context: Golden House Publications., 53-63.

exchange between states. People then were regarded as little more than expendable husks, at times as commodities, as can be seen in Mesopotamian religion. The Biblical account of a clan, tribe or extended family being enslaved does not appear to exist. The Egyptians made note of most things but not such an unusual phenomenon. An immense number taken for forced labour (slavery involved selling and usually as private property) would have badly upset the Egyptian economy of peasant farmers and professional artisans and builders so some other arrangement might have been in operation. In Greece, slavery existed by promoting peasants to the elite.

Nevertheless, Ronald Hendel²² holds that Egyptian oppression of Canaanite states may have constructed a mnemohistory (coined by Jan Assmann, the great Egyptologist), which he describes as a dialectic between historical memory and ethnic self-fashioning. He therefore places this memory in the Late Bronze Age and Iron Age 1 transition when Egyptian power, while still imposing, was on a cusp, and soon to wane. He declares that pharaonic ideology was an essential part of the cultural memory. Canaan was seen as the personal property of the Pharaoh and all its inhabitants were his slaves, therefore the Pharaoh was cruel and tyrannical, as some were. The Amarna letters, between the Pharaoh and the kingdoms of the Levant, show King Birdiya of Canaan declaring himself the Pharaoh's slave.

Hendel (2015) admits that the earlier stages of Egyptian rule can be interpreted in a number of ways, but during the nineteenth and twentieth dynasties it grew harsh. There appears to have been intense occupation by Egypt of the subject states, annexation of territory in south Canaan and northern valleys, increased taxation, with direct income to the Egyptian treasury and temples. Egyptian control of Canaan ended quickly and possibly violently, with Egyptian bases torched. Hendel (2015) views this period of Egyptian oppression as a period of Canaanite bondage. They were slaves, but in their own countries. He proposes that Canaanites in bondage within Egypt may have been immediately freed. These included the Shasu, possibly nomads, Habiru/Apiru, seen by Hendel (2015) as bandits, peasants, artisans and scribes. The *mythomoteur* (Hendel: that emerged turned a mixed freed population into a cohesive community. Throughout this process, history was reconfigured into ethnic triumph. The myth of the Israelites being an outside group compensates for their recent emergence as a group or confederacy. The centuries of humiliating submission to Egypt is thereby transformed into Egypt's humiliation.

Hendel (2015) then points to The Song of the Sea in Exodus 15 as the earliest written record of this myth, due to its use of more typologically archaic linguistic features in the Bible. It similarly is devoid of postclassical linguistic features. Hendel places its composition in mid. 8th century BCE. It is a victory hymn for YHWH mainly derived from Canaanite mythology, featuring, according to Frank Cross²³ the mythic

²² The Exodus as Cultural Memory: Egyptian Bondage and the Song of the Sea. Exodus in Transdisciplinary Perspective. Ed. Levy/ Schneider/ Proop. Text, Archaeology, Culture, and Geoscience. Quantitative Methods in the Humanities and Social Sciences. Springer International Publishing Switzerland. 2015.

²³ Cross, Frank Moore. The Song of the Sea and Canaanite Myth. Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel. 1973: 112-44. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

pattern of the primordial victory of the Divine Warrior involving victory at sea (clearly involving the Ba'al myth where he is depicting fighting *Yamm*, god of the sea), the building of a sanctuary on 'mount of possession', and the god's manifestation of eternal kingship. Apart from Ba'al the poem/song includes allusions to Marduk's battle with Tiamat, or the Sea. This also references a very ancient competition with goddesses, or a supreme female deity, and the development of warrior-type masculinity. Hendel traces the myth also to Mari (c1760 BCE).

Hendel (2015) believes that Egyptian royalty absorbed the Divine Warrior ideology, transforming their control of Canaan. Egyptian art, which in fact had always presented the Pharaoh as a warrior considerably larger than his cowering foes, usually a defeated king or chief, now, according to Hendel was shown bearing down on a chaotic enemy. The Song of the Sea thereby provides a counter memory to the Egyptian ideology of the Divine Warrior, making Egyptian power chaotic. YHWH overwhelms the Egyptian Pharaoh.

The Song of the Sea contains the lines:

*You blew with your breath, and the sea covered them,
They sank like lead in the mighty waters.....(Exodus: 15:10).*

In the text, YHWH's mighty arm supposedly derives from the Pharaoh's mighty arm fully demonstrated in Egyptian representations of the triumphant king. The sea in the text is *Yam Suf* or Reed Sea, which Hendel (2015) describes as both a location and an entrance into the underworld. In Egypt, the Reed Sea denoted the boundary between civilised Egypt and the chaotic world beyond (page 76).

The problem here is the transmission of the relieved Canaanite population of 1200 BCE and the later 8th century Hebrew population. Ronald Hendel alludes to the Canaanite population gradually converging into the Hebrew ethnic group but as that occurred some 3 centuries later perhaps a further consideration is possible. That the myth had several different forms in Palestine amongst many different groups, including Megiddo, Gezer, and Hazor, and these differing myth coalesced into Moses (a transmuted Pharaoh/YHWH concoction) and the narrative of the Exodus. The story probably had multiple origins around and within Canaan.

Hebrew relations continued with Egypt and may reflect later relations, and as likely reflect reactions to Philistine incursions into the weakened Canaanite population in Palestine and certainly Shoshenq's raid on the general area in the 10th century BCE which threw local power relations into confusion. This paper suggests that although there is clear credibility to Hendel's (2015) hypothesis the transmutation of Canaanite identity into Philistine and Hebrew can better be understood by the further shocks of the Sea Peoples, especially the Philistines, and the desire to embrace a victorious god-real or imagined-in some form or another.

Slavery seems to have been a many layered institution in Egypt, and rarely accorded

with perceptions of slaves as brutalised and owned body and soul. Most were as much the property of their kings or chiefs as of Egyptian Pharaohs. Ronald Hendel's (2015) narrative makes far more sense than conflating the situation in the Bible with recorded events in Egypt.

Multiple construction:

In more modern literature, again the King Arthur stories consistently come to mind- most of which were not written in Britain, from where the legend emanates, but in France and Germany of the 12th century dealing with the new idea of chivalry. Other more recent examples, are Tolstoy and Stendhal's writing of Napoleon's Russian invasion (Scarlet and Black) and believing the characters each described existed and all the events did too rather than the overarching ones. The novels both present, in different ways, self and group discovery providing wisdom lessons for the readers. It takes only a small imaginative leap to have an overarching god infused into each narrative alongside supernatural creatures and events. The Russian YHWH written in as expressing his wrath against Napoleon, a man bedevilled by hubris, protecting his chosen people with intermittent meetings with Tsar Alexander I to discuss the war's progress, or YHWH similarly deserting Napoleon because he slept with other men's wives thereby of course causing also the death of half-a million men who may not have slept with other men's wives. The possibilities while not endless, are nevertheless numerous.

In effect, the time the Hebrews spent in Egypt sustain the myth of close ethnic identity between Israel and Judah-one people, with one god, and one law. This is a post-exilic myth constructed with the involvement of the Persian monarchy. It does not reflect reality, but the political reality of the 5th century. The myth therefore, here, serves to explain away the clear antipathy between Israel and Judah in later centuries, providing a clear if dubious connection through YHWH. The Hebrew sojourn in Egypt concerns gestation-the people developing and growing in numbers which the Hebrews failed to do under the first Patriarchs. Judah/Israel succeeds in having lots of children, which Abraham and his descendants could not manage. Perhaps other elements in the stories prevented generational resolution, and the only way to make the whole legend work out was to move the Hebrews into Egypt and thereby create a nation within a nation. What else could they have done, wander around Canaan trying to build up a nation through assimilation of other peoples' land?

Actual relationships between Egypt and hill-country.

This paper will examine the continued cultural interaction between the hill-country and Egypt during the 1st millennium BCE, a period of gradual Egyptian political and military decline, and a period when the Bible was written.²⁴ This period involved the growing influence of the Philistines until their military power was virtually destroyed by Shoshenq, the Egyptian king, in the 10th century. Although other empires consumed Hebrew thoughts

²⁴ Egypt and Israel: The Never Ending Story. American Schools of Oriental Research. Near Eastern Archaeology. 80.1. 2017.

Shirly Ben-Dor Evian²⁵ notes that Egyptian material found in Philistia (Iron Age 1) indicates an on-going fascination with Egyptian culture, lotus-decorated jugs, imitations of Egyptian Nilotic scenes, Egyptian style burials are mentioned (page 34) indicating if not direct contact then perhaps the need of a new dominant group in the area to imitate the older one-something the Hebrew states were also it seems fond of doing, appropriating other people's histories. It is known that Egypt remained in close contact with the Levant as far as Dor, the Sea Peoples' enclave. The report of *Wenamun*, truthful reportage or not, indicates considerable cultural exchange between Egypt and Levant/Palestine. Shoshenq's campaign of the 10th century probably lived in stories as well as the imaginations of the hill-country inhabitants, especially as direct influence may have continued until just before the 9th century when Egyptian iconographic representations in cultic practices were common in the general area of present day Israel. According to Ben-Dor Evian this may have covered from 950 BCE until 880 BCE (page 36). Nevertheless, Egypt remained a presence in the Levant, and probably beyond, until the reign of Osorkon 11, which ended c830 BCE, a time of Israeli military ascendancy. Egyptian influence in the Levant and its environs was renewed with the reign of Shabako, 720 BCE, and war with Assyria, then a profound threat in the area. The death of Osorkon allowed for an alliance between Assyria and Egypt until renewed war between the two powerful states with the succession of Sennacherib. A large number of Egyptian artefacts have been discovered in Judah at the time of the destruction by Assyria in 701 BCE, indicating continued cultural contact.

Cultural Impress:

There was sufficient cultural memory around through the literature of Ugarit, Hittites, and Mesopotamians to locate certain events in the distant past, where the Hebrews placed their beginnings. The Mesopotamian stories (myths/histories) were enough to permit Hebrew scribes locate their origins in the Egyptian past, as well as conflating that history with Assyrian and Babylonian transportation of defeated peoples, with their subsequent, if decidedly, unheroic return to a promised land (promised by their Persian overlords) with one too many pagan worshippers. Israel Finkelstein provides a close description of Jerusalem of this period which bears no similarity to Biblical descriptions, at least regarding its size and recovery as suggested in Nehemiah, but describes an impoverished entity.²⁶

Within ancient Assyrian and Babylonian text between 1500-500 BCE can be found prophetic and apocalyptic texts (the latter is the overarching genre) that in many ways resemble Hebrew text²⁷, including the Marduk and Dynastic prophecies of Babylon. Also: Psalm 7.5 and Near East Treaties, Jeffrey H. Tigay²⁸; in 1st millennium Near East retained Sumerian texts, usually through Akkadian translations, found in

²⁶ Persian Period Jerusalem and Yehud: A Rejoinder. The Journal of Hebrew Scriptures. Vol 9. Article 24.

²⁷ Nissinen, Martti, Choon-Leong Seow, and Robert K. Ritner. 2003. *Prophets and Prophecy in the Ancient Near East*. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature. 1-8.

²⁸ Journal of Biblical Literature, Vol.89, No.2 (June 1970) pp 178-186.

Assur and Nineveh, although a few have been discovered in Anatolia, and a small corpus found in Babylonia²⁹; It is now generally accepted that much Greek literature was initiated and inspired by Near Eastern literature, including Odyssey and Iliad³⁰, and of course there are similarities between Greek and Hebrew literature, as has been seen by other papers in this project; Egyptian literature of the 1st millennium consists of stories of love involving heroes and pseudepigrapha employed for propaganda purposes against their Ptolemaic rulers, as well as Prophetic stories, or those alluding to prophets. Adherents of the Abrahamic religions believe prophets are peculiar to the Hebrews, but every ancient society had them. Egyptian gods now interact freely with humans: as Egyptian power became diminished their gods came down to earth.

Nevertheless Russell E Gmirkin *'Berossus and Genesis, Manetho and Exodus: Hellenistic Histories and the Date of the Pentateuch* (2006)³¹ writes that much of the Pentateuch was composed by Jewish and Egyptian scholars at Alexandria. This can be seen in Berossus's *Babyloniaca* (278 BCE) and Manetho's *Aegyptiaca* (285-280 BCE), as well as the table of nations in Genesis. Unfortunately, the Bible provides its own legitimacy from its brilliant, organised literature, but it must be born in mind that the first extant copy is the Dead Sea Scrolls (150-50 BCE, involving possible writing of the original text from 400 BCE)³², which contains copies or fragments of the Tanakh, but a complete copy is the Codex Vaticanus of the 5th century AD. We are moved by fiction, not history.

Sea Peoples:

As there is no evidence of polities in the hill-country, apart from the small city of Jerusalem accepted as not under Hebrew control, the Sea-Peoples may have been a trigger for a later mixed-ethnic polity to emerge. The Philistine incursion into Palestine certainly enabled the urban/fortress development of Shephelah, which may possibly have been the root and core of later Israel and Judah.

Merneptah Stela:

The next is perhaps the most curious as the Merneptah stela mentions Israel, but as the hill-country was replete with very small villages at the time, it is hard to see what resistance they could have put up against large Egyptian armies, and what ethnic identity they could have shared. As these papers earlier claimed, names were sometimes used by different groups at various times, and sometimes a group might have employed various names for themselves. As they were defined on the stela as a People, they could have been group or host of Israel, the head man. More there has

²⁹ Rubio, Gonzalo. *Sumerian Literature*. Ed. Ehrlich, Carl, S. From an Antique Land: An Introduction to Ancient Near Eastern Literature. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers. New York/London. 2009.

³⁰ Allen, Chris E. The Debt of Western Literature and Legends to Their Ancient Near East counterparts. Birkbeck Ancient Near East Studies. ANE Power Politics and Lasting Legacies. SSHC340H4-AAA Assignment 2. 2015.

³¹ Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies, 433: Copenhagen International Series, 15;; New York/London: T & T Clark, 2006).

³² Schonfield, Hugh.. The Essene Odyssey. The Mystery of the True Teacher & the Essene Impact on the Shaping of Human Destiny. Element. Shaftesbury, Dorset. Rockport, Massachusetts. 1985.

been scholarly concern as to whether the hieroglyphics actually read 'Israel', or some other translation is possible or perhaps Jezreel, which might make more sense. Hjelm and Thompson (2002)³³ have suggested the name represents a geographic rather than socio-political entity. Dermot Nestor³⁴ rejects that saying that the hieroglyphic definitely means peoples, although why the Egyptians should have meant it as an ethnic grouping is not clear. They expressed it perhaps of the Habiru, but that was a social phenomenon. He then considers another viewpoint, one these papers have considered, that it references followers of El, a view expressed by myself in 'El, YHWH, ALLAH, but is not happy with that either. In fact, names do not and did not mean that were or are held by one particular group; the name Britain, an ancient name, gives little sense of other occupants such as the German tribes, nor new immigrants. When the name was first used, the people may have worshiped other gods, spoke also an entirely different languages. We do not know what the people of the Harappa culture called themselves, but now should we call them Pakistani or Indian. The inhabitants of Los Angeles are not, for example, Mexican or Spanish speakers. The name could have been chosen, for example, because the group retained a myth of an ancestor of that name or from coming from a geographic area of that name. The date of the stela indicates that it was not likely, if true, to be the Israelites of 300 years later. The name might have been elemental to the area, and every group that settled there may have called themselves Israelite. It is yet another will o' wisp, to be clutched at and then let go.³⁵

In fact, by employing Michael E Bieniada's instructive breakdown of ethnicity³⁶, necessary where ancient Israel is concerned as it suggests, by its own valediction and others that people and state evolved together as compared to city states based upon the city alone we can perceive possible constructions of Iron Age II ethnicity. Bieniada conflates genetic speciation or cultural normative processes with biological evolution, and in many cases, especially in the ancient world when group-isolation was possible, with justification. One proposition of Bieniada is genetic similarity expressed through culture, which must be rejected as merely a myth where Hebrew politics is concerned as the archaeological evidence suggests mixed populations. Adaptive radiation has some basis, migrants settling in a new environment, but also has more basis in myth than evidence. Allopatric (geographic) speciation fits the separation of Israel and Judah but only if we believe that the two groups were firmly connected and not simply tied through elite groups. Although acknowledging the effects of cult practices on ethnicity-development, he appears to ignore language, an important method of gauging Hebrew connectivity. These papers will return to Bieniada's ideas when and where appropriate.

Recent archaeology in the Northern Valleys of present day Israel determining the ethnicity of the inhabitants in Iron Age 1 and 11 (approximate to the 6th century BCE)

³³ The Victory Song of Merneptah, Israel and the People of Palestine. JSOT. 27 3-18.

³⁴ Nestor, Dermot. Merneptah's 'Israel' and the Absence of Origins in Biblical Scholarship. CBR. Currents in Biblical Research. 2015. Vol. 13 (3) 293-329.

³⁵ Nestor, Dermot. Merneptah's 'Israel' and the Absence of Origins in Biblical Scholarship. CBR. Currents in Biblical Research. 2015. Vol. 13 (3) 293-329.

³⁶ Ethnogenesis-an evolutionary approach and the origins of Biblical Israel. University of Cardinal Stefan Wyszyrski, Warsaw 2013.

did not arrive at firm conclusions,³⁷ due largely to the difficulties in separating different ethnicities (a cultural term involving self-identification within group contexts but possibly with speciation attributes) but decided that at Tell Qiri they were not Hebrew; a later site at Nir David (Tel Amal) suggested anomalies but as this was the period of the imagined two Kingdoms, the differences are again probably not Hebrew; at Tel Hadar on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, the dig concentrating on the 9th and 8th centuries BCE, many structures resemble buildings in Syria at the same period. Overall, the conclusion is that the inhabitants were Phoenician, suggested in a previous paper in this project, not Hebrew. Avraham Faust (2000) concludes that Hazor had a mixed ethnic population with evidence of pig bones, and contrasts this with population distribution elsewhere, culturally defined as Israelite. Understanding of ethnicity has to be considered against its mutability and fluency. There are many reasons for cultural change, incomplete even by Iron Age II, and the population of the Northern Valleys seems to have remained Canaanite/Phoenician. Only Megiddo he believes had embraced or comprised Israelite ethnicity during Iron Age II through colonisation or conquest.

Although one definition of Israelite occupation is 4 room houses, such styles could have equally belonged to others predating YHWH worship, when few if any members of the population could be defined as Hebrew. More so, as the area of Jezreel Valley, one of the centres of the Omride Israelite culture, was perhaps mainly Phoenician, this raises questions about the Israelite state and if they were predominantly Ba'al worshippers, ethnically Phoenicia with an Israelite/Hebrew warrior elite prevailing long after Moses and his endeavours. A different perspective can be found in Randall Younker's *'The Iron Age in Southern Levant'*³⁸ who, starting from Biblical text, finds evidence in the 10th century of Hebrew (Two United Kingdoms) public architecture in Beth-Saida and Hazor indicating Israelite occupation, but which clearly looks and is likely to be Phoenician or Syrian. Such buildings long preceded any evidence of Hebrew occupation of Israel, and were used by Phoenicians, Philistines, and Amalekites.³⁹ The area of later Judah and Israel was far more dynamic than often presented, with competing ethnic groups and the consequent worship of several gods.

The possibility is that a relatively isolated group in the hill-countries selectively picked up by osmosis the cultural habits of more successful groups around, constantly redefining themselves through the more aggressive groups such as Ururta, Syrians, Philistines and Assyria.

³⁷ Faust, Avraham. Ethnic Complexity in Northern Israel During Iron Age II. *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* 132 (2000): 2-27.

³⁸ Near Eastern Archaeology. Ed. Richard, Suzanne. Eisenbrauns, 2003.

³⁹ Cojs.org/tripartite_buildings-_divided_structures_divide_scholars-_moshe_kochavi-_bar_25-03-_may-June_1999/



9th Century Palestine BCE: *Although there was probably much greater diversity than usually considered within the states of Judah and Israel, the available evidence indicates that most of the Israelite state itself was probably of mixed population, Phoenician, Hebrew and Syrian, up until the 7th century or later, with Phoenicians dominating in some areas. The origins of the two states might have been completely different.*

Akhenaten:

As the Hebrews had not yet formed a defined ethnic group in the hill country or its environs it is difficult to see how any clear transmission from the Akhenaten form of monotheism could have occurred. The present idea is that monotheism did not occur there until the 7th century, again a generous estimate, and even then unlikely outside the elite. The evidence of numerous idols suggests that many people there did not worship YHWH, and nor was it common until post-exilic times (Carl S Ehrlich: 29)⁴⁰. Before, the god might have been used as a royal totem for getting people together at times of crisis.

As there were certainly no Israelites in Israel until many centuries after the time of the heretic Egyptian Pharaoh, and after his death a series of strong kings would have sufficiently harassed the Hebrew escapees even while in conflict with other powerful states at the time, who may not have been too happy, one imagines, to see a huge militaristic horde heading in their direction. Not only do the Egyptians fail to record such an event, neither do the Hittites, Syrian polities, or Assyrians. It would be similar

⁴⁰ Moses, Torah and Judaism. Ed. Freedman/McClymond. The Rivers of Paradise. Moses, Buddha, Confucius, Jesus and Muhammad as Religious Founders. William B Eerdmans Publishing Company. Michigan/Cambridge UK. 2001.

to the present African and Asian migrations being ignored by everyone involved. We have here surely certain evidence of fictionality?

The Egyptians alone faithfully recorded events, and their failure to record a massive number of free slaves exiting along with the disappearance of an Egyptian army and its king seems truly preposterous. Of course they might have been embarrassed, but ancient peoples rarely failed to record a disaster-in the New Kingdom claiming it was nothing of the kind for they won. The 6 million Hebrews claimed to make up the host would probably have constituted more than the population of Palestine, Lebanon and Syria at that time.

Rightly, the connection is considered by commentators like Donald Redmond⁴¹ as ridiculous.⁴² Donald Redford makes a number of pertinent points about Akhenaten Hebrew monotheism:

The eras of Akhenaten Egypt and 7th or 6th century hill country were very different. Akhenaten's monotheism suppressed other religions, and major Egyptian cult centres of the time, although the Hebrew elite probably did the same at different times. The religions of Ra were powerful, whereas those of Ba'al and Moloch were probably tolerated. Redmond notes the iconographic nature of Aten worship and the aniconic nature of YHWH worship; the anthropomorphic character of YHWH, and the visible but bland Aten. The personal nature of YHWH worship, the worship of Aten through the king himself. The main difference here is central control of worship and control of worship through priests. One expresses the power of kings (political) the other the power of priests (theocratic).

Another reason Ehrlich (2001:30) explores is the supposed unstable state of Canaanite society between 1550-1200. The Exodus involves conquest. Akhenaten's distracted foreign policy had weakened Egyptian control over Canaanite cities, with immense competition between the often tiny polities as a result. From this urban disquiet the Apiru or Habiru arose, disappointed individuals looking for an alternative way of life. This as Ehrlich states was a social not an ethnic designation. At one point it was assumed that they were connected to the Hebrews or actually were them, but that idea has long been discarded. None of these, one assumes, would have easily tolerated sudden competition. Certainly not one that soon identified itself as an invasion force. The Egyptians once again exerted control over Canaan, as detailed above, and throughout this period any Exodus would have been easily dealt with by reinvigorated Egyptian armies. Ramesses II, a successful if perhaps overrated military leader, seems a strange choice for the Pharaoh of the legend, especially as so much was recorded during his reign on temple walls and in Day Books.

Nevertheless, there was one group at the end of this period who invaded, although as

⁴¹ Egypt, Canaan, and Israel in Ancient Times. Princeton University Press. 1992. Pages 377-82.

⁴² My words, not his.

usual it was not as straightforward as that, which was the Sea Peoples or specifically the Philistines, to date regarded as Mycenaean. Present information regards them as having destroyed towns and driven off the populations.

Hebrew writing:

The Hebrew script is generally considered to have developed from Phoenician culture, the cities along the coast of what is now Lebanon. Both Hebrews and Phoenicians were Western Semites, the form of Semitic spoken, and so their languages were closely related. It is acknowledged that early Israelite culture cannot be separated from other Canaanite cultures, as can be seen in previous papers involving child sacrifice.⁴³ The earliest probable incidence of a West Semitic script is from Wasi el Hol near Thebes in Egypt, indicating the movement of Canaanite peoples into the area. On an image of Hathor, who we know was accepted by Phoenicians, are the words in West Semitic '*to Balaat*'.

By 1050 BCE Phoenician script had developed into 22 letters, and earlier papers here suggest that Phoenician involvement with the hill country lead to the development of the Hebrew script, limiting both written material allocated to a possible Hebrew group and to the development of Hebrews as a separate entity. The ease with which the new scripts were written meant that they were easily learnt compared to elite scripts like the hieroglyphics, and therefore were frequently learnt and used by ordinary people. This probably was the case, and as most examples were written on papyrus all so far have been permanently lost. But as also Hebrew ostraca, written words on pottery, are not frequently found either extensive literacy remains a hypothesis. Finding mounds of ostraca (as they were often thrown out as rubbish, certainly in ancient literate societies) would change the picture. Perhaps the Arad Ostraca will do so, but biblical quotes are also needed to confirm the early appearance of biblical texts⁴⁴.

A number of commentators point to oral history as distinguishing many early Hebrew narratives that place the Hebrews in the hill country by the 11th century, but such oral stories could have come from any small group in the vicinity and simply regurgitated by later Hebrew scribes. Avraham Faust's investigations above indicate the likelihood that whole areas of later Hebrew-dominated Palestine were either ethnically mixed or ethnically different from the Hebrews. Others insist that stories could have been recorded by Hebrew scribes who learned their trade elsewhere, but then they would surely not be Hebrew as the script and the ethnic-identity exist together. This argument can only work if there is genuine evidence of early YHWH worship, but there is not.

⁴³ Smith, Mark. Early History of God. Harper & Row. 1990. Page 1.

⁴⁴ <https://www.timesofisrael.com/new-look-at-ancient-shards-suggests-bible-even-older-than-thought/>