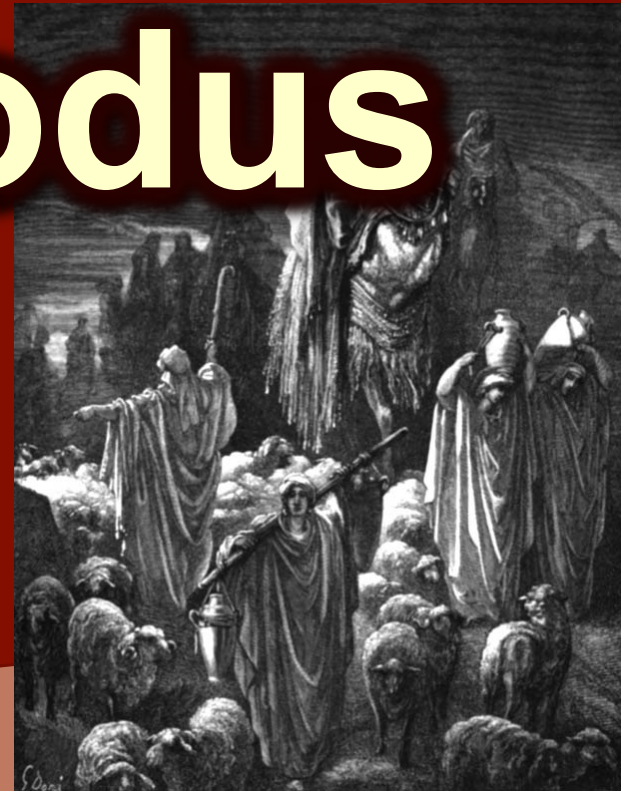




# The Date of The Exodus

By

Chiam Cheng Kiat  
Djenny Ruswandi



Adapted by Dr. Rick Griffith

Jordan Evangelical Theological Seminary • [BibleStudyDownloads.org](http://BibleStudyDownloads.org)

**Canaan**

107

**Goshen**

**Nile River**

**Egypt**

**Mt.  
Sinai**

**Midian**

**Route of  
the  
Exodus**







# Crossing the Sea of Reeds

Yam Suph (Exod.  
13:18; cf. 10:19)  
means "Sea of  
Reeds" but was  
erroneously  
translated as "Red  
Sea" in the LXX.

Amenophis II

# Traditional History of Egypt

**Pyramids**

3100-2686 Proto-Dynastic

**Abraham**

2686-2181 Old Kingdom

**Joseph**

2181-1991 First Intermediate

**Moses**

1991-1786 Middle Kingdom

1786-1558 Second Intermediate

1558-1085 New Kingdom

1098- 332 Late Dynastic

332- Alexander the Great



# Two Theories on the Date of the Exodus

- Late Date Theory  
(the 13<sup>th</sup> century)
- Early Date Theory  
(the 15<sup>th</sup> century)







# Why should we know about the date of the Exodus?





# The Mystery of the Exodus



- ◆ When did it happen? 1446 or 1266?
- ◆ Why does it matter?
  - It is the **most important historical event** in Israel's past, when it truly began to be a nation
  - It stands at the **centre** of Israel's faith
  - Many dates before and after **depend** on this date
  - The choice of date reflects our **belief** (or lack thereof) in the **historicity** and **accuracy** of the Bible and thus has an impact on our **faith**

# Arguments for the Late Date

- Historical Arguments
- Archaeological Arguments
- Biblical Arguments



# Historical Arguments for the Late Date

- The civilizations of Edom, Ammon, and Moab were not in existence in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Thus the Exodus must be dated to the 13<sup>th</sup> century.

# Historical Arguments for the Late Date

- The City of Raamses (Exod. 1:11) was founded by Seti I (1318-1304) and completed by Rameses II (1304-1237)



# A Late Exodus (1266-1299)

## FOR

- ◆ Ex. 1:11 The Israelites built the city of Rameses. It must have been **in honour of Rameses II** (c.1290)
- ◆ Thutmose III was **not known as a great builder** and therefore does not fit into the historical picture

## AGAINST

- ◆ The name 'Rameses' was **used much earlier** than 13<sup>th</sup> century. The city was being built before Moses' birth (**before Rameses II**)
- ◆ He is known to have had some building **projects in the delta region**



# Historical Arguments for the Late Date

- Thutmose IV was not the legal heir to the Egyptian throne, but that in no way proves that the legal heir had died in the tenth plague.



# Historical Arguments for the Late Date

- His father, Thutmose III (1504-1450), was not noted as a great builder.

# Historical Arguments for the Late Date

- The 300-year figure cited by Jephthah is merely an exaggerated generalization, since he had no access to historical records.

# Historical Arguments for the Late Date

- The 430 years of Exodus 12:40 from the late date for the Exodus places Jacob's entrance into Egypt in the Hyksos period (1730-1570). This period of foreign domination in Egypt is a more likely time for Israel's entrance into Egypt.



# Arguments for the Late Date

- Historical Arguments
- Archeological Arguments
- Biblical Arguments

# Archeological Arguments for a Late Date

- The Menerptah Stela (1220 B.C.)

The name “Israel” does not occur in any other historical record or documents before 1220.

- The Amarna Tablet (1400 B.C.)

The name of “Habiru” cannot be identified with the Hebrews. “Habiru” were a diverse people, native Canaanites.

- Archeological evidences

Lachish, Bethel, Debir, etc. support a 13<sup>th</sup> century date for the Exodus.

# A Late Exodus (1266-1299)

## FOR

- ◆ There is **no evidence of widespread destruction in Canaan in the early 14<sup>th</sup> century**. These cities of Canaan stood.
- ◆ Archeological evidence shows that Bethel, Lachish and Debir in Palestine fell as a result of a **violent attack between 1250 and 1200**. It must have been the Israelite conquest.

## AGAINST

- ◆ Israelites **did not cause material destruction** during the Conquest, except Jericho, Ai and Hazor (Josh. 24:13)
- ◆ The destruction might have been caused by **Egyptian conquests** (Pharaoh Merneptah)





# Arguments for the Late Date

- Historical Arguments
- Archeological Arguments
- Biblical Arguments

# Biblical Arguments for the Late Date

- The Old Testament
- 1 Kings 6:1
- Exodus 2:23

# The Old Testament

- The OT does not mention the Palestinian invasions of Seti I (1318-1304 B.C.) or Rameses II (1304-1237 B.C.), very likely because Israel was not yet in the land of Palestine.





# Small Group Discussion

**How does 1 Kings  
6:1 help date the  
Exodus?**

**(Solomon began  
to reign in 971 BC.)**

**How does Judges  
11:26 help date  
the Exodus?**

**(Jephthah lived  
around 1100 BC.)**

# 1 Kings 6:1

- "In the four hundred and eightieth year after the Israelites had come out of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel, in the month of Ziv, the second month, he began to build the temple of the Lord."

The 480 years is a symbolic figure for 12 generations. Because a generation is about 25 years, the actual figure should be 300 years.

966/ 960/ 957 B.C.

300/ 300/ 300 years

1266/1260/1257 B.C.

# An Early Exodus (1446)

FOR

- ♦ *1 Kings 6:1*  
480 years from  
Exodus to the  
building of  
Solomon's Temple  
(966)

- ♦ *Judges 11:26*  
Jephthah assigns  
300 years between  
his day (c.1100)  
and the Conquest

Exodus      1446 BC

+      480 yrs

**Temple =      966 BC**

+      4 yrs

**Reign Began = 970/71**



# Jephthah versus Ammonites

Ammonites

Gilead

Gad

Reuben

Jephthah 1100 BC

+ 300 yrs

Conquest = 1400 BC





# An Early Exodus (1446)

## FOR

- ◆ The length of time assigned to the judges in the Bible **cannot be squeezed into the 150 years** required by a late Exodus, even with overlaps
- ◆ Thutmose IV (Pharaoh after 1446 Exodus) **was not the eldest son**, who was possibly killed in the 10<sup>th</sup> plague

## AGAINST

- ◆ With overlaps and a **symbolic understanding of time** spans, it can be fitted in
- ◆ There are many **other possible explanations** for his eldest son not ruling



# Exodus 2:23

- During that long period, the king of Egypt died. The Israelites groaned in their slavery and cried out, and their cry for help because of their slavery went up to God.
- The 40 years Moses spent with the Midianites is not a chronological figure, but a symbolic figure indicating a long period of time.

# Two Theories of the Date of the Exodus

- Late Date Theory  
(the 13<sup>th</sup> century date)
- Early Date Theory  
(the 15<sup>th</sup> century date)

# Egyptian Sojourn Chronologies Contrasted

Adapted (column 1  
added) from John  
H. Walton,  
*Chronological and  
Background Charts  
of the OT*, 2d ed., 99

400 YEAR SOJOURN	430 YEAR SOJOURN	215 YEAR SOJOURN		LATE EXODUS	CRITICAL
The Patriarchs 2135-1774	The Patriarchs 2166-1805		2100		
Canaan Sojourn 1875-1845	Canaan Sojourn 2090-1876		2000		
Migration to Egypt 1845	Migration to Egypt 1876	The Patriarchs 1952-1589	1900	The Patriarchs 1950-1650	
Egyptian Sojourn 1845-1445	Egyptian Sojourn 1875-1446	Canaan Sojourn 1875-1660	1800	Canaan Sojourn ?-1650	
		Migration to Egypt 1660	1700	Migration to Egypt 1650	
Slavery 1730?	Slavery 1730 or 1580	Egyptian Sojourn 1660-1446	1600	Egyptian Sojourn 1650-1230	
		Slavery	1500	Slavery 1580	
<b>EXODUS</b>	<b>EXODUS</b>	<b>EXODUS</b>	1400		The Patriarchs 1500-1300
Wandering 1445-1405	Wandering 1446-1405	Wandering 1446-1405	1300		Gradual Migration to Egypt
Conquest and Judges 1405-1050	Conquest and Judges 1406-1050	Conquest and Judges 1406-1050	1200	<b>EXODUS</b>	Egyptian Sojourn 1350-1230
United Kingdom 1050-931	United Kingdom 1050-931	United Kingdom 1050-931	1100	(No Wandering) Conquest and Judges 1230-1025	(No Exodus or 40 Yr. Wandering) Migration, Conquest and Judges
			1000	United Kingdom 1025-931	United Kingdom 1025-931
			900		



# Arguments for the Early Date

- Biblical Arguments
- Archaeological Arguments
- Historical Arguments

# Biblical Arguments for the Early Date

- 1 Kings 6:1
- Judges 11:26
- Exodus 2:23

# 1 Kings 6:1

- "In the four hundred and eightieth year after the Israelites had come out of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel, in the month of Ziv, the second month, he began to build the temple of the Lord."

# 1 Kings 6:1

The Exodus occurred 480 years before  
the 4<sup>th</sup> year of Solomon's reign

966/ 960/ 957 B.C.

480/ 480/ 480 years

1446/1440/1437 B.C.



# An Early Exodus (1446)



## FOR

- ◆ *1 Kings 6:1*  
480 years from Exodus to the building of Solomon's Temple (966)
- ◆ *Judges 11:26*  
Jephthah assigns 300 years between his day (c.1100) and the Conquest

## AGAINST

- ◆ a) 480 means 12 generations. Actual no. of yrs is  $12 \times 25 = 300$
- ◆ b) The text is corrupt
- ◆ c) Historian had inaccurate facts
- ◆ This was a generalization or an inaccurate guess as he had no access to historical records

# Judges 11:26

- "For three hundred years Israel occupied Heshbon, Aroer, the surrounding settlements and all the towns along the Arnon. Why didn't you retake them during that time?"

# Judges 11:26

Israel in Canaan 300 years before Jephthah

Jephthah dated --- 1100 B.C.

300

Joshua Conquest --- 1400 B.C.

Add 40 yrs in desert 40

Exodus dated 1440 B.C.

## Exodus 2:23

- "During that long period, the king of Egypt died. The Israelites groaned in their slavery and cried out, and their cry for help because of their slavery went up to God."

# Exodus 2:23

Moses lived in exile in Midian 40 years. The only pharaohs who ruled 40 years or more:

1. Thutmose III (1504-1450)
2. Rameses II (1290-1224)



# Arguments for the Early Date

- Biblical Arguments
- Archaeological Arguments
- Historical Arguments

# Merneptah Stela

Lists Israel in Canaan  
as a people group in the  
13th century

*This is the first mention  
of the name "Israel"  
outside the Bible*

*Ancient Egypt,  
1208 BC*

Arnold/Beyer, 160



# An Early Exodus (1446)

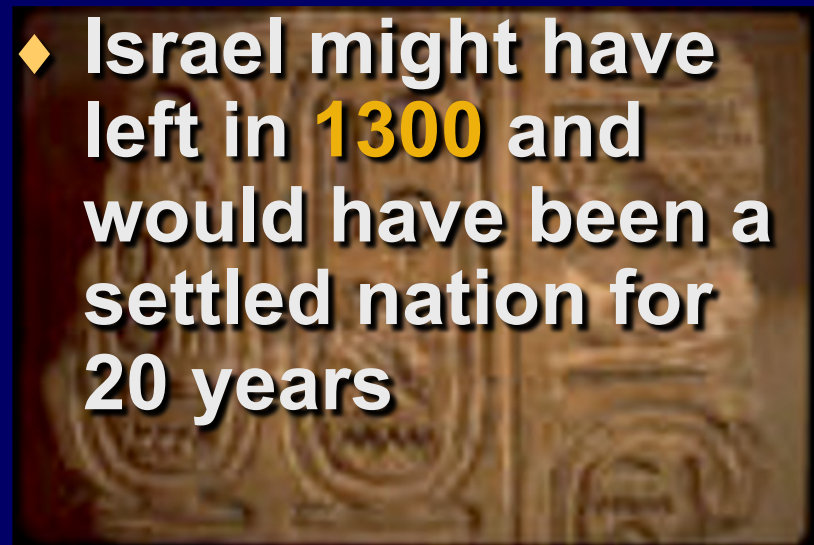


## FOR

- ◆ The Merneptah Stela identifies Israel as a people group (not city state or foreign nation) **c.1231**. If Israel had left Egypt in 1266, they would still have been **wandering in the wilderness** then

## AGAINST

- ◆ This is **not the same Israel** of the Exodus
- ◆ Israel might have left in **1300** and would have been a settled nation for 20 years



"Canaan is captive with all woe . . . Israel is wasted, bare of seed"

Merneptah Stela, *Readings from the ANE*, 160

# Archeological Arguments for an Early Date

- The Menerptah Stela (1220 B.C.)

Israel was already a nation.

- The Amarna Tablets (1440 B.C.)

The “Habiru” that caused chaos was likely the Hebrews.

- The Dream Stela of Thutmose IV

Shows Thutmose IV was not the legal heir to Pharaoh.  
Why not? The legal heir died in the 10<sup>th</sup> plague.

- Jericho and Hazor Evidences

# Arguments for the Early Date

- Biblical Arguments
- Archeological Arguments
- Historical Arguments



# Historical Arguments for the Early Date

- The length of the Period of Judges  
Early Date – 250 years  
Late Date – 180 years (unlikely)
- The Reign of the Pharaoh during the Entrance of Jacob was  
Sesostris/Senuseret III (1878-43 B.C.),  
not the Hyksos dynasty (1674-1567 B.C)

# Egyptian Sojourn Chronologies Contrasted

Adapted (column 1  
added) from John  
H. Walton,  
*Chronological and  
Background Charts  
of the OT*, 2d ed., 99

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			900		

View	400 YEAR SOJOURN	430 YEAR SOJOURN	215 YEAR SOJOURN	LATE EXODUS	CRITICAL	108a
Exodus	Early	Early	Early	Late	Gradual Migration	Egyptian Sojourn Chronologies Evaluated
Egyptian Sojourn	400	430	215	420	120	
Years of Freedom	Unspecified	295 or 145	80	70	120	
Years of Slavery	<400	135 or 285	135	350	none (a myth)	
Exod. 12:40 Text	LXX & Samaritan Pentateuch	MT	LXX & Samaritan Pentateuch	MT	Unimportant	
Popularity	Few	Most common	Common	Few Evangelicals Many Liberals	Many Liberals	
Support:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Gen. 15:13 (sojourn 400 yrs)</li><li>• Acts 13:19-20 "about 450 years" = 400 + 40 + 7 = 447 yrs.</li><li>• Exod. 12:40 "children of Israel" points to Gen. 35:10 (1875 BC) to begin 430 years since this is when nation called "Israel"</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Follows MT of Exod. 12:40</li><li>• Scripture sometimes uses round numbers</li></ul> <p>(See the next few pages for more early date arguments)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Follows MT of Exod. 12:40</li><li>• The new king of Exod. 1 was a native Egyptian who followed the Hyksos</li><li>• Their later date for Abr. Cov. (1875 BC) to Jacob entering Egypt (1660 BC) is 215 yrs.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Archaeology supports the destruction of some Canaanite cities in the 13th century</li></ul> <p>(See the next few pages for more late date arguments)</p> <p>These views are listed in order from the best to the worst perspective, in my opinion.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The city of Rameses (Exod. 1:11) must have been built after Rameses II (1300 BC) since it was named after him</li></ul>	

## 15th-CENTURY EVIDENCE

## 13th-CENTURY REBUTTAL

I Kings 6:1 designates 480 years from the Exodus to Solomon's dedication of the temple. The dedication was 966. That makes the Exodus 1446.

The 480 years is most likely 12 generations ( $12 \times 40 = 480$ ). In actuality, a generation was about 25 years, making the actual figure about 300.

The "Dream Stela" of Thutmose IV on the sphinx gives evidence that Thutmose was not legal heir to the throne. Would be logical that eldest son was killed in the 10th plague.

Only one of many other possibilities. No proof that the biblical plague was involved in the death of the rightful heir.

In Judges 11:26, Jephthah assigns 300 years between his day (c. 1100) and the Conquest. This would seem to indicate a 15th-century Exodus.

This was a generalization or a rough and slightly inaccurate guess by Jephthah who would have had no access to historical records.

To support the biblical chronology of Moses, Pharaoh must have reigned in excess of 40 years. Moses stayed in the wilderness until Pharaoh died. Only possibilities: Thutmose III, Rameses II.

Moses' 40 years with the Midianites is not really a chronological reference.

The Last Level at Hazor, wiped out by Barak and Deborah, contains Mycenaean IIIB Pottery; this requires, at the latest, a date in the late 13th century. This pushes Exodus much earlier.

The judges overlapped enough to accommodate this.

The Merneptah Stela (C. 1220) mentions Israel by name. They must have been there for a long time for the Egyptians to accept them as a nation.

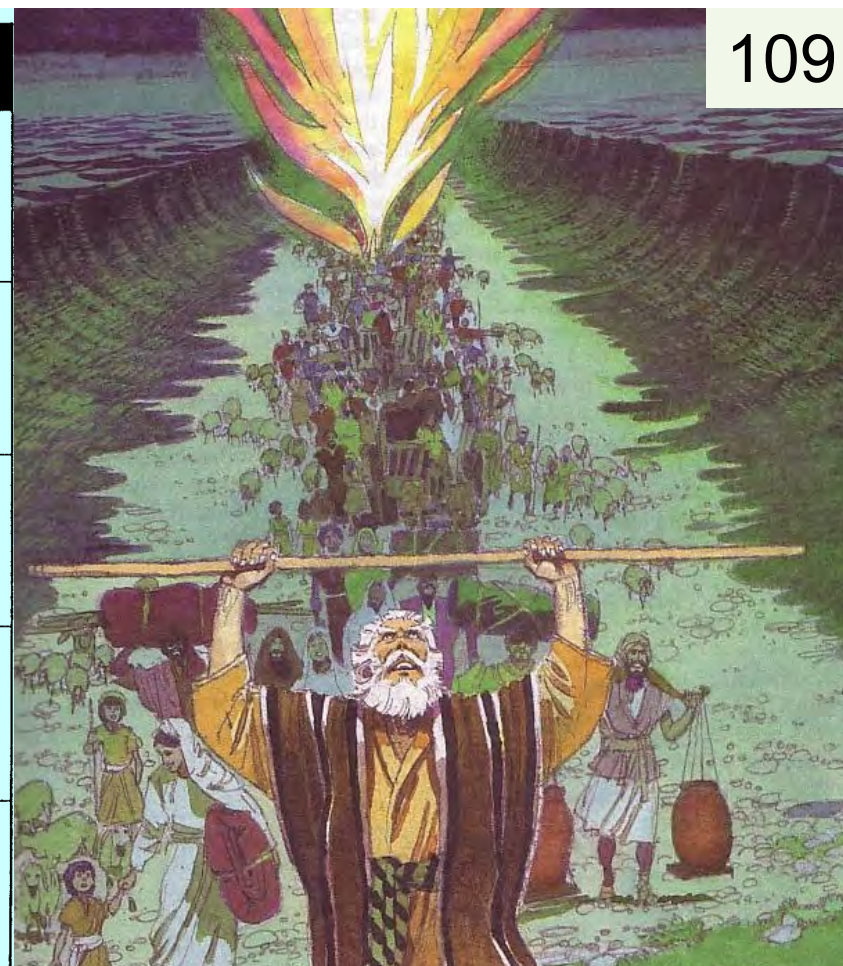
Fifty years would have been sufficient time.

The Amarna Tablets (1400) tell of the upheaval caused by the "Habiru." This could have been the Hebrews, possibly classified under a general category.

The "Habiru" can in no way be identified with the Israelites.

The length of time assigned to the judges period in Scripture, even with overlapping, cannot be squeezed into the century and a half allowed by a 13th-century Exodus.

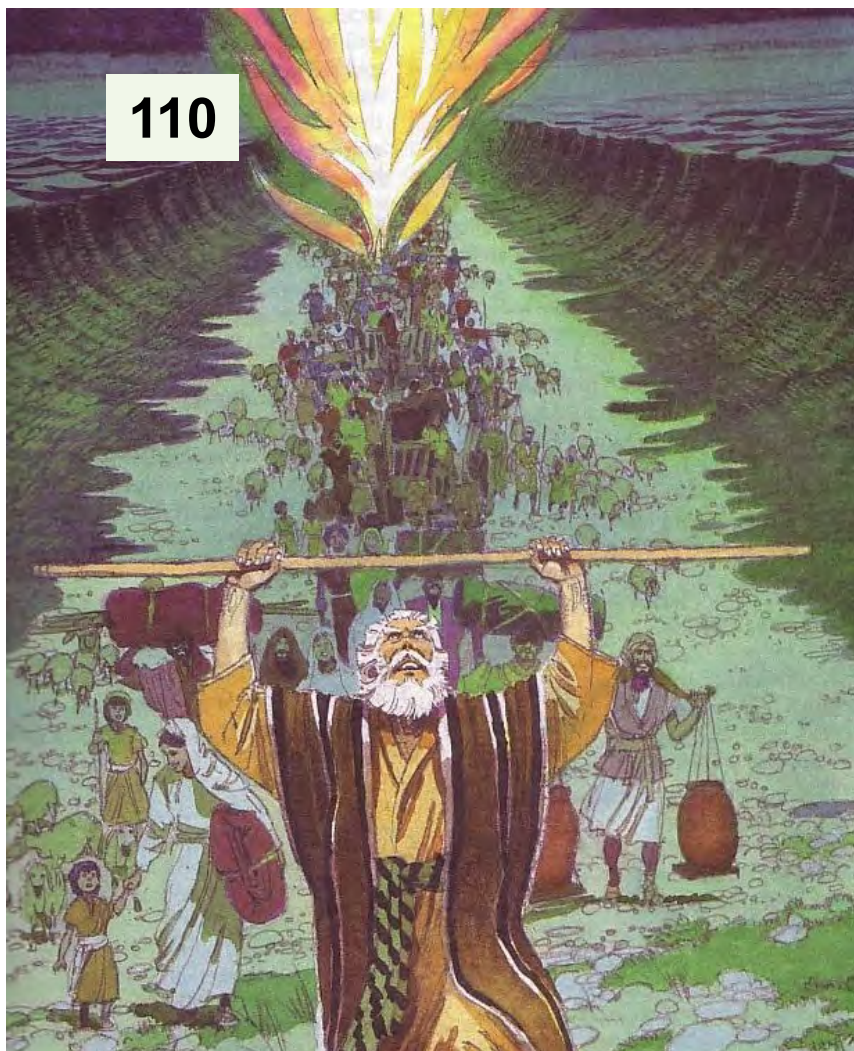
With overlaps and understanding of the symbolic nature of time spans, it can be fitted in.



# Early Date Evidence

**John H. Walton, *Chronological and Background Charts of the OT*,  
2d ed., 102-3**





# Early Date Responses

John H. Walton, *Chronological and Background Charts of the OT*,  
2d ed., 102-3

## 13th-CENTURY EVIDENCE

The civilizations of Edom, Moab, and Ammon were not in existence in the 15th century. Since Israel had contact with them, the Exodus must be later.

The destruction of Lachish, Debir, and Bethel were in the 13th century, as indicated by the layer of ash.

In Exodus 1:11, Israelites were said to have been building the city of Rameses. This must be in honor of Rameses II of 13th century.

The 430 years of Exodus 12:40 cannot fit in with the Hyksos period.

Thutmose III was not known as a great builder and therefore does not fit into the historical picture.

Scripture does not mention the Palestinian invasions of Seti I or Rameses II. Therefore, Exodus must have been in 13th century and Israel was not yet in Palestine.

Pushing the Exodus back means pushing the patriarchs back, and the Patriarchs cannot go back any farther.

## 15th-CENTURY REBUTTAL

Finds at the Timna temple indicate sedentary civilizations in Negev at least in early 14th century. Tribes were wandering earlier than that.

Lachish, Debir, and Bethel are not said to have been burned at the time of the Conquest. The layer of ash could be due to Egypt's conquests.

(1) Name "Rameses" used much earlier than 13th century. (2) City was being built before birth of Moses; thus, before Rameses II, even with late Exodus. (3) This was a store city, not a capital.

The Hebrews need not be related to the Hyksos. There is much evidence that Jacob went to Egypt almost 150 years before the Hyksos period began.

Though not known as a great builder, Thutmose III is known to have had some building projects in the delta region.

It is very likely that the periods of "rest" during the Judges were the periods of tighter Egyptian control. The Egyptian invasions were against the Canaanites.

There is just as much evidence for putting the patriarchs in Middle Bronze I as there is for putting them in Middle Bronze II.



# Conclusion

- “After examining the biblical, historical, and archeological evidence, we can see that both the 1446 [early] date and the 1290 [late] date can be supported by impressive arguments, but at this point in the debate the case for the 1446 B.C. Exodus appears to be the stronger one.”

# Application

- Inerrancy
  - The Biblical Historicity
  - Jewish Festivals and Tradition
- God's Faithfulness
- Parallel to NT experience in Christ



# Additional Information

Source: John D. Currid, *A Study Commentary on Exodus* (Darlington, England: Evangelical Press, 2000)

- Currid subscribes to 13th Century B.C.
- Peaceful Migration Theory (to Canaan)
- Rural Canaanites

# Currid subscribes to 13th Century B.C.

John D. Currid, *A Study Commentary on Exodus* (Darlington, England: Evangelical Press, 2000), 27

- The Egyptian monument first mentioning Israel is a stele of Pharaoh Merneptah (1224-1214 B.C.)
- Historical Setting – The 13<sup>th</sup> Century was a period of upheaval, conducive to Israel's escape from Egypt and conquest of Canaan

**God is not in the picture**

# Peaceful Migration Theory I

*originated by M. Noth and A. Alt,*

John D. Currid, *A Study Commentary on Exodus* (Darlington, England: Evangelical Press, 2000), 29

- “...the increase of settlement in Palestine was due to gradual infiltration of Hebrews into Palestine and a gradual subsistence shift from semi-nomadism to agriculture... no invasion, only a peaceful penetration from outside to inside Palestine.”

This contradicts Genesis 46:31-34, where Israelites settled Palestine as shepherds and were despised in Egypt.



# Peaceful Migration Theory II

*by G. Mendenhall in 1962*

John D. Currid, *A Study Commentary on Exodus* (Darlington, England: Evangelical Press, 2000), 29

- “...there occurred a withdrawal by a faction of Palestinian society, namely the peasantry. This peasantry later came to develop into the Hebrews. The catalyst for their moving out of the Canaanite cities was a revolt, or at least a dissatisfaction with the ruling people.”

Hebrews were not an evolution from such peasantry. Genesis 45:17-20 says Pharaoh invited Joseph's family into Egypt.

# Rural Canaanites

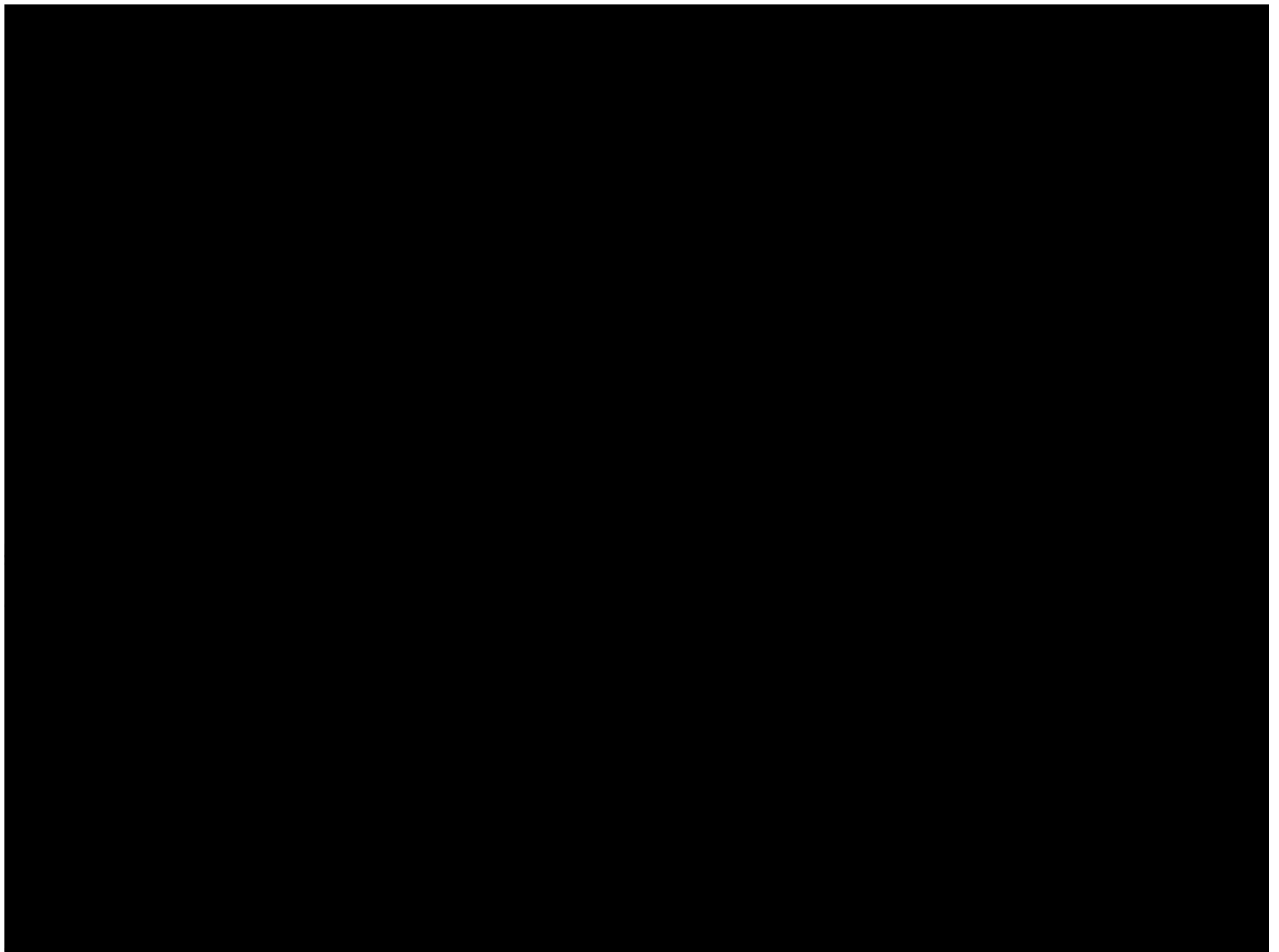
*recently by Finkelstein*

John D. Currid, *A Study Commentary on Exodus*  
(Darlington, England: Evangelical Press, 2000), 30

- “... he believes the change may simply be a shift in the subsistence patterns of the Canaanites. These Canaanites gave up their urban environment and moved out to pastoral villages. Much later, these Canaanites became Israelites.”

Israelites were not an evolution from Canaanites.

# Questions & Answers




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