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**Abstract** Review of *Who Was the Pharaoh of the Exodus?* (1994), by Jeff Williams.

**Jeff Williams. *Who Was the Pharaoh of the Exodus?* Bountiful, Utah: Horizon, 1994. 144 pp., with bibliography and subject index. \$10.98.**

Reviewed by John Gee

## **Who Was *Not* the Pharaoh of the Exodus**

The year 1994 saw the publication of many important studies in Egyptian chronology, some better than others.<sup>1</sup> The study under review, however, was clearly the worst. Chronological studies normally are tedious reads. This one is not. The lucidity of the prose, however, comes not from the author's ability, like A. E. Housman, to take a boring subject and make it interesting,<sup>2</sup> but from a complete absence of a detailed examination of evidence and close reasoning, such as one finds in the work of K. A. Kitchen<sup>3</sup> or Edward Wente and Charles Van Siclen.<sup>4</sup> The average

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<sup>1</sup> James P. Allen, "Further Evidence for the Coregency of Amenhotep III and IV?" *Göttinger Miszellen* 140 (1994): 7-8; Hartwig Altenmüller, "Das Grafito 551 aus der thebanischen Nekropole," *Studien zur altägyptischen Kultur* 21 (1994): 19-28; Jürgen von Beckerath, "Zur Datierung Ramses' II," *Göttinger Miszellen* 142 (1994): 55-6; Jürgen von Beckerath, "Papyrus Turin 1898+, Verso," *Studien zur altägyptischen Kultur* 21 (1994): 29-33; Chris Bennett, "The First Three Sekhemre Kings of the Seventeenth Dynasty," *Göttinger Miszellen* 143 (1994): 21-8; N. Dautzenberg, "Neferhotep III. und Sobekhotep VIII.—Datierungsüberlegungen anhand der Königstitulaturen in der 13. Dynastie," *Göttinger Miszellen* 140 (1994): 19-25; Alfred Grimm, "Zur kalendarischen Fixierung des ihhi-(Freuden-) Festes nach dem Kalender des Königs Amenophis I. aus Karnak," *Göttinger Miszellen* 143 (1994): 73-6; J. Goldberg, "The 23rd Dynasty Problem Revisited: Where, When and Who?" *Discussions in Egyptology* 29 (1994): 55-85; Rolf Krauss, "Fällt im Illahun-Archiv der 15. Mondmonatstag auf den 16. Mondmonatstag?" *Göttinger Miszellen* 138 (1994): 81-92.

<sup>2</sup> A. E. Housman, *M. Manilii Astronomicum*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1937), 1:vii-lxxv, 5:v-xlvi.

<sup>3</sup> Kenneth A. Kitchen, *The Third Intermediate Period in Egypt (1100-650 B.C.)*, 2nd ed. (Warminster: Aris and Phillips, 1986).

reader need not worry about Williams's erudition overwhelming him.

There have been important recent studies in chronology that have radical implications for not only Egyptian chronology but all ancient chronology.<sup>5</sup> It is worth looking at the volume under review as an inferior but typical version of an infamous genre that includes such dubious works as *Centuries of Darkness*, *Ages in Chaos*, *Worlds in Collision*, and *Pharaohs and Kings*.<sup>6</sup>

Jeff Williams's work, while it certainly has implications as sweeping as any recent effort, demonstrates how not to revise ancient chronology, since the crucial insights it relies on do not stand up to careful scrutiny. Williams has noticed that the number of years of the pharaoh of the oppression, according to the *Book of Jasher*, matches only that of Pepy II (pp. 30, 96-7). Therefore the pharaoh of the exodus was the following pharaoh, Nemtyemsaf II. This forces him to conclude that ancient Egyptian chronology as presented by the scholars is not reliable (pp. 31, 52-6). Scholars, he claims, base their work on Manetho (pp. 80-6) and Manetho is unreliable (p. 31). His novel insight requires him to somehow compress the First Intermediate Period, the Middle Kingdom, the Second Intermediate Period, the New Kingdom, and the Third Intermediate Period into about six hundred years

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<sup>4</sup> Edward F. Wente and Charles C. Van Siclen III, "A Chronology of the New Kingdom," in *Studies in Honor of George R. Hughes* (Chicago: Oriental Institute, 1976), 217-61.

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, Jürgen von Beckerath's study pointing out the complete absence of evidence for the Sothic cycle before the Ptolemaic period, which removes the basis for almost all astronomical dating, and thus for almost all absolute dates from the ancient world before about 701 B.C. Jürgen von Beckerath, "Bemerkungen zum ägyptischen Kalendar," *Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde* 120 (1993): 7-22. The opposite position is taken by Leo Depuydt, "On the Consistency of the Wandering Year as Backbone of Egyptian Chronology," *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt* 32 (1995): 43-58. Depuydt's study was done specifically to refute more intelligent but certainly as radical redatings as Williams proposes.

<sup>6</sup> Peter James, *Centuries of Darkness: A Challenge to the Conventional Chronology of Old World Archaeology* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1993); Immanuel Velikovsky, *Ages in Chaos* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1952); Immanuel Velikovsky, *Worlds in Collision* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1950); and David Rohl, *Pharaohs and Kings* (New York: Crown, 1996).

instead of the approximately fourteen hundred years usually allotted. He does this by relegating to nonexistence the Nineteenth through Twenty-fifth Dynasties (by adopting the work of Immanuel Velikovsky wholesale) and consequently produces a series of startling conclusions.

The great thing about doing history with documents you cannot read is that your conscience is never constrained by such things as grammar, syntax, or script.<sup>7</sup> Something Williams does not indicate is that although ancient historians certainly have their share of biases and disagreements, they are generally swayed by a body of evidence and reasonable assumptions that makes the standard chronology fit (more or less). The chronological black holes that some individuals wish to see either simply are not there or simply are not of the size imagined.<sup>8</sup> Because Williams plays around with king lists rather than the thousands of extant dated business documents and memorial decrees, he feels free to propound assertions that have no basis in the evidence. It is not difficult to draw up a random list of documents where both the year and pharaoh are documented and see that not much room is present to compress ancient chronology.<sup>9</sup> And what do we do with all the kings that are attested, although without any year dates? Are they fictitious? Granted that coregencies and some overlapping dynasties exist—for example, the Twenty-second Dynasty runs concurrently in northern Egypt with the successive Twenty-third and Twenty-fourth Dynasties in southern Egypt—other criteria

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<sup>7</sup> Williams's handling of philological matters is ill informed and taken from Velikovsky. Take his equation of Egyptian *rtnw* with Hebrew *'ršnw* (p. 64): In words which are cognate, Egyptian *t* = Hebrew *k* (e.g., Hebrew *kap*, Old Egyptian *kbw* "soles," Egyptian *tbwt* "sandals"; Akkadian *-ka*, Egyptian *tw* "you"). In the Middle Kingdom, Egyptian *t* = Hebrew *z*; see James E. Hoch, *Semitic Words in Egyptian Texts of the New Kingdom and Third Intermediate Period* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 493, example F3. In the New Kingdom, Hebrew *š* is always transcribed in Egyptian as *d* (*ibid.*, 433) not *t*, which is used to transcribe Hebrew *s* or *d* (*ibid.*, 436). The aleph, though weakening in Egyptian by the Third Intermediate Period, was still transcribed and would not be simply left off.

<sup>8</sup> Granted that the First and Second Intermediate Periods leave much to be desired in chronology, the lights go dim, but they do not completely go out.

<sup>9</sup> I had drawn up just such a list as an appendix to this review but its bulk made it prohibitive.

are at work, such as artistic styles, king lists, prosopography, and the fact that monuments of these dynasties are found in different parts of the country. These factors help us determine that the dynasties are synchronic. Williams would like to say that the Nineteenth and Twenty-sixth Dynasties are identical, but the artwork they produce is dramatically different, and in that artwork the proportions of the human figure are not only different, but also consistently different.<sup>10</sup> Handwriting styles also vary; no abnormal hieratic documents exist for the reign of Ramses II, but they do for Necho II.<sup>11</sup> And what do we do about the documented year dates? Do we believe that Necho II/Ramses II was schizophrenic the first sixteen years of his reign, but that the Ramses II personality won out for the next fifty years? And did all the courtiers and scribes in the country somehow go along with it by writing the documents in different handwriting and artistic styles for the separate personalities? Or do we have the megalomaniac "Ramses the Ubiquitous"<sup>12</sup> actually masquerading as Necho II during the battle of Qadesh and then going back and changing all his official propaganda on such things as temple walls and ostraca?

Williams justifies ignoring the existence of Ramses II by asserting that "there are no Greek or scriptural accounts of this mighty pharaoh" (p. 69). Why should there be? The Bible only mentions three pharaohs by name—Taharqa (2 Kings 19:9; Isaiah 37:9), Necho II (2 Kings 23:29, 33–5; 2 Chronicles 35:20, 22; 36:4; Jeremiah 46:2), and Apries (Jeremiah 44:30; KJV "Pharaoh Hophra")—all within the last hundred and fifty years of Judah's existence; and the Egyptians give Israel the same courtesy and rarely mention it.<sup>13</sup> According to the conventional chronology,

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<sup>10</sup> See Gay Robins, *Proportion and Style in Ancient Egyptian Art* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994), 148–69, esp. 254–7.

<sup>11</sup> Heinz-Josef Thissen, "Chronologie der frühdemotischen Papyri," *Enchoria* 10 (1980): 108; John Gee, "Two Notes on Egyptian Script," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 5/1 (1996): 169, for an overview, see 162–4, 166–70.

<sup>12</sup> For the epithet, see Edna R. Russmann, *Egyptian Sculpture: Cairo and Luxor* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1989), 150.

<sup>13</sup> The conspicuous exception is the "Israel" stela, for which see, now, Thomas von der Way, *Göttergericht und "Heiliger" Krieg im alten Ägypten: Die Inschriften des Merenptah zum Libyerkrieg des Jahres 5* (Heidelberg: Heidelberg Orientalverlag, 1992); an English translation of this document is conve-

Ramses II lived somewhere around the same time as the fall of Troy (assuming it occurred), which is already a distant memory at the time of Homer, one of the earliest Greek authors. The Greeks first appear in large numbers in Egypt with the Twenty-sixth Dynasty (almost 600 years later). The oldest Greek inscription in Egypt is a graffito left by the mercenary Archon, son of Amoibichos on the leg of a statue of Ramses II at Abu Simbel during the campaign of Psammetichus II into Nubia in 593 B.C.<sup>14</sup> (If that had really been the father of Psammetichus II, would Psammetichus have stood for it?)

Williams also concludes that there were no Hittites! Even though the Bible mentions Hittites,<sup>15</sup> Williams thinks that the reference should refer instead to the Chaldeans: "In order to form a true picture of ancient times, many 'ghost' nations will have to be eliminated, such as the 'Hittite Empire'" (p. 112). Williams would dismiss the rock carvings at Yazilikaya with a wave of the hand as Lydian (p. 72). But Williams needs to explain not just the rock carvings at Yazilikaya (and presumably those of Alaja Hüyük), but the thousands of tablets from nearby Boghazköy,<sup>16</sup> tablets that incidentally discuss Ramses II and the battle of Qadesh as well as provide Hittite copies of the treaty between the two countries.<sup>17</sup> His syncretizing kings becomes almost comical: "Since we have already identified Necho as Ramses II and Kadesh as Carchemish, we must conclude that Hattusilis was Nebuchadnezzar" (p. 71).

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niently available in Miriam Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature: A Book of Readings* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 2:73-8.

<sup>14</sup> Reproduced in P. W. Pestman, *The New Papyrological Primer*, 2nd ed. (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 6-7.

<sup>15</sup> Genesis 15:20; 23:10; 25:9; 26:34; 36:2; 49:29-30; 50:13; Exodus 3:8, 17; 13:5; 23:23, 28; 33:2; 34:11; Numbers 13:29; Deuteronomy 7:1; 20:17; Joshua 1:4; 3:10; 9:1; 11:3; 12:8; 24:11; Judges 1:26; 3:5; 11:3; 1 Samuel 26:6; 2 Samuel 11:3, 6, 17, 21, 24; 12:9-10; 23:39; 1 Kings 9:20; 10:29; 11:1; 15:5; 2 Kings 7:6; 1 Chronicles 11:41; 2 Chronicles 1:17; 8:7; Ezra 9:1; Nehemiah 9:8; Ezekiel 16:3, 45. Apparently, if Williams thinks that something did not exist, it does not matter whether it was mentioned in the Bible or not.

<sup>16</sup> Discussed in Oliver R. Gurney, *The Hittites*, 4th ed. (London: Penguin, 1990), 3-4. This readily available overview should have been in Williams's bibliography before he so glibly dismissed the existence of the Hittites.

<sup>17</sup> Most recently available in translation in Gary Beckman, *Hittite Diplomatic Texts* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996), 90-5.

His simplistic equation of Hattusilis III with Nabu-kudurri-usir II<sup>18</sup> ignores several important facts, not the least of which is that although Nabu-kudurri-usir II defeated Necho at Carchemish, Muwatallis II—and not his brother Hattusilis III—defeated Ramses II at Qadesh.<sup>19</sup> Hattusilis III wrote an apologetic account in Hittite of his taking the throne from his nephew Urhi-Teshub,<sup>20</sup> while Nabu-kudurri-usir II, who succeeded his father on the throne, wrote his inscriptions in Akkadian.<sup>21</sup> No one having read from either of these in the original could possibly make the mistake of merging these two kings, since the two languages are not mutually intelligible—they do not even use the same form of the script. The Hittites are coincidentally the ones who may perhaps give evidence for the existence of the Achaean hosts outside of Homer (in the reign of Mursilis II, the father of Muwatallis II and Hattusilis III).<sup>22</sup> Score one for the conventional chronology.

Once one starts relegating well-attested individuals and empires like Ramses II and the Hittites to nonexistence, surely one is on the wrong track. Williams's problems actually start before the adoption of Velikovsky. Williams assumes that modern scholars rely heavily on Manetho in working with chronology. Yet read what Wentz and Van Siclen say in working out their chronology:

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<sup>18</sup> The name is given in Akkadian as Nabu-kudurri-ušir ("Nabu protect the heir!"), producing biblical Nebuchadrezzar; this was altered by Jews opposed to Babylonian rule to Nabu-kudani-ušir ("Nabu protect the jack-ass!") producing biblical Nebuchadnezzar. One can tell the opinion of the writer of the Bible by the spelling of the name. Nevertheless, it is doubtful that anyone ever called him Nebuchadnezzar to his face.

<sup>19</sup> Gurney, *The Hittites*, 27–8, 181; Nicolas Grimal, *A History of Ancient Egypt*, trans. Ian Shaw (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), 253–8 (Williams lists this in his bibliography, but apparently did not read it).

<sup>20</sup> Conveniently in Johannes Friedrich, *Hethitisches Elementarbuch*, 2nd ed. (Heidelberg: Winter, 1960), 42–63; portions may even be found in the questionable Warren H. Held Jr., William R. Schmalstieg, and Janet E. Gertz, *Beginning Hittite* (Columbus, Ohio: Slavica, 1987), 98–111.

<sup>21</sup> Readily available grammars and chrestomathies for Akkadian do not use inscriptions of Nabu-kudurri-usir II. Nevertheless, inscriptions of his may be found *inter alia* in J. N. Strassmaier, *Inschriften von Nabuchodonosor, König von Babylon (605–561 v. Chr.) von den Thontafeln des Britischen Museums* (Leipzig: Pfeiffer, 1889).

<sup>22</sup> See the discussion in Gurney, *The Hittites*, 38–47.

It cannot be denied, however, that the important Eighteenth Dynasty is somewhat confused in the surviving excerpts from Manetho's history, and it has become something of a parlor game to try to reconcile Manetho's kings and the lengths of their reigns with ancient Egyptian data. Because of the extreme difficulties presented by that portion of Manetho that treats the New Kingdom, the chronology that we are proposing relies as little as possible upon data supplied by the excerpts or by modern interpretations of them.<sup>23</sup>

Or consider Kitchen's discussion of Manetho in his careful chronological study of the Third Intermediate Period (that Williams claims is nonexistent): "It is vain to expect total confirmation from the monuments for all our extant 'Manetho'; nor should we manipulate the evidence of the monuments merely to fit the extant text of the Epitome of Manetho."<sup>24</sup>

Donald B. Redford, in his thorough survey of the various sources to which Manetho might have had access, concludes the following of Manetho: "The Aegyptiaca of Manetho is the response to the second Ptolemy's policies of political conciliation and scholarly patronage. . . . In the main he worked from Demotic sources in temple libraries, not from the monuments themselves."<sup>25</sup> Do Egyptologists rely on Manetho? Generally, no.

This brings us to the reign of Pepy II. How do we know that he reigned for 94 years? The highest dates attested for Pepy II are the somewhat doubtful year 65 (biannual cattle count, ḥsbt 33?) found in the chapel of Queen Udjebten, and the year after the thirty-first count (year 62) at the Hatnub quarries.<sup>26</sup> Where do we learn about the other twenty-nine years? From Manetho!

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<sup>23</sup> Wente and Van Siclen, "A Chronology of the New Kingdom," 217-9.

<sup>24</sup> Kitchen, *Third Intermediate Period in Egypt*, 448; cf. 448-54, where the problem is discussed in detail.

<sup>25</sup> Donald B. Redford, *Pharaonic King-Lists, Annals and Day-Books: A Contribution to the Study of the Egyptian Sense of History* (Mississauga, Ont.: Benben, 1986), 336.

<sup>26</sup> W. Stevenson Smith, "The Old Kingdom in Egypt and the Beginning of the First Intermediate Period," in *The Cambridge Ancient History*, 3rd ed. (London: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 1.2:195; cf. Grimal, *A History of Ancient Egypt*, 89.

“Manetho tells us that he came to the throne at the age of six and lived to be one hundred.”<sup>27</sup> Thus Williams’s theory rests on the foundation of a date from a source that he himself tells us is untrustworthy. Williams’s other source, the *Book of Jasher*, is an even later and less trustworthy compilation of sources that may or may not have any validity.<sup>28</sup> Thus no reasonable basis for Williams’s thesis exists, nor for his book.

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<sup>27</sup> Smith, “The Old Kingdom in Egypt,” 194–5; Alan H. Gardiner, *Egypt of the Pharaohs: An Introduction* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), 436; William W. Hallo and William Kelly Simpson, *The Ancient Near East: A History* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971), 228–9. The excerpts of Manetho may be found in W. G. Waddell, trans., *Manetho* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1980), 54.

<sup>28</sup> Edward J. Brandt, “The Book of Jasher and the Latter-day Saints,” in *Apocryphal Writings and the Latter-day Saints*, ed. C. Wilfred Griggs (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1986), 297–318.