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FINDING EXODUS: AN EXEGESIS OF EXODUS 1:8–21

B. STEPHEN KERR

Know well that your seed shall be strangers in a land that is not their own and they shall be enslaved and afflicted four hundred years. But upon the nation for whom they slave I will bring judgment, and afterward they shall come forth with great substance.”¹ These were the words of Jehovah to Abram as he slept and received a divine manifestation. This likely late insertion by an unknown author prepares the reader for the Bible’s watershed event: the Exodus. Perhaps no other biblical story has elicited more discussion nor been more vehemently defended. In this paper I will holistically look at the historicity of Exodus 1 as a case study for the Exodus narrative. I hope to demonstrate that elements of the Exodus are historically plausible, but by no means axiomatic historical fact. I will limit my study to the unnamed pharaoh, the pharaonic oppressions, and the midwives.

I commence my inquiry with several fundamental assertions. First, let us recognize that many of the conclusions we can come to are based, primarily, upon the questions we ask. One well-known author has written:

New knowledge depends on what questions you ask—and don’t; how the way you present research shapes the questions you can ask and how you answer them. Most important, you will understand how the knowledge we all rely on depends on the quality of research that supports it and the accuracy of its reporting.²

If I regard the Exodus as a historically reliable source, I will likely be biased in the way I collect and report my evidence. Conversely, if I reject the Exodus narrative as a source of historically reliable information, I run the risk of perpetuating grotesque errors should the source be shown to contain reliable information. A problem with much of scholarship is the unwillingness, on the

1. Genesis 15:13. The Translation comes from Robert Alter, *The Five Books of Moses: A Translation with Commentary* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2004), 75.

2. Wayne C. Booth and Gregory G. Colomb and Joseph M. Williams, *The Craft of Research* (3rd ed.; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 4.

part of the scholar, to admit that his or her declared truth is no more than pet theory. Evidence must be weighed, new questions must be raised, and we must be willing to admit that our beliefs, our “knowledge,” may be incorrect as new sources surface. Having clarified my views, in this paper I present evidence that lends credence to my claims and that can be tested empirically. Future research will either vindicate or negate the claims I make in this paper.

A Proposed Methodology

Just as important as the questions that we ask are the methodologies that guide our work. Before we get into the text proper, permit me to outline the methodology I follow throughout this study. Let me say that I am an unabashed believer in multiple Pentateuchal sources. While I have serious concerns with the separation of the sources, I am an advocate for a multiple source theory. In this paper I will reference some of those sources. I also adhere to the theories of form criticism and rely heavily upon the contextual method. I believe that by conservatively comparing related literature and archaeological findings we can determine with greater accuracy the historical plausibility of the text. This approach does not work all of the time, but I accept as fact that these methodologies can provide us with new insights into the meaning of the biblical text.

By applying contextual, source, and form criticism to Exodus 1, we will gain greater understanding into the possible meaning of the text. We must ask questions like:

- Is the pericope or similar phraseology used elsewhere in the Bible?
- Does the text fit a recognizable genre?
- Can we corroborate the text with external sources?
- Does the story fit into the claimed context?

These questions will guide much of this study. Let us now look at the text proper.

Which Text?

Anytime we consider the biblical text, we have to be aware of variant readings found in other versions of the Hebrew Bible. The conclusions we come to are based upon what questions we ask, but *also* what text we use. Here I provide a translation of the text from the Hebrew, and provide alternative readings in the footnotes:

1 These are the names of the Israelite people who came to Egypt with Jacob; each man came with his household. **2** Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah, **3** Issachar, Zebulun, and Benjamin, **4** Dan, and Naphtali, Gad, and Asher. **5** All of the persons who were born to Jacob numbered seventy. But Joseph was already in Egypt. **6** And Joseph died, and all of his brothers, as well as that entire generation; **7** yet the Israelite people multiplied, swarmed, became great, and tremendously mighty, in so much that the land became

filled with them. **8** Then a new king arose over Egypt who knew³ not Joseph. **9** And he said to his people, “Look, the Israelite people⁴ are more numerous and mighty than us. **10** Come,⁵ let us deal wisely with them⁶ lest they⁷ multiply, and if war arises, they will join with those who hate us, wage war with us, and go up from the land.” **11** Therefore they⁸ set taskmasters about them to humble them with forced labor. And they built storage⁹ cities for Pharaoh: Pithom and Rameses.¹⁰ **12** And though they¹¹ humbled them,¹² they¹³ multiplied and spread, and they came to loath the Israelites. **13**¹⁴ And the Egyptians worked the Israelites severely, **14** and made their lives bitter with hard work in mortar and bricks and with all kinds of field work. All of the work with which they worked them was severe. **15** And the king of Egypt spoke to the midwives of the Hebrew women,¹⁵ the name of one of them was Shiphrah, and the name of the second was Puah, **16** and he said, “When you deliver for the Hebrew women, and see them upon the two stones,¹⁶ if it is a boy, you will kill him; however, if it is a girl, you will let her live.” **17** However, the midwives feared Elohim; therefore, they would not do as the king of Egypt had spoken to them, and they let the boys live. **18** Then the king of Egypt¹⁷ summoned the midwives and said to them, “Why have you done this thing, and permitted the boys to live?” **19** Then the midwives said to Pharaoh, “Because the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women, they are lively and before the midwife comes to them

3. The Hebrew, עִד, is sometimes to be interpreted as a term which refers to a covenant relationship. It is possible to render the Hebrew: “Who covenanted not with Joseph.” While this is possible, I do not believe that the text warrants this interpretation.

4. Here the text contains the expected יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּנֵי, however, it is preceded by the word עַם. This is the same word that Pharaoh uses to describe his own people. This could hint at the idea that the writer of this text understood the Israelites to be a distinct people.

5. The MT has this verb in the singular, whereas other versions read it as a plural. Seeing as Pharaoh is referring to his own people, עַם, a word which can text either singular or plural verbs, it can translated as a singular or as a plural. It is a collective plural.

6. The MT literally reads “to him.” The LXX, the Syriac, Targum secundum, and Targum-Jonathan record this as a plural. We understand this as a collective plural.

7. The MT literally reads “lest he multiply.” The Syriac, Targum secundum, and Targum-Jonathan record this as a plural. We understand this as a collective plural. It is interesting that the LXX has this in the singular. It would appear that LXX translators were using a text very close to the MT, and adjusted some words, while leaving others untouched.

8. The LXX and Vulgate have this in the singular.

9. The LXX reads, “fortified cities.”

10. The LXX adds, “and On, that is Heliopolis.”

11. Targum Onkelos adds says “the Egyptians.”

12. I.e., the Israelites.

13. I.e., the Israelites.

14. Verses 13 and 14 are usually attributed to the P source based on vocabulary. Another reason for assigning these verses to P is that the Israelites are no longer referred to in the collective plural, but in the normal 3cp.

15. This phrase can be read “Hebrew midwives” or “the midwives of the Hebrews.” While we cannot be exactly certain as to which interpretation is correct, we do know that the names of the midwives are of Semitic origin.

16. The LXX reads “when they are about to drop the child.” This is likely an interpretation of the MT and not a literal translation.

17. The Samaritan Pentateuch reads “Pharaoh.”

they give birth.” **20** And Elohim was good to the midwives; and the people multiplied and became very mighty. **21** And because the midwives feared Elohim, he made them households. **22** Then Pharaoh commanded all his people, “Every boy that is born to the Hebrews¹⁸ you shall throw into the Nile, but you shall let every girl live.

The Structure

- I. Bridging the gap between Genesis and Exodus (1:1–7)
- II. Introduction of the new king (1:8)
 - A. Unnamed Pharaoh begins to rule in Egypt (1:8)
 - B. Pharaoh is worried about the increasing of the Israelites (1:9)
- III. The plot to thwart the Israelites is proposed (1:10)
 - A. Pharaoh addresses the people (1:10)
 - B. Introduces the people to the idea that the Israelites can be harmful (1:10)
- IV. The plan is carried out (1:11–14)
 - A. Taskmasters are set over the Israelites (1:11)
 - B. Initial results (1:12)
 - a. The plan backfires: the Israelites multiply even more (1:12)
 - b. The Egyptians intensify the labor (1:13–14)
- V. Introduction of the midwives (1:15)
 - A. Shiphrah and Puah enter the scene (1:15)
 - B. Pharaoh addresses the midwives (1:16)
 - a. Pharaoh’s dictates the death of the firstborn males (1:16)
 - b. The midwives disobey Pharaoh (1:17)
 - C. Pharaoh questions the midwives (1:18)
 - a. The midwives makeup an excuse (1:19)
 - b. God deals kindly with the midwives (1:20–21)

I will briefly explain this outline. I have divided the Exodus pericope into five sections and then subdivided those five sections into smaller units.

The story is not written poetically or according to any noticeable linguistic structure; therefore, I have chosen to bifurcate the narrative based upon cause and effect. Let me explain the cause and effect outline.

The first section connects the end of Genesis with the beginning of Exodus. The second section introduces the new king. Without knowledge that a new king has arisen over Egypt, the third section would make less sense and lead us to alternative conclusions. The story has been structured in a way that each piece of information is necessary in order to get to the next phase of the narrative; nothing appears arbitrary. The pericope under consideration is a smaller unit of a larger narrative: “The Exodus.” This smaller unit is necessary

18. “To the Hebrews” is not found in the MT. I have taken this from the Samaritan Pentateuch, LXX, and Targummim.

to understand each of the events that follow, and though it may seem boorish to separate the Exodus narrative into smaller subunits—boorish because there is a clear-cut cause-and-effect structure as I have outlined—we can see places where the narratives transition into new sub-pericopes. For this reason I have divided based on cause and effect.

Outlining the text may give us clues as to the text's literary function. The above outline helps us to see that Exodus 1 has been strategically placed and structured. Verses 8 through 21 serve a didactic purpose in that they move the biblical narrative from one extreme to another. The Joseph stories portray a time when foreign relations between the Israelites and the Egyptians were strong and healthy. At the end of Genesis we find a kind of last will and testament of Joseph. Joseph, in contrast to the Israelites in the Exodus, receives leave from Pharaoh in order to go and bury his father.¹⁹ We note that in this instance this Pharaoh has no qualms about allowing Joseph to leave so he may keep a promise he made to his father.²⁰ This is contrasted by the Israelites' experience contained in the Exodus literature. The introductory verses of Exodus 1 assist the audience's understanding of the swift transition that is about to occur. In spite of what has previously occurred under the life of Joseph, the current Israelites encounter hardship and opposition. While this initial chapter in Exodus can be seen as an individual unit, its purpose can be recognized and understood only in the greater Exodus narrative.

Genre

In this section I will take up the problem of *genre*. Defining and using genre has been one of the major difficulties in biblical studies in past and present scholarship. In many instances generic categories have been applied too rigidly. Conversely, many scholars ignore genre completely and fall into the trap of "parallelomania,"²¹ seeing biblical parallels in every facet of Near Eastern culture. Clearly we need testable methodologies; however, literary- and history-based disciplines are not hard sciences. We cannot expect to come to the same conclusions by applying the same methodologies. Literary works are not mathematic equations! They are the creation of humans who have biases, uncertainties, and difficulties in expressing their thoughts.

The difficulty in categorizing genres is that genre is meant to be recognized without categorization. If I were to begin a story with the phrase, "Once upon a time," the reader is immediately alerted that the story is a fairy tale. The phraseology is the form the author uses to communicate the genre of the story. Modern readers are not familiar with ancient genres and therefore, are forced to categorize texts based on "their content, form, or technique."²² Jens Bruun Kofoed has convincingly written, "One cannot re-cognize something one

19. Gen 50:4–6.

20. Gen 50:5.

21. S. Sandmel, "Parallelomania," *JBL* 81 (1962): 1–13.

22. Ross Murfin and Supryia M. Ray, *The Bedford Glossary of Critical and Literary Terms* (2nd ed.; Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2003), 189.

has never seen, read, or heard before. Re-cognizing a textual genre, therefore, presupposes the previous cognition of a similar configuration of elements.”²³

As we place our pericope into a generic category, we acknowledge that such pinchbeck categories are modern innovations. The reason we assign a text to modern generic categories is merely to assist us in the comprehension of possible use and function of given text. One of genre’s major successes is that it helps prevent the possible comparison of two tremendously unrelated texts (i.e. comparing *annals* to *poetry*). We also acknowledge that our imposition of false genre upon a text does not exclude the likelihood that a text intersects into the other generic categories we have created. Genre is a false dichotomy that assists us; it is not an infallible methodology. It is a means to an end; it is not the end.

As we look for particular features that will assist us in assigning our pericope into a generic category, we will notice that there are several possible assignments we might make. I should note that the passages we are considering as part of our case study are only part of a greater whole. To separate verses and see them outside of the Exodus narrative as a whole might be a bit dishonest. Let me propose two possible genres: (1) *legend* and, (2) *historiography*.

Legend in ancient Near Eastern literature has come to refer to those texts that narrate the story of “cultural heroes and institutions.”²⁴ Relegating a text to the genre of legend is by no means an admission that the text is fictional; instead, we are admitting that the text treats the story of a communal figure that has some kind of importance for the “community.”²⁵ The Exodus narrative contains the story of Moses, his birth, upbringing, and his godly acts to free the Israelite people. The “hero” Moses and the Israelite sojourn in the land of Egypt is referred to frequently throughout the Hebrew Bible, and therefore, assigning our passage to the genre of legend is no stretch of the imagination. The stretch, admittedly, would be if we were to become dogmatic in our use of this genre, not allowing for intersections into other genres.

The second genre of possible insertion is historiography. Let me briefly explain how I use this term in this paper. Historiography normally refers to the use of sources to create a narrative of the past, a kind of patchwork made of various documents mingled with the compiler’s views and interpretation.

23. *Text History: Historiography and the Study of the Biblical Text* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2005), 195. Kofoed continues, “It is because of this first cognition of the genre that people could now recognize it and react correspondingly” (195). Further, Kofoed says that, “We immediately know how to interpret and respond to a multitude of genres, because we are familiar with them. They are part and parcel of our culture, and learning how to interpret and respond to them is an essential part of the curriculum from elementary school to university or, in the broadest sense, from cradle to grave” (196).

24. Kenton L. Sparks, *Ancient Texts for the Study of the Hebrew Bible* (Peabody, MA.: Hendrickson, 2005), 271.

25. I use the term *community* to refer to those who concocted, transmitted, wrote, and copied the text. I personally believe that those who attempt an analysis of the text’s effect on the “hearer,” what they refer to as “community,” are researching fantasy. While there may be several places in the Hebrew Bible where such an analysis is possible, the greater part of the Bible would be unfruitful. We cannot know who heard the text, how much of the text was available to each generation, and thus we are at the mercy of speculation.

While patchwork documentation without embellishment can be seen as a kind of interpretation, and rightfully so, it is difficult to glean out the compiler's motives. We find it much easier to assign a text to historiography when the text proper clearly contains the hand of embellishment. Here we look for signs of anachronism, hyperbole, tell-tale phrases like "until this day," and other interpolative tells. According to Donald Redford, "The Biblical writer certainly thinks he is writing datable history, and provides genealogical material by means of which the date may be computed. He also thinks it is possible to locate this event on the ground, and packs his narrative with topographical detail."²⁶ I fully agree with Redford.

The "Exodus Pattern"

Here I want to briefly discuss what I term the "Exodus Pattern." I use this phrase to refer to instances wherein the Bible uses the form of the Exodus to tell other stories. Let me share just one example. In Genesis 12 we read about Abram's sojourn in a foreign land, his promise of becoming a great nation, and his construction of an altar. What concerns us here is how the story is recounted. We begin in verse 10 which tells of a famine in the land, wherein Abram travels to "Egypt to reside there as an alien." In verses 14–15 the word "Pharaoh" is used three times. Clearly, as we shall see, this is anachronistic. During the time when Abram lived, the term "Pharaoh" would not have been used in the way that this text is using it.²⁷ Next we read that:

The Lord afflicted Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai, Abram's wife. So Pharaoh called Abram, and said, "What is this you have done to me?" And Pharaoh gave his men orders concerning him; and they set him on the way, with his wife and all that he had. So Abram went up from Egypt, he and his wife, with all that he had, and Lot with him, into the Negev.²⁸

These verses clearly are meant to foreshadow the Exodus. The pattern is the same as the one we find in the Exodus narrative, and seeing as the Exodus is referred to more times in the Bible than any other event, I would argue that the current edition of Genesis 12 is later than the Exodus. The author used the Exodus form to tell other stories.

The Exodus throughout the Bible

In this section I will analyze some of the numerous biblical references to the Exodus narrative. While the majority of the references look at the Exodus holistically, that is, many of these passages do not make reference to specifics of chapter 1 but to the experience as a whole, they do apply to our study. The Exodus is the most prevalent event in the Hebrew Bible. I do not make this

²⁶ *Egypt, Canaan, and Israel in Ancient Times* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 409.

²⁷ See my discussion on the word "pharaoh" below.

²⁸ Gen 12:17–18, 20–13:1.

claim from my own personal bias but from the bias of the text. The Exodus is referenced more times than any other narrative in the Hebrew Bible. It is *the* watershed event.

As we look at the passages that will follow, it is important that we do not extract more than is responsible. I do not believe that other passages outside of the Exodus narrative can shed light onto the text's original meaning. Let me qualify this. We will see that later (if they are in fact later) authors use the Exodus for their own purposes, that is, to meet the needs of their own situations and the propaganda they want to promulgate. We continue to do this today as modern readers. How many times in religious settings do we hear a speaker take a passage out of context and apply it to the lives of the hearers? I am by no means arguing that this is incorrect, in fact, I see this practice as fundamental to the applicability and usefulness of the Hebrew Bible today as well as in the future. What I am arguing is that the application of an older text to later situations does not give insight into the original meaning and content; it gives insight into the lives of the later hearer.

First and foremost, the Hebrew Bible uses the Exodus narrative as the quintessential example of the suffering of the Israelites.²⁹ While the most significant way the Exodus is used is to make a comparison of the suffering of Israel and their deity's mercy, the story is most numerous referenced as a point of dating the current era. An example of this is found in Numbers 1:1, "The Lord spoke to Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the tent of meeting, on the first day of the second month, in the second year after they had come out of the land of Egypt." Here I want to examine several Pentateuchal references to the "Exodus." Below is a list of passages with some commentary.

1. *Exodus 20:2, 3*: "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; you shall have no other gods before me." Here the author uses the Exodus as a justification for the monotheistic worship of the Israelites.
2. *Exodus 22:21*: "You shall not wrong or oppress a resident alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt." Again we see the Exodus used to justify the author's beliefs. Because the Israelites were oppressed aliens in the land of Egypt, it would be wrong for them to oppress those who are aliens in their land. It all goes back to the Exodus.
3. *Exodus 23:15*: "You shall observe the festival of unleavened bread; as I commanded you, you shall eat unleavened bread for seven days at the appointed time in the month of Abib, for in it you came out of Egypt." The unleavened bread theme is found Exodus 12:1-28. Here we see this practice being perpetuated, that is the dictate for the perpetuation of the Festival of Unleavened Bread is found in Exodus 12:14. This verse is also found in Exodus 34:18 commonly recognized as a *covenant renewal* ceremony. This chapter contains a different version of the *Ten Commandments*, which may or may not imply

29. E.g. Numbers 20:15-16; Deuteronomy 4:20; 5:6, 15; 6:12; Joshua 5:9; 24:17.

multiple authors/sources.

4. *Leviticus 18:3*: “You shall not do as they do in the land of Egypt, where you lived, and you shall not do as they do in the land of Canaan, to which I am bringing you.” Our author here uses the Exodus to keep the Israelites regulated (i.e., under his command).
5. *Deuteronomy 1:30*: “The Lord your God who goes before you, is the one who will fight for you, just as he did for you in Egypt before your very eyes.” Here in the Deuteronomistic History the author uses the Exodus to quell possible fears that would have arisen in the hearts and minds of those hearing Moses’ words.³⁰
6. *Deuteronomy 5:6*: “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; you shall have no other gods before me.” We saw this phrasing in Exodus 20. In this version of the Sinai/Horeb revelation we find varied wording (though not in this verse), which carries a possibility of multiple sources. The author is using this verse to promulgate his ideology.
7. *Deuteronomy 5:15*: “Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm; therefore the Lord your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day.” Contrary to the Exodus 20 version, which says that Sabbath came about because “in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and consecrated it,” the Dtr uses the Exodus narrative as the reason for Sabbath worship.

He Who Shall Not be Named

One of the most highly discussed phenomena in the Exodus narratives is unveiling the identity of the oppressive Pharaoh. Those who defend the historicity of the Biblical narrative nominate Thutmose III (1479–1425 BCE) and Ramesses II (1279–1213 BCE) as the unnamed despot. This is a sticky matter. Whether or not we can identify the Egyptian ruler is based exclusively on how we read the text, and then where we collocate it chronologically. If we read the text as history (a difficult term in itself) or historiography then we are forced to determine the text’s chronological placement. For those who see the text as a later creation with no historically reliable information, the identification of the Pharaoh is a fruitless activity. One question we will take up in this study is whether we can determine the identity of Pharaoh. This is not merely a question of historicity. We must look at possible reasons for not mentioning the Egyptian king, reasons that include genre, literary motifs, and authorial motives. I will make no attempt at identification; rather, I will discuss

30. With this phraseology I am not giving credence to the historical reliability of the narrative. I am referring to the author’s use of the information he cites and the purpose that he is giving to his modern audience.

whether or not the question of identification is possible.

Perhaps the most important element we can analyze is the linguistics of the word *pharaoh*. Much of what we can conclude will be based upon our capacity to render the Egyptian and Hebrew phrase into a chronological time table. Let me elaborate. It would be poor scholarship indeed to dismiss the unnamed pharaoh as a later creation by ignorant authors without an analysis of the way in which the word *pharaoh* was used at various periods. Why? Because, as we shall see, the deciphering of authorial motives may lay hidden in our linguistical analysis; an attempt to determine motive without a linguistical study is to be shunned, and studies which lack this essential element are highly suspect.

We begin with the Egyptian usage of the word *pharaoh*. For modern readers the word is ubiquitously associated with the king of Egypt. This is mostly correct; however, as we shall see, the development of this word needs to be fully understood in order to properly analyze the Exodus narratives. The origin of the word has its roots in Old Kingdom Egypt (2686–2160 B.C.E.).³¹ During this period in Egypt the word, according to available material, had no reference to the Egyptian monarch but was a “designation of part of the large palace complex at Memphis wherein the king and the officers of his administration lived, the term by extension came to signify the authority of the central government.”³² Over time, as words in most languages, the word *pharaoh* took on alternative meanings. A transition can be seen in Egyptian documents during the Middle Kingdom (2055–1650 B.C.E.). During the 12th Dynasty (2000–1800 B.C.E.) the meaning of pharaoh evolved to incorporate an association with “the three wishes following the actual royal name: life, health, and power.”³³

Another transition in usage occurs around the 18th Dynasty (1550–1295 B.C.E.). By this period the word *pharaoh* begins to be associated with the ruling king.³⁴ During the New Kingdom period (1550–1069 B.C.E.) we do not yet find the title attached to the king’s royal titulary; *pharaoh* stood alone.³⁵ The addition of *pharaoh* into the royal cartouche can be seen around the end of the New Kingdom (1069 B.C.E.); it is commonplace by the 8th century B.C.E., and “from the 7th century on was nothing but a synonym of the generic ‘king,’ the older word which it rapidly replaced.”³⁶ We continue to see the word used throughout the Ptolemaic period (332–30 B.C.E.), until its usage morphs again under the Copts and Islam, who change the title into a proper name.³⁷

31. Donald B. Redford, “Pharaoh,” *ABD* 5:288-89.

32. Redford, “Pharaoh,” 289. See also Adolf Erman and Hermann Grapow, “Pr-‘3,” *WÄS* 1:516; Raymond O. Faulkner, “Pr-‘3,” *CDME* 89; Henri Gauthier, “per äa,” *Dictionnaire des noms géographiques contenus dans les textes hiéroglyphiques* 2:62.

33. Henri Cazelles, “par3öh,” *TDOT* 12:102.

34. Redford, “Pharaoh,” 5:289.

35. James K. Hoffmeier, *Israel in Egypt: Evidence for the Authenticity of the Exodus Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 87.

36. Redford, “Pharaoh,” 289.

37. Redford, “Pharaoh,” 289.

This is the information we have regarding the Egyptian usage of the word *pharaoh*. We now turn to the Hebrew Bible (MT) to look at ways in which the word was used.

Unlike the Egyptian, the Hebrew shows no sign of morphology. The Hebrew word is borrowed from the Egyptian; its phonetic value is equivalent to the Egyptian. The Masoretic Text records 274 occurrences of the word *pharaoh*,³⁸ of which 216 occur in the Pentateuch. “The LXX contains 32 occurrences beyond the MT.”³⁹ As we analyze each attestation of *pharaoh* in the Hebrew Bible, we note that the Pentateuch never associates a name with the Egyptian title.⁴⁰ This title is used as a proper noun without accompanying titulary, with several exceptions; the exceptions include verses where *pharaoh* is suffixed with “king of Egypt.”⁴¹ Outside of the Pentateuch we have 58 attestations of *pharaoh*.⁴² Of these 58 occurrences, 14 have the titulary “king of Egypt” suffixed to them.⁴³ The first time we get a proper name associated with Pharaoh occurs in 2 Kings 23:29 referring to “Pharaoh Neco, king of Egypt.”⁴⁴ The second and final occurrence of *pharaoh* with a proper name is “Pharaoh Hophra, king of Egypt” in Jeremiah 44:30. We also note that the Bible records “King Shishak of Egypt.”⁴⁵ This is the information we have regarding the Hebrew usage of the word “pharaoh.” We now turn to several non-Masoretic sources before we make final conclusions.

This portion of the study would not be complete if we did not look at examples from the Dead Sea Scrolls. If we are to consider the usage of *pharaoh* as a possible way in which to date the Exodus narrative, then we must consider this late material. I will discuss two examples, and include a statistical analysis of numerous examples. We begin with the “War Scroll” 1QM 11:9–10. This portion of the scroll instructs the hearer on how he is to treat his enemies, “You shall treat them like Pharaoh (כפרעוה),⁴⁶ like the officers of his chariots in the Red Sea (Reed Sea).”⁴⁷ This text uses the same Hebrew as the MT; however,

38. My numbering is based on the Hebrew Bible lexical functions on Dead Sea Scrolls Electronic Library, Version 7.0.24, 2005.

39. Cazelles, *TDOT* 12:102.

40. “Pharaoh” occurs in Genesis, Exodus, and Deuteronomy, but never in Leviticus or Numbers.

41. Eight usages in the Pentateuch occur: Genesis 41:6; Exodus 6:11, 13, 27, 29; 14:8; Deuteronomy 7:8; 11:13. That means “Pharaoh” is used 208 times in the Pentateuch without an accompanying titulary!

42. Twice in 1 Samuel, thirteen times in 1 Kings, eight times in 2 Kings, five times in Isaiah (never in Deutero-Isaiah), eleven times in Jeremiah, thirteen times in Ezekiel, twice in the Psalms, once in the Song of Songs, once in Nehemiah, once in 1 Chronicles, and once in 2 Chronicles.

43. 1 Kings 3:1; 9:16; 11:18; 2 Kings 17:7; 18:21; Isaiah 36:6; Jeremiah 25:19; 46:17; Ezekiel 29:2, 3; 30:21, 22; 31:2; 32:2.

44. “Pharaoh Neco” is also found in 2 Kings 23:33, 34, 35; Jeremiah 46:2

45. 1 Kings 14:25.

46. Here we note the *waw* acts as a vowel, a common element found in the DSS, but not in the MT occurrences of Pharaoh.

47. Florentino García Martínez and Eibert J.C. Tigchelaar, eds. and trans., *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 1:131.

because we are dealing with a text that refers to a possibly earlier episode, dating based on this text remains difficult, if not impossible. Next we turn to “Ages of Creation” 4Q180 frags. 5–6, which reads (though quite fragmented), “[...And what is wr]itten concerning the land[...] two days’ journey [...] is] Mount Zion, Jerusale[m ...] [...]and wh[at is written concerning Pharaoh [פִּרְעוֹה].”⁴⁸ It is unclear as to what is being referenced, however it seems to be biblical episode considering the context of the text that precedes this one. Vital to this study is the fact that in the nonbiblical scrolls the term *pharaoh* occurs thirty-four times. Four times we find פִּרְעוֹ, where the dropped ה might be being substituted with the ו, what I would describe as an alternative mater lectionis, or we could be dealing with a defective spelling of a late plene spelling. Additionally, of the thirty-four attestations of *pharaoh*, four times we find פִּרְעוֹה spelled in the traditional MT defective spelling. This is significant because of the 274 attestations of *pharaoh* in the MT each of them is spelled in the defective. We do not have one example of “pharaoh” being spelled defectively in the Hebrew Bible (MT)! The DSS Biblical texts preserve the defective spelling in many instances, especially in the book of Exodus. The last 26 nonbiblical DSS examples of “pharaoh” are spelled פִּרְעוֹה. Let me discuss the significance of these data.

We have seen that in the nonbiblical scrolls the authors spell *pharaoh* differently than the MT 88.23% of the time. The MT spells *pharaoh* defectively 100% of the time. I have looked at all the DSS containing Exodus material and note that 4QExod^a, 4QExod^b, 4QExod^c, and 4QExod^d contain the word “pharaoh” twenty times altogether. Every attestation is spelled in the defective, including those attestations that are partially existent which have been reworked by the International Team of the Dead Sea Scrolls.⁴⁹ What can this tell us? Let me propose that what we may be looking at is evidence that whenever we date the Exodus narrative a later date is not to be preferred. I would argue that the DSS scribes were copying an older manuscript of Exodus. If this were not the case, we would expect to find at least one instance where the orthography matches the nonbiblical manuscript, that is, a plene spelling. I believe that this statistical analysis shows that we cannot equate the creation of the Exodus narrative to the time of the Dead Sea Scrolls.

The purpose of this linguistic analysis is to determine, if possible, the time period when the word *pharaoh* can be placed into the Hebrew Bible. One major difficulty we encounter is knowing to what extent the Egyptian usage influenced the Hebrew usage. We know that the Hebrew word for *pharaoh* comes from the Egyptian; however, we cannot be absolutely sure if Hebrew speakers would have used the word in the exact manner of the Egyptians. Our main concern here is chronological placement. In essence, does the Hebrew follow the chronological morphology that we see in the Egyptian sources? And can we use that morphology to date the Text? One of the major concerns and

48. Martínez and Tigchelaar, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition*, 373. Here we note a rare example of a defective spelling.

49. I make this claim only for the word “Pharaoh”; I have not examined other words.

reserves I have with those who use morphology to date the text is that they do not engage the question of usage.⁵⁰

By looking at Egyptian usage and Hebrew usage, we can conclude that the dating of the supposed Exodus could not have been before New Kingdom (1550–1069 B.C.E.). Semites living in Egypt before that period would not have associated a name with the title “Pharaoh.” This, of course, presupposes that the usage that we find in the Egyptian documents can be correlated with common vernacular—the spoken language, not merely with what was written. We also note that the text could have been written no later than the time of the DSS. I have argued that even a date to the time of the DSS is too late, based upon the overwhelming orthographical analysis. We cannot be sure how early we can date the text based upon the MT and DSS because their usage (but not orthography) is consistently uniform throughout.

Let me here insert a caveat. When an analysis of Biblical Hebrew orthography is undertaken we always look at the plene and defective spelling. There is somewhat (though not completely) of a consensus that earlier stages of biblical Hebrew was more prone to use defective spelling; whereas in later times a plene spelling was employed. The issue that we confront is the lack of early Hebrew manuscripts. We just do not have access to manuscripts that would allow us to make more definitive statements about Hebrew orthography.⁵¹ Another issue we encounter with dating based on orthography is that one word may contain both defective and plene spelling.⁵² We have an example of this in our passage in verse 12, קצו. Here we see a Qal verb with a qibbutz under the second radical, and a mater lectionis waw in the ultimate radical. I do not believe that we can give a definite date based on orthography; however, I believe that the variants between the MT and DSS indicate a difference in the Hebrew language.

Before I conclude, I must offer other possible alternative reasons that the author left the pharaoh unnamed. If my linguistic analysis does not completely satisfy the question of pharaonical ambiguity, what other explanations exist? One alternative response to this question is that the author of the Exodus narrative purposely left the Egyptian king unnamed. Perhaps by leaving the ruler’s name out of the text, the author was trying to disrespect the king. This is, of course, speculative. Another alternative has been proposed by Hendel.⁵³

50. See Hoffmeier, *Israel in Egypt*, 87–88. Hoffmeier writes, “The usage of “pharaoh” in Genesis and Exodus does accord well with the Egyptian practice from the fifteenth through the tenth centuries. The appearance of “pharaoh” in the Joseph story could reflect the New Kingdom setting of the story or if its provenance is earlier (i.e., the late Middle Kingdom through Second Intermediate Period), its occurrence in Genesis is suggestive of the period of composition.” Hoffmeier bases his conclusion on the names, “Shishak, Neco, and Hophra, while excluding the fact that those are the only instances where a name is attached to “pharaoh” or “king of Egypt” in the Hebrew Bible.

51. Emanuel Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible* (2nd ed.; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 220–29.

52. Tov, *Textual Criticism*, 221.

53. Ronald Hendel, *Remembering Abraham: Culture, Memory, and History in the Hebrew Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 57–73.

He argues that the motive for leaving the pharaoh unnamed was to create a mnemohistory.⁵⁴ By mnemohistory, he refers to Jan Assmann's concept:

Unlike history proper, mnemohistory is concerned not with the past as such, but only with the past as it is remembered. It surveys the story-line of tradition, the webs of intertextuality, the diachronic continuities and discontinuities of reading the past. Mnemohistory is not the opposite of history, but rather is one of its branches or subdisciplines, such as intellectual history, the history of mentalities, or the history of ideas Mnemohistory is reception theory applied to history.⁵⁵

Hendel uses this argument to prove that the author of the Exodus narrative left the pharaoh unnamed in order to use the story as an application to Israel's current situation—that is the time when the author was living.⁵⁶ One of the difficulties that I find with Hendel's argument is that it presupposes that the Israelites could not apply a story to themselves that contained a proper name. Within the narrative we find two midwives named.⁵⁷ Using Hendel's logic Israelite women could not have seen themselves in the story because the two women are named. I am willing to entertain the idea of mnemohistory, but I reject it as an explanation of the authorial motive behind leaving the pharaoh unnamed.

In conclusion, I would argue that we cannot say for certain whether the motives behind the unnamed pharaoh are for linguistic reasons or for propagandistic purposes. The evidence for a linguistic cause is not entirely consistent, which would give us greater reason to attribute the unnamed pharaoh to the category of word usage. The arguments for applicative motive are speculative and not testable. There is no empirical datum for Hendel's reasoning, though it is enticing; therefore, a linguistic motive is to be favored over applicative purposes.

The Oppression

One of the arguments I have encountered as I have researched this topic is that the claims made in the text can fit into many different periods; therefore, we cannot know when the event occurred. Is this true? Yes. However, the question is not if the text fits into multiple places chronologically, but does the text fit into the time period claimed by the text? This should be our primary concern! This would be equivalent to arguing that the American Revolution didn't occur in the 18th century because slavery can be traced throughout later periods. Slavery did occur during later periods, but the event is said to have happened in the mid-18th century. Our question then should be, "Is that claim verifiable?" I realize this may be an oversimplification, but the point is a good one. Using this reasoning ("Does the text fit into the claimed context?"), we

54. Hendel, *Remembering Abraham*, 59–60.

55. Hendel, *Remembering Abraham*, 58.

56. Hendel, *Remembering Abraham*, 60.

57. Exod 1:15. Their names are Shiphrah and Puah.

will analyze the question of the Egyptian oppressions.

The text clearly portrays a time during the Egyptian New Kingdom period (1550–1069 B.C.E.). The text also claims that the Egyptians were oppressing the Israelites, a Semitic people, forcing them to build “storage cities . . . with hard work in mortar and bricks.”⁵⁸ In our quest for historically reliable claims, we ask, does this claim have a footing in what we know about New Kingdom Egypt? My response is an emphatic yes. Let us briefly look at the claims made in the text.

First, was there a people known by the name “Israel” during the New Kingdom period? Yes. Here we find universal agreement among all competent Egyptologists. According to the Merneptah Stela (1208 B.C.E.):

The princes are prostrate saying: “Shalom!”
Not one of the Nine Bows lifts his head:
Tejehenu is vanquished, Khatti at peace,
Canaan is captive with all woe.
Ashkelon is conquered, Gezer seized,
Yanoam made nonexistent;
Israel is wasted, bare of seed,
Khor is become a widow for Egypt.
All who roamed have been subdued
By the King of Upper and Lower Egypt.⁵⁹

The text clearly refers to Israel as a people and not as a geographical location, as argued by Ahlström.⁶⁰ The Egyptian determinative makes this irrefutably clear.⁶¹ What this assertion does not tell us is that the Israelites sojourned in Egypt. I have not made the geographical claim based on the Merneptah Stela, only that a people called Israel existed during the New Kingdom.

The second claim asserts that these Israelites were employed in the building projects of the king. This claim is not verifiable as we have no documentation of the Israelites sojourning in Egypt. We can ask the question of whether foreign peoples were conscripted in building projects during the New Kingdom. We cite several examples that demonstrate foreigners being used in construction projects.

58. Exod 1:11, 14.

59. Miriam Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature: The New Kingdom* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 2:77.

60. Gösta Ahlström, *Who Were the Israelites?* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1986), 37-43.

61. Carol A. Redmount, “Bitter Lives: Israel in and out of Egypt,” in *The Oxford History of the Biblical World* (ed. Michael D. Coogan; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 97.

The first, and perhaps most known example of foreign slaves being used for building projects, comes from reliefs in the tomb of Rekhmire, the vizier of Thutm

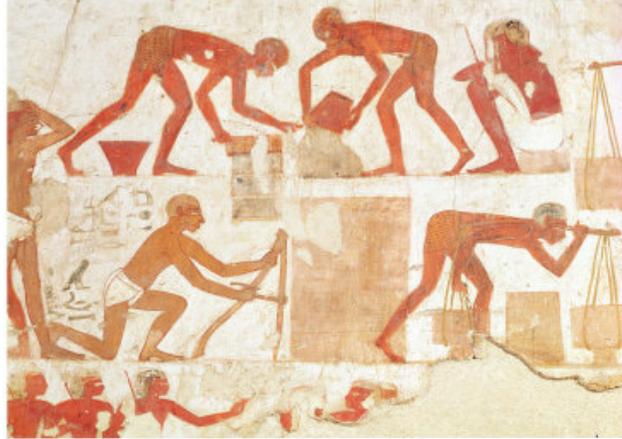


Fig. 1. This relief from the tomb of Rekhmire shows Semites and Nubian war prisoners making bricks. The bricks were used in the construction of the Temple of Amun at Karnak.

Another example of forced labor comes to us from Papyrus Leiden 348, during the reign of Ramesses II, which reads, “the soldiers and the Apiru-folk who drag stone to the great pylon (gateway) of [the Temple] of Ramesses II Beloved of Maat.”⁶³ We also have numerous examples of human tribute from the Amarna letters, which describe foreigners being sent to Egypt.⁶⁴ The idea of forced labor in Egypt during the New Kingdom period is highly documented; therefore, we will let these few examples suffice.⁶⁵ We cannot conclude that there was a group called Israel living in Egypt during the New Kingdom who was forced to build up the storage cities of the king. What we can say is that the idea of Semites living in Egypt during the New Kingdom who were forced to build up cities for the king is not only plausible, it actually happened. Does this lend credence to the Exodus narrative? Only in so far as the claimed context fits quite well. Of course, this picture could be painted during other periods in Egypt; however, the text claims that it happened during the New Kingdom period.

62. See James K. Hoffmeier, *The Archaeology of the Bible* (Oxford: Lion Hudson, 2008), 51.

63. Kenneth Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 248.

64. See EA 64, 268, 287, 288, 301, 309, and 369 in W.L. Moran, *The Amarna Letters* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1992).

65. For those who are interested in a more detailed account of forced labor and brickmaking see Kenneth Kitchen, “From the Brick Fields of Egypt,” *TynBul* 27 (1976): 143–144; James K. Hoffmeier, “Taskmasters,” *ISBE* 4:737.

Midwives

We now take up the issue of the midwives. Midwifery as a suitable female endeavor is attested as early as Middle Kingdom Egypt.⁶⁶ As stated earlier, the Hebrew leaves the identity of the midwives slightly ambiguous. Do we translate the text as “the Hebrew midwives,” or as “the midwives of the Hebrew?” Here the only indication we have is the origin of the names of the midwives. The first midwife is named Shiphrah, clearly a Semitic name. The name comes from the triconsonantal root שפר “to be beautiful, fair, and comely.”⁶⁷ The second midwife is called Puah (פועה), a name not attested in the Hebrew Bible; however, it is attested in Ugaritic documents. In one Ugaritic source, the famed Danel has a daughter with the same name.⁶⁸

Why are the names given for these two women? It has been argued that by mentioning the midwives by name “the biblical narrator expresses his scale of values.”⁶⁹ That is to say that the author was interested in showing the faith of these two women by giving us their names, and at the same time disgracing pharaoh by leaving him unnamed. Whether this is the case we cannot know; however, the idea is an entertaining one. Another question we must ask is why would there only be two midwives named for the Hebrew women? The population of Israelites according to the text is estimated to be around 2.5 million persons.⁷⁰ How could two midwives function for such a large population? How we answer this question depends entirely on how we read the text. If we read it as historiography, we are forced to come up with ways to explain this phenomenon. For those who read this as a historically reliable source, several explanations are proposed. The first says that midwives were “overseers of the practitioners, and were directly responsible to the authorities for the women under them.”⁷¹ While this could explain away the difficulty in having only two midwives, the explanation is speculative, unwarranted, and has no evidence in external sources. The second attempt at explaining the two midwives is that the two names “are those of guilds or teams of midwives called after the original founders of the order.”⁷² Like the previous explanation, this one remains suspect.

Another way to read this text would accord with Hendel’s line of thinking. We could argue (without evidence of course) that the midwives were remembered to find application in the “current” era’s audience. If this is the way that we are to read the text how would this have been played out? We might say that the text seeks to find place among a female audience by making the women more important than pharaoh. This text would have been used

66. Lichtheim, *AEL*, 1:220–21.

67. *BDB* 1051.

68. *UT* 19:2081.

69. Nahum M. Sarna, *Exploring Exodus: The Origins of Biblical Israel* (New York: Schocken Books, 1996), 25.

70. Redford, *Egypt, Canaan, and Israel in Ancient Times*, 408.

71. Sarna, *Exploring Exodus*, 25.

72. Sarna, *Exploring Exodus*, 25.

to energize women's faith in their deity and give them an example of how to receive blessings from God. While this explanation is one that surely resonates with some, there is no way to prove it. Lastly, one could argue that the whole story is made up, and we are not meant to ask the question regarding the two midwives, that this question never entered the mind of the author.

We now take up the issue of the birthstool. The text literally says, "When you see them upon the two stones."⁷³ This issue ostensibly should not have incurred much discussion; nevertheless it did. Richard Elliot Friedman understands the "two stones" as euphemism for the male genitals.⁷⁴ The fact that this interpretation is even entertained is bewildering indeed. The text reads, "When you deliver for the Hebrew women, and see them upon the two stones, if it is a boy—kill him, but if it is a girl, she shall live."⁷⁵ The text does not apply the "two stones" to the males only, but to the females as well; this fact alone should have been enough. One might argue that this is an idiomatic expression for male genitalia, but the reference to the girls leaves doubt in the mind of the reader. Let us turn to external sources in order to lay this argument to rest.

Our first piece of evidence comes from the New Kingdom, Egyptian inscription from Deir el-Medina. The inscription is called *The Votive Stela of Neferabu with Hymn to Mertseger*. It reads:

I was an ignorant man and foolish,
 who knew not good from evil;
 I did the transgression against the Peak,
 And she taught a lesson to me.
 I was in her hand by night as by day,
 I sat on bricks like the woman in labor,
 I called to the wind, it came not to me,
 I libated to the Peak of the West, great of strength,
 And to every god and goddess.⁷⁶

We also note the numerous art depicting women giving birth in a squatting position, who are sitting upon birthstools. One such figurine comes to us as late as the Roman period in Egypt (2nd century CE).⁷⁷ In Jeremiah 18:3 we find the only other Hebrew attestation of the "two stones." In this context it is used to refer to the "potter's wheel." In Egyptian, a potter's wheel is "regularly linked to pregnancy in Egyptian literature and art."⁷⁸ All of this evidence combined demonstrates that the "two stones" referred in the Exodus narrative were in fact a birthstool and not a reference to testicles.

73. Exodus 1:15.

74. *Commentary on the Torah with a New English Translation and the Hebrew Text* (New York: Harper Collins, 2001), 171.

75. Exodus 1:15.

76. Lichtheim, *AEL*, 2:108.

77. Eleni Vassilika, "Museum Acquisitions, 1992: Egyptian Antiquities Accessioned in 1992 by Museums in the United Kingdom," *JEA* 80 (1994), 181.

78. Scott Morschauer, "Potter's Wheels and Pregnancies: A Note on Exodus 1:16," *JBL* 122 no. 4 (Winter 2003): 732.

Theological Underpinnings

This section of the paper will attempt to draw out theological tenets from the text under discussion. I will focus on the possible theological beliefs of the author of the text and not how those beliefs are found and commented on in Christian thought. I will avoid Mormon theology, for I want the text to speak for itself (as far as that is feasible). By looking at the text proper we can minimize biases, though the reader will surely sense some biases, and uncover the author's personal convictions about theology.

The text opens with a new Egyptian king who designs the enslavement of the Israelite peoples.⁷⁹ This Egyptian, through his cunning plan, is able to bring the Israelite peoples into bondage, as well as into his service. Whoever authored this text had no qualms with a deity who would allow his people to be brought under a foreign yoke. Our author seems to be less interested in the idea of God permitting his people to be subjugated by Egypt and more concerned with demonstrating God's ability to perform wonders and lay waste to his enemies. Again, we note that this text believes in a deity who allows other nations to interfere in the lives of his chosen people.

Next in our discussion of theological beliefs we find the Israelite peoples increasing their population in the face of affliction.⁸⁰ The text tells us that the "more they (Israelite peoples) were oppressed, the more they multiplied and spread, so that the Egyptians came to dread the Israelites."⁸¹ One senses the author's attempt to show that when God is with his people, notwithstanding their situation, they can continue to grow in number and gain greater prominence. For our author the greatness of the Israelite peoples knows no bounds, and it is clearly not quelled, even in times of hardness and difficulty. Perhaps this is to show the partial fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant.

Finally, we find a striking claim about the disobedient midwives, who were commanded to kill all male Hebrew infants.⁸² The text informs us that the reason for the midwives actions was that "the midwives feared God."⁸³ The midwives are not punished by Pharaoh, and we are told that "God dealt well with the midwives; and the people multiplied and became very strong. And because the midwives feared God, he gave them families."⁸⁴ A major theme we draw out from this section is that dissidence is not looked upon as an infringement against God. For our author it is not only acceptable to disobey foreign leaders, but one can be blessed for doing so. We cannot say that this would have been the outcome every time; however, here a precedent is set.

We have seen that this passage contains at least three distinct theological beliefs. The first regards God's allowance of foreign involvement in the lives of his people. The second teaches that God's people can flourish under hardship,

79. Exod 1:8.

80. Exod 1:12.

81. Exod 1:12.

82. Exod 1:15–21.

83. Exod 1:17.

84. Exod 1:20–21.

and the third deals with respecting God over foreign magistrates.

Conclusion

Here I shall briefly review what we discussed up to this point. We began our study by proposing a methodology, which included looking at genre, patterns, external sources, and the application of the contextual method. We analyzed the Hebrew text of Exodus 1, noting variant readings. An attempt was then made to outline chapter 1 based upon a cause-and-effect structure. We looked at genre and concluded that the Exodus narrative likely falls into the category of *Legend* or *Historiography* or both. Then we treated the phenomenon of the Exodus pattern and cited Genesis 12 as an example. We also looked at several ways in which the Bible uses the story of the Exodus for propagandistic purposes. Our study then led us into a lengthy discussion on the usage of the word “pharaoh,” and we concluded that the Exodus was not written before New Kingdom Egypt (1550–1069 B.C.E.), nor later than the Dead Sea Scrolls; we also concluded that the Exodus was written before the DSS and was likely copied from the DSS scribes from an earlier manuscript. Next we moved into a discussion on the “oppressions.” We noted that the “Exodus” claim that Semites living in Egypt, being forced to labor on building projects making bricks is absolutely plausible. We also noted that we cannot claim that the Israelites ever lived in Egypt, but that a group calling themselves “Israel” existed is beyond dispute. Next we looked at the midwives and analyzed the text’s claims. We found hints at historical footings, but no definite claims could be made. Lastly, we extracted theological claims made in the Exodus 1.

Let me say by way of conclusion that the idea that the Exodus paints a picture that can be verified externally is inconclusive as a whole. That we can verify certain shades, and objects in that picture is an empirically testable fact. The Exodus is a tremendously puzzling text to unravel. This study has only focused on the first chapter of Exodus as a kind of case study. Many items were discussed; however, many were left untouched. We had neither the time nor space to discuss the reasons for identifying the unnamed pharaoh with Thutmose III or Ramesses II. We never addressed the historical reliability of the storage cities or the Egyptological implications of Pharaoh’s mandate that every Hebrew boy be tossed into the Nile; I have concentrated on a condensed version of Exodus 1. What this study has shown is the necessity to ask historical questions, as well as the question, how do I know what I know? We have used Exodus 1 to accomplish this task.