

# OLD TESTAMENT SURVEY

## *Lesson 11*

### Joseph-Moses: Archaeology and Egypt

Being a trial lawyer has made me a cynic when it comes to a number of things, especially the opinions of others. I have heard some of the most outrageous opinions, many made under oath in a court of law.

One time, I was trying a case for a man injured on an offshore rig. The defendant had an “expert” on the stand, and I was cross-examining him. He had the most preposterous theory and refused to give credible answers to my questions. Finally, Judge West had enough, and he ordered the jury to retire into their jury room.

Once the jury was gone, the judge began berating the expert telling him in a rather loud tone of voice, “You are NOT going to turn my courtroom into Wonderland where little is big and big is little. I expect you to tell the truth! I know you’re lying. The jury knows you’re lying, everyone knows you’re lying. Now stop it!”

The judge then called the jury back in (side note—we won that trial).

This is one of countless stories I could recount over twenty-five years of trying cases in courts around the country. It has produced a healthy dose of cynicism. I read with a critical eye, hopefully both when reading folks I agree with as well as when reading those with whom I disagree.

Enter now the world of scholastic Bible study, specifically the Israelites in Egypt during the time of Joseph to Moses.

### THE PROBLEM

In 1997, an annual research seminar that usually took place at Ben-Gurion University in Beer Sheva, Israel, was moved to the University College in London, England. The subject was: *The Origin of Early Israel—Current Debate: Biblical, Historical and Archaeological Perspectives*. The study reflected a sharp division among scholars over the genesis of the Jews as a people. This division still exists among academics that argue for and against the Abrahamic start of the Jews, the issues of the Egyptian background as provided in the Bible, how the Israelites came to inhabit Canaan (swift military conquest or nomadic infiltration?), and even whether King David existed.

Among the keynote speakers was Israel Finkelstein, then director of the Institute of Archaeology at Tel Aviv University. Finkelstein spoke on “The Rise of Early

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Israel—Archaeology and Long-Term History.<sup>1</sup> His ideas were abbreviated in speech form, but he subsequently co-authored a book entitled, *The Bible Unearthed: Archaeology's New Vision of Ancient Israel and the Origin of its Sacred Texts*. In this book, he entitled the second chapter, “Did the Exodus Happen?”

Rather than agreeing with the biblical account of the Israelites descending from Abraham, spending 400 plus years in Egypt, and then coming back into Canaan, conquering the Promised Land and establishing presence as God’s chosen people, Finkelstein concludes to the contrary:

The Israelites emerged only gradually as a distinct group in Canaan, beginning at the end of the thirteenth century BCE. There is no recognizable archaeological evidence of Israelite presence in Egypt immediately before that time.<sup>2</sup>

Finkelstein believes that the history given in Scripture, including Abraham and his journey from Ur to Canaan, Moses and the deliverance of the Jews from Egypt, and even the rise and fall of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah were, “a brilliant product of the human imagination...first conceived—as recent archaeological findings suggest—during the span of two or three generations, about twenty-six hundred years ago.”<sup>3</sup>

We use Finkelstein’s book as an exemplar recognizing it as one of the most recent to delve into these problems William Dever noted. Dever is professor emeritus of Near Eastern archaeology and anthropology at the University of Arizona in Tucson. He served as the director of the Nelson Glueck School of Biblical Archaeology in Jerusalem, and spent thirty years of his life conducting excavations in the Near East. He has written a number of books on the subjects including, *Who Were the Early Israelites and Where Did They Come From?*<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The symposium was produced in book form providing the three keynote addresses as well as panel discussions of those lectures by an additional set of scholars. See, Ahituv, Shmuel and Oren, Eliezer, eds., *The Origin of Early Israel—Current Debate: Biblical, Historical and Archaeological Perspectives*, (Ben-Gurion University of the Negev Press 1998).

<sup>2</sup> Finkelstein, Israel and Silberman, Neil, *The Bible Unearthed: Archaeology's New Vision of Ancient Israel and the Origin of its Sacred Texts*, (Simon and Schuster 2001) at 57.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, at 1.

<sup>4</sup> Dever, William G., *Who Were the Early Israelites and Where Did They Come From?*, (Eerdmans 2003).

In that book, published in 2003, Dever lists Finkelstein and Silberman's book as the most recent publication of note on the "current crisis in understanding the origins of early Israel."<sup>5</sup> In other words, we do not pick Finkelstein's work because it is a weak example of the arguments. To the contrary, it is cited as one of the latest works of academia setting forth some of the best arguments for its viewpoint.

Finkelstein's book was an instant best seller, resulting in newspaper stories, interviews with him on NPR, the History Channel, the Learning Channel and BBC television. Dever rightly calls Finkelstein "the major spokesperson" on this discussion of Israelite origins.<sup>6</sup>

Finkelstein gives several reasons to support invalidating the biblical account of the exodus:

- **Allegedly conflicting dates and kings.** In this regard, I Kings 6:1 says that Solomon began constructing the temple 480 years after the exodus (or 440 if one follows the Septuagint reading). Based on unspecified computations of the king history in Israel, Finkelstein gives the exodus date as 1440 BCE. That date predates the first Pharaoh to have the name Ramesses by over 100 years, since the first Ramesses ascended the throne in 1320 BC. This sets the following problem:

The Bible speaks explicitly about the forced labor projects of the children of Israel and mentions, in particular, the construction of the city of Raamses (Exodus 1:11). In the fifteenth century BCE such a name is inconceivable. The first Pharaoh named Ramesses came to the throne only in 1320 BCE—more than a century after the traditional date.<sup>7</sup>

- **The alleged impossibility of a mass exodus during the reign of Ramesses II.** Archaeological evidence shows forts built along the eastern border of the Nile delta, an area Israel would have passed through in their exodus.

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<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* at 2.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* at 153.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* at 56.



Finkelstein says,

If a great mass of fleeing Israelites had passed through the border fortifications of the pharaonic regime, a record should exist.<sup>8</sup>

Additionally, the northern part of the Sinai Peninsula was protected by forts one day's march apart stretching from the delta to the southwest part of Canaan. Finkelstein says,

Any group escaping Egypt against the will of the pharaoh would have easily been tracked down not only by an Egyptian army chasing it from the delta but also by the Egyptian soldiers in the forts in northern Sinai and in Canaan.<sup>9</sup>

- **The absence of evidence of wilderness wanderings.** Finkelstein points out not only the absence of any evidence or record of Israeli presence in Egypt, a prince named Moses, plagues, a release of

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<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* at 59.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* at 61.

slaves by Pharaoh, and the debacle at the Reed/Red Sea, but also the lack of any trace in the Sinai wilderness of a large group moving around and camping for forty years. He states,

Not a single campsite or sign of occupation from the time of Ramesses II and his immediate predecessors and successors has ever been identified in Sinai.”<sup>10</sup>

- **Allegedly positive clues to a seventh century BCE date.** Finkelstein details a number of alleged “clues” which indicate that the authors of the Exodus drew upon the well of knowledge from the 600’s rather than over 500 years earlier. He includes many names in the story that were in common use in the 600’s BCE, both of people and places. He also notes the failure of the author to give a name to Pharaoh, instead simply calling him “Pharaoh” apparently suggesting no name was known. He cites the apparent “fear” of Egypt about foreign invaders from the East. Pointing out that Joseph was concerned about “spies” from the east and that Pharaoh was worried the Jews might collaborate with some eastern power once they were released from Egypt, Finkelstein believes such fear from the east reflected the 7<sup>th</sup> century BCE, rather than the time of Pharaoh Ramesses II. He says the fear:

Would make sense only *after* the great invasions of an Egypt greatly weakened by the Assyrians, Babylonians, and Persians in the seventh and sixth centuries.<sup>11</sup>

## THE RESPONSE

In responding to these theories and ideas, my approach is usually two-fold. First, I am careful to examine the qualifications and motives of the authors’ opinions. Second, I examine the opinions, carefully weighing their merit both against common sense and against the thoughts of other experts in the area.

As to Finkelstein’s qualifications, they are very solid in certain areas, namely Iron Age (1200-539 BC) settlements, and to a lesser degree Bronze Age (3300-1200 BC) settlements in Israel. But, those subjects are not the ones at issue in this debate. This debate really centers first and foremost on matters pertaining to Egypt. That is an entirely different branch of academia called “Egyptology.”

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<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* at 62.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.* at 67.

In this regard we can compare the qualifications of Finkelstein to another speaker at the same 1997 London seminar. Also delivering a keynote address was Kenneth A. Kitchen. Professor Kitchen is the Brunner Professor Emeritus of Egyptology and Honorary Research Fellow at the School of Archaeology, Classics, and Egyptology at the University of Liverpool.

Kitchen is no lightweight in Egyptian studies. He is one of the leading experts in the world on the Egyptian Third Intermediate Period, he has written over 250 scholarly books and journal articles on these and other subjects since the mid-1950s. He has been described by *The Times* as "the very architect of Egyptian chronology."<sup>12</sup>

Kitchen's areas of specialty within Egyptology extend to what scholars call the "Ramesside Period," the very time period at issue with the exodus questions. Kitchen published a major work on the life of Ramesses II in 1982 titled *Pharaoh Triumphant: The Life and Times of Ramesses II, King of Egypt*.

Kitchen's lecture was entitled, "*Egyptians and Hebrews, from Ra'amses to Jericho*. His lecture addressed many of the arguments and concerns set out above, and we will compare his analysis to that of Finkelstein's. Like Finkelstein, Kitchen followed up with a book, which we will also use. Kitchen's book exceeds 650 pages and goes into much greater detail, with full footnotes and a visual appendix of many referenced records and documents.<sup>13</sup>

Before leaving Finkelstein's qualifications, we should note even in his own specialty of study, he is not without his challengers. William Dever, cited earlier, is an expert in much the same area as Finkelstein. His assessment is that Finkelstein plays "so loosely with well-known facts" because he is "too much in the grip of a, *idée fixe*" or "fixed idea."<sup>14</sup> In other words, Dever believes that when Finkelstein's ideas conflict with the evidence, Finkelstein rejects evidence in favor of his pre-fixed ideas.

It is not enough to simply examine the qualifications and motivations of scholars. We should also examine their ideas. In that regard, a number of Finkelstein's arguments need response by someone with the qualifications and training to

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<sup>12</sup> *The Times*, October 13, 2002, *How Myth Became History*.

<sup>13</sup> Kitchen, K. A., *On the Reliability of the Old Testament*, (Eerdmans 2003).

<sup>14</sup> Dever at 166. Dever goes on to add that while Finkelstein and Dever had years of ongoing discussions over points of conflict, Finkelstein "mostly repeats himself, sometimes word for word" (at 155). Further, "While Finkelstein pointedly rejects my several criticisms in all his publications, he 'answers' only with *ad hominem* attacks, not with any real data, old or new" (at 155).

answer them. Kitchen and others have that expertise, and so we will reference them as necessary.<sup>15</sup> Other arguments have common sense responses that call the reasoning into question without falling back on experts.

In so doing, we have to make some choices. There is not scholastic agreement among those who agree with the true presence of Israel in Egypt and the subsequent exodus under Moses. Different scholars have different reasons for establishing their positions especially on the issue of *when* the exodus occurred. We cannot in this space set out all the opinions, and so I will choose the one that I think most fits the archaeology as well as Scripture. We do so recognizing that there are solid arguments for alternate views of timing on the exodus.

With that background out of the way, we now deal with Finkelstein's arguments in the order he gave them. In doing so, we try to find the substance of the problems (although we do find the *ad hominem* language of Kitchen quite entertaining!)<sup>16</sup>

- **Allegedly conflicting dates and kings.** Based on I Kings 6:1 (“In the four hundred and eightieth year after the people of Israel came out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon’s reign over Israel...he began to build the house of the LORD”), Finkelstein gives the exodus date as 1440 BCE. Because that date predates the first Pharaoh to have the name Ramesses by over 100 years, Finkelstein asserts Israel could not have built the city of Raamses. (Ex. 1:11 “They built for Pharaoh store cities, Pithom and Raamses.”)

Kitchen points out,

[This] approach to chronology...is totally naïve: namely, to...set these figures at odds with the Ramesside-related data. For those of us with some firsthand knowledge of the fuller data from, and the ancient procedures in, the ancient Near East, this nonsense will not do.<sup>17</sup>

Careful scholars are always hesitant to speak in absolute terms about the numbers used in the Hebrew Old Testament, especially when dealing with large ones. There are subsequent edits which show that

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<sup>15</sup> Kitchen is actually much more an expert than Finkelstein in areas of Egyptology. Finkelstein is *not* an Egyptologist.

<sup>16</sup> Kitchen asserts that Finkelstein and Silberman are “utterly out of their depth, hopelessly misinformed, and totally misleading” (at 465). He adds, “Their treatment of the exodus is among the most factually ignorant and misleading that this writer has ever read” (at 466).

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

the original meaning and sometimes numbers used may have been lost over time. In 1 Kings 6:1, for example, the Hebrew text was translated into Greek in the Septuagint several hundred years before Christ. That translation used the number 440, rather than 480. With Kitchen's reasoning, the Hebrew 480 could easily reflect a Hebrew figure that set out the twelve generations between the exodus and Solomon, using the typical rounded figure of 40 years per generation. That would put the text at 480 years, even though the original number might have been closer to 300 years if the generations truly occurred at the more typical 25-year age.<sup>18</sup> This would put the Exodus squarely in the time range of Ramesses II, certainly a time where the Israelites would be building the cities of Pithom and Raamses, as noted in Exodus 1:11).

A second approach to this problem is set out by Kitchen as he carefully dissects the data from the ages of the judges and considers that some judges would have existed contemporaneously to each other, thereby producing a date again in the range of 1260-1250 for the exodus.

If we consider Kitchen right on dating, then what do we know of Egyptian history that would agree with this dating? First, it could mean that Joseph entered Egypt during the reign of the Hyksos kings.<sup>19</sup> The Hyksos were interlopers of sorts. While Egyptians ruled over Egypt for over a thousand years, around the year 1664 BC, rulers from foreign lands (likely from the Canaan area) took over and ruled Egypt as Pharaohs for over one hundred years.

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<sup>18</sup> Kitchen addresses this in multiple places in the book but gives his best evidence on pages 307ff, citing Mesopotamian works as well as Hebrew passages that seem to use the 40-year generation figure even though in our world, it is not the mathematical figure of precision. As Kitchen notes, "In the ancient Near East, the Hebrew Bible's own world (which ours is not!), such procedures were almost certainly in use." (*Ibid.* at 307).

<sup>19</sup> How long the Israelites were in Egypt is also open to debate, again noting the difficulty in understanding the usage of Hebrew numbers today. There are three passages in play, Genesis 15:13 reads, "Then the LORD said to Abram, "Know for certain that your offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs and will be servants there, and they will be afflicted for four hundred years." But scholars point out the offspring in a land not their own includes Isaac and others before the actual time in Egypt. Similarly, Paul wrote in Galatians 3:15-17 that the Law was given to Moses 430 years after the promise to Abraham, seeming to start the time running with Abraham, not with Joseph. Yet, Exodus 12:40 indicates the "people of Israel lived in Egypt 430 years."



It certainly makes sense that Joseph (and his family) would be welcomed into the court and country of Pharaohs who were foreigners from the west Semitic area of the world themselves.<sup>20</sup>

Similarly, once the Hyksos rulers were ousted from Egypt and the rule returned to Egyptians, Exodus 1:8-10 makes great sense:

Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. And he said to his people, "Behold, the people of Israel are too many and too mighty for us. Come, let us deal shrewdly with them, lest they multiply, and, if war breaks out, they join our enemies and fight against us and escape from the land."

Add to this the paranoia that must have existed in a post-Hyksos Egypt, as noted by Egyptologist Manfred Bietak,<sup>21</sup>

The impact of the Hyksos on ancient Egypt should not be underestimated. They were perceived as a foreign dynasty, so their political relations and acts of power must have caused great internal irritation.<sup>22</sup>

So, does the dating invalidate the exodus as a historical fact? Absolutely not! In fact, the dates measure out quite nicely if taken in a fashion more akin to the timing of the Bible rather than today's mathematically precise method.

- **The alleged impossibility of a mass exodus during the reign of Ramesses II.** Noting the archaeological evidence that showed forts built along the eastern border of the Nile delta as well as the northern area of Sinai, Finkelstein made two points: (1) There should have been a record of the Israelites passing through the border fortifications and (2) Pharaoh could have tracked down the Israelites and annihilated them.

To answer the first point we turn to Kitchen; to answer the second, we use common sense.

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<sup>20</sup> "Nearly all the Hyksos names have been convincingly decoded as West Semitic." Redford, Donald, ed., *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt*, (Oxford 2001) vol. 2 at 139.

<sup>21</sup> Professor of Egyptology at the University of Vienna.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.* at 142.

In part, Kitchen agrees with Finkelstein in that “a record *should* exist.” Kitchen adds that, “no doubt it did!”<sup>23</sup> Kitchen then calls Finkelstein “clueless,” stating that while we know from stone inscriptions that the delta city of Pi-Ramesse had “voluminous papyrus archives...*no minutest scrap now survives.*”

In the sopping wet mud of the delta, *no* papyrus ever survives (whether it mentions fleeing Hebrews or not)... In other words, as the official thirteenth century archives from the East Delta centers are one hundred percent lost, we *cannot* expect to find mentions in them of the Hebrews or anybody else.<sup>24</sup>

As to the idea that Pharaoh could have tracked down the Israelites, Finkelstein is surely right! In fact, according to Exodus, Pharaoh did that very thing! In Exodus 14:3, we read that Pharaoh *knew* the Israelites were “wandering in the land; the wilderness has shut them in.” Pharaoh pursued the Israelites and had no trouble catching up. His trouble was following them through the Red/Reed Sea!

That still leaves the question of Egyptian fortifications along the northern ridge of Sinai. Kitchen sees this not as disproving the Bible’s exodus account, but rather as supporting it! There were indeed the ten forts and settlements along the fast northern route from Egypt to Canaan that were strong during the time of Ramesses II and his predecessor, but weakening late in his reign and even more so in the reign of Ramesses III. If the exodus were to take that route from the 1200’s BC, then it would have been “suicidal, ‘out of the frying pan and into the fire.’”<sup>25</sup>

That is the whole point of the route taken by the Israelites! They went the opposite way—south instead of north! Exodus 13:17-18 explains,

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<sup>23</sup> Notwithstanding this exchange, Kitchen does note earlier in his response that “Pharaohs never celebrated losses and defeats; we have no pharaonic, monumental parallel to the Armana letters showing Egypt’s loss of whole areas (*e.g.*, Ugarit, Amurru, other parts of North Phoenicia/North Syria) to Hittite rule under Akhenaten, for example. Nor should we even remotely expect any pharaonic monumental record of the successful escape by the early Israelites.” Kitchen in Ahituv at 87.

<sup>24</sup> Kitchen at 466.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.* at 267.

When Pharaoh let the people go, God did not lead them by way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near. For God said, "Lest the people change their minds when they see war and return to Egypt." But God led the people around by the way of the wilderness toward the Red Sea.

What actually makes greater sense is that this passage is authentic, rather than the imaginings of some Jew 600 years after these forts were long gone. Most likely, someone writing without knowledge of these forts would have sent the Israelites the logical short route everyone else took. At least, they would not have known that the short route was a route of forts that would require almost daily battles.

- **The absence of evidence of wilderness wonderings.** Finkelstein points to the absence of any evidence or record of Israeli presence in Egypt, a prince named Moses, plagues, a release of slaves by Pharaoh, and the debacle at the Reed/Red Sea, as well as the lack of any trace in the Sinai wilderness of a large group moving around and camping for forty years.

Again, these areas on “absence of evidence” are more appropriate for an Egyptologist than a lawyer! Again, we turn to Kitchen. In his follow-up paper to his 1997 lecture referenced earlier, Kitchen wrote of his concerns over a paper of Dever’s where Dever answers the question of whether “any archaeological evidence exists for the exodus” with the simple word, “No.” In reply, Kitchen wrote,

Dever is among the finest and most able Syro-Palestinian archaeologists of our time; but here, he is excruciatingly out of his depth.

Kitchen then goes on to cite a long list of evidence, most of which responds more directly to the “clues” Finkelstein gave in his last point below. We reserve those for below. Here we respond to the failure to find any reference to the Israelites on the tombs, the temple walls, or the surviving Egyptian papyri and to the “lack of any trace in the Sinai wilderness of a large group moving around.”

In reply to the idea that no Israelite is mentioned in writing, Kitchen says, “Of course not.” He then points out that those from the Canaan area (which certainly would include the Israelites) were described as

“Asiatics,” and not by their tribal affiliations.<sup>26</sup> Not a single campsite or sign of occupation from the time of Ramesses II and his immediate predecessors and successors has ever been identified in Sinai.”<sup>27</sup>

On the lack of Sinai evidence, Kitchen points to several factors with a summarizing statement, “it is silly to expect to find traces of everybody who ever passed through the various routes in that peninsula.”<sup>28</sup> Good examples include the fact that we know that Canaanites worked Egyptian mines at Serabit el-Khadim during that time, yet there is similarly no evidence they travelled to and from the mines. Those mines were also in the south central portion of the Sinai Peninsula. Of course, no one uses the argument that their wilderness travel cannot be documented as invalidation on whether they were “there.” Similarly, the lack of pottery shards is not seen as determinative when the Israelites never knew they would be wandering for more than a year. Certainly, animal skins were much more likely to be hauled, explaining why no pottery shards have been found.

- **Allegedly positive clues to a seventh century BCE date.** Finkelstein details a number of alleged “clues” trying to prove that the authors of the Exodus wrote with the knowledge of the 600’s rather than the 1200’s. Let’s dissect his points:
  - **Common names.** Finkelstein includes many names in the story that were in common use in the 600’s BCE, both of people and places. Each of those names, without exception, are shown and clearly documented by Kitchen as being in use during the time of Ramesses II.<sup>29</sup> This includes the towns of Raamses<sup>30</sup>, Pithom, Succoth, Etham, Pi-Hahiroth, Baal-Zephon, Migdol, Goshen, and even the Red/Reed Sea. Not just the names of towns, but also the names used in the

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<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.* at 466.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.* at 62.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.* at 467.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.* at 255ff.

<sup>30</sup> Kitchen makes the point that the city scholars generally associate as that named “Ramesse” was *only* a city such as described in Exodus *from* the 1279 to 1136 BC. This is not information that a writer in the 600’s would have. See Kitchen in Ahituv at 81ff. and Kitchen at 479.

Genesis/Exodus accounts are consistent with names used in the Ramesses II era. Joseph's Egyptian name (Zaphenath-Pa'aneah), his wife's name (Asenath), his father-in-law's name (Potipera), as well as that of his first Egyptian boss, (Potiphar) are shown to be Egyptian and to be in the right time range for the true exodus. What is more, the spelling given in the Hebrew is spelling that would be found in the biblical dating range of Ramesses II, and *not* in the dating range of 600 BC.

- **No name is given to Pharaoh.** Finkelstein believes that the failure of Scripture to name Pharaoh is an indication that the identity was unknown, and that the story was concocted at the late date range of 600 BC. In his blunt fashion, Kitchen says the charge of failing to name Pharaoh:

Is what one might have expected of some long-dead, uninformed anti-biblical humanist in the 1850's, but not of a major scholar in the 1990's.<sup>31</sup>

Citing dozens of administrative and narrative papyri and thousands of writings on pottery shards, Kitchen shows that people in the period of Ramesses II customarily spoke of their ruler exactly as the Bible does, without a proper name. Rather than refute the true exodus, this evidence supports it! As Kitchen shows, at the time Finkelstein believes the exodus story was written, the practice was very much to *name* the Pharaoh!

- **Fear of invasion.** Finkelstein cites the apparent "fear" of Egypt about foreign invaders from the East that is set within the Joseph-Moses narrative. He believes that reflected the 7<sup>th</sup> century BCE, rather than the time of Pharaoh Ramesses II because the fear would make sense only *after* the great invasions of an Egypt greatly weakened by the Assyrians, Babylonians, and Persians. This argument seems a reach. First, the Hyksos reign itself clearly established a basis for fear of invaders. This is evidenced by the very forts that Finkelstein references in the eastern side of the delta and along the route from Canaan into Egypt. Those forts were

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<sup>31</sup> Kitchen in Ahituv at 105.

built out of a concern of foreign invaders, not as a government work program!

## CONCLUSION

What we have attempted to do is take the popular scholastic view that minimalizes the historical accuracy of the Egypt/Joseph/Moses narrative, using one of its most vocal proponents. We have dissected those arguments in an effort to show some inadequacies, at least as they are currently in the public domain. Our goal over the next lessons will be to set out the positive evidence that shows the consistency of Scripture with the archaeological record, also helping us understand the Old Testament storyline.

We will take next week to cover the basic story of Moses up through the Exodus. Then, we will finish our archaeology.

## POINTS FOR HOME

1. *“They ruthlessly made the people of Israel work as slaves”* (Ex. 1:13).

The story of Israel’s servitude is the story of God’s deliverance. It is a storyline that finds its final fullness in the redemption that flows from Christ and the freedom from the bondage of sin. Both are acutely real. This is not simply a story of legend. It is the hand of God moving in powerful and real ways in ways that are prophetic and foreshadowing of a powerful and real final deliverance. When people question the integrity of this storyline, it is worth time to study and verify the truth on which we stand.

2. *“They forgot his works and the wonders that he had shown them”* (Ps. 78:11).

As powerful as the deliverance of God was, the people of Israel often failed to remember it, or even as likely, failed to believe it. As the first hand witnesses died off, and as the stories became more distant, it became increasingly easy to think of it no more, or to liken it to a fictional legend. Yet, it was something God commanded the fathers to teach their children. This needs to be a warning for us. As we have seen God work in our lives, as we have experienced his deliverance, we need to tell our children and

bear witness to the hand of God. May each generation grow and stand on the shoulders of the faithful from the prior generation.

3. “*Deliverance*” (OT...).

Over and over in the Old Testament, we read of God’s deliverance of the Israelites from bondage. Not just in Exodus through Deuteronomy, but throughout the historical books—Joshua, Judges, Samuels, Kings, Chronicles, the Psalms, and even the prophets. It is a cause for thanksgiving and gratitude. It is a cause for celebrating and poignant understanding. It undergirds the practice and theology of the Jewish faith as well as the Christian. Let us commit to studying in greater detail the events, their significance, and their meaning. This is worth the time!

**WANT MORE?**

Get ready for the Moses narrative next week by reading through the first ten chapters of Exodus. If you have any questions, email us at [wantmore@Biblical-Literacy.com](mailto:wantmore@Biblical-Literacy.com).