

BIBLE and SPADE

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DAVID'S FORTRESS and Shoshenq's Invasion

Where is
Mt. SINAI?

YAHWEH
in Egyptian
Hieroglyphics

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DEMONSTRATING THE HISTORICAL RELIABILITY OF THE BIBLE



Beneath the Surface

An Editorial Comment

By Henry B. Smith, Jr.

Out of Egypt I called My Son (Matthew 2:15)

The subject of Egyptian history and its relation to the Bible remains one of the greatest areas of excitement and interest in the Christian community. The correlation between events recorded in the Bible and Egypt draws an immense amount of archaeological and apologetic interest. The Bible indicates that many important biblical characters spent time in Egypt: Abraham (Gn 12:10–13:1), Jacob (Gn 46–50), Joseph (Gn 39–50), Moses (Ex 2:12), Joshua (Nm 14:26–30), Jeremiah (Jer 43:6–8), and even Jesus (Mt 2:14–21). Of course, major biblical events took place there, such as the Sojourn of the Israelites and the Exodus.

Most Christians familiar with Egypt also know that these accounts are considered by most Old Testament scholars, archaeologists and skeptics to be fictitious. Finkelstein and Silberman typify this attitude: “Virtually every modern archaeologist, with few exceptions, agrees that the way the Bible describes the Exodus is not the way it happened, if it happened at all.”¹

Those of us who take the biblical record seriously understand what is at stake. While the historicity and accuracy of the Bible is important at every point, these events in Egypt form the backbone of the Old Testament. They are the center and heart of Israelite religious and existential life. Numerous references to their time in Egypt are found throughout the Old Testament, such as: “I am the LORD your God who brought out of the land of Egypt” (Ex 20:2; Lv 19:36; Nm 15:41; 2 Sm 7:6; Ps 74:12–13; 77:19–20; 81:10; 114:1; 135:8; 136:10, 15, 16; Jgs 6:8–10; Hos 12:9; 1 Kgs 8:9; 12:28; 2 Kgs 8:16).

The New Testament is replete with connections to the Exodus, and its theology is wholly undermined if the Exodus events did not actually take place. Many of the Exodus events are types, historical foreshadowings of fulfillment in the person of Christ. The Passover is celebrated the night before Jesus is crucified (Mt 26:17ff). The manna from heaven comes as the true Bread of Life (Jn 6:25–29). The passage through the Red Sea is a kind of baptism (1 Cor 10:2). The blood of the lamb on the doorposts represents Christ’s atoning death (Ex 12:7). Jesus, of course, is the Lamb of God (Jn 1:29). These typological and redemptive-historical connections are utterly vacuous if the Sojourn and Exodus did not happen as Scripture describes.

ABR has produced numerous articles on its website and in *Bible and Spade* over the last 15 years concerning Egypt. The location of Mt. Sinai, the Red Sea crossing, the Pharaoh of the Exodus, the Amarna Letters and the Conquest, Egyptian scarabs

discovered at Khirbet el-Maqatir (Ai), and the presence of Semitic foreigners in Egypt have all been the subject of study and publication. We encourage you to peruse through our free online archive and back issues of *Bible and Spade*.

Additionally, new archaeological evidence is being unearthed in Egypt on a regular basis. The volume of information is almost bewildering. An Austrian archaeological team, led by Dr. Manfred Bietak, has excavated the palatial district at Avaris (Tell el-Dab‘a) and produced some significant results for illuminating the Nile Delta’s history during the Fifteenth and Eighteenth Dynasties. These discoveries in the Egyptian Delta have a direct bearing on the historicity of the Sojourn and Exodus.

ABR has also published a statement on the recent trend of radically revising the chronologies of Egypt and the ancient Near East (ANE) in the second and first millennia BC. A number of evangelicals have adopted these revisionist constructs, often in a sincere but misguided attempt to defend the Bible. Moving the chronology of the ANE centuries ahead during this era utterly destroys hundreds of correlations we already have between archaeology and the Bible. We urge our brethren to jettison this untenable apologetic, posthaste. For the full statement, visit www.BibleArchaeology.org, then click “About” at the top of the page, then click “Statement on ANE Chronologies” on the left sidebar.

This issue of *Bible and Spade* begins an updated focus on Egypt. In the fall of 2015, ABR will be having a conference in Quakertown, PA with five presentations on Egypt and the Bible. This conference will feature Rev. Gary Byers, Dr. Bryant Wood, and ABR Associate Douglas Petrovich. This conference will not only include some of the previously known discoveries from Egypt which correlate with the Bible, but new, up-to-date research will also be presented with respect to the period of the Sojourn in Egypt. Dr. Petrovich also plans to publish a book, with a chapter by Dr. Wood, detailing epigraphic and archaeological evidence of the Israelites in Egypt. Please join us for this important and exciting conference. If you cannot attend, ABR plans to produce DVDs from these powerful presentations and make them available in our online bookstore in 2016.

This issue of *Bible and Spade* serves as a kickoff for a renewed Egyptian focus. Please pray for the ABR ministry as it continues to conduct research and present evidence from Egypt that the events of the Bible are historically accurate, and can be trusted.

Note

¹ Israel Finkelstein and Neil Asher Silberman, *The Bible Unearthed*, 7–8.



Question about Eighteenth vs. Thirteenth Dynasty Exodus

Hi, I am very grateful for the work you guys do! I know you guys hold to an 18th dynasty exodus as well as I do. What do you say to those who hold to a 13th dynasty exodus like some of the creation sites hold to? Some of their arguments sound reasonable.

Thank you,

Clarence G.

A reply from ABR staff member Henry Smith:

Dear Clarence,

Greetings in Christ!

The ministry of ABR believes that attempts to radically revise Egyptian chronology in the second millennium BC are not feasible. Please consider the following abridged portion of the *Associates for Biblical Research Statement on Ancient Near Eastern and Biblical Chronologies*, which can be found at <http://www.biblearchaeology.org/about/ancientneareasternbiblicalchronologies.aspx>. I hope you find it to be a helpful summary of our position on this subject.

On Radically Revising Ancient Near Eastern and Egyptian Chronology in the Second and First Millennium BC

1. ABR recognizes that the standard dating for Egypt before the Twelfth Dynasty (ca. 1979 BC) is highly dependent on 14-C dating. Based on the outermost possible date for the Flood from biblical texts tentatively outlined above (3150–3300 BC), many of the dates given by the secular chronologies for both Egypt and other civilizations before 2000 BC are not viable and require revision because of this dependence on 14-C dating. However, we reject the notion that adjusting the dating of these dynasties in the third millennium BC (especially the Old Kingdom) *necessarily entails a domino effect that demands the wholesale revision of Egyptian/ANE chronology on the order of centuries down into the second and first millennium BC*.

2. We believe that various attempts to radically revise (by

centuries) conventional Egyptian chronology from ca. 2000 BC and down into the second and first millennium BC are unwarranted, unnecessary, and untenable.

Archaeological and historical dates from this period are derived from:

- Written texts
- Paleography
- Astronomical data
- Ceramic typology
- Architectural tendencies and practices
- Cultural practices
- Major events in the archaeological strata (fires and earthquakes)
- Treaties between nation-states
- Royal decrees
- Private communications

3. This enormous wealth of data all converges to assist the historian in determining reasonably reliable dates for events in the ancient world. Any particular piece of data can be cross-checked versus other known data to test it for accuracy. We believe these dating methods, while not infallible, are generally reliable primarily because they are tethered to human activity, which has an eyewitness dimension to it.

4. We recognize that eyewitnesses can be untruthful and/or in error. For example, ancient kings were notorious for exaggerating their deeds and diminishing or ignoring those of their foes. However, a king who exaggerated his accomplishments in battle against another country in year “X” of his reign did not generally lie about when the battle happened, only about its result. Thus, much useful historical information can be gleaned from the annals of kings, despite their exaggerated claims.

5. The radical revision of Egyptian chronology demands that the chronologies of many other civilizations across the ANE also be rewritten. Egypt had countless dealings with numerous other nation-states, such as the Hittites, the Sea Peoples (Philistines), the Canaanites, the Amorites, Mesopotamia, Cyprus, Nubia, and of course, Israel. Hundreds of synchronisms from the archaeological record during the post-2000 BC era already exist, some of which are cited on this

website in a variety of articles. These synchronizations agree with the biblical dates and cultural setting. Radical revisionism serves to destroy these manifold correlations, undermining their already strong and highly useful apologetic value.

6. We believe that those who advocate such reconstructions have been and will continue to be woefully unsuccessful at resolving the thousands of new synchronization problems that the wholesale disruption of Egyptian chronology creates, even if one were to assume that said advocates have the requisite expertise to revise the histories of all of the applicable civilizations.

Questions Concerning Egyptian and Biblical Chronology

Dear Sir,

I am new to the study of the chronologies of the dynasties of Egypt, as I have a degree in Ministry covering Biblical History, my interest never actually delved into how the two contradict each other; Contemporary Egyptian Chronology and the Biblical timeline.

I am now being challenged by some friendly atheists regarding biblical history, particularly around the time of the flood and the tower of Babel.

I was wondering if you can point me in the right direction regarding this challenge. Is it indeed possible to correlate archaeological evidence discovered regarding the History of Egypt, with biblical accounts like the flood and the tower of Babel?

This is the challenge I have taken up to defend:

The Tower of Babel story is complete nonsense. Let's first establish when it was supposed to happen. I suggest this timeframe as a reference—but if you can show me it is wrong—am open <http://www.wyattnewsletters.com/articles/chronochart.htm> each account of years is given a corresponding Bible reference to help you. So this puts Babel at around 2100 BCE—From Babel—languages and nations came. This puts the nation of Egypt starting after 2100 BCE—which means all known pharaohs and some previously unknown have just 2000 years of history. I intend to demonstrate this is nonsense.”

Would you happen to have an opinion that I could glean some perspective on? Appreciate your time in advance.

M. Wilson

A reply from ABR staff member Henry Smith:

Dear Mr. Wilson,

Thank you for writing to the ABR ministry and for engaging in this challenge. Here are a few basic items to consider.

1. The atheist is arguing that the Tower of Babel must be placed at 2100 BC because of the use of the chart at the link given. This is

based on the Ussher chronology. I would recommend employing the strategy that the chart is incorrect, and that the Flood was much earlier, 3100–3300 BC. (Please see our statement on chronologies on the ABR website, www.biblearchaeology.org/Ancient_Near_Eastern_Biblical_Chronologies.)

To possibly avoid plunging into the details of the chronology from the Flood to Abraham, and for the sake of not confusing the matter, you MIGHT consider taking the position that the Genesis 11 chronology has some limited gaps and the Flood was perhaps even earlier (see the appendix of Whitcomb and Morris' *The Genesis Flood* for details). This is not my understanding of the texts, but numerous conservatives have held this view, and it might prove helpful in making your larger point apologetically. It depends on your own understandings and convictions. I am only suggesting this because you are dealing with atheists, who will almost inevitably misconstrue and misunderstand the complexities surrounding the texts we have for Genesis 11.

2. Thus, the Tower of Babel incident was probably around 2700 BC or so.

Please check out these important articles on the ABR website for further information:

- *Is There Archaeological Evidence for the Tower of Babel?*
- *Cultural Change and the Confusion of Language in Ancient Sumer*

3. There is evidence from archaeology that there was only one language in the distant past, as seen below:

Emerkar and the Lord of Aratta, 1900–1600 BC



“...In those days...the people entrusted [to him] could address Enlil, verily, in but a single tongue. In those days...did Enki...estrangle the tongues in their mouths as many as were put there. The tongues of men which were one.”

4. Concerning Egypt, we have an enormous array of evidence that fits perfectly with the Bible from the time of the Sojourn and Exodus. For more information on this topic, please check out the following free articles of the ABR website:

- *Joseph in Egypt*, in 6 parts
- *The Joseph Narrative*
- *Evidence for the Exodus from Egypt*
- *New Evidence Supporting the Early Biblical Date of the Exodus and Conquest*

I hope this provides you with a good starting point. Let me know if you have further questions.



By Clyde E. Billington and Bretta Grabau

Introduction

In 2008, Professor Yossi Garfinkel of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem excavated an ostraca (a piece of broken pottery with an inscription) at Khirbet Qeiyafa, southwest of Jerusalem, with the oldest Hebrew inscription ever discovered.¹ The French epigrapher Emil Puech, of the Ecole Biblique et Archeologique Francaise in Jerusalem, has declared the written text on this ostraca to be Hebrew and dated it to ca. 1000 BC.² Carbon-14 dating of burned olive pits from this same site by Oxford University scientists has yielded dates between 1020–980 BC.³

The ruins which Garfinkel excavated at Khirbet Qeiyafa are the remains of a large ancient fort that has been named the Elah Fortress. Garfinkel estimates that it took 100,000 tons of cut stone to build this massive fort; he also believes that King David built it.⁴ This article upholds Garfinkel's contention that the Elah Fortress was a Jewish site which was almost certainly built by King David of the Old Testament.

The Elah fortress was apparently built only as a military post and lookout site, since there is no evidence that a large civilian population lived there during the period of the United Monarchy. It was almost unquestionably built to protect both Jerusalem and Hebron from attack by the Philistines. It

also was apparently abandoned shortly after it was built, which suggests that David no longer needed it after he defeated the Philistines.

There is, however, a “rich destruction layer”⁵ at Khirbet Qeiyafa which has also been dated to the reign of King David. This is strange since there is no biblical evidence suggesting that David ever suffered a defeat at the hands of the Philistines, who were his only enemies south and west of Jerusalem. This

article will argue that this destruction layer has been misdated by about 75 years, and it will also argue that this destruction layer was made by King Shoshenq I of Egypt (the biblical Shishak) when he captured the Elah Fortress on his way to attack Jerusalem in 925 BC.

The Elah Valley Road is not only the most direct route leading south from Jerusalem to Gath and the Philistine Plain, but it is also the most direct route leading south from Jerusalem to the Via Maris road and on to Egypt. The Egyptian king Shoshenq I attacked Jerusalem along this road in 925 BC, and forced King Rehoboam of Judah to buy him off with the massive amount of gold treasure which his father Solomon had collected during his reign.⁶ 2 Chronicles 12:9 states:

When Shishak king of Egypt attacked Jerusalem,

he carried off the treasures of the temple of the LORD and the treasures of the royal palace. He took everything, including the gold shields which Solomon had made.



Clara Amit, Israel Antiquities Authority
Infrared image of the ostraca discovered at Khirbet Qeiyafa in 2008, with a Hebrew ink inscription.



William Schlegel, *Satellite Bible Atlas*

Map denoting Shishak's campaign into Judah, circa 925 BC. The authors suggest the possibility that Shishak's troops destroyed the Elah Fortress, located just to the west of Azekah and north of Socco, not far from the route depicted here.

It will be shown below that there is ample evidence from Egypt from the reigns of Shoshenq I (945–924 BC), Osorkon I (924–889 BC), and Shoshenq II (890 BC) that a huge amount of gold and silver appeared in Egypt—that was clearly not there earlier—after Shoshenq I looted Jerusalem in 925 BC.⁷

From the garbled account of Shoshenq's campaign against Jerusalem as is given on his Bubastite Portal in the Temple of Amun at Karnak, it appears that Shoshenq I launched at least a two-pronged attack against Jerusalem, one along the Elah Road and one along the road leading directly north from Hebron to Jerusalem. He also seems to have launched a third, simultaneous attack against Jerusalem along the Beth Horon-Gibeath Road. Incidentally, it is very apparent that Shoshenq I was advised by someone with an intimate knowledge of the geography of ancient Judah.

In his campaign against Jerusalem along the Elah Road, Shoshenq I would have encountered the Elah Fortress which, as will be argued, had been built earlier by King David. Even though there is no evidence given in the Old Testament, it seems nearly certain that Rehoboam sent troops to defend this vital fortress when he learned of Shoshenq's invasion. It is also almost certain that Shoshenq I had to capture the Elah Fortress before going on to attack Jerusalem. The crucial location of this fortress was a potential threat to Shoshenq's lines of communication for the two or three armies that he had sent to attack Jerusalem. The question thus arises, is the Elah Fortress mentioned in the existing portions of Shoshenq I's campaign inscription at Karnak?

This article will first support Yossi Garfinkel's contention that the Elah Fortress was built by King David. Second, it will support Egyptologist Kenneth Kitchen's reading of the hieroglyphs in enemy name rings 105 and 106 of Shoshenq's campaign inscription on the Bubastite Portal at Karnak as the "Heights of David." Third, it will conclude that the Heights of David site is to be identified with the Elah Fortress built by King David. And fourth, this article will maintain that the destruction layer at the Elah Fortress is evidence that Shoshenq I conquered this fort on his way to Jerusalem.⁸

Elah Fortress was Built by David

The Elah Fortress is located about 19 mi (31 km) southwest of Jerusalem, along the main road leading from Jerusalem to the Philistine city of Gath. This road also leads on from the city of Gath to the entire Philistine Plain. It was along the Elah Valley Road that the Philistines—during the reign of King Saul—invaded central Judah, and then after David killed Goliath, they fled south along this road in defeat to Gath. In 1 Samuel 17:52, the Elah Valley Road is called the Shaaraim Road. The Old Testament is very clear on the importance of this road in Israel's wars with the Philistines. It was the shortest and best route for the Philistines to use to attack deep into central Judah. As will be seen, the Philistines also used this route in two attempts at attacking Jerusalem during David's reign.

David knew the area of the Elah Fortress very well. It was near this location that he killed Goliath. And in addition, the Cave of Adullam where David hid from Saul is located only a few miles from the site of the Elah Fortress. But the question

remains: When did David build the Elah Fortress? The biblical and archaeological evidence suggests that David began building it while he was ruling for seven and a half years from the city of Hebron. As discussed later, the Elah Fortress has two gates, one of which is intended to provide protection and/or access for the road leading to Jerusalem, while the other gate opens to the road leading to Hebron from the Elah Valley. The gate for the Elah-Adullam-Hebron Road strongly suggests that David built the Elah Fortress while he was ruling in Hebron.

It seems very likely that David built the Elah Fortress for five reasons. First, he needed to control the Elah Valley from Philistine attacks against Hebron, from which he first ruled the Israelites. The Elah-Adullam-Hebron Road T's into the Jerusalem-Elah Valley-Gath Road right in front of the Elah Fortress. As was noted above, the road from the Elah Valley to Hebron passed by the ancient city of Adullam near which the Cave of Adullam was located, the cave in which David hid from Saul. In other words, David knew this area very well and would have known that the Elah-Adullam-Hebron Road was also the most direct route for a Philistine attack on Hebron, which was at that time David's capital.

Second, in his conquest of Jerusalem, David almost certainly also needed the Elah Fortress to control the Jerusalem-Elah Valley-Gath Road in order to isolate the Jebusites in Jerusalem from any possible help from the Philistines. While the Bible does not specifically say so, it appears that the Jebusites and the Philistines became allies against David. It should be noted that there is no evidence that the Philistines ever made any attempt to capture Jerusalem from the Jebusites, but only attacked it when David gained control over the Holy City. This suggests that the Jebusites and the Philistines were allied against David. In other words, it appears likely that the Elah Fortress played a key blocking role against the Philistines in David's conquest of Jerusalem from the Jebusites. The fact that David constructed the Elah Fortress so that it could easily control the road leading to Jerusalem suggests that he was planning his conquest of Jerusalem when he built the Elah Fortress.

Third, David unquestionably knew that he needed to protect the Elah Valley Road in order to stop Philistine attacks against central Judah and Jerusalem, his future capital. Incidentally, the two gates in the wall around the Elah Fortress would have allowed David to quickly send troops to protect each of these two crucial roads that "T" in the Elah Valley just below the Elah Fortress. The two-sided threat from the Philistines that David faced even explains why David built the Elah Fortress with two gates, and also why it was apparently called Sha'arayim ("Two Gates") by the ancient Jews.⁹ As for the two gates in the Elah Fortress, one gate opens to the Elah Valley-Jerusalem Road to the south, while the other opens to the Elah-Adullam-Hebron Road to the east. David saw the need to have two gates to move troops quickly depending upon the direction from which the Philistines were attacking, either towards Jerusalem or towards Hebron.

Fourth, the Elah Fortress almost certainly served as an early-warning watch post for David. As will be seen, David built a tall "administrative structure" in the Elah Fortress, and the Elah Fortress was already located on the highest peak near the Elah Valley. The Elah Fortress has an almost unrestricted view in all

directions, but especially toward the Philistine Plain to the west and south.

While the Elah Fortress itself could have only held a few hundred permanent troops, messengers and/or signal fires sent from there to David in Hebron or Jerusalem would have given David enough warning time so that he could muster his entire army to meet a Philistine attack. Actually, it seems very likely that David used signal fires at the Elah Fortress to warn him in



Khirbet Qeiyafa Archaeological Project
Aerial view of Khirbet Qeiyafa, also known as the Elah Fortress.

Hebron or Jerusalem of such an attack.

And fifth, the Elah Fortress was an ideal location for David to launch future attacks against Gath and the other cities in the Philistine Plain. It is nearly certain that David used the Elah Fortress as his military headquarters in his later attack on and conquest of the crucial city of Gath. When Gath fell to David, it opened the way for his defeat of the other four cities in the Philistine alliance.

Shortly after David captured Jerusalem and made it his new capital, the Philistines attacked the Holy City twice along the Elah Valley Road.¹⁰ When the Philistines attacked Jerusalem in the First Battle of the Rephaim Valley, 2 Samuel 5:17 states that David went from Jerusalem “down to the stronghold” (NASB and NIV). This “stronghold” was almost unquestionably the Elah Fortress which he had earlier built.

The Hebrew word which is translated as “stronghold” in 2 Samuel 5:17 (NASB and NIV) is *metsudah*, the very same Hebrew word used a thousand years later for Herod the Great’s Masada Fortress on the west shore of the Dead Sea. In the NIV this same Hebrew word is translated as “fortress” in 2 Samuel 5:17, but is inconsistently translated as “stronghold” in 2 Samuel 5:9. The NASB translates this word as “stronghold” in both passages. Actually, “fortress” seems a much more appropriate translation of *metsudah*. A stronghold could just be a natural geographic site that could be used for military protection, while “fortress” implies some sort of military construction.

It should be noted that 2 Samuel 5:9 has David living in the *metsudah* in Jerusalem that had been built much earlier by the Jebusites. 2 Samuel 5:9 also has David constructing additional military fortifications in Jerusalem after he had captured the Holy City from the Jebusites. Therefore, *metsudah* will be

translated as “fortress” in the remaining portions of this article. Incidentally, a *metsudah*, like a medieval castle, tended to be built on the highest peak or mountain in an area, which fits both the Jebusite fortress in Jerusalem and the Elah Fortress. Holding the high ground has always been an important military advantage.

David apparently knew in advance—probably forewarned by watchmen stationed in the Elah Fortress—that the Philistines were coming to attack Jerusalem in the First Battle of the Rephaim Valley. To meet this attack, David exited Jerusalem and moved his army southwest to a fortress¹¹ from which he could launch a flanking maneuver against the Philistine army. As noted above, the *metsudah* to which David moved his army was almost certainly the Elah Fortress. David probably also had troops stationed at Hebron, which he very likely summoned to join his main army at the Elah Fortress by way of the Elah-Hebron Road.

The Elah Valley Road connects to the Rephaim Valley near Jerusalem where David as king first defeated the Philistines. The northern portions of the Rephaim Valley are today located in modern Jerusalem’s western suburbs.¹² It was by using the Elah Valley Road to Jerusalem that David was able to launch a surprise attack against the Philistine flank in the First Battle of the Rephaim Valley.

We previously observed that David was very likely warned of the approach of the Philistine army along the Elah Valley Road by watchmen stationed at the Elah Fortress. The site of the Elah Fortress provides an unrestricted view north, west, south and even southeast of the crucial Elah Valley.¹³ Recall also that Garfinkel’s archaeological team reported discovering the remains of a large “administrative structure” that was several stories high inside of the Elah Fortress. Garfinkel writes of this



Khirbet Qeiyafa Archaeological Project
The southern city gate, a typical four-chambered Iron Age gate, with the Elah Valley in the distance.

administrative structure that:

...it occupied the highest and most important location—at the center of the site—overlooking the entire city as well as the surrounding countryside as far as Jerusalem and the Hebron Mountains to the east and Ashdod to the west.¹⁴

The city of Ashdod was, of course, one of the five Philistine

cities, and was located on the Mediterranean coast. Thus, from this administrative structure in the Elah Fortress three of the five Philistine cities could be seen: Gath, Ekron, and Ashdod. Of these three, Ashdod was the farthest away. Only the Philistine cities of Ashkelon and Gaza could not be seen from the Elah Fortress.

Garfinkel at first called this multi-storied, monumental structure at Khirbet Qeiyafa “David’s Palace,” but since almost all biblical archaeologists and scholars reacted adversely to the word “palace,” he now refers to it as an “administrative structure.” While this administrative structure probably never truly functioned as “David’s Palace,” he almost certainly did use it as an early warning watch-post, and it probably also served as his field headquarters in his later wars of conquest against the Philistines.

From the top of this multi-storied administrative building David could have—and almost certainly did—station watchmen who could spot and give him advance warning of the movement of Philistine troops marching to attack Jerusalem or Hebron. It also seems likely, as observed earlier, that David used warning fires—probably at the top of this administrative structure in the Elah Fortress—to warn him of the movement of Philistine troops.

David defeated the Philistines in the First Battle of the Rephaim Valley, but the Philistine army retreated back along the Elah Valley Road to the city of Gath, and basically survived still intact. The Philistines decided to try again to take Jerusalem, but they made two major mistakes. First, they underestimated David’s brilliance as a commander; and second, they once again attacked towards Jerusalem along the Elah Valley Road. David was waiting for them.

The Second Battle of the Rephaim Valley proved disastrous for the Philistines. Not only did David again defeat the Philistines, but this time he also wisely blocked their retreat along the Elah Valley Road to Gath. Hence, David forced the Philistines to make a long circuitous retreat along roads leading from Jerusalem to Gibeon (the Hebrew text says Geba) to Gezer to Ekron.¹⁵ It should be noted that David forced the Philistines to flee this time to the Philistine city of Ekron and did not allow them to take the shorter route to Gath. 2 Samuel 5:25 says that David “struck down the Philistines” along the entire path of their long retreat through hostile territory, which was inhabited by their Israelite enemies. The Philistines never fully recovered from this second disastrous loss to King David.

The fact that David blocked the retreat of the Philistines southwest along the Elah Valley Road to Gath in the Second Battle of the Rephaim Valley provides very strong proof that he knew of its military value. David would also have known the value of controlling this road during his own later offensive campaigns into the Philistine Plain. Both for defensive and offensive reasons, David knew that he needed to control the Elah Valley Road. This fact provides strong circumstantial evidence that it was David who built the Elah Fortress.

The area where the Elah Fortress is located is frequently associated with David in the Bible. As was noted above, 1 Chronicles 11: 15 and 2 Samuel 23:13–14 indicate that the Cave of Adullam, where David hid from King Saul, was located only a few miles from the site of the future Elah Fortress. 2 Samuel 23:13–14 even mentions a *metsudah* fortress to which David had fled, and which was clearly located near the Cave of Adullam. The fortress mentioned in 2 Samuel 23:14 was almost certainly the Elah Fortress. Incidentally, one scholar has suggested that it was

Saul who built the Elah Fortress. This is highly unlikely, since David could not have safely lived in the nearby Cave of Adullam earlier if Saul had troops stationed in the Elah Fortress.

The Elah Fortress is also located only about 15 mi (24 km) from the Rephaim Valley, where we noted that David twice defeated the Philistines. In addition, the Cave of Adullam, where David hid from Saul, was located only about 11–12 mi (18–19 km) from the city of Gath, where David for a short period became the vassal of Achish,

king of Gath. In other words, David knew very well the area where the Elah fortress was built. Incidentally, it is likely that David picked the Cave of Adullam to hide from Saul because it was located close to Gath, and the Philistine soldiers located at Gath were a potential threat to Saul, if he foolishly tried to move his army into the Elah Valley to capture David.

To summarize, there is ample evidence from the Old Testament linking the site of the Elah Fortress to David. Based on the archaeological and biblical evidence, David is the only Jewish king who could have possibly built the Elah Fortress.

Was the Elah Fortress a Jewish Site?

There are critical scholars who reject David as the builder of the Elah Fortress and have even suggested that it was not a Jewish site. It was observed previously that the oldest Hebrew inscription



Todd Bolen/BiblePlaces.com

View of the Rephaim Valley, looking west. The north end marked the northern boundary of the tribe of Judah and the southern boundary of Benjamin (Jos 15:8; 18:16). It was here that David's army defeated the Philistines on two occasions.

ever discovered was found by Garfinkel on an ostracaon at Khirbet Qeiyafa. While there is a dispute about exactly how this entire inscription should be translated, the word “king” unquestionably appears on it.¹⁶ In other words, there was a king living in the area of Judah at the time that the Elah Fortress was built, and based upon the size of the Elah Fortress, he must have been a very powerful king. Thus, David is a good fit for the king who built the Elah Fortress, although we have seen that some critical scholars have expressed doubts that it was built by David, even going so far as to suggest that it was not even built by the Jews.

These critical scholars have questioned identifying the Khirbet Qeiyafa ostracaon inscription with Hebrew, and they have even suggested that it was written in Phoenician¹⁷ or maybe even in the Philistine dialect, which was itself a version of the Phoenician/Canaanite language. Hebrew and Phoenician/Canaanite are very closely related languages, and both used the same basic alphabet. Incidentally, it should be remembered that the French epigrapher Emil Puech of the Ecole Biblique et Archeologique Francaise in Jerusalem declared the written text on the Khirbet Qeiyafa ostracaon to be Hebrew.

Other discoveries made by Garfinkel at Khirbet Qeiyafa, however, have destroyed the Canaanite/Phoenician theory proposed by his critics. For example, Garfinkel and his archaeological team have found “thousands of animal bones” which are from “sheep, goats, and cattle, but no pigs.”¹⁸ Both the Canaanites and the Philistines ate pigs, making the Elah Fortress a very unlikely Canaanite site. The Philistines also ate dogs, and so far Garfinkel has not reported the discovery of any dog bones at Khirbet Qeiyafa, making the Philistines even more unlikely than the Canaanites to have built the Elah Fortress. Philistine pottery is also very distinctive, and it clearly does not appear in the Elah Fortress.

Garfinkel also reported the discovery of five religious “standing stones” or *massebot*, two basalt altars, two pottery libation jars, and two portable religious shrines.¹⁹ These religious items were discovered in three “cultic rooms” inside the Elah Fortress at Khirbet Qeiyafa.²⁰ There are no images engraved on any of these objects, and in addition no idols or figurines have been found in association with these cultic items. Garfinkel thus argues that this too is strong evidence for the presence of Israelites in the Elah Fortress, since only the ancient Jews were forbidden to use graven images in religious worship.²¹

Thus, neither idols/images nor pig bones have been found in the Elah Fortress. Garfinkel therefore notes: “This suggests that the population of Khirbet Qeiyafa observed two biblical bans—on pork and on graven images—and thus practiced a different cult than that of the Canaanites or the Philistines.”²² In other words, only the Israelites fit the archaeological discoveries which Garfinkel has made at Khirbet Qeiyafa.

Pulling this all together, only David fits the historical and biblical context to have been the builder of the Elah Fortress at Khirbet Qeiyafa in ca. 1000 BC. As was noted above, David was very familiar with this area, having first defeated Goliath near the future location of the Elah Fortress, and second having hidden from King Saul in the nearby Cave of Adullam. The Elah Fortress was unquestionably built to protect both central Judah and the city of Jerusalem from the Philistines. Therefore, the historical context of the Elah Fortress only fits King David.

We have seen that the Elah Fortress was absolutely essential for the protection of Jerusalem and central Judah from the Philistines, and this apparently was the reason why the Elah Fortress was built by David, but then abandoned shortly afterwards. The question arises: Why did David go to all of the trouble to build the Elah Fortress and then abandon it?

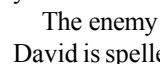
After he had defeated the Philistines and with the city of Gath under his control, David no longer needed the Elah Fortress, and hence he abandoned it. The city of Gath is located at an even better site to protect the Elah Valley road to Jerusalem than is the Elah Fortress. 2 Samuel 15:18–22 indicates that Gittites from Gath eventually became David’s loyal allies after he conquered their city. As noted previously, Gath was located at an even more advantageous location along the same road on which the Elah Fortress was located, and provided better access to the Philistine Plain. However, the Elah Fortress was still located at a crucial site for the protection of Jerusalem; and later, after the conquest of Gath by Shoshenq I, it would briefly once again play a role in the history of ancient Israel.

“The Heights of David” in Shoshenq’s Bubastite Inscription

In the fifth year (925 BC) of the reign of King Rehoboam over Judah, the Egyptian king Shoshenq I (Shishak) invaded the Kingdom of Judah and surrounded the city of Jerusalem. According to 2 Chronicles 12:9, Shoshenq I extorted a huge amount of gold from Rehoboam in exchange for not destroying Jerusalem. As will be seen below, there is strong archaeological and inscriptional evidence which indicates that Shoshenq I did acquire a huge amount of gold and also silver from Rehoboam. After defeating Judah, Shoshenq apparently attacked the Ten Tribes of Israel to the north, and returned to Egypt with the great wealth that he had captured from Judah and Israel.

After returning from his successful campaign in Judah in the 21st year (925 BC) of his reign, Shoshenq commissioned the Bubastite Portal in the great Temple of Amun at Karnak.²³ On the Bubastite Portal, King Shoshenq I provides a very garbled account of his military campaigns against the kingdoms of Judah and the ten northern tribes of Israel. In his inscription here, Shoshenq I provides a series of enemy name rings around the names of cities, locations and fortresses that he conquered—or at least claimed to have conquered—in Judah and Israel.

The Israelite locations found in the enemy name rings on Shoshenq’s inscription on the Bubastite Portal are all of interest, but enemy name rings 105 and 106 are of particular interest. The British Egyptologist Kenneth Kitchen translates rings 105 and 106 together as the “Heights of David.”²⁴ If Kitchen is correct, this would be the earliest reference to David which has been found in non-biblical sources. The only other two ancient references to David in non-biblical texts are found on the Mesha Stele and the Tel Dan Inscription, both of which date about 75 years later.

The enemy name in ring 106 that Kitchen suggests is the name David is spelled in hieroglyphics as  . The key glyphs in this ring are  , which transliterate as DAW_T. David’s name in the original Hebrew consonants—without the Masoretic vowel points—transliterates as DWD.

For the comparison of consonants—Hebrew was originally only written in consonants—Kitchen drops both of the hieroglyphic vowels  and  and the foreign hill country determinative , and thus spells the name in ring 106 as DWT. The only significant difference between DWT and DWD in these two names is the final D in DWD and the final T in DWT.

Kitchen correctly argues that T's and D's frequently interchange when moving between languages. He even provides an example of the name David being spelled with a final T. Kitchen writes:

However, in an Ethiopic victory inscription of the early sixth century A.D. in southwest Arabia, the emperor of Axum cited explicitly passages (Pss. 65; 19) from the “Psalms of Dawit,” exactly the consonants in DWT as found with Shoshenq. In Egyptian transcriptions of foreign names (both places and personal), a T could and sometimes did transcribe a Semitic D.²⁵

Strangely, this Ethiopic example given by Kitchen has been dismissed and discounted by several Egyptologists, although it is very relevant. Kitchen continues: “Thus there is no reason to doubt a final –D becoming a voiceless T in both Egyptian and Ethiopic (both Afro-Asiatic languages).”²⁶

Kitchen continues his argument for the final Hebrew D in DWD changing into a T in DWT in Egyptian hieroglyphics by giving a whole list of locations in Canaan where a Semitic/Hebrew D is transliterated into a T sound in Egyptian hieroglyphic spellings. He even provides an example of what appears to be the name of another David, “the Asiatic chief carpenter *TWTT*” who is mentioned on an Egyptian stela.²⁷ In this case, both Semitic D's in the name David are both transliterated as T's in Egyptian hieroglyphs.

However, Kitchen's translation/interpretation of DWT in enemy name ring 106 as the name David has been questioned by several Egyptologists. No one seems to question that D's and T's frequently interchange when moving between the Egyptian and Hebrew languages. The problem seems to be the hieroglyphic T that is used in name ring 106 is , which is not commonly used in Egyptian hieroglyphics to transliterate the Semitic/Hebrew D. The normal Egyptian glyph for T that is used in place of the Semitic D is .

There are two major problems with using this  T vs.  T argument to reject Kitchen's reading of the name DWT as David in ring 106. First, Gardiner in his *Egyptian Grammar* writes that the glyph  T : “Sometimes also, by a false archaism, for  T.”²⁸ In other words,  was at times substituted for , which means that it was at times pronounced exactly like . It later became so common to use  T in place of  T “in hieroglyphic and hieratic” that a “diacritical tick” was added to  to denote when it was to be pronounced with its old original value of T.²⁹

The second problem with rejecting Kitchen's reading of DWT as David in enemy name ring 106 is an unspoken assumption that Kitchen's critics appear to make. They assume that the scribe(s) who wrote the hieroglyphic text in Shoshenq's inscription on the Bubastite Portal at Karnak was a well-trained, royal Egyptian scribe who would have never used the  T in place of the

Semitic/Hebrew D. However, the evidence from Shoshenq's Inscription itself suggests that the scribe who wrote it was not a native Egyptian, was not well trained, and almost certainly spoke another language (probably Libyan) as his first language.

As will be seen, the epigraphic evidence also strongly suggests that this (Libyan?) scribe of the Bubastite Portal at Karnak was influenced by and/or consulted with some sort of Semitic speaker(s) who was very likely a Jew or an Edomite. Actually, this non-Egyptian, campaign scribe almost certainly consulted with and/or received military-geographic reports from either a Jewish traitor or an Edomite, and possibly from both.

The scribe in charge of Shoshenq I's inscription on the Bubastite Portal at Karnak was unquestionably his son Iput.³⁰ George Hughes in his preface to the Oriental Institute's third volume on the Bubastite Portal even notes that Iput was not only in charge of Shoshenq I's victory inscription at Karnak, but also gave himself a highly unusual place of prominence in his father's inscription. Hughes writes:

The three scenes on each of the pilasters (on the Bubastite Portal) are largely notable for showing the great prominence of Shoshenq I's son, the High Priest of Amun and Commander-in-Chief of the Army, Iput, who appears behind his father in every one of the scenes.³¹

Hughes also notes that Iput “appears with equal prominence on the Silsilah stela of Haremsaf”³² which was found at the quarry from which the stone for the Bubastite Portal was taken. Iput's prominence on his father's Bubastite Portal is quite strange, since he did not succeed his father as the king of Egypt. Hughes writes:

Iput, being at Thebes while the king (Shoshenq I) was in the north, would perhaps have been the one immediately responsible for the building operations (on the Bubastite Portal). Despite this revelation of his prominence under his father, it was not Iput but Osorkon I who succeeded their father on the throne, while Iput continued as High Priest in his brother's reign.³³

Besides being the High Priest of Amun during the reign of his father Shoshenq I, Iput also held the position of “Commander-in-Chief of the Army,” which strongly suggests that he even campaigned with his father in his invasion into Judah and Israel. It seems very likely that Iput as Commander-in-Chief of the Army was in charge of recording the actual military field reports from his father's invasion into Judah and Israel, and Iput was almost unquestionably in charge of their publication in Shoshenq I's inscription on the Bubastite Portal.

As was noted above, the actual inscriptional evidence from the Bubastite Portal itself clearly shows that it was not written by a highly-trained Egyptian scribe. It was also almost certainly written by a scribe whose primary language was not Egyptian. Iput fits both of these requirements.

Shoshenq I and his son Iput were ethnically Libyans. Only a few years before he obtained the throne of Egypt and began the Twenty-Second Dynasty, native Egyptian scribes wrote Shoshenq I's name with a foreigner determinative. Since the

historical evidence indicates that Iput was both the High Priest of Amun who was in charge of the construction of the Bubastite Portal and also Commander-in-Chief of the Army, it is almost certain that it was he who was responsible for the errors and irregularities found in Shoshenq I's victory inscription at Karnak.

The first error and/or irregularity found in Shoshenq I's victory inscription is his claim to have "subjected" the armies of the Kingdom of Mitanni.³⁴ The Kingdom of Mitanni had disappeared four hundred years earlier in ca. 1340 BC when its armies were crushed by the Hittites. Shoshenq I—or more likely his son Iput—clearly copied this reference to the Mitanni from an older pharaoh's campaign itinerary. It is likely that this is not the only instance where Shoshenq I borrowed from an inscription of an earlier pharaoh. John Currid in his *Ancient Egypt and the Old Testament* writes:

The veracity of the triumphal relief of Shoshenq I has frequently been called into question. The principal argument against its reliability stems from some scholars' belief that many of the towns were copied from older texts. For example, the cities of the Esdraelon Plain closely conform to invasion lists of Sethos I (ca. 1306–1290 B.C.) and Ramses II (ca. 1290–1224 B.C.).³⁵

Currid's statement should not be interpreted to mean that most scholars deny that Shoshenq I invaded Judah and Israel, but rather that it is likely that he—or his son Iput—augmented his invasion inscription with sites borrowed from the older inscriptions of earlier Egyptian pharaohs; such borrowings were a fairly common practice in ancient Egypt. In other words, some conquered locations in Judah and Israel that are listed on the Bubastite Portal were attacked by Shoshenq I and are authentic, but it is likely that others are not. This is a fact which must be kept in mind when trying to identify the exact location of the "Heights of David" mentioned by Shoshenq as a site he

conquered.

The second error or irregularity is the use of a Semitic plural M on the Egyptian word for forts [*h3krm*] in enemy name ring 107. This is an error that a trained Egyptian scribe would have never made. The use of this Semitic plural M strongly suggests that there must have been a Semite who either served as a scout

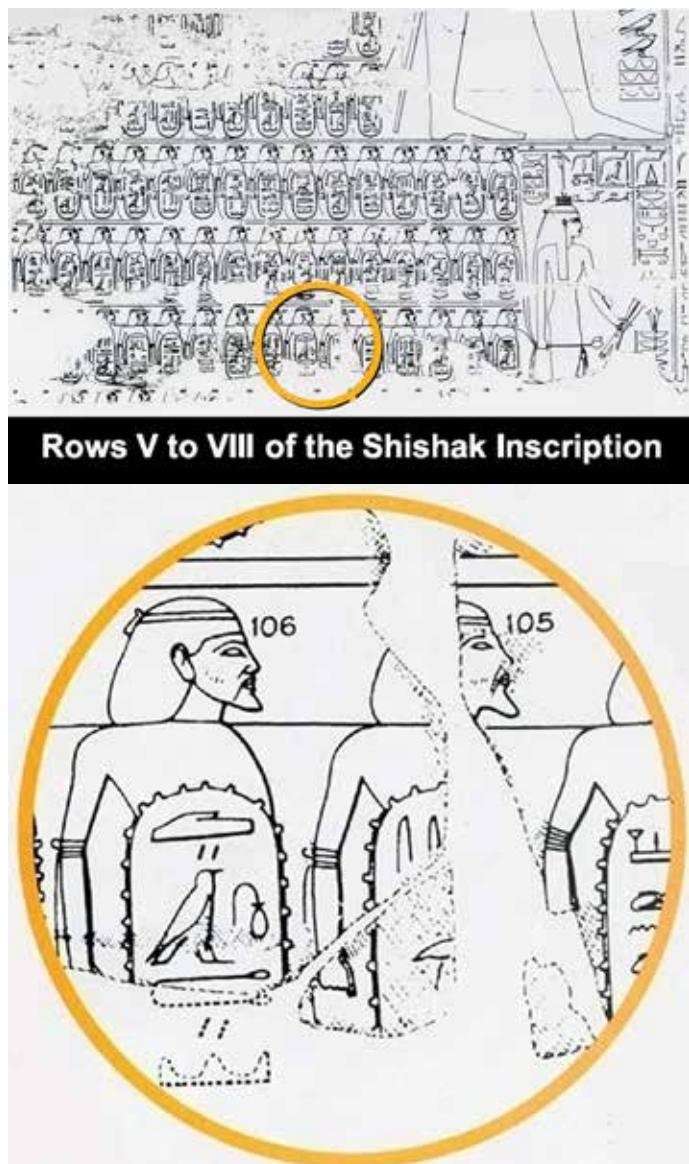
or guide for Shoshenq's army, and who consequently attached a Semitic plural M to the Egyptian word for a fortress in his report to Shoshenq's campaign scribe. Even if this campaign scribe was not Iput, it should be noted that Iput did not correct this error on the Bubastite Portal.

1 Kings 11:14–40 provides a list of two potential sources for Shoshenq's Semitic guide(s). The first is the Edomite Hadad, who is reported in 1 Kings 11:17 to have been from the royal house of Edom and to have fled from David to Egypt along "with his father's servants." According to 1 Kings 11:19, Shoshenq I gave his own wife's sister to Hadad as a wife. The second potential source for a Semitic guide aiding Shoshenq I's army may have been an Israelite who fled with Jeroboam to Egypt and remained there. After the death of Solomon, Jeroboam I returned to Israel and became the first king of the ten northern tribes of Israel.

When Jeroboam fled to Egypt, he was given protection from Solomon by Shoshenq I according to 1 Kings 11:26–40. It is possible that some Israelites remained in Egypt after Jeroboam returned home to split the ten northern tribes from Rehoboam, the son of Solomon. It is also possible that it was such a non-returning Israelite(s) who served as a scout or guide for Shoshenq I's army. However, the most likely Semitic guide for Shoshenq I

was either the Edomite Hadad himself or some Edomite servant or relative of his that he sent as a scout/guide to help his brother-in-law against the Jews.

The third hieroglyphic error or irregularity in Shoshenq I's inscription on the Bubastite Portal at Karnak is the inversion



Gary Byers
Egyptian Pharaoh Shishak's battle relief from the Bubastite Portal in the Temple of Amun, Karnak. The yellow circle denotes enemy ring names 105 and 106. Kenneth Kitchen has forcefully argued that these cartouches should be translated "Heights of David." A close up view shows the details of the cartouche. This article suggests that the title "Heights of David" is a reference to the Elah Fortress.

of the Egyptian glyph 2, which is twice—in rings 19 and 33—written upside down.³⁶ While there are occasions in other inscriptions where this glyph is written backwards—i.e., not facing the same direction as the other glyphs—these two inverted 2 glyphs in Shoshenq I’s campaign itinerary apparently are the only two known examples where this glyph is written upside down. This is like a modern child writing the Latin letter E backwards. This is an error that a trained Egyptian scribe would never have made. Even if this mistake was not made by Iuput himself, it was almost certainly written by another individual who was also probably of foreign extraction and who clearly was not a well-trained Egyptian scribe. At any rate, it is clear that Iuput either made this error himself, or did not catch this embarrassing mistake made by another scribe.

The fourth error or irregularity is the use of the unknown and undecipherable glyphs ia written at the bottom of 26 enemy name rings on Shoshenq I’s campaign itinerary. Currid suggests that these 26 names—to which these two glyphs are attached—are all those of “villages,” and he thus suggests that these two glyphs may indicate sites that were villages.³⁷ Currid may be correct, however, it has not been unquestionably established that every one of these sites was a village.

Every time that these two glyphs appear in an enemy name ring, they are followed by the foreign country determinative . In other words, the order is: LOCATION + ia + . The 26 instances where these two glyphs are used in Shoshenq’s campaign itinerary list are the only known examples found in hieroglyphic texts where these two glyphs are used in this way.

Thus far, no modern scholar has suggested a viable Egyptian—or for that matter, Hebrew/Semitic—translation of these two glyphs.

It is likely that these two glyphs formed a word. It also seems very likely that this was an ancient Libyan word—for village? But one thing is certain, it is not an Egyptian or Hebrew word. This strongly suggests that the scribe who recorded these names probably spoke Libyan, and once again, that he was not a well-trained Egyptian scribe. Incidentally, since the 26 instances of the use of this word only occur in Shoshenq I’s campaign itinerary, it is nearly certain that these were authentic sites captured by Shoshenq I and were not copied from another pharaoh’s military campaign itinerary.

And finally, the fifth error or irregularity is the highly confused order of attack that is given of Shoshenq’s march through Judah and Israel. While it is possible to determine with some accuracy the direction and order of attack found in the campaign itineraries of other pharaohs, it is not possible to do

so with Shoshenq I’s campaign itinerary. This is what makes the identification of sites so frustratingly difficult.

Some scholars try to make sense of Shoshenq I’s campaign itinerary by having him divide his army into two, three or more attacking groups. While it does appear that Shoshenq I divided his army at times into at least two parts and probably three parts, the actual problem seems to be the way in which these campaign reports were written and reported to the scribe who recorded the campaign itinerary. In other words, this campaign scribe(s) may have written down sites captured by two or three Egyptian armies in the order that they were reported to him rather than in geographic order or even in the actual chronological order in which they were taken. There is consequently no overall, logical geographical order that can be discerned in Shoshenq I’s list of captured sites in Judah and Israel. While sections of Shoshenq’s campaign itinerary appear to be in geographic order, his overall campaign itinerary is not.

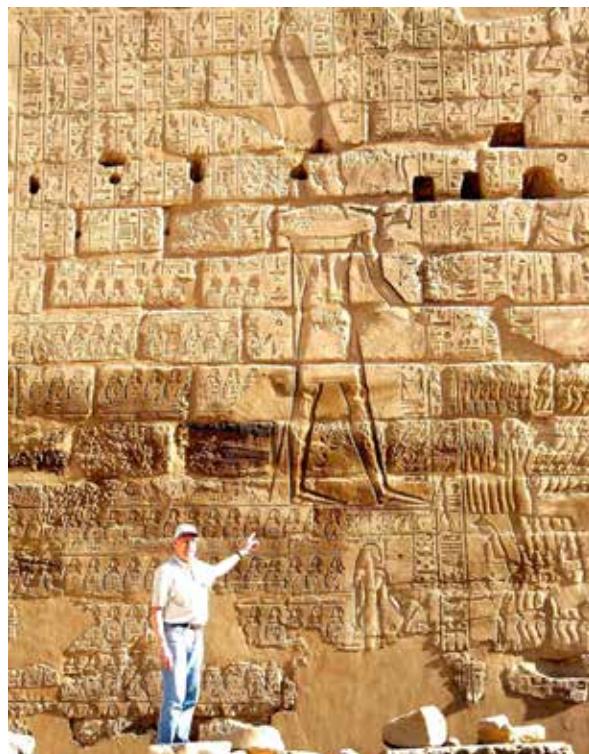
At any rate, any argument dismissing Kitchen’s reading of the name DWT as David in enemy name ring 106, if based upon how a well-trained Egyptian scribe would have written the name David in hieroglyphs, should be rejected. Clearly the scribe—almost certainly Iuput—who wrote the text of Shoshenq I’s campaign itinerary on the Bubastite Portal made errors that an expert would not. In addition, as was shown above, even Alan Gardiner stated that was at times substituted for . Hence, Kitchen’s reading of enemy name rings 105 and 106 in Shoshenq I’s campaign inscription at Karnak as “Heights of David” is almost certainly correct.

Kitchen is also correct that the DWT mentioned in ring 106 is almost unquestionably the name of King David of the Bible. There is no other name or place in ancient

Judah that matches with the Egyptian spelling DWT. In addition, Kitchen is also correct that enemy name ring 105 should be translated as “Heights.” Incidentally, since “Heights of David” is never mentioned again in any other hieroglyphic text, it almost certainly was not a site copied from the military itinerary of an earlier pharaoh’s campaign itinerary. Consequently, the Heights of David was almost certainly an actual site attacked and captured by Shoshenq I.

The Heights of David and the Elah Fortress

The Elah Fortress and its tall administrative structure/tower, which were both built by David, are almost certainly the Heights of David mentioned by Pharaoh Shoshenq I as a site that he conquered in his invasion into Judah. The Elah Fortress—and its



Dr. Bryant Wood points to the Shoshenq/Shishak reliefs at the Karnak Temple.

tall structure/tower—is actually the only location in all of Israel that fits the label “Heights of David.”

Incidentally, there is another site on Shoshenq I’s list of captured Jewish cities that is of great significance; it is called the “Fortress of Abraham” (rings 71–72). The Fortress of Abraham was either located in or very near to the city of Hebron, and may have even been David’s fortified palace at Hebron. This reference to Abraham—possibly the oldest outside of the Bible—strongly suggests that there was some member of Shoshenq I’s staff who was very familiar not only with the geography of Judah but also with the history of the Jews. While it is beyond the present scope of this article, it is likely that the Fortress of Abraham was also built by David. The site of the Fortress of Abraham has not yet been discovered by modern archaeologists.

There is nothing in the Old Testament that indicates that the Elah Fortress was ever captured by the Philistines. However, Garfinkel reports finding a “rich destruction layer” at Khirbet Qeiyafa, and the archaeological evidence suggests that this destruction layer dates to the time of David.³⁸ After their defeat by David, the Philistines ceased being a threat to the Jews, and as was noted earlier, the Elah Fortress was abandoned. There is no biblical or archaeological evidence suggesting that Jerusalem was ever attacked by the Philistines or any other foreign enemy during the reign of King Solomon.

Who, then, is responsible for the destruction layer at the Elah Fortress that Garfinkel discovered? I believe that this layer of destruction has been slightly misdated and should be attributed to the Pharaoh Shoshenq I’s campaign against Jerusalem in 925 BC. As was mentioned earlier, Shoshenq I was able to extort a huge amount of gold from Rehoboam by attacking Jerusalem. While Jerusalem is not mentioned in the surviving portions of Shoshenq I’s victory inscription on the Bubastite Portal at Karnak, there can be little doubt that it was once listed in the lost portions.

In his attack on Jerusalem, Shoshenq I would have had to have taken the Elah Fortress, which could have served as a Jewish base for attacking his rear. It should be remembered that this is basically what David did against the Philistines when they attacked Jerusalem. It appears that Rehoboam did send or station troops in the Elah Fortress when the Egyptian army attacked into Judah. But it was too little and too late. It seems nearly certain that it was the Egyptians under Shoshenq I who captured and destroyed the Elah Fortress. It also seems nearly certain that the “Heights of David” site listed on Shoshenq I’s victory inscription was the Elah Fortress which was earlier built by David to protect Jerusalem from the Philistines.

Solomon’s Gold in Egypt

Both Kenneth Kitchen and Alan Millard have written articles proving that Solomon’s huge hoard of gold and silver was taken to Egypt by Shoshenq I. There is no need here to repeat their arguments and to recite again all of the archaeological evidence, which is extensive. However, a brief review of the evidence—which is provided mainly by Kitchen and Millard—will be provided here to support the Bible’s contention that Shoshenq I extorted a huge amount of wealth from Solomon’s son Rehoboam I and took it to Egypt.

2 Chronicles 12:9 states: “When Shishak king of Egypt

attacked Jerusalem, he carried off the treasures of the temple of the LORD and the treasures of the royal palace. He took everything, including the gold shields Solomon had made.” Shoshenq did besiege Jerusalem, but the Bible is very clear that he did not *destroy* it. He stationed his army around Jerusalem and threatened to destroy it, and by so doing he extorted a huge amounts of gold and silver from Rehoboam.³⁹ It is also nearly certain that the biblical phrase “treasures of the temple of the LORD and the treasures of the royal palace” also included a huge amount of silver.

The massive amount of wealth accumulated by Solomon is recorded in the Old Testament. 1 Kings 10:14 states: “Now the weight of gold which came in to Solomon in one year was 666 talents.” In other words, Solomon’s income for one year was more than 25 tons of gold. 1 Kings 10:27 adds: “The king made silver as common as stones in Jerusalem.”

1 Kings 10:16–17 records that Solomon “made two hundred large shields of hammered gold...he also made three hundred small shields of hammered gold.” According to Alan Millard, the total weight of these 500 gold shields alone would have been over two tons.⁴⁰ The Bible also indicates that Solomon covered the inside of his new temple with gold, had a gold-plated throne, and ate and drank from tableware that was all made of gold.

Is Solomon’s wealth in gold exaggerated in the Bible? Both Kenneth Kitchen and Alan Millard argue that it is not. The Egyptian king Thutmose III (1504–1450 BC) and the Assyrian kings Tiglath-pileser III and Sargon II (ninth and eighth centuries BC) all had comparable or greater amounts of gold than that given in the Bible for Solomon.⁴¹ The fabulous gold-filled tomb of King Tutankhamun (1337–1328 BC) found by Howard Carter in 1922 in Egypt also provides strong support for the biblical report of the amount of wealth that Solomon once had.

In addition, Kenneth Kitchen provides solid archaeological and inscriptional evidence from Egypt supporting the Bible’s claim that Shoshenq/Shishak carried Solomon’s massive gold hoard back to Egypt.⁴² Because of Solomon’s wealth which he extorted in 925 BC, Shoshenq I and his successors resumed monumental building projects in Egypt, something that other pharaohs had not done for several centuries.⁴³

After his return from his military campaign against Rehoboam in 925 BC, Shoshenq I commissioned his famous Bubastite Portal in the great Temple of Amun at Karnak. Because Shoshenq I died in 924 BC shortly after returning from his military campaign against Judah and Israel, it is his son Osorkon I who is mainly recorded in Egyptian texts as having given away huge amounts of Solomon’s precious metals to Egyptian temples. However, Shoshenq I, in the short period of time before his death, appears to have started making these gifts of gold and silver to Egyptian temples. For example, Shoshenq’s Bubastite Portal was itself once decorated with sheets of precious metal. George R. Hughes of the Oriental Institute at the University of Chicago writes:

The north face of the portal consisting of the architrave and the sides of both pilasters was completely decorated. The plug-holes in the abaci of the columns indicate that even they were originally ornaments with metal plates.⁴⁴

While Hughes does not so indicate, it is very likely that

the metal plates which he mentions were also made of gold—Solomon’s gold.

After Shoshenq I died in 924 BC, his son Osorkon I became king of Egypt. Osorkon I claims to have given huge amounts of precious metals to the temples of the gods and goddesses of ancient Egypt. He brags of his contributions to Egyptian temples on a granite pillar near his father Shoshenq I’s inscription on the Bubastite Portal in the great temple of Amun at Karnak. The entire inscription on this granite pillar is not intact; however, the remaining portions state that around “383 tons of precious metal was given by Osorkon to the gods.”⁴⁵

Even after all the gold and silver which he gave to the temples of the gods in Egypt, Osorkon I still had a considerable amount of wealth. He made his son, Shoshenq II, a co-regent with him to rule over Egypt.⁴⁶ However, Shoshenq II died before his father, and Osorkon I entombed his son’s mummy in a solid silver casket which was discovered—along with many other gold and silver items—by the French Egyptologist Pierre Montet in 1939.⁴⁷ Unfortunately, because of the outbreak of WWII, Montet’s discovery of Shoshenq II’s tomb did not receive the publicity that it so richly deserved.

As was noted above, both Kenneth Kitchen and Alan Millard have written articles proving that Solomon’s huge hoard of gold and silver was taken to Egypt by Shoshenq I. But this brief review of the archaeological evidence strongly supports the biblical story of Shoshenq I’s very profitable military campaign against Judah and Jerusalem during the reign of Rehoboam.

Conclusion

The archaeological and biblical evidence supports the contention of Yosef Garfinkel that the Elah Fortress—which he recently finished excavating at Khirbet Qeiyafa—was built by King David. The existence of this massive Jewish fortress, which was clearly built by David in ca. 1000 BC, has dealt a very heavy blow to the minimalist critics of the historical accuracy of the Bible.

From the evidence laid out above, we may conclude the Elah Fortress was almost unquestionably built by David against the Philistines. After he defeated the Philistines, it appears from the archaeological evidence that David abandoned it. David almost certainly abandoned the Elah Fortress because the Philistines at Gath became his loyal allies, and the city of Gath could better protect the Elah Valley Road for him.

Shoshenq I almost certainly took the city of Gath in his campaign against Jerusalem. There is a question about whether Gath is named in the surviving portions of his inscription on the Bubastite Portal at Karnak. Kitchen has argued that enemy name ring 83 is the city of Gath, but as John Currid has noted, the name in ring 83 is spelled with a letter N (*g3n3t i*).⁴⁸ This N does not completely preclude ring 83 from being Gath, but it does make it less than certain. One thing is certain, however; after Shoshenq I returned to Egypt, Rehoboam fortified a number of sites according to 2 Chronicles 11:8, one of which was the city of Gath. With Gath fortified against a future Egyptian attack, the Elah Fortress again became superfluous and was abandoned again, this time by Rehoboam.

However, as was argued above, when the Egyptian Pharaoh

Shoshenq/Shishak attacked towards Jerusalem—almost certainly after taking Gath—it appears that Rehoboam sent troops to the Elah Fortress in a futile attempt to try and stop Shoshenq I’s advance along the Elah Valley Road to Jerusalem. His troops were crushed by Shoshenq I, who then went on to threaten Rehoboam in Jerusalem. It seems very likely that the “rich destruction layer” which Garfinkel found in the Elah Fortress dates to the reign of Rehoboam rather than to the reign of David.

The question thus remains, is the Elah Fortress to be identified with the Heights of David mentioned in enemy name rings 105 and 106 on Shoshenq’s victory inscription at Karnak? We believe so, for the following reasons. First, David almost unquestionably built the Elah Fortress and the tall building in it that was apparently used both as a lookout site and a campaign headquarters by David. Second, the Bible is very clear about David having a fortress in the area of the Elah Valley near his old hideout in the Cave of Adullam, and this cave was located near where the Elah Fortress was located.

Third, the Egyptian name “Heights of David” fits the Elah Fortress very well since it sits on a tall hill and once had a tall administrative building. Fourth, there is a destruction layer at the Elah Fortress that historically only fits Shoshenq’s campaign against Jerusalem. Conquering a site associated with David’s name would very likely have appealed to both Shoshenq I and his brother-in-law, the Edomite king Hadad. And fifth, the location of name rings 105 and 106 in Shoshenq I’s inscription on the Bubastite Portal at Karnak appears to place the Heights of David in Judah to the south and southwest of Jerusalem. The Elah Fortress is located southwest of Jerusalem.⁴⁹

While there is no absolute proof that the Heights of David is to be identified with the Elah Fortress that David built, there is very strong circumstantial evidence suggesting that they were the same site. As Kitchen has argued, the name David does indeed appear in name ring 106 on Shoshenq I’s victory inscription on the Bubastite Portal. Since the Elah Fortress was almost certainly built by David, it seems highly likely that the Heights of David mentioned in name rings 105–106 on Shoshenq I’s Bubastite Portal is a reference to the Elah Fortress.

Endnotes for this article can be found at www.BibleArchaeology.org. Type “Endnotes” in the search box and page down.

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"ISRAEL" FOUND IN A 15TH CENTURY BC EGYPTIAN TEXT

By Bryant G. Wood

Evangelical scholars are divided as to when the Exodus-Conquest events took place—some say the 15th century BC, while others hold to the 13th century BC. The chronological data in the Bible, however, clearly indicates that these events transpired in the 15th century BC, the Exodus occurring in 1446 BC and the Conquest 1406–1400 BC (Wood 2008: 100). Now, for the first time, we have evidence from an Egyptian source which supports the earlier biblical dating.

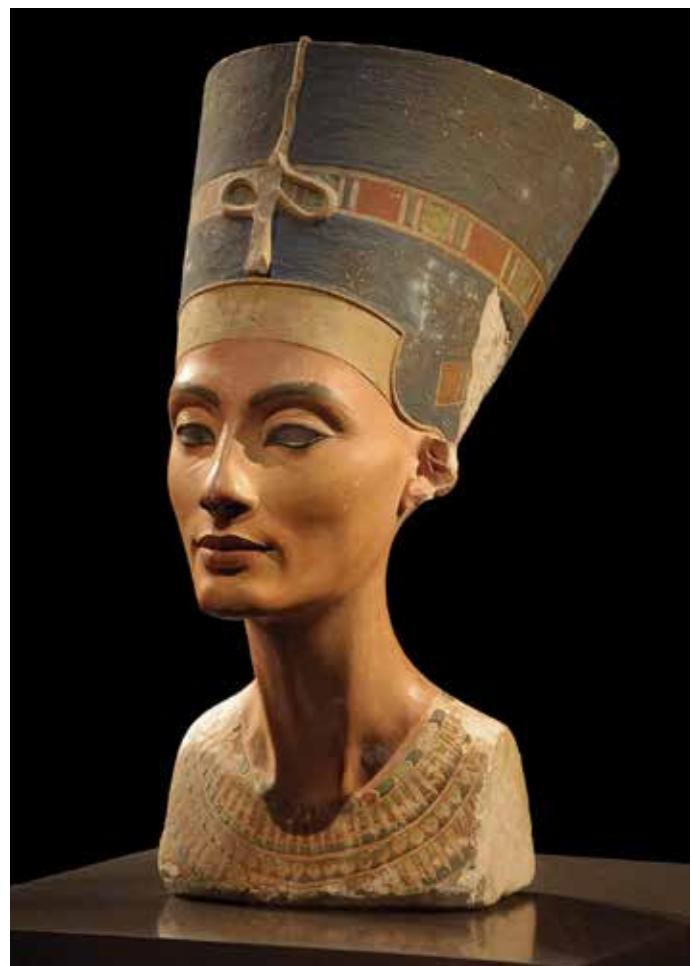
That source is an inscription housed in the Egyptian Museum in Berlin. It appears on a gray granite block 18 in (46 cm) high, 16 in (39.5 cm) wide and of unknown thickness since it was cut from a larger piece. According to the Museum's records, the

block—most likely part of a statue base—was acquired in 1913 by Ludwig Borchardt from an Egyptian merchant. Borchardt (1863–1938) was a German Egyptologist who is best known for his excavations at Tell el-Amarna where he discovered the famous bust of Nefertiti, queen of Akhenaten (ca. 1369–1352 BC).

The inscription is comprised of three name rings superimposed on Western Asiatic prisoners, the rightmost of which is only partly preserved due to substantial damage, probably incurred when the block was removed from its original context. Above the heads of the prisoners is a partial band of hieroglyphs which reads "...one who is falling on his feet..." The inscription was first published in 2001 by Manfred Görg (1938–2012), former



Public Domain
Ludwig Borchardt (1863–1938), best known for his discovery of the bust of Nefertiti at Tell el-Amarna.



Wikimedia Commons
Bust of Nefertiti from Tell el-Amarna, now in the Egyptian Museum in Berlin.



Staatliche Museen zu Berlin—Ägyptisches Museum und Papyrussammlung

Topographical statue base relief fragment depicting three Canaanite place names superimposed on Western Asiatic captives. The relief was purchased in Egypt in 1913 and is now in the Egyptian Museum in Berlin.

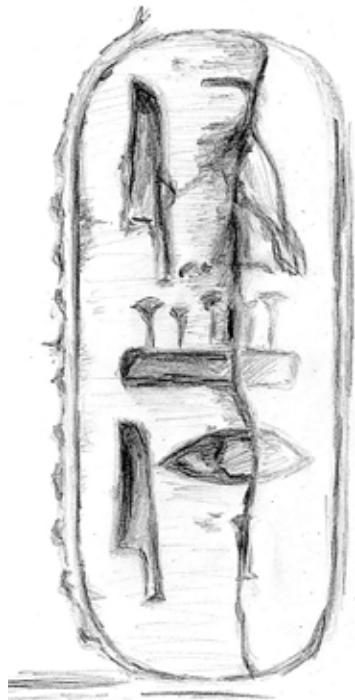
Professor Emeritus of Old Testament Theology and Egyptology at the University of Munich (Wood 2005a). The first two names are easily read—Ashkelon and Canaan. The name on the right, however, is less certain. Görg restored the right name as Israel and dated the inscription to the reign of Ramesses II (ca. 1290–1223 BC) in the Nineteenth Dynasty, based on a similarity of names to those on the Merneptah Stela (ca. 1220 BC). Görg also concluded, based on the spellings of the names, that they were copied from an earlier inscription from around the time of Amenhotep II (ca. 1455–1418). Israeli Egyptologist Raphael Giveon (1916–1985) previously dated the inscription to the reign of Amenhotep III (ca. 1408–1369 BC) (1981: 137). If these two scholars are right, this extrabiblical Egyptian inscription would place Israel in Canaan at about the time of the biblical date for the Conquest.

The Berlin inscription now has been analyzed in greater detail and republished by Görg and two other German scholars—Dr. Peter van der Veen, Instructor of Old Testament and Biblical Archaeology at the University of Mainz, and Christoffer Theis, MA, Lecturer at the Institute of Egyptology, University of Heidelberg (2010). The new study confirms the earlier conclusions of Görg.

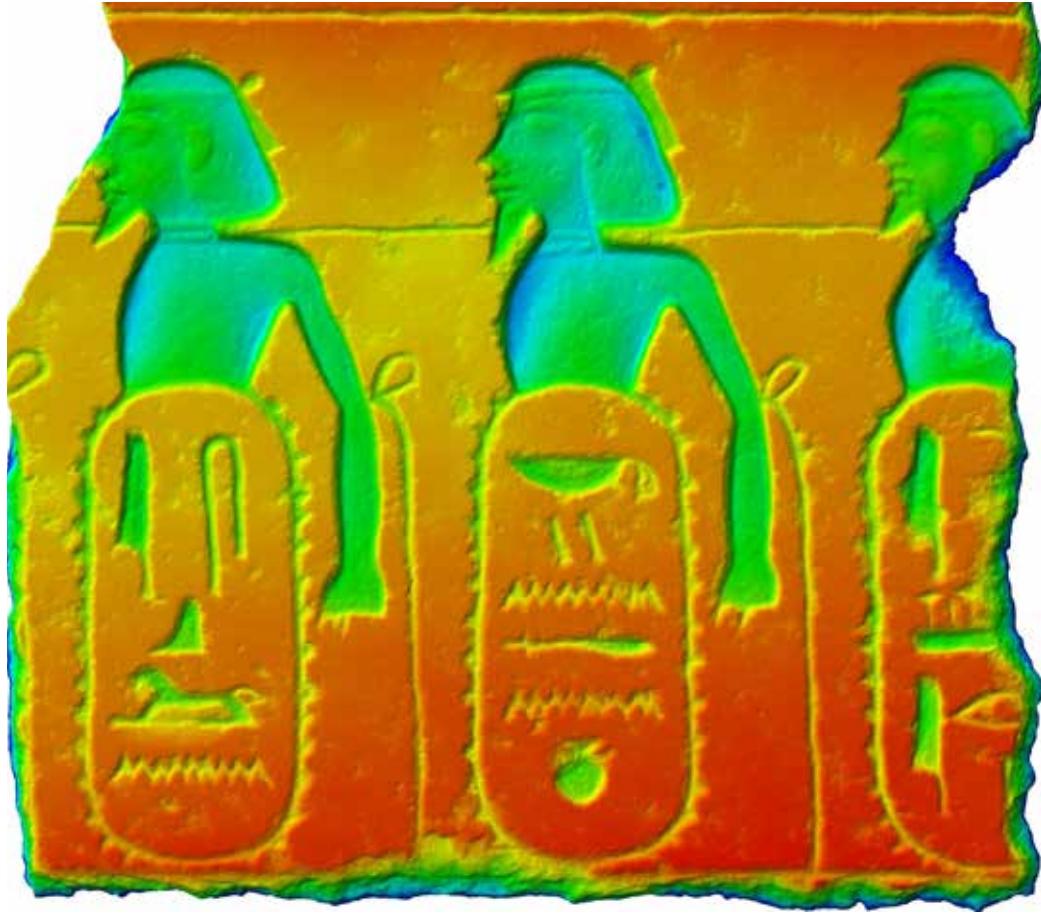
The authors point out that the names Ashkelon and Canaan largely were written consonantly and thus are closer to Eighteenth Dynasty examples from the reigns of Tuthmosis III (ca. 1506–1452 BC) and Amenhotep II, than to those from the

times of Ramesses II and Merneptah (van der Veen, Theis and Görg 2010: 16). In addition, ethnic renderings (“Canaanites”) in the inscriptions of Amenhotep II are similar to the name on the Berlin fragment, providing further evidence for an early date (van der Veen, Theis and Görg 2010: 16).

The third name presents difficulties because of the broken nature of the right side of the inscription. A detailed examination of the relief, however, allowed the authors to reconstruct the name as *Y3-šr-il* (“Israel”), a name very close to biblical *yšr’l* (“Israel”) (van der Veen, Theis and Görg 2010: 17–18). The



Peter van der Veen
Reconstruction of the third name ring on slab no. 21687 with the name “Israel.”



Peter van der Veen

3D laser scan of the Berlin Pedestal. The hieroglyphs can be seen more clearly, enabling scholars to better reconstruct the missing section.

theophoric element *il*, “God,” at the end of the name is written in a shortened form which again argues for an early date, since the shortened form was in use prior to the reign of Amenhotep III (ca. 1386–1349 BC) (van der Veen, Theis and Görg 2010: 16).

The major difference between the name on the inscription and the biblical name is that the inscription has “sh” rather than “s.” This difference caused James Hoffmeier to reject the identification of the name on the inscription as that of the Israel of the Old Testament (2007: 241). But the authors point out that there is no known candidate for the name in the vicinity of Canaan and Ashkelon other than biblical Israel (van der Veen, Theis and Görg 2010: 18–19, 20). It is entirely possible that the sh spelling is an archaic form, or perhaps the cuneiform rendering (van der Veen, Theis and Görg 2010: 19). Moreover, Egyptian scribes were not consistent in their usage of the hieroglyphs for sh and s, and quite often interchanged them (van der Veen, Theis and Görg 2010: 19–20).

In summary, the authors of the new study believe that the name on the Berlin statue base fragment is that of Israel and that it was part of a name list originally written in the Eighteenth Dynasty. This is much earlier than the appearance of the name Israel on the Merneptah Stela. Furthermore, they conclude that their findings “indeed suggest that Proto-Israelites had migrated to Canaan sometime during the middle of the second millennium BCE” (van der Veen, Theis and Görg 2010: 21).

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By Charles F. Aling and Clyde E. Billington

Introduction

Among ancient Egyptian designations for types of foreign peoples in the New Kingdom Period, the term Shasu occurs fairly frequently. It is generally accepted that the term Shasu means nomads or Bedouin people, referring primarily to the nomadic or semi-nomadic peoples of Syria-Palestine. There are two significant hieroglyphic references in New Kingdom Period texts to an area called “the land of the Shasu of Yahweh.”¹ Except for the Old Testament, these are the oldest references found in any ancient texts to the God Yahweh. The purpose of this article is to study these two references and assess their possible importance in dating the Exodus story.

The Term Shasu

The term Shasu is found in a variety of New Kingdom hieroglyphic texts including the military, administrative, and diplomatic documents of Thutmose III, Amenhotep II, Thutmose IV, Amenhotep III, Akhenaton, Seti I, Ramses II, Merneptah, and Ramses III. One of the most intriguing of the Nineteenth Dynasty documents referring to the Shasu is a letter, dated 1192 BC, which states in part:

Another communication to my Lord: We have finished letting the Shasu tribes of Edom pass the fortress of Merneptah Hotep-hir-Maat...which is in Tjeku, to the pools of Per Atum of Merneptah Hotep-hir-Maat, which are in Tkekhu, to keep them alive and to keep their cattle alive...²

Note here that the Shasu tribes are linked with the Edomites, a tribal people with a well-known relationship to the Israelites. Note too that these Shasu tribes were settled, after they crossed the border into Egyptian territory, at Per Atum in Tjeku, or, to put it in biblical terms, at Pithom in Succoth.³ In addition, it should be noted that these Shasu Edomites were animal herders and that they were also, of course, Semites.

According to Exodus 1:11, Pithom and the nearby city of Raamses were two “storage cities” built by the Israelites for Pharaoh during their bondage in Egypt. In addition, the German

scholar Siegfried Herrmann, who translated the above text, has identified the area of Tjeku, where the Shasu Edomites were settled, with the general area of the Land of Goshen mentioned in Genesis 46:34.⁴ The treatment of the Shasu Edomites by the officials of Pharaoh is reminiscent of Pharaoh’s earlier treatment of the Israelites in Egypt during the time of Joseph.

There are a few references in Egyptian texts to Shasu nomads living in the area of Nubia south of Egypt, but the vast majority of references are to Shasu living north of Egypt, and it is these Shasu who are the focus of this article.

For an excellent study of the use of the term Shasu in Egyptian texts, see Kenneth R. Cooper’s two-part series of articles titled *The Shasu of Palestine in Egyptian Texts* that appeared in *Artifax*.⁵ As Cooper points out, most Egyptologists derive the name Shasu from an Egyptian verb meaning “to wander,” and thus translate it as “nomads” or “Bedouin.”

However, the vast majority of scholars who have written on the Shasu stress that they were a people who were not totally nomadic. There were specific geographic areas associated in Egyptian topographical texts with the Shasu, thus indicating that at least some Shasu lived a somewhat settled existence in defined areas. “Semi-nomadic” is probably a more accurate translation.⁶

While the term Shasu is used primarily for semi-nomadic Semitic herders who lived north of Egypt, it also has a secondary usage in some New Kingdom texts for the geographic areas where the Shasu lived. When used geographically in Egyptian texts, the hieroglyphic word *t3* is used, and this word should be translated as “land of.” In the case of these two references that we are discussing, the Egyptian phrase is *t3 sh3sw ya-h-wa*, i.e. “the land of the Shasu of Yahweh.”

The term Shasu is almost exclusively used in New Kingdom texts for semi-nomadic peoples living in parts of Lebanon, Syria, Sinai, Canaan, and Transjordan. When used for nomads living in these areas, the term Shasu seems to have been used by the Egyptians almost exclusively for people groups that can clearly be identified as Semitic herders.

It is clear from New Kingdom texts that the Shasu were rarely if ever under the control of the Egyptian government and were almost always looked upon as enemies of the Egyptians. For example, at the famous Battle of Kadesh in ca. 1275 BC, there were Shasu soldiers who were allies of the Hittites against Ramses II.

It is likely that the Egyptians of the New Kingdom Period classified all of the Edomites, Ammonites, Moabites, Amalekites, Midianites, Kenites, Hapiru, and Israelites as Shasu. This list should also probably include the Amorites and the Arameans. There is even a reference dating to ca. 1250 BC in *Papyrus Anastasi I* to a group of giant Shasu living in Canaan who could be identified with the giants encountered by the Israelites at the time of the Exodus.⁷

The Land of the Shasu of Yahweh

The two New Kingdom inscriptions which refer to “the land of the Shasu of Yahweh” are found in topographical lists. One list is at Soleb and the second at Amarah-West.

Soleb, a temple dedicated to the god Amon-Re, was built by the pharaoh Amenhotep III in ca. 1400 BC. Today it is located in the nation of Sudan, on the left bank of the Nile about 135 mi (217 km) south of Wadi-Halfa.

Amarah-West, which is also located in Sudan, is a construction of Ramses II in the 13th century and has massive topographical lists inscribed in it. The section of the Amarah-West topographical list which contains the reference to “the land of the Shasu of Yahweh” was almost certainly copied from the earlier list at Soleb.

It must be noted at this point that Egyptologists in general do not question the appearance of the name Yahweh in these two lists. For example, Donald Redford writes of the reference to Yahweh at Soleb:

For half a century it has been generally admitted that we have here the tetragrammaton, the name of the Israelite god “Yahweh”; and if this be the case, as it undoubtedly is, the passage constitutes the most precious indication of the whereabouts during the late 15th century BC of an enclave revering this god.⁸

Redford identifies the Shasu of Yahweh with the Edomites and argues that Yahweh was at first worshipped as an Edomite god. He also argues that one tribe of Edomites split from the main body of Edomites, moved northwest, and became one of the tribes of the Israelites, taking their god Yahweh with them. For Redford, this



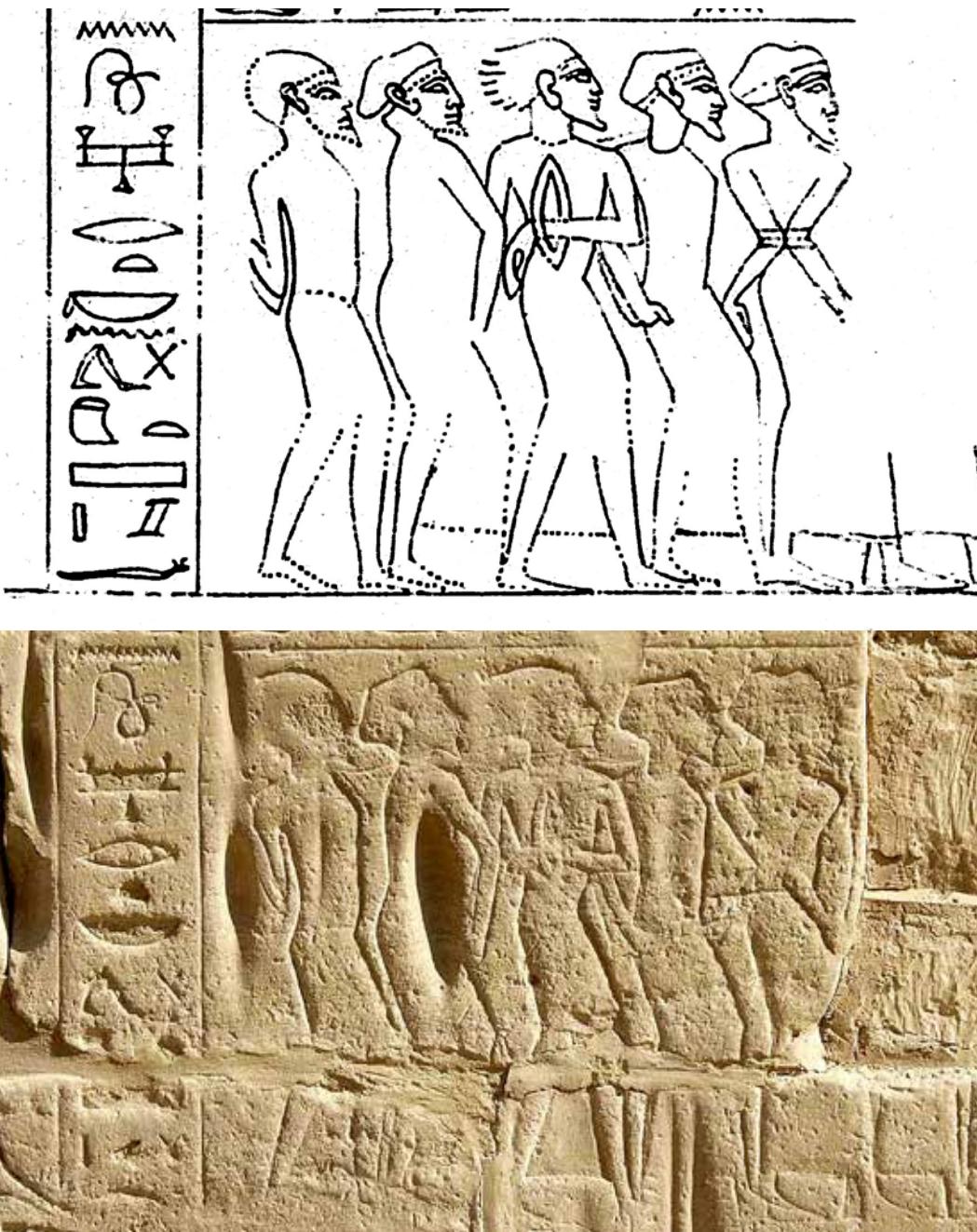
Michael Luddeni

Scene 5 of Pharaoh Merneptah's Canaanite battle reliefs in the Karnak Temple. Merneptah binds Shasu prisoners to take back to Egypt, drawing above, picture below. The Shasu, a desert-dwelling people, are depicted as bearded, wearing short, often tasseled, kilts or ankle-length garments and turbans. The texts flanking the scene are largely rhetorical, praising the virtues of the king. They say, in part, “Strong Bull, sharp-horned and resolute, who treads down the Asiatics...he causes the chiefs of Khurru (= Palestine) to cease all boasting with their mouths.”

explains how Yahweh became the God of the Israelites.⁹

There are several problems with Redford’s position, and these will be dealt with later. It suffices here to note that there are almost no scholars who question the appearance of the name Yahweh at Soleb and Amarah-West.

The best discussion of the place-names in Egyptian topographical lists that are related to the location of “the land of the Shasu of Yahweh” is that of Michael Astour in his chapter in the *Festchrift Elmar Edel* published in 1979. Astour points out



Michael Luddeni

Pharaoh Merneptah's Canaanite battle reliefs in the Karnak Temple. Scene 8, Shasu captives, drawing above, picture below. Part of a larger scene which originally would have depicted Merneptah presenting captives to the god Amun. Text from a loose block which may belong to this scene reads in part, "Presentation of tribute by His Majesty to his father Amun, [when] he returned from the land of despicable Retenu (Syria), and the chiefs of the foreign lands."

that the place-names listed at Soleb and Amarah-West include both Egyptian possessions in Syria-Palestine as well as non-Egyptian controlled ethnic groups and regions in that area.

The topographical lists that are of most interest are the group of texts which read "*t3 sh3sw of X*," or "land of the Shasu of X," where X is normally a place. Astour observes that, contrary to what has been stated by some other scholars, Donald Redford being a good example, not all of the Shasu lands mentioned by Amenhotep III, and copied by Ramses II, were located in the general areas of Syria, Lebanon, Canaan, Sinai, and Transjordan.¹⁰

Even though Egyptologists accept the appearance of the name Yahweh in the topographical lists at Soleb and Amarah-West, the implications of its appearance do not seem to have been fully appreciated by Old Testament scholars. Of course the question remains, who or what is being referred to by the word Yahweh? Is it a reference to the God of Israel? Or is it just a reference to a town or city like any of the other toponyms beginning with *t3 sh3sw*?

In other words, should the phrase *t3 sh3sw ya-h-wa* be translated as "the land of the nomads who worship the God Yahweh" or should it be translated as "the land of the nomads who live in the area of Yahweh"? The answer to this is not known with absolute certainty, but even if Yahweh is a place in these hieroglyphic texts, it was clearly place named after the god Yahweh of the Old Testament. Anything less seems too coincidental. But let us look at Astour's proposed locations of the other *t3 sh3sw* toponyms in these lists at Soleb and Amarah-West.

Astour correlates the Amarah list of Ramses II with the Soleb list of Amenhotep III. He also correlates both of these lists with a parallel, but partial, topographical list of Ramses III which is located in his great mortuary temple at Medinet Habu on the west bank of the Nile at Luxor.

First, let us look at Astour's correlation of the parallel portions of the Amarah and Soleb lists. Both of the lists begin with a place called *t3 sh3sw pys-pys*, which Astour identifies with a spring in the Biqa Valley, near the Litani River in modern Lebanon.¹¹ It is clearly located north of Canaan.

The second place in the two lists is *Sa-ma-ta*, a place that Astour again is quite certain as to its precise location. He identifies Sa-ma-ta with Samat, a site on the Phoenician coast some 7 mi (11 km) south of Batrun. This site is located north of Canaan in an area that is generally considered to be Phoenician,

again far away from Edom.¹²

The third place-name and the one that is of the greatest interest to us is “the land of the Shasu of Yahweh.” Astour makes no attempt to locate this people group, and for a good reason. There is no topographical site in the entire region today that bears the name Yahweh or anything remotely similar. There is also no biblical reference or ancient historical source that mentions a topographical site named Yahweh. We will return to this point later.

Astour observes that the name Yahweh also appears in a topographical list at Medinet Habu (12th century BC) with the variant spelling *yi-ha*.¹³ This constitutes a third reference in hieroglyphic texts to Yahweh. However, in the Medinet Habu list, the phrase “the land of the Shasu” has been omitted.

Astour believes that *yi-ha* is just a variant of *ya-h-wa* as found on the Soleb and Amarah-West topographical lists. He also believes that it refers to the same people, since it is followed in all three lists by some version of a place called “the land of the Shasu of *Tu-ra/Tu-ra-ba-ar*.” However, the Medinet Habu list has mistakenly split the name *Tu-ra* from the last elements of this place’s full name, *Tu-ra-ba-ar*, and has made this one locality into two places. Nevertheless, the full name *t3 shsw tu-ra-ba-ar* appears after the place mentioning Yahweh on both the Soleb and Amarah lists.

Astour has identified *Tu-ra-ba-ar* with the name Turbul. It should be remembered that the Egyptian language has no L sound and routinely uses R for L sounds. Astour states that there are two possible locations for ancient *Tu-ra-ba-ar*, both with the modern name Turbul. One is located in the Biqa Valley in Lebanon and the other a little further north but also in Lebanon.¹⁴

It should be observed at this point that the Amarah-West list presents, at the head of the Shasu lands section, two additional Shasu locations not found in the earlier text from Soleb. The first, *Sa-a-r-ar*, is difficult to identify on linguistic grounds. Some scholars, including Redford, have identified it with Mt. Seir in Edom, but other identifications have also been suggested.¹⁵ However, if this toponym does refer to Mt. Seir and therefore to Edom, the Egyptians seemingly were differentiating between the land of the Shasu of Yahweh and the land of the Shasu of Edom.

Another item in the Amarah list of Shasu sites that does not occur at Soleb is *ra-ba-na*. However, this term does occur at Medinet Habu, and Astour identifies it with the city state of Labana in Middle Syria.¹⁶ Again, this shows that Shasu peoples and their lands were spread throughout the region and were not limited to just the areas of Edom and the Sinai.

Now let us draw some conclusions regarding the land of the Shasu of Yahweh. Since no geographical term that is anything like Yahweh has been identified, this suggests that the hieroglyphic phrase *t3 sh3sw ya-h-wa* should be translated as “the land of the nomads who worship the God Yahweh” rather than as “the land of the nomads who live in the area of Yahweh.” In addition, the fact that no geographical term anything like Yahweh has been identified also strengthens the likelihood that the words *ya-h-wa* in the Soleb and Amarah texts are indeed early mentions of the God of Israel.

As Astour points out, the reference to Yahweh at Soleb is 500 years earlier than the well-known Moabite Stone’s reference to Yahweh, and thus it is by far the earliest non-biblical occurrence

of the name Yahweh. Even if Yahweh in these Egyptian texts was a place, it seems nearly certain that such an area, city, or town was named after the Hebrew God Yahweh of the Old Testament. We thus still would have the earliest references to the God Yahweh found outside of the Old Testament.

Egyptian Syncretism and the God Yahweh

At this point it is worth taking a look at Egyptian references to foreign gods and goddesses to see how they were normally treated. Kenneth Ostrand published a study of foreign deities in ancient Egypt in 2006 in *KMT* magazine.¹⁷ Let us survey four of them.

The West Semitic goddess Astarte, who probably evolved out of Semitic Ishtar and/or Sumerian Inanna, was a goddess of love and fertility. She does not appear in Egyptian texts until the reign of Amenhotep II in the 15th century BC, when she is mentioned in that king’s famous sphinx stele as being pleased with the king’s vaunted horsemanship. It is important to note that in the New Kingdom Period, Astarte was made a consort of Set and a daughter of Re. It is possible that her connection with Set had something to do with the warlike nature of both deities. In Egyptian art, Astarte is depicted standing on a horse, with a crown on her head, and holding various weapons. A temple to her was built at Tell el-Dab‘a, biblical Rameses, a city site associated both with the Israelites and the Hyksos. The city of Rameses was also the Nineteenth Dynasty’s capital of Egypt.

Another West Semitic female warrior deity revered in Egypt was Anath, who appears as early as the late Middle Kingdom, perhaps as a part of the influx of Semites into Egypt that eventually produced the so-called Hyksos period. After a brief hiatus in Dynasty 18, Anath enjoyed a resurgence of popularity in Dynasty 19, being credited with military victories of Seti I and his son Rameses II. The center of her worship was the Delta. Because of the sexual nature of her worship, Anath was viewed as an associate of a number of sexually-oriented Egyptian deities, Min, Hathor, and Set. She was depicted either wearing a traditional Egyptian sheath dress or as wearing nothing at all. She also tended to be shown holding weapons, such as a spear or battle axe.

Reshef, a Canaanite god of war and thunder, seems to have been introduced into Egypt by the Hyksos. As king of the netherworld, Reshef was thought to bring plague and war upon humanity. The Egyptians depicted him in a distinctly Syrian style, with kilt, beard, and horned helmet, but he could also be shown wearing the White Crown of Upper Egypt and holding the Egyptian ankh and scepter, or sometimes holding Canaanite weapons. This, along with the Reshef’s insertion as a member of a trinity of deities with the god Min and the goddess Qadesh, shows the marked degree of syncretistic integration of foreign deities into the Egyptian pantheon.

Deities from even more obscure areas could also be worshipped in Egypt. An example cited by Ostrand is Ash, a Libyan god who entered Egypt in the Middle Kingdom. He was, naturally, a god of desert regions and oases and was eventually totally equated with the Egyptian god Set. The ancient Egyptians depicted Ash as a man with either a hawk or a snake head, or sometimes as a lion or vulture.

All of this illustrates that the Egyptians were perfectly willing to worship foreign gods, including building temples to them, giving them Egyptian attributes, emphasizing their similarities to their own gods and goddesses, and even sometimes to completely equating them with them with their own deities.

By studying the general syncretistic acceptance by the ancient Egyptians of the gods of other nations and by comparing their syncretistic acceptance of foreign gods with the treatment afforded Yahweh, one recognizes that Yahweh was for some reason treated very differently. Clearly the Egyptians knew about Yahweh as can be seen in the Soleb, Amarah-West, and Medinet Habu topographical lists, but they did not worship him, and they apparently did not want to worship him.

Nor was Yahweh equated to or identified with any Egyptian deity. There were no temples to Yahweh built by the Egyptians, nor were there any artistic representations made of him, or in fact even any discussions of him in Egyptian texts. There are no other mentions of him in any Egyptian texts besides the topographical references found at Soleb, Amarah-West, and Medinet Habu. It appears that the ancient Egyptians placed Yahweh into a category all by himself. To say the least, this is very strange for the syncretistic Egyptians. A possible explanation is that Yahweh was seen by the Egyptians as an enemy God, of an enemy tribal group which was a part of the hated Shasu peoples who lived north of Egypt.

Was Yahweh A Place Name?

It seems significant that there is no modern or ancient place name that can be connected with the name Yahweh. One in fact wonders if the attempts by Astour and others to always supply a place name at the end of the phrase “land of the Shasu of X” is not putting the cart before the horse.

Perhaps what we now accept as place names in these topographical lists were originally something else, perhaps the names of deities or of eponymous ancestors that came to be attached to a particular group of Shasu nomads/Bedouin. For example, was *sa-ma-ta* a leader or some other important figure for a group of Shasu, and was his name only later attached to a physical location? It should be noted that this was exactly what happened to the name Israel; first it was the name of an eponymous ancestor, but later it became the name of a place.

Perhaps originally none of the terms indicated by the phrase “the land of the Shasu of X” were place names, including the name Yahweh. This possibility again suggests that the hieroglyphic phrase *t3 sh3sw ya-h-wa* could, and probably should, be interpreted as “the land of the Shasu who worship the God Yahweh” rather than being interpreted as “the land of the Shasu who live at a place called Yahweh.” By any means, topographical lists at both Soleb and Amarah-West unquestionably use the name Yahweh, and this Yahweh is almost unquestionably the God of the Israelites of the Old Testament.

Who Were the Shasu of Yahweh?

Donald Redford in his book *Egypt, Canaan, and Israel in Ancient Times* assumes that the Shasu of Yahweh were very early worshippers of the God Yahweh. Redford also argues that

these early worshippers of Yahweh were a tribe of Edomites who originally lived in the general area of Edom in the 15th century BC. Redford writes:

But lists from Soleb and Amarah, ultimately of fifteen century B.C. origin, suggest that an original concentration of Shasu lay in southern Transjordan in the plains of Moab and northern Edom.¹⁸

Redford here contradicts Astour who argued that the Shasu mentioned in the Soleb, Amarah-West, and Medinet Habu lists were scattered over Canaan, Lebanon, and part of Syria, and were not just located in the area of Edom. Redford not only assumes that the land of the Shasu of Yahweh was located in the general area of Edom, but he also assumes that the earliest worshippers of Yahweh were Edomites. He then goes on to argue that the worship of Yahweh was introduced to proto-Israelites in the mountains of Canaan by a tribe of Edomites who migrated northwest and merged with these proto-Israelite tribes. Redford writes:

The only reasonable conclusion is that one major component in the later amalgam that constituted Israel, and the one with whom the worship of Yahweh originated, must be looked for among the Shasu of Edom already the end of the fifteenth century B.C.¹⁹

However, as was noted above, there are problems with Redford’s assumptions.

First, there is no evidence that the Shasu of Yahweh were Edomites. If they were Edomites, then it must be explained why the Edomites are strangely mentioned twice in the list at Amarah West since Redford translates the phrase *t3 sh3sw sa-a-r-ar* on this list as the “land of the Shasu of Seir.”

As Redford himself notes, Seir is another name for Edom in the Old Testament. Redford writes of Amarah West: “Here a group of six names is identified as in “the land of the Shasu” and these include Seir (i.e. Edom).”²⁰ If Redford is correct in his translation of this phrase, then, as was noted above, the Edomites are strangely mentioned twice in the six references to the “lands of the Shasu of X” found at Amarah West. Of course, Redford would probably respond to this criticism by answering that he believed that all six references to “the land of the Shasu of X” were references to Edomite groups which in the 15th century BC were located in the general area of Edom, an assumption that Astour strongly rejected.

And second, there is a major problem with Redford’s Edomite theory because *Sa-a-r-ar* as Seir because of the way that it is spelled in the list at Amarah. *Sa-a-r-ar* is an unusual Egyptian spelling for Mt. Seir, if it indeed is Mt. Seir. *Sa-a-r-ar* cannot be explained away as just a misspelling, since it is also spelled the same way in an even earlier topographical list of Pharaoh Thutmose III.²¹ If *Sa-a-r-ar* was not Seir, then, as Astour suggests, it might not have even been located in the area of ancient Edom.

Based upon the evidence provided by Astour, Redford’s theory that the Shasu of Yahweh were Edomites has very little to support it. Who, then, were the Shasu of Yahweh?

The Shasu of Yahweh and the Date of the Exodus

There are two indisputable facts that Old Testament scholars must face when dealing with these hieroglyphic references to the Shasu of Yahweh. First, there is no doubt that the name of the Israelite God Yahweh appears in these hieroglyphic texts at Soleb and Amarah-West, and also probably at Medinet Habu. And second, at Soleb the reference to Yahweh dates to ca. 1400 BC during the reign of Pharaoh Amenhotep III. In other words Pharaoh Amenhotep III, or at least his scribes, must have at least heard about the Hebrew God Yahweh in ca. 1400 BC. This fact is highly significant when trying to date the Exodus of the Israelites from Egypt under Moses.

In Exodus 5:2, Pharaoh answers the first request of Moses to allow the Israelites to go into the desert to worship Yahweh by saying, “Who is Yahweh that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I do know Yahweh and besides I will not let the Israelites go.”²² Pharaoh appears here to be saying that he had never heard of the God Yahweh. This interpretation of Pharaoh’s statement is reinforced by Exodus 7:17, where God responds to Pharaoh: “Thus says Yahweh, ‘By this you will know that I am Yahweh: behold, I will strike the water that is in the Nile with the staff that is in my hand, and it will become blood’” (NASB).

In his third meeting with Moses and Aaron after the second plague, Pharaoh clearly recognized Yahweh as some sort of deity and asked Moses and Aaron to pray to Yahweh to remove the plague of frogs (see Exodus 8:8). If the Pharaoh of the Exodus had never before heard of the God Yahweh, this strongly suggests that the Exodus should be dated no later than ca. 1400 BC, because Pharaoh Amenhotep III had clearly heard about Yahweh in ca. 1400 BC.

Conclusion

It is clear that there once was a group of Shasu Bedouin/nomads living in Syria-Palestine who were associated with either a deity or a place named Yahweh. It is also clear that the name Yahweh was known to the Egyptians in the Eighteenth Dynasty during the reign of Pharaoh Amenhotep III.

But it must be admitted at this point that we also know from the Old Testament that there were other worshipers of Yahweh in Canaan who did not go into Egypt and therefore did not leave Egypt at the time of the Exodus. The question thus arises, were they perhaps the Shasu of Yahweh mentioned at Soleb and Amarah?

Although we do not have all the information that we wish we did, it is significant that there are no mentions of the Shasu of Yahweh in Egyptian texts earlier than the reign of Amenhotep III. If the group in question were Yahweh followers who never went to Egypt, why are they absent in topographical lists from the early period of the Eighteenth Dynasty—for example, from the extensive topographical lists of Thutmose III? The reason may very well be because the Shasu of Yahweh were indeed the Israelites, and that they were still living in Egypt in the early Eighteenth Dynasty.

The fact that the Shasu of Yahweh first appear in topographical lists under Amenhotep III in ca. 1400 BC fits perfectly with the early date of the Exodus, but this fact presents major problems

for those late-date scholars who believe that the Exodus took place during the reign of Pharaoh Ramses II in the 13th century BC. In any case, these references to Yahweh have been ignored for far too long by both conservative and liberal biblical scholars.

It thus appears very likely that the Shasu of Yahweh, who are mentioned in the topographical texts at Soleb and Amarah-West, were the Israelites who by about 1400 BC had settled into their own land (*t3*) in the mountains of Canaan. It also appears that for the ancient Egyptians the one feature that distinguished the Israelites from all the other Shasu (Semitic herders) in this area was their worship of the God Yahweh.

Notes

¹ Michael C. Astour, Yahweh in Egyptian Topographic Lists in *Festschrift Elmar Edel in Agypten und Altes Testament*, edited by Manfred Görg (Bamberg, Germany, 1979). Pp. 17–19. Astour points out in this article that there is a third likely use of the name Yahweh in the Medinet Habu topographical lists of Ramses III in the early 12th century BC, pp. 19–20. However, as will be seen below in this article, at Medinet Habu the name Yahweh appears in the form “*yi-ha*.” However, at Medinet Habu “*yi-ha*” is used without the phrase “land of the Shasu.”

² Siegfried Herrmann, *Israel in Egypt* (Naperville, IL: Alec R. Allenson Inc., 1973), p. 25.

³ For the identification of the Egyptian name Tjekku with the Hebrew name Succoth, see Donald B. Redford, *Egypt, Canaan, and Israel in Ancient Times* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), p. 203.

⁴ Herrmann, *Israel in Egypt*, pp. 26–27. See also Herrmann’s article Der Altestamentliche Gottesname in *Evangelischen Theologie* 26 (1966), pp. 289–91.

⁵ Kenneth R. Cooper, The Shasu of Palestine in Egyptian Texts, Part One, *Artifax*, Autumn 2006, Vol. 21 No. 4, pp. 22–27; and Part Two, *Artifax*, Winter 2007, Vol. 22 No. 1, pp. 24–29.

⁶ Cooper, *Shasu*, Part One, pp. 24–25.

⁷ W.W. Hallo, ed. *The Context of Scripture* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), Vol. 3, p. 9. See also Clyde E. Billington, Goliath and the Exodus Giants: How Tall Were They? in the *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, 48 (2005), pp. 505–506.

⁸ Redford, *Egypt, Canaan, and Israel*, p. 272.

⁹ Redford, *Egypt, Canaan, and Israel*, pp. 272–73.

¹⁰ Astour, *Yahweh*, pp. 20–29.

¹¹ Astour, *Yahweh*, p. 29.

¹² Astour, *Yahweh*, p. 28.

¹³ Astour, *Yahweh*, p. 26.

¹⁴ Astour, *Yahweh*, pp. 26–27.

¹⁵ Astour, *Yahweh*, p. 21.

¹⁶ Astour, *Yahweh*, p. 23.

¹⁷ Kenneth Ostrand, Aliens in Egypt, *KMT* 17.2, Summer 2006, pp. 71–76.

¹⁸ Redford, *Egypt, Canaan, and Israel*, p. 272.

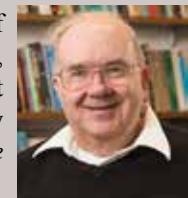
¹⁹ Redford, *Egypt, Canaan, and Israel*, p. 273.

²⁰ Redford, *Egypt, Canaan, and Israel*, p. 272.

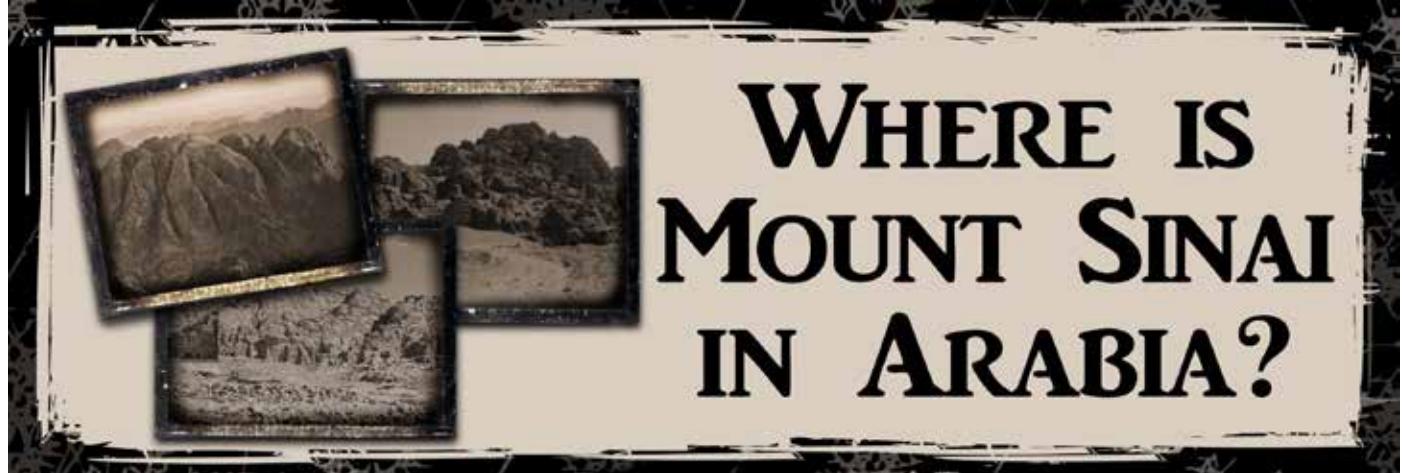
²¹ Astour, *Yahweh*, p. 21.

²² This question is taken from the New American Standard Bible, but we have substituted Yahweh from the Hebrew for the word LORD.

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WHERE IS MOUNT SINAI IN ARABIA?

By Gordon Franz

In Galatians 4:25, the Apostle Paul identifies Mount Sinai as being in Arabia. He writes: “For these are the two covenants: the one from Mount Sinai which gives birth to bondage, which is Hagar—for this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children” (4:24–25 NKJV, emphasis mine). The questions to be asked regarding this passage are:

- “Where was Arabia in the first century AD, and what area did it cover, when the Apostle Paul wrote the book of Galatians?”
- “Where would a Jewish person, living in Jerusalem in the first century AD, understand Arabia to be?”
- “What was the Apostle Paul’s geographical understanding of the term Arabia?”

The short answer is that in the days of the Apostle Paul, the term “Arabia” included the Sinai Peninsula and did not correspond just to modern-day Saudi Arabia’s boundaries as some today mistakenly assert. The area of Saudi Arabia was one part of first-century Arabia, but not the whole of Arabia. Thus the biblical Mount Sinai, located in the Sinai Peninsula, which in my opinion should be located at Jebel Sin-Bishar (Franz 2000: 112; Faiman 2000; Har-el 1983; Rasmussen 1989: 89–91), was in “Arabia.” The traditional Mount Sinai at Jebel Musa was also located in the Sinai in ancient “Arabia.” So Mount Sinai (either site) was in both the Sinai *and* in “Arabia,” which overlapped, and there is no disconnect with the Bible, ancient geography, or modern scholarship.

Based on this verse in Galatians, some have insisted that the Apostle Paul is referring to Mount Sinai being in Saudi Arabia, and not in the Sinai. For example, Robert Cornuke, the president of the BASE Institute, states:

It’s [Galatians 4:25] one of several Bible references plainly describing the location of Mount Sinai. It’s in Arabia. Not in Egypt. *Not in the Sinai Peninsula.* And how does the Bible define Arabia? In both the Old and New Testaments, *Arabia* has always been located south and east of Palestine, the area of present-day Saudi Arabia. The Sinai Peninsula, on the

other hand, lies south and west of Palestine. The apostle Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, informs us that *Mount Sinai is in Saudi Arabia. Not Egypt!* (Cornuke and Halbrook 2000: 170–71; emphasis by the author).

His associate, Larry Williams, basically says the same thing (1990: 70–71), as did Ron Wyatt, who also placed Mount Sinai at Jebel al-Lawz in Saudi Arabia (Wyatt 1994; Standish and Standish 1999: 195–200).

A word of caution, though: as we have already read, all the Bible actually says is that Mount Sinai is in Arabia, not *Saudi Arabia*. It is not wise to read into the text that which is not stated, or to simplistically interpret 21st-century political boundaries as applicable to a first-century biblical text without any substantiation.

Where was Arabia According to the Ancient Sources?

Unfortunately, no actual maps of Roman Arabia exist from the first century AD, so we are limited to the accounts of the geographers, historians, and contemporary travelers. As one examines these accounts, it will be seen that the vast territory of Arabia goes from the Nile Delta in eastern Egypt and the Arabian Gulf (Red Sea/Gulf of Suez) on the west, all the way over to the Persian Gulf on the east. It goes from Damascus in the north, to the tip of Yemen in the south. Today, the territory of first-century Arabia would cover the areas of eastern Egypt, including the Sinai Peninsula, southern Israel, Jordan, and parts of Syria and Iraq, all of Saudi Arabia, Yemen, and the Gulf States on the Persian Gulf. It is not limited to Saudi Arabia or the northwest quadrant of Saudi Arabia as Cornuke has stated.

Moses

Moses never used the word “Arab” or “Arabia” at the time he wrote the Pentateuch. The Book of Exodus thus cannot be used to locate “Arabia” which did not exist yet as a geographic term. So, of course, “Arabia” does not appear in that book of the Bible. The words “Arab” and “Arabia” appear later in the Bible (1 Kgs

10:15; 2 Chr 9:14; 17:11; 21:16; 22:1; 26:7; Neh 2:19; 4:7; 6:1; Is 13:20; 21:13; Jer 3:2; 25:24; Ez 27:21). So the Apostle Paul does not have a Mosaic use of the word “Arabia” in mind when he uses the word in Galatians 4:25, because “Arabia” did not exist in Moses’ day.

Shalmaneser III

The word “Arab” first appears in an extra-biblical inscription from a monolith found at Kurkh from the time of the Assyrian king Shalmaneser III (853 BC). It describes the coalition of armies led by the rulers of Damascus, Hamath, Israel, and “Gindibu’ the Arab and his 1,000 camels” that battled against Shalmaneser III at Qarqar (Eph’al 1982: 21). Throughout the Assyrian period, various Assyrian kings describe the activities of the Arabs, or desert nomads, in their inscriptions (Eph’al 1982: 21–59).

Herodotus

The first time the word “Arabia” is used as a term for a designated geographical area is in the mid-fifth century BC by the famous Greek historian and traveler, Herodotus (ca. 450 BC). He traveled to Egypt and wrote about his trip in his book, *The Persian Wars*.

In his monumental work on ancient Arabs, Dr. Israel Eph’al of Tel Aviv University points out that:

Herodotus, an important source for the demography of the mid-5th century B.C. Egypt and Sinai peninsula, calls the entire region east of the Nile and the Pelusian Branch, from the Mediterranean to the Red Sea, ‘*Arabia*’, and its population ‘*Arabs*’ ([Herodotus, *Persian Wars* 2:8, 15, 19, 30, 75, 124, 158 [LCL 1: 283, 291, 297, 309, 361–63, 425, 471]]).

The Gulf of Suez is called “the *Arabian Sea*,” and the mountainous region in Egypt east of Heliopolis “the *Arabian mountains*” (2:8, 124 [LCL 1: 283, 425]). Daphnae (biblical Tahpanhes in Egypt, present-day Defeneh) is described as a border town with a garrison “against the *Arabs* and the *Syrians*” (2: 30 [LCL 1: 309]), and the town of Patumus (biblical Pithom) near Bubastis at the approach to Wadi Thumilat as “city of *Arabia*” (2:158 [LCL 1: 471])” (Eph’al 1982: 193–94, emphasis added; the Loeb Classical Library, LCL, bracketed references [...] added by the author). Herodotus’ description would therefore include all of the Sinai Peninsula in Arabia of his day.

In the mid-third century BC, when Jewish scholars translated the Hebrew Bible into Greek (known as the Septuagint, abbreviated LXX) and followed the contemporary use of the word “Arabia,” they referred to Goshen as “*Goshen in Arabia*” (Gn 45:10, 46:34, LXX English translation). The Children of Israel resided in Goshen during their 400-year sojourn in Egypt, which is located on the easternmost branch of the Nile Delta connected through to the Wadi Tumilat canal. Though Goshen is part of Egypt (Gn 37:6, 27; Ex 9:26), the translators of the Septuagint obviously considered it and the Sinai Peninsula in between the Egyptian Goshen-in-Arabia and what is now modern Saudi Arabia as all part of ancient “Arabia,” of course.

The Eastern Nile Delta land of Goshen was Arabia, the Sinai was Arabia, and (Saudi) Arabia was Arabia.

Alexander the Great and the Arabs in Arabia

Alexander the Great went to fight the Arabians in the area of the Anti-Lebanon Mountains, also known as Mount Hermon (Dar 1988: 26–27). This is situated in modern-day Lebanon and Syria. Alexander the Great fought the Arabs in Arabia, but he was never in modern-day Saudi Arabia.

Flavius Arrianus, better known as Arrian, wrote a book around AD 150 about the life of Alexander the Great. He gave great details about Alexander’s campaign against the Persians. After the Greeks had taken Sidon, Alexander was preparing to move on Tyre. Because of harassment by the Arabs, “Alexander marched some of the cavalry squadrons, the hypaspists, the Agrianians and the archers in the direction of *Arabia* to the mountain called *Antilebanon*. Here he stormed and destroyed some places and brought others to terms; in ten days he was back at Sidon” (*Anabasis of Alexander* 2.20.4; LCL 1:195).

Plutarch (ca. AD 45–120), in his *Parallel Lives*, recounts of Alexander the Great (about AD 120) the same incident by saying: “While the siege of the city [Tyre] was in progress, he made an expedition against the *Arabians* who dwelt in the neighborhood of *Mount Antilibanus*” (*Alexander* 24.6; LCL 7:293).

Quintus Curtius (first century AD) wrote a history of Alexander the Great that also recounts this same incident in these words: “On *Mount Libanus* also the peasants of the *Arabians* attacked the Macedonians when they were in disorder, killed about thirty, and took a smaller number of prisoners. This state of affairs compelled Alexander to divide his forces, and lest he should seem slow in besieging on city, he left Perdiccas and Craterus in charge of that work and himself went to *Arabia* with a light-armed band” (*History of Alexander* 4.2.24–4.3.2; LCL 1:185). After this short campaign Curtius informs us: “And Alexander, on returning from *Arabia*, found hardly any traces of so great a causeway” (*History of Alexander* 4.3.7; LCL 1:187). For these historians, the part of “Arabia” that Alexander the Great was fighting Arabs in, was in what is today Lebanon and Syria, not Saudi Arabia.

Josephus

Josephus, the first century AD Jewish historian, lived in Jerusalem for a number of years before its destruction by the Romans in AD 70. He was well familiar with the topography of the city as well as its walls, towers, and monumental buildings. In fact, he was a contemporary of the Apostle Paul who would understand the term “Arabia” the same way Josephus understood it.

In his *Jewish Wars*, written sometime between AD 75 and 79, Josephus describes the line of the third wall enclosing the northern part of Jerusalem. He mentions that there are ninety towers on this wall, and the most important was the Psephinus Tower:

...which rose at its north-west angle and opposite to which Titus camped. For, being seventy cubits high [115 ft/35 m], it affords from sunrise a prospect embracing both *Arabia* and the utmost limits of Hebrew territory as far as the



William Schlegel, *Satellite Bible Atlas*

Map of the Sinai Peninsula and the surrounding region during the time of the Exodus. Author Franz proposes that Mount Sinai is at Jebel Sin Bisher (due north of point #6). Dr. Bryant Wood has proposed its location might be at Jebel Khasm et-Tarif (due west of point #12). Either proposal is consistent with the Apostle Paul's use of the term "Arabia" in Galatians 4:25.

[Mediterranean] sea, it was of octagonal form (Josephus, *Jewish Wars* 5.159–60 [LCL 3: 247–49]; see also *Wars* 5.147 [LCL 3: 243], emphasis added, bracketed material added by the author).

When Josephus uses the word “Arabia” in this passage, he is not referring to the area of Saudi Arabia, but to the Trans-Jordanian Plateau. If he stood on top of the Psephinus Tower, he would observe first-hand Arabia to the east, as well as the Mediterranean Sea through a saddle in the hills by present-day Abu Ghosh to the northwest.

When I was doing graduate work in archaeology and geography of the Bible at the Institute of Holy Land Studies in Jerusalem in the late 1970s, I was able to climb onto the roof of a bank building (with permission of the guard), to have a similar view. This bank was approximately 115 ft (35 m) high and close to where the Psephinus Tower had been located. I observed the mountains of Transjordan to the east (ancient Arabia), but could not see the Mediterranean Sea because of the haze. I have archaeologist friends, however, who have seen the Mediterranean Sea from the top of this building on several occasions. One can also calculate the visibility with the aid of a good topographical map. Josephus wrote this passage from first-hand experience. For him, Arabia included what is today the Kingdom of Jordan.

In the first century AD, the Nabatean kingdom, with its capital in Petra (today in southern Jordan), occupied part of what was known as “Arabia.” Josephus noted on several occasions that Petra was in Arabia (*Wars* 1.125, 159, 267; 4.454 [LCL 2:59, 75, 125; 3:135]). He also describes the extent of the Nabatean kingdom as from the Euphrates River to the Red Sea (*Antiquities* 1.220–21 [LCL 4:109]).

Josephus gives a description of Lake Asphaltitis, known today as the Dead Sea, in which he mentions that the “length of this lake is five hundred and eighty furlongs, measured in a line reaching to Zoara in Arabia” (*Wars* 4.482 [LCL 2:143], emphasis added). Zoara is the biblical Zoar and is located in the southeastern portion of the Dead Sea (Gn 13:10; 14:2, 8; 19:22, 23, 39; Dt 43:3).

Herod the Great fortified several sites on the border of his kingdom to keep an eye on the Nabateans in Arabia. One fortress was Machaerus (Voros 2012). It is situated on the east side of the Dead Sea because Herod understood how strategic the site was in “its proximity to Arabia, conveniently situated, as it was, with regards to that country, which it faces” (Josephus, *Wars* 7.172 [LCL 3:555], emphasis added). The territory of Arabia was 8 mi (14 km) to the south of Machaerus on the south side of the Arnon River.

Another site that Herod the Great fortified was the Herodium, the only building project named after him. The fortress is located

a few kilometers to the southeast of Bethlehem in the Judean Desert “on the *Arabian* frontier” (Josephus, *Wars* 1:419 [LCL 2:199], emphasis added). From the top of the Herodium, one today can get a splendid view of the territory of Arabia to the east of the Dead Sea, but one cannot see *Saudi* Arabia from the top of the Herodium.

Josephus describes the territory and borders of Perea to the east of the Jordan River. He states that:

Perea extends in length from Machaerus to Pella, in breadth from Philadelphia to the Jordan [River]. The northern frontier is Pella, which we have just mentioned, the western frontier is the Jordan [River]; on the south it is bounded by the land of Moab, on the east by *Arabia*, Heshbonitis, Philadelphia, and Gerasa (*Jewish Wars* 3.46–47; [LCL 2:589]; brackets and emphasis added by the author).

Ancient Philadelphia is located under Ammon, the capital of the modern kingdom of Jordan.

Josephus also mentions the southern border of Judea and states, “it is marked by a village on the *Arabian* frontier, which the local Jews call Iardan” (*Wars* 3.51 [LCL 2:591], emphasis added). The village of Iardan has been tentatively identified with Arad in the Eastern Negev Basin [LCL 2:590, footnote d]. Arabia would include areas south of Judah, including the Beersheva Basin and the different wildernesses to the south of Beersheva, basically the southern part of Israel today.

This brief survey of *Jewish Wars* by Josephus demonstrates the first-century understanding of the term Arabia. It included more than just the area of northwest Saudi Arabia. His understanding of the term included territory in modern-day

Jordan and southern Israel, as well as the Sinai Peninsula, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Syria, and part of Iraq. The Apostle Paul would have understood the term in the same way.

Strabo

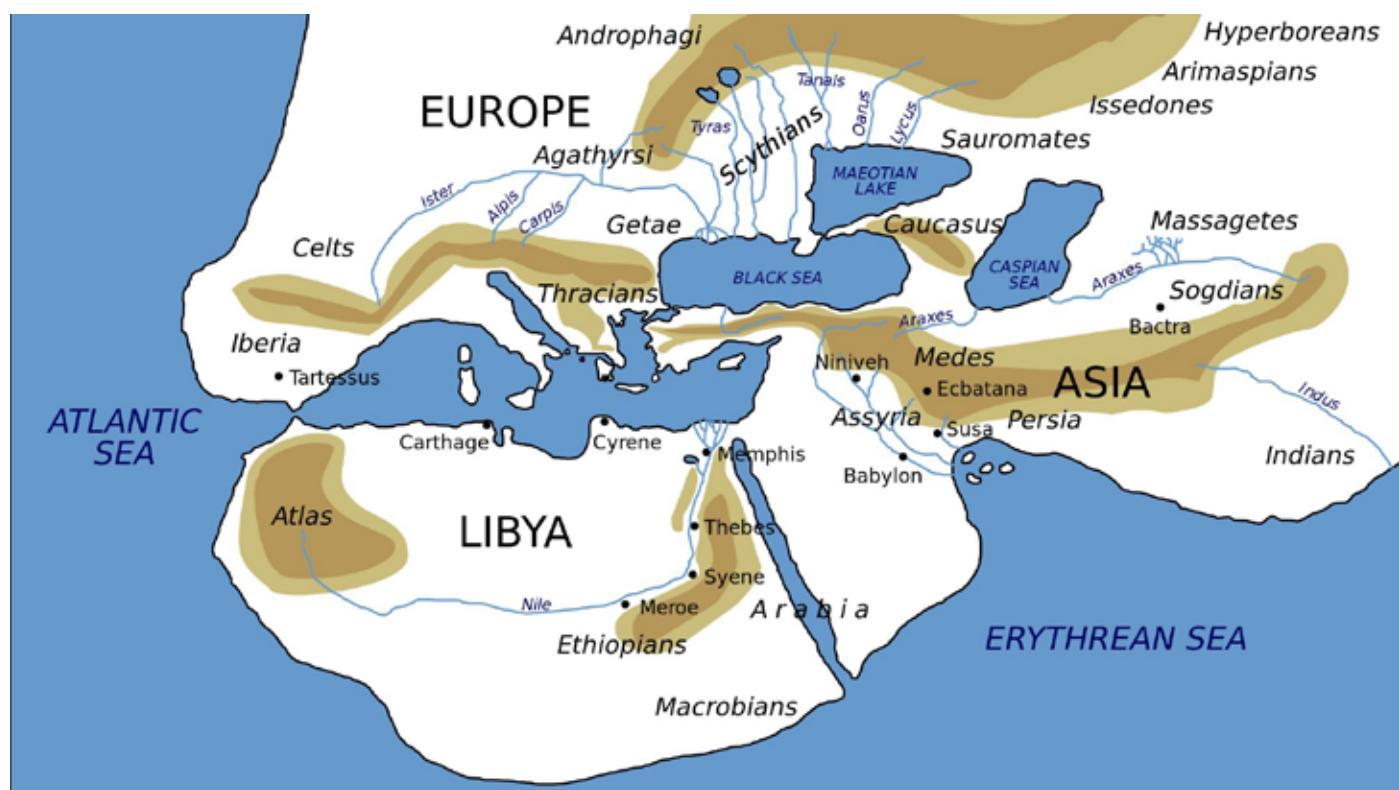
Strabo, a Greek geographer from Pontus on the Black Sea (64 BC to ca. AD 25), describes the territory of Arabia in his books on the geography and nature of the ancient world. In his *Geography*, he states:

The whole of *Arabia Felix* (… is bounded by the whole extent of the Arabian Gulf [Red Sea] and by the Persian Gulf). And all the country occupied by the Tent-dwellers and by the Sheikh-governed tribes (which reaches to the Euphrates [River] and Syria) (*Geography* 2.5.32 [LCL 1:499]; emphasis added, bracketed material added by the author).

Elsewhere in his writings, Strabo delineates the eastern border of Arabia as the Persian Gulf (*Geography* 16.4.2 [LCL 7:307]).

Strabo, who visited Egypt during his lifetime, understood the geography of that area quite well and wrote about it in detail. For him, the western border of Arabia began at the east side of Egypt’s Nile River and the Arabian Gulf (today the Gulf of Suez) and went eastward, thus placing the Sinai Peninsula in first-century Arabia (*Geography* 16:4:2; 17:1:21, 24–26, 30, 31 [LCL 7: 309; 8: 71–79, 85–87]).

The Apostle Paul would have been familiar with the writings of Strabo and would concur with him that “Arabia” went from eastern Egypt, across the Sinai and the Arabian Peninsula, all the way to the Persian Gulf. This would clearly put the Sinai Peninsula



A reconstruction of the world as Herodotus may have viewed it, ca. fifth century BC. Note that Herodotus’ conception of Arabia includes the Sinai Peninsula.

Wikimedia Commons

within Arabia of Strabo's day as well as the Apostle Paul's day.

Egeria

Egeria, one of the early Church mothers, traveled to the East between AD 381 and 384 and wrote a book about her pilgrimage. She visited Jebel Musa which she mistakenly, in my opinion, thought was Mount Sinai. She also visited the Land of Goshen (Wilkinson 1981: 91–103). She stayed at Clysma, the modern-day Suez City in eastern Egypt at the northern end of the Gulf of Suez, and from there went to visit the “city of Arabia” in Goshen in Egypt (Wilkinson 1981: 100). She wrote, “It gets its name from the region, which is called ‘the land of *Arabia*, the land of *Goshen*’, a region which, while it is a part of Egypt, is a great deal better than any of the rest” (Wilkinson 1981: 100–101, emphasis added). Egeria followed the Septuagint reading of Genesis 46:34 in her description of Goshen being in the Land of Arabia.

The Conclusion of the Matter

The ancient sources, both the contemporary and near-contemporary to the Apostle Paul, speak for themselves. When the Apostle Paul wrote that Mount Sinai was in Arabia, he was drawing on the contemporary understanding of the geographical location of “Arabia.” Ancient Arabia would include the territory from the Eastern Nile Delta and the Arabian Gulf (Red Sea/Gulf of Suez) across the Sinai Peninsula to the Persian Gulf. It would not be limited to just the northwest quadrant of Saudi Arabia, as the proponents of Jebel al-Lawz for Mount Sinai would contend.

Based on the above, the ancient historians and geographers differ with Mr. Cornuke’s statement that “Arabia has never been in the Sinai Peninsula when Paul wrote this [Gal. 4:25]” (August 8, 2012, AM session, Camp-of-the-Woods, Speculator, NY). Biblical and secular first-century geography did include the Sinai Peninsula in “Arabia.” In summary, it seems that the Apostle Paul would have disagreed with Mr. Cornuke’s assertions about Mount Sinai never being in the Sinai Peninsula.

Further Discussion

For a more detailed, scholarly discussion of the ancient sources and related issues, see: Bowerstock 1971; 1983; 1990; Donner 1986; MacAdam 1989; Montgomery 1934; Murphy-O’Connor 1993.

For links to other critiques of Cornuke’s ideas, see <http://www.lifeandland.org/2012/06/how-accurate-are-bob-cornuke%e2%80%99s-claims-2/>

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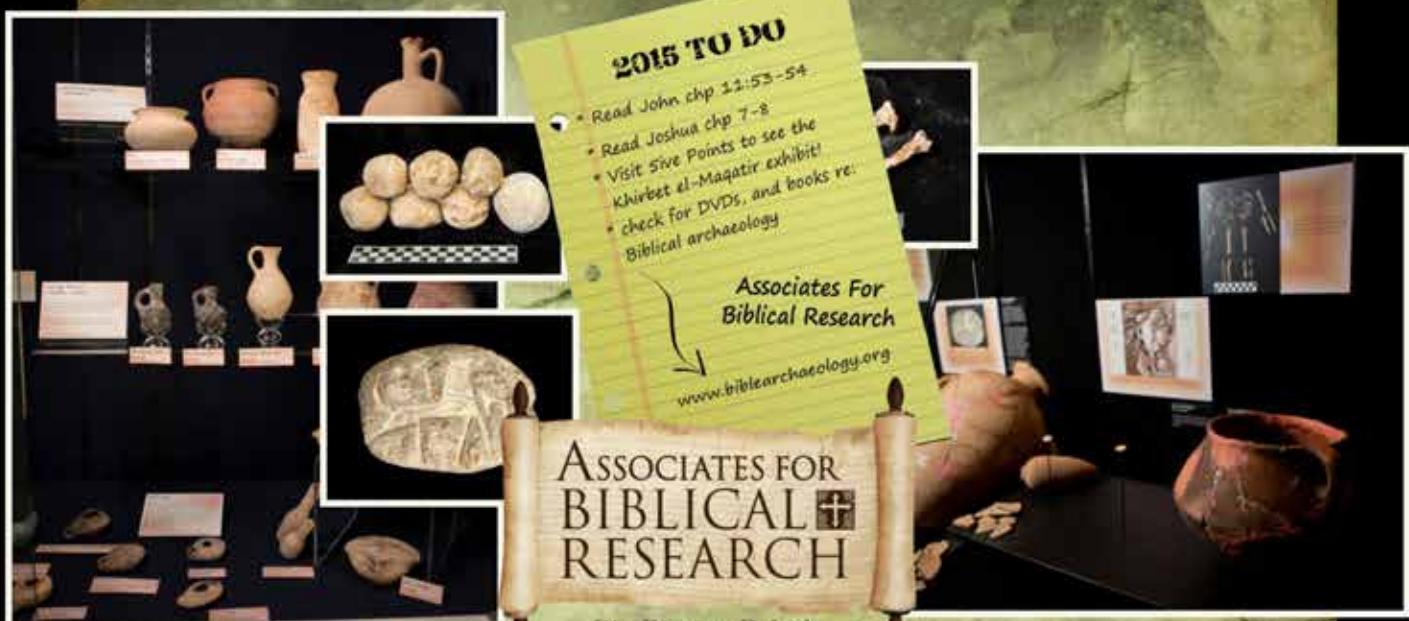
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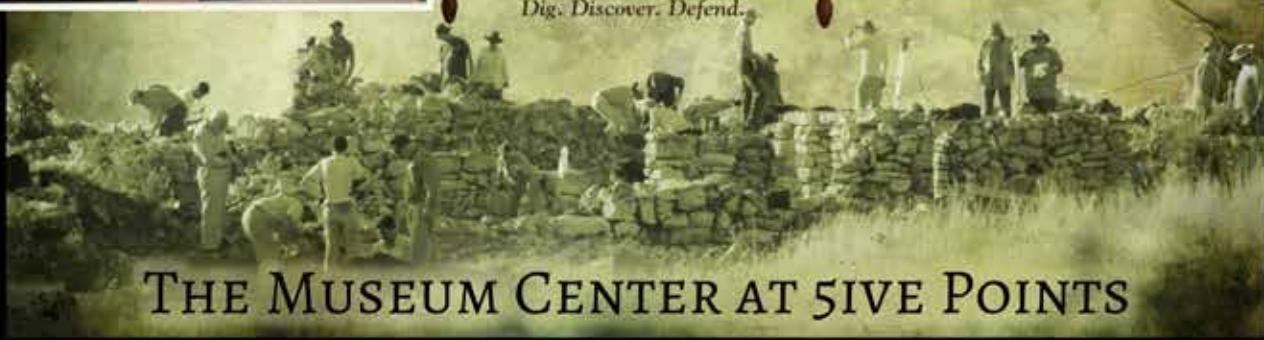
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