

Exodus Introduction

A. Authorship

1. Historically, the first five book of the Bible, including Exodus, have been attributed to Moses, mainly because the Bible attests to this:
 - a. Old Testament:
 - 1) Exodus 24:4: "**Moses wrote down all the words of the LORD...**"
 - 2) Exodus 17:14: "**Then the LORD said to Moses, 'Write this in a book as a memorial and recite it to Joshua...'**"
 - 3) Exodus 34:27: "**Then the LORD said to Moses, 'Write down these words, for in accordance with these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel.'**"
 - 4) Deuteronomy 31:9: "**So Moses wrote this law and gave it to the priests...**"
 - 5) Deuteronomy 31:24 states, "**It came about, when Moses finished writing the words of this law in a book until they were complete.**"
 - 6) Other OT authors referred to the first five book of the Bible as "**the book of the law of Moses**" (Joshua 8:31, 23:6; 2 Kings 14:6; others)
 - b. New Testament:
 - 1) In John 5:46 Jesus said, "**For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me, for he wrote about Me.**"
 - 2) In Mark 12:26 Jesus quoted from Exodus and refers to it as "**the book of Moses**"
 - 3) Romans 10:5: "**For Moses writes that the man who practices the righteousness which is based on law shall live by that righteousness.**"
 - 4) Like the OT, the NT repeatedly refers to the first five books of the Bible as "**the Law of Moses**" (Luke 24:44; Acts 13:39; 15:5; 28:23; 1 Corinthians 9:9; Hebrews 10:28)
 2. Moses' authorship didn't begin to be challenged until the 1800s:
 - a. This was tied to the rise in something called "higher criticism" which in its strictest sense deals with things like who wrote the book, when was it written, etc.
 - 1) Higher critics posit that most of the OT book were not written by the traditional authors or eye-witnesses, but years/centuries later and are merely the products of unknown editors who worked from multiple unknown/unnamed sources
 - 2) They reject the traditional view of inspiration, inerrancy and infallibility, and therefore most often reject the historical accuracy of most OT books
 - b. Some also challenge Moses' authorship because he referred to himself repeatedly in the third person throughout the Pentateuch, and Deuteronomy records his death (34:5-7):
 - 1) However, it wasn't uncommon in the ANE for authors to refer to themselves in the third person
 - 2) Also, it's likely that an editor added Moses' death to the book of Deuteronomy

B. Date and Purpose of Writing

- a. Moses died at 120 (Deuteronomy 34:7) which means he wrote the Pentateuch when he was between 80 and 120 years old, or somewhere between 1446 and 1406 (discussed in a moment)
- b. Written for the post-wilderness generation as a historical record and instructions for when they entered the land of Canaan

C. Structure

- 1. Chapters 1-18 cover the Exodus from Egypt to the arrival at Mt. Sinai
- 2. Chapters 19-40 cover the establishment of the covenant, giving of the Law, and the plans for the Tabernacle
- 3. Common ways to summarize the book:
 - a. Deliverance from submission to their captors in Egypt (1-18) to submission to their God (19-40)
 - b. From being the servants of Pharaoh (1-18) to becoming the servants of God (19-40)
 - c. Rescue from human bondage (1-18) and rescue from bondage to sin (19-40)

D. Main Themes of Exodus

- 1. Some of the themes are summed up in Exodus 6:6-8:
 - a. Knowledge of Yahweh: **“Say, therefore, to the sons of Israel, 'I am the LORD”** (repeated in 7 and 8)
 - b. Freedom from bondage: **“and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from their bondage.”**
 - c. Redemption: **“I will also redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments.”**
 - d. God’s covenant with Israel: **“Then I will take you for My people, and I will be your God; and you shall know that I am the LORD your God, who brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.”**
 - e. The Promise Land: **“I will bring you to the land which I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and I will give it to you for a possession; I am the LORD.”**
- 2. Other themes:
 - a. The necessity of holiness and obedience (seen in the giving of the Law):
 - 1) Exodus 19:5: **“Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine”**
 - 2) Exodus 20:20: **“Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid; for God has come in order to test you, and in order that the fear of Him may remain with you, so that you may not sin."**
 - b. God’s sovereignty and omnipotence: prolific in the plagues
 - c. God’s presence among His people
 - d. God’s holiness (keeping distance from the mountain, rules related to the tabernacle, etc.)

E. Date of the Exodus

1. The most widely accepted date among Evangelicals is ~1446 BC (referred to as the Early Date):
 - a. Relies on 1 Kings 6:1 which states Solomon began to build the temple in his fourth year as King in the 480th year since Israel left Egypt:
 - i. Solomon became king in 970 BC which means he began the temple in ~966 BC
 - ii. 480 years prior to that would have been 1446 BC so this gives us the date of the Exodus
 - b. Further proof of this is found in Judges 11:26:
 - i. Jephthah was a judge who lived ~1100 BC
 - ii. In Judges 11:26 he explained to the king of the Ammonites that Israel had lived in the land for 300 years
 - iii. So, if we take this 300 years and add it to the 40 years Israel wandered in the wilderness, it would put the Exodus around ~1440 BC
2. A few scholars argue for what's called the Late Date, 1250 BC:
 - a. Relies mostly on the reference to the cities of "**Pithom**" and "**Raamses**" in Exodus 1:11:
 - 1) Raamses is similar to Ramses, a name used by multiple Egyptian pharaohs only after the thirteenth century
 - 2) So, the argument is if the Israelites built the city of Raamses as stated in Exodus 1:11, and the name Raamses wasn't used until the 1200s, then the Exodus could not have been any earlier than the 1200s
 - 3) However, there is evidence that the names Pithom and Raamses in Exodus are something called anachronisms which refers to when a name had changed over time and a later scribe replaced the original name used by the author with the new name to help modern readers identify it
 - 4) We have multiple instances of this elsewhere in the OT, including with this very name Raamses
 - b. Proponents of this late date also rely on an ancient granite monument called the Merneptah Stele:
 - 1) It dates to 1207 BC and records the conquests of Pharaoh Merneptah over people in Cannan and claims "Israel is laid waste, bare of seed"
 - 2) They claim Israel could not have lived in the land for 200+ years because the stele only refers to Israel as a group of people rather than a nation with fortified walls, etc.
 - 3) They claim Israel had to be small at this point in order to have been defeated by Merneptah
 - 4) The problem with these claims is that Egyptian conquest records are highly unreliable, often filled with embellishments diminishing their enemies and even recording defeats as victories

F. Archeological Evidence for the Exodus

1. Most ANE scholars claim there is little to no evidence for the Exodus, or that Israelites ever lived in Egypt

“Archaeological evidence directly confirming the biblical Exodus (a mass migration of 600,000+ men) is nonexistent, with most scholars viewing it as a foundational myth with a potential, much smaller, historical core. While no, direct evidence exists in Sinai or Egypt for the specific, massive, 13th-century BCE event, indirect archaeological data supports that Canaanite slaves lived in the Nile Delta, and that a, largely, indigenous, highland, population, formed in, Canaan, during the, Iron Age.” (Gemini AI)

2. The fact is there's quite a bit of evidence, so why do critics deny it?
 - a. First are foremost, they completely reject the Bible as an accurate historical account of past events; they view most of it as myth, while taking other ancient writings as fact
 - b. Second, when archeological evidence aligns with a Biblical event, they reject it claiming it can't be evidence because it's not from the right “time period”:
 - 1) The problem with this is that prior to ~800 BC there is no agreed upon or even reliable ANE chronology outside of the Bible
 - 2) Google Gemini (AI) states it this way: “The core problem with Ancient Near Eastern (ANE) chronologies lies in the reliance on a conventional, sequential interpretation of Egyptian dynasties and limited, sometimes contradictory, astronomical data, leading to a “floating” timeline with discrepancies of 50 to over 300 years. This framework often forces an artificial alignment of archaeological data that struggles to reconcile Assyrian, Babylonian, and Biblical records before 745 BCE.”
3. Examples:
 - a. Large Semitic population in Egypt's Nile Delta:
 - 1) This is the area of Goshen
 - 2) Time period was 1700-1500 BC (~300 years before the Exodus)
 - 3) Abrupt abandonment that coincides with migration into Canaan
 - b. Royal Palace/Villa at Avaris (city in Goshen):
 - 1) Architecture is a combination of Egyptian and Semitic styles
 - 2) One end is supported by 12 large pillars
 - 3) 12 tombs in the garden, 11 normal and one pyramid style royal tomb
 - 4) When the tombs were excavated, each of the 11 contained remains, but the royal tomb contained none
 - 5) In addition, the remains of a large statue were found depicting a royal Semitic figure in a multicolored robe
 - c. Egyptian Records:
 - 1) There are Egyptian hieroglyphics from the time before the Exodus depicting Semitic slaves in Egypt
 - 2) Egyptian texts like the Anastasi Papyri and Papyrus Leiden mention a group they refer to as the “Habiru” working on Egyptian construction projects
 - 3) Papyrus Brooklyn found in Thebes with the names of Egyptian slaves thirty of which have Hebrew names
 - 4) Two inscriptions on a temple of Pharaoh Amenhotep III which refer to a region east of Egypt (Canaan) as “the land of the nomads of Yahweh”
 - 5) Merneptah Stele: records the conquest of three Canaanite cities by Pharaoh Merneptah 200 years after the Exodus, but Israel is the only people group named

d. Evidence of the Conquest from Jericho:

- 1) Known today as Tell es-Sultan and it's composed of five distinct layers, called "cities", covering five different time periods
- 2) One of these "cities" shows destruction that matches significant details in the Bible
 - a) Walls which fell outward (not inward as with most attacks)
 - b) A burn layer indicating the city had been burned
 - c) A section of the wall with residential housing that survived (where Rahab might have lived and survived)

G. Duration in Egypt and Population of Israel

1. Duration: two most widely accepted durations are 430 years and 215 years:

a. Support for 430 years:

- 1) Genesis 15:13-16: "where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years"
- 2) Exodus 12:40-41: "Now the time that the sons of Israel lived in Egypt was four hundred and thirty years. 41 And at the end of four hundred and thirty years, to the very day, all the hosts of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt."
- 3) Acts 7:6: Stephen said, "but God spoke to this effect, that his descendants would be aliens in a foreign land, and that they would be enslaved and mistreated for four hundred years."
- 4) The argument against this view is that the genealogy in Exodus 6 only appears to allow for about four generations (but God described the 400 years in Genesis 15 as four generations)
 - a) Levi's son Kohath is listed in Genesis 46:11 as one of the 70 who arrived with Jacob and he is listed as the grandfather of Moses in Exodus 6:18, 20; Numbers 26:58-59)—that's only two generations: Kohath --> Amram --> Moses
 - b) Rueben's son Pallu is listed in Genesis 46:14 as one of the 70 who arrived with Jacob and he is listed as the grandfather of Dathan and Abiram who rebelled against Moses in Numbers 16: that's only two generations: Pallu --> Eliab --> Dathan & Abiram
 - c) There's also another individual, Nahshon (also Nachshon) who Ruth 4:18-20 records as the great grandson Hezron (Perez's son) who was one of the 70 who came with Jacob to Egypt (Genesis 46:12): that's only three generations: Hezron --> Ram --> Amminadab --> Nahshon

b. Support for 215 years:

- 1) Galatians 3:16-17 seems to suggest the 430 years started when God made His promise to Abraham, not when Jacob entered Egypt (READ Galatians 3:16-17)—so from that promise to Jacob entering Egypt was about 215 years which leaves the remaining 215 (of the 430) to be spent in Egypt
- 2) They also find support for this in the LXX of Exodus 12:40-41: "**Now the residence of the sons of Israel during which they dwelt in the land, Egypt, and in the land of Canaan was four hundred and thirty years. And it happened after four hundred and thirty years that all the host of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt during the night.**"

c. The bottom line is that there is no consensus and there are pros and cons to each viewpoint:

- 1) I favor the 430 viewpoint because it's hard to ignore the explicit statement in Exodus 12:40-41 that they spent 430 years in Egypt "**to the very day**"
- 2) And, the sheer number of Israelites at the time of the Exodus favors a longer rather than shorter time in Egypt

2. Population: estimates range from 2.4 million to as few as 30,000:
 - a. Support for 2-2.4 million:
 - 1) Exodus 12:37: "**Now the sons of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand men on foot, aside from children.**"
 - 2) This aligns with the census of all the tribes of Israel in Numbers 1 (Levi wasn't included)
 - 3) Adding estimates for the women and children brings the total to between 2-2.4 million
 - 4) The main objections to such a large population are:
 - a) Various passages in Deuteronomy state that the Canaanites were more numerous than Israel, but most scholars put the largest ANE Canaanite civilizations at less than 200-300,000 people
 - b) Egypt's population at the time is estimated to have been between 3-4 million so how would they subjugate and enslave a population of 2-2.4 million?
 - b. Support for 30,000:
 - 1) The Hebrew word for "**thousand**" can also mean group, tribe or clan which would bring the total down to ~6000 men plus women and children
 - 2) 30,000 could survive in the wilderness for 40 years but not 2-2.4 million
 - 3) 30,000 could gather around to listen to Moses but not millions
 - 4) The main objections to this view:
 - a) It doesn't line up with the census in Numbers 1 which seems exceptionally precise and lines up with the 600,000+
 - b) If the population was only 30,000, how could 50,000 have been killed by three different plagues in the wilderness (Numbers 16:49; 25:9; 1 Corinthians 10:8)
 - c. Evangelical opinion favors the larger number:
 - 1) Exodus 1:7 is deliberately emphatic: "**But the sons of Israel were fruitful and increased greatly, and multiplied, and became exceedingly mighty, so that the land was filled with them.**"
 - 2) According to the major AI models, 70 people could easily grow to over 2 million over 400 years—it would only require a ~2.6% growth rate per year which according to models is "mathematically sound, demographically realistic in historical context, and consistent with known population model"
 - 3) We should take Pharaoh's own words at face value (Exodus 1:9): "**Behold, the people of the sons of Israel are more and mightier than we**"

H. Pharaoh of the Exodus

1. Most secular scholars believe in the late date of the Exodus (1250 BC) and claim Ramses II was the pharaoh (as depicted in Cecil B. DeMille's 1956 movie The Ten Commandments-- Yul Brynner played Ramses while Charlton Heston played Moses)

2. Most Evangelical scholars believe in the early date of the Exodus (1446 BC) and generally favor one of two pharaohs': Amenhotep II or Neferhotep:
 - a. Criteria:
 - 1) Must have reigned during the date of the Exodus (1440s)
 - 2) His predecessor must have reigned for at least 40 years: Moses was 40 when he fled the pharaoh and returned 40 years later shortly after the pharaoh died (Exodus 2:23; 4:19)
 - 3) He could not have been a first-born son because he would have died during the 10th plague (Exodus 11-12 states “all” the firstborn which logically would have included children as well as adults)
 - 4) His successor could not be his firstborn son because he would have died during the 10th plague
 - 5) There are only a couple pharaohs that meet all four of these criteria
 - b. Amenhotep II:
 - 1) Based on one Egyptian timeline, he reigned at the correct time (1426 to 1453)
 - 2) His predecessor, Thutmose III, reigned for 54 years
 - 3) He was not a first-born son so he would not have died in the 10th plague
 - 4) He was succeeded by his second born son, Thutmose IV, not his first born son, Webensenu who died between 11-15 years old (found in his tomb with him)
 - 5) BONUS: when his mummy was discovered, it was covered in unexplained boil-like sores or tubercles which have never been found on another mummy—could this have been from the 6th plague?
 - c. Neferhotep:
 - 1) This requires a new revised and shortened Egyptian chronology proposed by Egyptologist David Rohl
 - 2) His predecessor, Amenemhat III reigned for 46 years
 - 3) He was not a first-born son so would not have died in the 10th plague
 - 4) He was succeeded by his brother rather than a son (even though he was known to have at least one, maybe two sons)
 - 5) BONUS: There's archeological evidence of mass disappearance of Asiatic slaves from northern Egypt near the end of his reign
 - 6) BONUS: Shortly after his death, Egypt was invaded by the Hyksos “without a fight” (archeological inscription) by Egypt which suggests they no longer had a well-trained and skilled military (wiped out in the Red Sea?)