

Perspectives on ancient chronology and the Old Testament—part 2

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It is well known that dates for the first millennium BC are fairly firm, and that the Assyrian Eponym Canon has a full record of years as far back as 912/911 BC. However, prior to that the chronology is very much 'up for grabs'. For Egypt, the resort has traditionally been to the so-called 'Sothic cycle' and fixing dates by the few astronomical references in Egyptian records. However, the neat scheme established by this method has in recent years started to come unstuck, and serious challenges have been made against Sothic chronology. In particular, the excavations by Manfred Bietak in the Fikus region of the Nile Delta have revealed what looks very much like the Israelite settlement, but much too early for traditional chronology, i.e. the 12th and 13th Dynasties. From the Mesopotamian and Syrian ends serious discrepancies have also arisen in regard to the later second millennium, especially from the texts from Emar in the Middle Euphrates region. In total, the discrepancies could amount to as much as 250 years.

In a previous article I outlined the conventional schemes of ancient chronology for both Egypt and Mesopotamia, to serve as starting points for discussion and revision. Such a revision is certainly needed if a match with biblical chronology is to be achieved, since the verdict from secularists is that there is no such correlation, therefore the Bible's stories of the patriarchs, Israel in Egypt, the Exodus and Conquest, and even David and Solomon, are to be dismissed as merely pious legends, without historical foundation. Yet even the secularists are prepared to concede that the Divided Monarchy, as recorded in the books of Kings, is historical, so we are compelled to ask: "Where then is the transition point between legend and history?" The answer to such a question becomes subjective and arbitrary.

If, however, our starting point is that the biblical narratives are sober history, but that on the conventionally held chronological scheme evidence of the biblical events is indeed lacking, then the only conclusion is that the conventional chronology must be modified, or even changed rather radically. This, then, is the approach in the present article, as there is mounting evidence that the conventional scheme is in error even on its own terms, let alone in relation to the Bible. However, it should be noted at this point that the approach here is not to do a wholesale reconstruction of ancient history vis-à-vis biblical history, whether that of Courville or Rohl.¹ The aim is the more modest one of starting with the conventional schemes, and then showing the difficulties and inconsistencies inherent in those schemes.

Joseph in Egypt

Much has been written about this issue, into which dynasty he might fit, even if the actual pharaoh remains

elusive. I do not propose to go into all the various aspects in this overview article, but there is one important clue which points to a historical setting: when Joseph stripped the power of the nomarchs, or rulers of the provinces, and consequently centralised the government in the palace, while reducing the people to serfdom, as recorded in Genesis 47. Precisely such an event took place in the 12th Dynasty, during the reign of Senusret III, as I have already argued elsewhere.² An excerpt from what I wrote there is in order:

"Under his (i.e. Senusret III) rule the nomarchs lost their traditional power in favour of the vizier, who then directed the administration of the entire country. Battenfield argues that this centralization of power is precisely that of Joseph, according to Genesis 47."³

The evidence of the famine tablets from Emar illustrates further the resort to debt slavery by families and the populace at large in times of severe famine. In those texts a man would, in time of famine and distress, sell his family into slavery to a temple official (and thereby connected with the king) in order to maintain life (*bulluṭu*: "to keep alive"); or to take care of those surrendered (*palāḥu*: normally "to fear, revere", but in this context "to treat with respect, take care of"). This is similar to the expression יהיהנו in Genesis 47:25, where the Egyptian peasants confess to Joseph, "you have saved our lives".⁴

While memory of Joseph himself may well have been deliberately expunged from the records in a *damnatio memoriae* exercise—fairly typical of what we see at other times in Egyptian history—the sort of development in Genesis 47 is something that we could well expect to turn up in the Egyptian records, and such is indeed the case. Giving this event its due consideration, the Joseph story belongs to

the later 12th Dynasty, possibly the reign of Senusret III or Amenemhet III.

Another point of reference in this discussion concerns the ‘Land of Goshen’ (Heb. *Eretz Gošen* אֶרֶץ גּוֹשֶׁן; LXX. *gē gesem*; Genesis 45:10; 46:28–29; 47:6). Again, to summarise what I have written elsewhere, as follows:

1. According to Genesis 47:4, 6, the pharaoh allowed Jacob and his extended family to settle in “the land of Goshen”, and in verse 11 it becomes clear that this is equivalent to “the land of Rameses”. The question then arises: Were either of these names used for the region at the time, especially the latter? Since on any chronology the descent into Egypt preceded the 19th Dynasty Ramesside period the reference has to be retrospective or anachronistic.⁵ But how did this name later arise for this region? This question can be answered fairly readily as a result of the work of Manfred Bietak and his team (see further below): the Hyksos capital of Avaris became in the Ramesside period the port for the extensive new capital and royal residence of Pi-Ramesse.⁶

In other words, the name Rameses in Genesis 47:11 is used anachronistically: the name was attached to it in later years in reference to the extensive building work of Ramesses II, and the biblical author employs this name from his standpoint. However, the site also saw considerable construction activity in earlier centuries, going back to the Middle Kingdom.

2. The modern name of Fikus, a town 7 km south of the modern Qantir, clearly reflects the Ptolemaic name Phacusa for the same region, mentioned in his *Geographica*, where he records that the (twentieth) nome of Arabia had this city as its capital. Egeria, travelling there in the fourth century, likewise observes that the city of Arabia is the land of Goshen.⁷ This in turn reflects the Septuagint of Genesis 45:10 and 46:34, where it reads “in the land of Gesem of Arabia” (*en gē Gesem Arabias*). Qantir is now accepted as the site of Pi-Ramesse, and Phacusa/Fikus is the city which gave its name to the region in its vicinity.
3. Egyptian records mention *Gšmt* for the chief city of the region,⁸ which can be identified as *p3-ks* in Egyptian. The prefix *p3* is the definite article, and the *ks* element matches with the phonemes *k* and *s* in the LXX *Gesem*. All in all, the land of Goshen can be identified with the modern Fikus and the surrounding region, and in the immediate vicinity of Avaris and the later Pi-Ramesse, now also confidently identified with the modern Qantir.

Oppression and Exodus

The first point to consider is the Oppression. All too often, commentators assume and speak of ‘the pharaoh of the Oppression’, and proceed to identify him with e.g.

Seti I (on the late-date model), or Thutmose III (on the conventional early-date model). But does this square with a proper exegesis of Exodus 1? Consider what is recorded: The passage shows a series of initiatives from the palace to control the growth of the Israelite population. The first of these is the construction of the ‘store cities’ (*‘arey miskenōt*) for the pharaoh. Then follow further measures: increased hard labour (vv. 13–14) and enforced infanticide (v. 22). Now each of these measures would require time for both implementation and then assessment. Meanwhile, the population continues to grow. In all, this would envisage a period of at least 50 years to a century, including several pharaohs. The notion of late-date advocates that the cities were built just prior to the Israelites’ escape from Egypt pays scant regard to the data of the text, in that they require that the cities were built just prior to the Exodus. To explain: the 13-year reign of Seti I (for the Oppression) plus a few years into the reign of Ramesses II are insufficient for what would be a large-scale project of the construction of store-cities (emphasis mine). As Bimson argues:

“The Biblical traditions, in speaking of a bondage spanning a number of centuries, clearly separate by a considerable period the first task of the people (i.e. construction of the cities) and their eventual escape from Egypt.”⁹

Another part of the problem here revolves around how long the Egyptian sojourn lasted. The conventional view, based on the Masoretic text of Exodus 12:40, whereby the period of sojourn in Egypt was 430 years. However, both the Septuagint and the Samaritan Pentateuch, apparently



Figure 1. Senusret III of the 12th Dynasty—the pharaoh of Joseph?

following a different textual tradition, read “the sojourning in the land of Egypt *and the land of Canaan* was 430 years” [emphasis added]. This would cut the Egyptian sojourn precisely in half, since an addition of dating notices in the patriarchal narratives gives a total of 215 years. It would also harmonise with Paul’s statement in Galatians 3:17 that the Law was given 430 years after Abraham. Regrettably, in the preserved fragments of the Dead Sea scroll 4Q22 paleo-Exodus—in the paleo-Hebrew script—Exodus 12:40 is lacking, thus frustrating any effort to confirm this one way or the other. Nevertheless, speaking generally, since a number of the Dead Sea biblical manuscripts lend support to Septuagint and Samaritan readings their testimony should be taken more seriously than has been traditionally the case. Accordingly, a 215-year Egyptian sojourn should be given serious consideration.¹⁰

As to Israel’s sojourn in Egypt, the above-mentioned work of Manfred Bietak and his team in the Nile Delta (Tell el-Dab’a), has been epoch-making. The following facts emerge from this investigation (using conventional Egyptian chronology):

- It has confirmed that a range of Semitic settlements existed in the region from the 12th Dynasty to the end of the 13th Dynasty and into the early Second Intermediate Period. Although the Semitic population (*aamu*: “Asiatics”, to the Egyptians) was sparse from the early Middle Kingdom, from the late 12th Dynasty through the 13th Dynasty there was a population explosion. Yet early in the Second Intermediate Period the settlements suddenly end, and there is a brief occupational hiatus.
- In the period of Hyksos rule the same site became the Hyksos capital of Avaris, until their expulsion after 100 to 150 years of rule.
- Ramesses II expanded this old Hyksos capital, making it his Delta capital of Pi-Ramesse in the 19th Dynasty.¹¹
- This region of Tell el-Dab’a was precisely the ‘land of Goshen’ of the biblical account.¹²

These facts, and others which could be mentioned, really demand that these Semitic settlements are to be identified as Israel in Egypt, even if some of the inhabitants were from elsewhere in the Levant, and from further afield. The latter would accord with the ‘mixed multitude’ of Exodus 12:38. However, all this is too early for the conventional chronology, and so the scenario has to be otherwise explained. Yet this has proved difficult, even for the secularists, as Dr Janine Bourriau notes in regard to Bietak’s pottery finds:

“When these dates have been imported to sites in Syria-Palestine where objects similar to those from Tell el-Dab’a have been found, there have sometimes been clashes with the existing chronology. The resulting fierce debates, when resolved, will eventually demand radical revisions not only in the dating of strata at Tell el-Dab’a but in the methods used for dating the Middle Bronze Age over the whole Mediterranean region.”¹³

Indeed there will be ‘radical revisions’ (precisely what she does not specify), but one suspects that such procedures will ultimately be in the interests of shoring up the existing scheme. We wait to see which way the proverbial cat will jump. For the present, however, these discrepancies highlight how the existing scheme—with its archaeological evidence—is inconsistent with itself, let alone with the biblical data.

If, as I believe to be the case, Bietak has discovered clear evidence of Israel’s sojourn in Egypt, then the Oppression must be identified with the period of the 13th Dynasty, and the pharaoh of the Exodus, following Rohl, be identified as Dudimose, at the close of that dynasty.¹⁴ As Rohl further points out, such an identification accords with Manetho’s description of the disaster which befell Egypt at this time:

“Tutimaeus. In his reign, for what cause I know not, a blast of God smote us; and unexpectedly, from the regions of the East, invaders of obscure race marched in confidence of victory against our land.”¹⁵

Tutimaeus can readily be related phonetically to Dudimose, a later king of the 13th Dynasty, while the tantalising mention of ‘a blast of God’ can plausibly be referred to the plagues, a devastation which left Egypt open to foreign invaders. In this connection appeal also is sometimes made to the *Admonitions of Ipuwer* as descriptive of the chaotic conditions in the aftermath of the plagues. However, caution is required here: this text belongs to a genre of ‘pessimistic’ literature from various periods, and betrays no definite historical reference or setting. In fact, the dating of the text is disputed: some date it to the end of the Old Kingdom, others to some time in the Middle Kingdom. In the words of Miriam Lichtheim:

“In sum, the *Admonitions of Ipuwer* has not only no bearing whatever on the long past First Intermediate Period, it does not derive from any other historical situation.”¹⁶

As stated, one should refrain from appeal to this text in regard to the plagues.

Further to this point on the plague-caused devastation: to explain away their effect as a relatively minor setback, or a more-intense-than-usual series of natural occurrences, from which Egypt quickly recovered, as often alleged by conventional late-date advocates, is to ignore the evidence.¹⁷ This is evident, e.g. from the narrative of the great hailstorm: “So there was hail, and fire flashing continually in the midst of the hail, very severe, such as had not been in the land of Egypt since it became a nation” (Exodus 9:24). Hence if the succession of plagues which Exodus 7–12 relates had the total effect of devastating Egypt’s agriculture, its economy, its military capability, and its manpower we can well understand why as a result it was defenceless and wide open to foreign invasion and occupation. Put another way, according to the interpretation proposed here, the succession of plagues brought on the collapse of the Middle Kingdom Egyptian

state, and in turn was one factor which plunged Egypt into the upheavals of the Second Intermediate Period.

Conquest of Canaan

At this juncture, before discussing the Conquest proper, one important matter should be mentioned, which raises a serious problem for the conventional chronology, and in favour of a drastic revision, viz. the discussions by Yurco regarding the Karnak reliefs of Merenptah depicting the same Canaanite campaign recorded in the text of his famous ‘Israel stele’.¹⁸ According to Yurco, these reliefs depict a victorious campaign through Palestine by Pharaoh Merenptah (conventionally 1212–1202 BC), with an ‘Israel register’ (fourth scene) which depicts an Israelite army equipped with chariots having six-spoked wheels—long before (on conventional chronology) chariotry is attested biblically as part of Israel’s military technology.¹⁹ Also, the Israelites wear the same city-style dress as do their counterparts in Gezer and Ashkelon. Clearly then, an Israelite army able to engage a pharaoh of Egypt, and field a chariot force in so doing, attests a coherent Israelite nation—not merely an aggregation of tribes, and one which has been resident in the land for a considerable period. Yurco’s observations have not only created a serious anomaly in the conventional late-date scheme (remember here that David’s conquests were accomplished by infantry, not chariotry), but also point to a much earlier date for Israel’s arrival in Canaan—although Yurco himself does not realise the full import of his proposals.

As to archaeological evidence of the Conquest proper, while I will not add to my discussions elsewhere on sites in the Transjordan and the testimony they bear to the Conquest,²⁰ one point needs to be made with emphasis: in Palestine itself there is *no* pattern of heavily fortified, walled cities during the Late Bronze (LB) periods, whether in LB I or LB II. This single observation cancels both the conventional Late Date (19th Dynasty, LB II) or Early Date (18th Dynasty, LB I) schemes of those scholars who adopt the existing secular chronology of Egypt, and attempt to match it to the biblical data. Yet this network of fortified cities was precisely what frightened the Israelites as they contemplated a conquest from the Negev region:



Figure 2. Karnak relief showing Fourth Battle Scene

“Nevertheless, the people who live in the land are strong, and the cities are fortified and very large ... We are not able to go up against the people, for they are too strong for us” (Numbers 13:28).

“Our brethren have made our hearts melt, saying, ‘The people are bigger and taller than we; and the cities are large and fortified to heaven’” (Deuteronomy 1:28; see also Deuteronomy 9:1).

However, it is in the earlier, Middle Bronze period (conventionally 2000–1550 BC), where we *do* find a system of heavily fortified cities throughout Palestine. The latter part of this period, archaeologically Middle Bronze IIIC, has to be where we place the Conquest. This in turn fits neatly with an Exodus in the same general period (albeit 40 years earlier), as argued above.

One final point in this connection is the oft-repeated scenario of destruction layers in the cities through Late Bronze Palestine, which on the conventional late-date scheme are identified with Joshua’s conquest. Even those who adopt the conventional early-date model have (rightly) objected to this identification, citing the biblical data:

- According to Joshua 6:24; 8:28; and 11:11–13, only three cities were burned: Jericho, Ai, and Hazor respectively. The rest were left on their mounds;²¹
- Burning cities was contrary to Conquest policy of living in the homes and cities of the conquered Canaanites, cf. Deuteronomy 6:10–11; 19:1; and Joshua 24:13.

Hence destruction or ‘burn’ levels in Israelite cities are quite irrelevant and precisely *not* evidence of the Israelite conquest.

The Amarna Letters and early Israel

The Amarna Letters, discovered in 1887 and thus known for well over a century, provide a picture of a Palestine under the control of a range of petty kinglets in a network of city-states, squabbling with each other, and parleying with the Egyptian pharaoh. Thus we see Abdi-hepa ruling in Jerusalem, Milkilim in Gezer, Shuwardata in Gath (?), Lab’ayu in Shechem, etc.²² Late-date advocates proclaim this as proof positive of a pre-Conquest Palestine,²³ where Canaanite kings are in control of Palestine and Israel not yet in the picture, while conventional early-date proponents have not really come to terms with the evidence of these texts. Some of the latter still cling to the now untenable theory that the Habīru of these letters are the advancing Israelite forces under Joshua, seen from the opposite end of the stick.²⁴

However, this neat conclusion is by no means necessary, for the following reasons:

1. Lab'ayu as king of Shechem poses a particular problem, since according to Joshua 24:1 Israel gathers at Shechem for a covenant re-affirmation, without any interference from local Canaanites. Moreover, Joshua 10–11 relate respectively to a southern campaign and a northern one, but no campaign in the central highlands, the location of Shechem. The impression one gets is that the central highlands—later the tribal territory of Ephraim—were largely empty of Canaanite presence or influence at this time, so for Lab'ayu to be ruling Shechem presents a major problem. However, this person was not king of Shechem, and the only Amarna text which links the two (EA 289) has been misread in the past, and cannot be read so as to link him with Shechem. He is much more plausibly king of Pella (URUPi-*hi-li*) in the Transjordan. Moreover, we cannot even be sure that KURŠa-*ak-mi* in EA 289:23 refers to Shechem.²⁵ With Lab'ayu, and an alleged Lab'ayan empire, removed from the central hill country, the scene is open to accommodate early Israel.
2. The list of yet unconquered cities and territories in Judges 1 dovetails with the Amarna Letters as precisely those cities still in Canaanite hands.²⁶ The only anomalies here are Shechem—which as argued above was not where the Canaanite Lab'ayu ruled his mini-empire—and Lachish, which as a city near the border with Philistine territory could well have changed hands a number of times during the Judges period, even though listed as one which the coalition of kings defeated in Joshua 10:22–27. In 1 Samuel 7:14 there is a circumstantial statement that territory which had been lost to the Philistines was recovered at the time of Samuel: the same might well be said of other localities during the Judges period, given that it was a time of turmoil, with successive oppressions and loss of territory.²⁷
3. While various studies have shown fairly conclusively that the term *ḥapīru/ḥabīru* (logogram SA.GAZ) is a sociological one, denoting social outcasts and

freebooters, reviled by the mainstream populations of cities and villages, and relegated to the fringes of society, a connection with the Hebrews is still possible.²⁸ While any attempt to relate the term phonetically to 'Hebrew' (*'ibrī*) has now been abandoned, if *ḥabīru* was a general term of opprobrium it could plausibly be applied in this context and circumstance to the Hebrews without any such linguistic relation—although there are indeed problems in that respect also.²⁹

Early monarchy

When we come to the glory days of David and Solomon, when Israel dominated the entire Levant from the River Euphrates to the river of Egypt (1 Kings 4:21), we could reasonably expect that the evidence in the archaeological record should be abundant. That it is lacking has propelled sceptical scholars to the conclusion that there never was such an empire; at least, not as 2 Samuel and 1 Kings describe it.³⁰ However, even from a secular standpoint it is difficult, to say the least, to accept that the entire narrative from 2 Samuel 8 through 1 Kings 11 is sheer fiction, as these sceptics would have us believe.

The answer, I am convinced, comes from a re-assessment of the chronology of the period in question: not only to bring it into line with Scripture, but also with itself. Here the texts from Emar on the Middle Euphrates shed some light on the chronological anomalies in the conventional scheme of Mesopotamian and Syrian chronology (CS),³¹ and point the way to a new placement of David and Solomon in ancient history. If we start looking in this new time location we shall indeed find a place for and indeed evidence of Solomon's empire.

In order to appreciate the upset which comes from the Emar evidence the following chart displays first the conventional chronology (CS):

For the purposes of this discussion the focus should be on the Hittite, Mitanni, and Middle Assyrian kingdoms. The conventional chronology, as seen in chart 1, shows the latter stages of the Mitanni Kingdom as contemporary

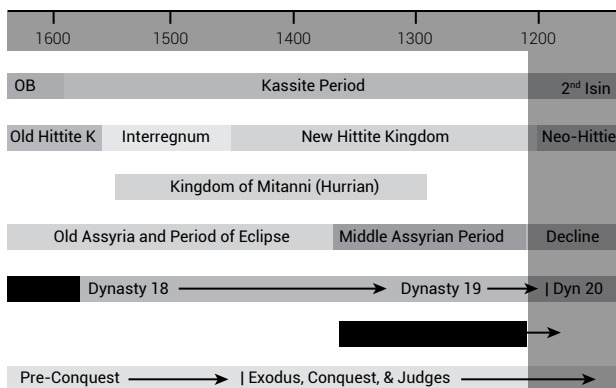


Chart 1. In this chart OB denotes Old Babylonian period; 2nd Isin denotes the 2nd Dynasty of Isin (Babylon).

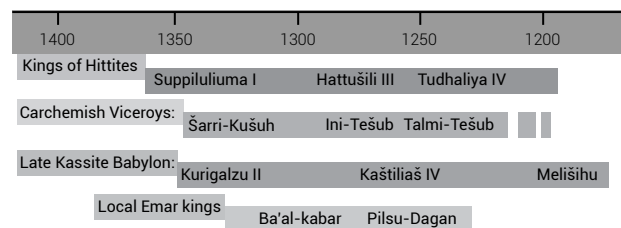


Chart 2. The period covered by the Emar texts showing the various synchronisms, again according to conventional chronology. Names in bold type indicate those kings of Carchemish or Emar with the most attestation, or in the case of Melišihu, significant for the present discussion.

with the rise of Middle Assyria, the last known contact of Assyria with Hanigalbat (i.e. Mitanni) was Šattuara II and Shalmaneser I, when the latter “invaded and destroyed the Hittite-backed kingdom”.³² However, the Emar texts appear to condense these synchronisms into a much shorter timescale, as seen by considering the following anomalies:

Problem 1

Each eponymn at Emar covered two years (as opposed to Assyria’s one), and those extant cover a total period of 34 years. Being generous, we could add from scribal careers at most about 45 years, to give a total of 80 years.³³ Hence considerable compression is necessary from the 130 years of conventional chronology as given by Arnaud, the original epigraphist for the texts.³⁴

Problem 2

By this scheme Talmi-Tešub of Carchemish does not synchronise with Melišihu (1188–1174 BC), the last Kassite king of Babylon, but according to the Emar evidence he does.³⁵

Problem 3

Emar faced an enemy in its final days, viz. “the king of the Hurri” (i.e. the Hurrians of the Mitanni kingdom). But as seen above, by the time Emar saw its final phase the Hurrian kingdom was well and truly conquered, and had passed into history. The enemy now, according to the conventional scheme, was Assyria, but although several Emar texts mention “a year of distress and war”, the enemy is either the Hurri or a mysterious people called the *tarwu* (Hurrians?), while the texts are completely silent as to Assyria.³⁶

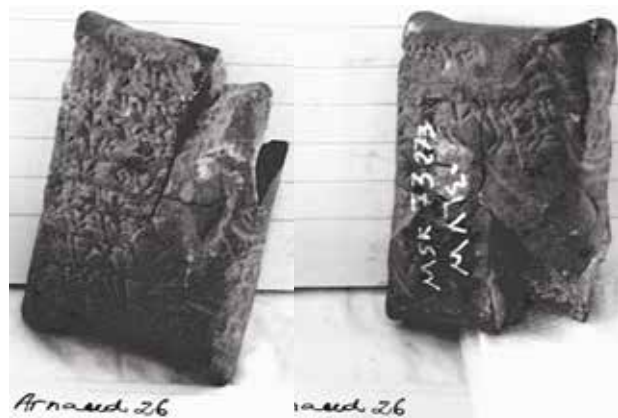


Figure 3. Emar text. Respectively obverse (left), describing the Hurrian invasion and its repulse, and reverse (right).

Problem 4

Then there is the tablet #26 (figure 3A and 3B), which is dated to the second year of Melišihu of Babylon, the last of the Kassite kings, conventionally dated to 1187 BC. However, this king is around 40–50 years too late for the Emarite kings, going by the attested synchronisms with the viceroys of Carchemish, the latest of whom is Talmi-Tešub. Some scholars, seeing the difficulty, have suggested that this tablet may be intrusive from a later phase, but the archaeology of the corpus will not permit this. The only alternative is to revise the chronology. I repeat here what I have concluded in my published thesis:

“The whole chronology of the thirteenth century (must) be drastically revised downwards to meet this *terminus ad quem*. This would involve a drastic ‘squeezing’ of the relative chronologies of the period: Middle Assyrian, Late Kassite, Late Hittite period to fit them into less than a century! Such a shake-up of accepted schemes is hereby proposed as a serious option, and though such a revision should not be based merely on the evidence of one site, nevertheless the Emar texts must be allowed to carry their own testimony.”³⁷

However, reducing the chronology by 40 to 50 years may not seem a great deal when in regard to Egypt I am pleading for a reduction of around 200 years. However, while the anomaly regarding Melišihu is of the order of 40–50 years, that of Emar *vis-à-vis* the Mitanni kingdom is most likely larger, of the order of perhaps over 100 years. The overall point to grasp here is that of a *minimum amount* in respect of the Emar evidence. The reality could well be much larger. I make two points in this connection:

- The evidence produced above indicates already that anomalies exist in the conventional chronology, of the order of 150 to 200 years in the earlier end of the second millennium (Egypt), and around 60 to 100 or more years at the later end (Syria). These the conventional chronology cannot accommodate, and in turn serve as a pointer or signpost that second millennium chronology needs further revision, and further evidence could well confirm this.
- Even the material produced above regarding Emar has not met with acceptance by mainstream historians, which goes to show that even relatively small-scale revisions (if such they are) face an uphill battle for acceptance.

Summary of the Emar evidence

- The total period covered by the kinglets of Emar must be shortened to about 60 or 70 years, at a stretch 80; but not the 130 years as required by the conventional scheme or Arnaud and others.
- The Emar evidence reveals chronological data which the conventional scheme cannot explain, i.e. in regard to Mitanni and the Hurrians, and is out of harmony with itself.

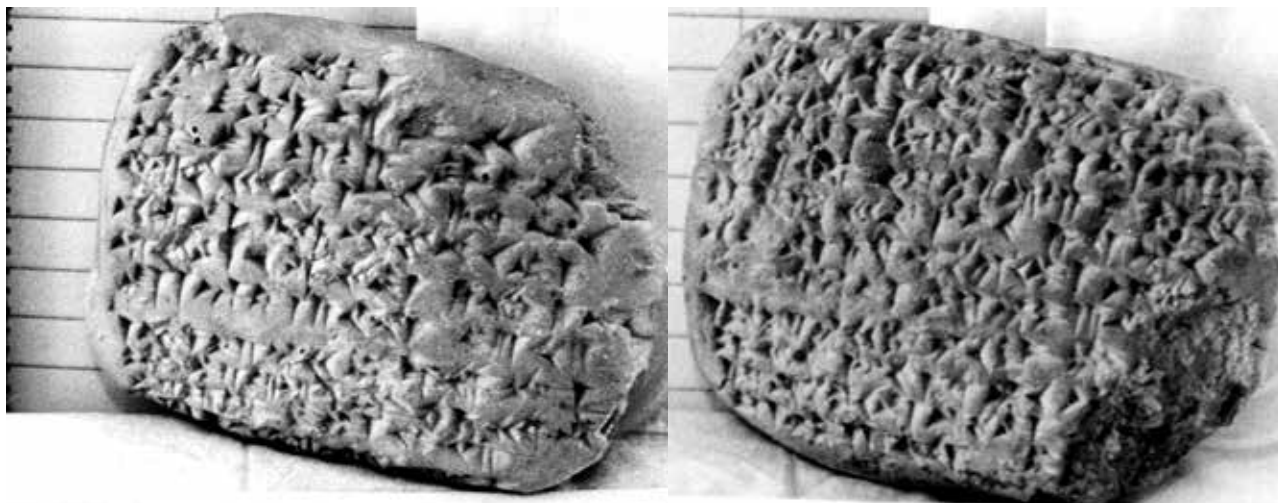


Figure 4. Tablet 42 of the Emar corpus. Respectively obverse (left) and reverse (right)

Implications for biblical chronology

Apart from being out of harmony with itself, the Emar evidence shows also that the conventional scheme of Mesopotamia-Syria in the late second millennium is also out of harmony with the data of Scripture as currently interpreted. Consider here, for example, the picture in 1 Kings 10:29, where Solomon traded with the kings of the Aramaeans and the kings of the Hittites. If we take the Emar evidence and thereby condense the chronology of the Late Hittite period, eliminate the ‘Dark Age’ in charts 1 and 2 above (which the Emar evidence also strongly suggests, but space forbids me to elaborate³⁸), we have a scenario whereby Solomon belongs in the Late Hittite period, where the early Aramaean period also belongs (again, the Emar evidence also indicates this, but space forbids a discussion here³⁹). It is in this Late Hittite/Early Aramaean period, archaeologically the Late Bronze II phase, where, I firmly believe, we will find Solomon.⁴⁰

Overall summary

The above discussion has sought simply to highlight anomalies in the conventional chronology at various points, but has not attempted a revised structure. Nevertheless it should be evident that the chronology of the Ancient Near East, in particular the third and second millennia BC, whether in Egypt, Mesopotamia, or Anatolia, is in something of a disarray, and needs serious revision. The work of Bietak in the Nile Delta, the evidence from Emar on the Middle Euphrates, the Karnak reliefs, and reassessment of the Amarna texts all point in this direction, albeit not always to the same extent in each case. Such a revision, therefore, would bring the biblical events out from the realm of fiction into the world of sober reality. Further issues arising from this data will be explored in subsequent articles.

References

1. See Courville, D., *The Exodus Problem and its Ramifications*, Loma Linda, Challenge Books, 1971; Rohl, D., *A Test of Time*, Random House, Arrow Books, 1995. Both of these reconstructions have their problems, Courville’s (following Velikovsky) the more serious. For a critique of one element of Courville’s thesis see Clarke, P., Was Jerusalem the Kadesh of Thutmose III’s 1st Asiatic Campaign?—topographic and Petrographic evidence, *J. Creation* 25(3):48–55, 2011. See also Gary Bates, G., Egyptian Chronology and the Bible—Framing the Issues, creation.com/egypt-chronology. Bates’ discussion is much more in line with the approach here.
2. See Adamthwaite, M., Archaeological light on the Old Testament; in: Baker, D. (Ed.), *The Face of Old Testament Studies (FOTS)*, Baker, Grand Rapids, MI, pp. 75–78, 1999.
3. Adamthwaite, ref. 2, p. 77. The Battenfield reference is to his article, A consideration of the identity of the pharaoh of Genesis 47, *J. Evangelical Theological Society* 15:77–85, 1972.
4. See also Hurowitz, V.A., Joseph’s enslavement of the Egyptians (Genesis 47:13–26) in the light of the famine texts from Emar, *Revue biblique* 101:355–62, 1994.
5. See Bimson, J.J., *Redating the Exodus and Conquest*, Almond Press, Sheffield, UK, p. 39, 1981, who sees the Rameses reference in Genesis 47:11 as retrospective, “since the descent of Jacob into Egypt must have preceded the reign of the first Rameses”.
6. Bietak, M., *Avaris: The capital of the Hyksos*, British Museum, London, p. 82, 1995.
7. Wilkinson, J., (Ed. and transl.), *Egeria’s Travels to the Holy Land*, Aris & Phillips, Warminster, pp. 100–101, 1981. This 20th nome, called Arabia in Hellenistic times and later, was known as Sopdu in pharaonic times. See Baines, J. and Malek, J., *Atlas of Ancient Egypt*, Equinox, Oxford, pp. 175–176, 1984.
8. Some Egyptologists have read the signs as *Ššmt*, but Naville (Naville, E., *The Geography of the Exodus*, *J. Egyptian Archaeology* 10:28–32, 1924) has persuasively argued against this reading. See Adamthwaite, ref. 2, p. 73.
9. Bimson, ref. 5, p. 39.
10. See also Vicary, M., Biblical chronology: our times are in His hands, *J. Creation* 21(1): 62–66, 2007; Austin, D., Chronology of the 430 years of Exodus 12:40, *J. Creation* 21(1):67–68, 2007. Vicary takes the view that the Masoretic text as it stands can be taken to mean an Egyptian sojourn of 215 years, without an appeal to the LXX, p. 64. One further point here is that Jewish rabbis apparently held to a 215-year Egyptian sojourn, but that would be the subject of a separate article.
11. A further difficulty for the conventional early-date model (as above) is that the clear archaeological evidence indicates that Pi-Ramesse/Qantir was unoccupied during the 18th Dynasty. See Bietak, ref. 6, p. 273; Baines and Malek, ref. 7, p. 176; Shea, W.H., Exodus, date of, *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* 2:231, 1982, reporting the work of Bietak at Tell el-Dab’a.
12. Bietak, ref. 6, chs ii–vii. See also Bourriau, J., The Second Intermediate Period; in: Shaw, I. (Ed.), *The Oxford History of Ancient Egypt*, Oxford, pp. 186–195, 2000.

13. Bourriau, ref. 12, p. 190. See also Bietak, M. and Höflmayer, F., *Introduction: High and low chronology*, Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Austria, pp. 13–23, 2007.
14. Rohl, ref. 1, pp. 281–284. Or perhaps another pharaoh of the late 13th Dynasty. Whatever, the 13th Dynasty remains a mystery to a considerable extent.
15. Waddell, W.G. (transl.), *Manetho*, Loeb Classical Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, p. 79, 1940.
16. Lichtheim, M., *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, vol. I, University of California, Berkeley, p. 150, 1975.
17. See the discussion of this ‘natural phenomena’ view in Currid, J.D., *Ancient Egypt and the Old Testament*, Baker, Grand Rapids, MI, pp. 104–107, 1997. Currid then continues to discuss the more recent position of critical scholars that the plague narratives are merely ‘literary creations’, pp. 107–108. Kitchen, K.A., A Rameside Exodus adherent, in his *Pharaoh Triumphant*, Aris & Phillips, Warminster, p. 71, 1982, declares: “The plagues and losses of the (Exodus) year quickly became just an unpleasant memory to be pushed out of mind, and any lesson they taught was soon lost.”
18. Yurco, F.J., Merenptah’s Canaanite Campaign, *The Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt (JARCE)* 23:189–215, 1986. See also idem, Yurco, F.J., 3,200-year-old picture of Israelites found in Egypt, *Biblical Archaeology Review (BAR)* 16(5):20–38, 1990; p. 34; then the challenge by Rainey, A.F., with a reply by Yurco, *BAR* 17(6):56–61, 1991.
19. Note how both Rainey and Yurco (respectively) note, and try to explain, the problem this poses for the conventional chronology, Rainey and Yurco, pp. 59, 61. The first attested mention of chariots as part of Israel’s military force we find in 1 Kings 1:5 and 4:26.
20. Cf. discussions in Adamthwaite, ref. 2, pp. 82–84.
21. For example see Aling, C.F., *Egypt and Bible History*, Baker, Grand Rapids, MI, p. 89, 1981.
22. See Aharoni, Y., *The Land of the Bible*, rev. edn, Burns and Oates, London, pp. 169–176, 1979.
23. While for Aharoni the Conquest begins only *after* the Amarna period, he sees the Habiru/’Apiru penetration during the Amarna period as an earlier arrival of certain Hebrew tribes in a ‘split-Exodus’ scenario, Aharoni, ref. 22, p. 191.
24. See Wood, L., *A Survey of Israel’s History*, rev. edn by O’Brien, D., Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, pp. 82–84, 1986; Archer, G.L., *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, Moody, Chicago MI, pp. 265–271, 1974. Note also in this respect the discussion by Kline, M., The Habiru: kin or foe of Israel? *Westminster Theological J. (WThJ)* XX:60–68, 1957.
25. See Adamthwaite, M., Lab’aya’s connection with Shechem Reassessed, *Abr-Nahrain* 30:1–19; pp. 8–12, 1992. Support for my reading of the relevant lines in EA 289 came from Anson F. Rainey on a visit to Melbourne University in 2002, when he gave a special lecture on the Amarna Letters, and EA 289 in particular. Partial support for my thesis re Lab’ayu has come from a recently recovered cuneiform inscribed cylinder from Beth-Shan; see Horowitz, W., The Amarna age inscribed clay cylinder from Beth-Shean, *Biblical Archaeologist* 60: 97–102, 1997.
26. A point also observed by Kline, ref. 24, p. 66.
27. This point will be developed more fully in a forthcoming article.
28. The literature on this issue is considerable, but see e.g. Greenberg, M., *The Habiru*, American Oriental Series 39, New Haven, American Oriental Society, 1955; Kline, ref. 24, but also the earlier installments in *WThJ* XIX:1–24, 1956; 170–184; then of more recent vintage, Rowton, M.B., Dimorphic structure and the problem of the ‘apirû-’ibrîm’, *J. Near Eastern Studies (JNES)* 35:13–20, 1976; Na’aman, N., Habiru and Hebrews: the transfer of a social term to the literary sphere, *JNES* 45:271–288, 1986.
29. See the discussion by Kline, ref. 24, pp. 61–63, for an outline of the problems involved in any sort of Habiru/Hebrew identification. My own view is that these problems are not insuperable, but nevertheless full account needs to be taken of the relevant difficulties.
30. See Knoppers, G.N., The historical study of the monarchy: developments and detours, in Baker and Arnold, ref. 2, p. 215, and note 34.
31. As for example, in Bryce, T., *Ancient Syria: A three thousand year history*, Oxford University Press, New York, pp. 332–334, 2014.
32. See Wilhelm, G., *The Hurrians*, Warminster, Aris & Phillips, p. 40, 1989, albeit with some skepticism regarding Shalmaneser’s claims; Bryce, ref. 31, p. 83; and also Bryce, T., *The Kingdom of the Hittites*, Oxford University Press, New York, pp. 303–304, 1998, where he notes Wilhelm’s scepticism, but still insists that Shalmaneser wiped away what remained of the Mitanni kingdom.
33. See Adamthwaite, M., Ph.D. thesis, *Late Hittite Emar*, Louvain, Peeters, pp. 16–25, 2001.
34. See Arnaud, D., Les textes d’Emar et le chronologie de la fin du Bronze Récent, *Syria* 52:89, 92, 1975. See also discussion in my thesis, ref. 33, pp. 3–4 and notes 2 & 3.
35. Adamthwaite, ref. 33, p. 72.
36. Adamthwaite, ref. 33, pp. 261–272.
37. Adamthwaite, ref. 33, p. 75. See the entire chapter (part I, ch. 5) for full discussion.
38. This concerns the discovery of the standard neo-Assyrian *hilāni*-palace, quite out of chronological location, in Emar of ostensibly the Late Hittite period, 13th century BC. See Margueron, J., Un <<hilāni>> à Emar; in: Freedman, D.N., Archaeological reports from the Tabqa Dam project, *Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 44:153–176, 1977. See also discussion in Adamthwaite, ref. 33, pp. 201–203.
39. On this matter see my chapter, Aramaean Movements; in: Adamthwaite, ref. 33, pp. 273–278.
40. As also proposed in James, P., *Centuries of Darkness*, Pimlico, London, 1992.

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