

THE STORY OF MOSES AND THE HISTORY OF ANCIENT EGYPT

Lesson One: UNDERSTANDING ANCIENT EGYPT

The purpose for this study:

- A) Learn more about the historical context of the story of Moses
- B) Demonstrate the truthfulness and historical accuracy of the Bible
- C) Strengthen our faith and knowledge in God and His word by examining the real time and history in which it occurred

- I) The Land of Egypt (“Egypt” from Gk. *Aigyptos*)
 - A) Located in the north-eastern corner of the African continent
 - B) Modern Egypt = 390,000 square miles of which only 4% is habitable
 - C) Virtually all of Egypt’s population throughout history has lived in close proximity to the Nile River – “Egypt is the Nile”
 - 1) Nile was life of Egypt – annual flooding
 - 2) Divided Upper Egypt (valley) from Lower Egypt (delta)
 - D) Deserts on east and west served to isolate the culture in early times
 - E) Important sites: Memphis, Thebes, Giza, Alexandria, et.al.

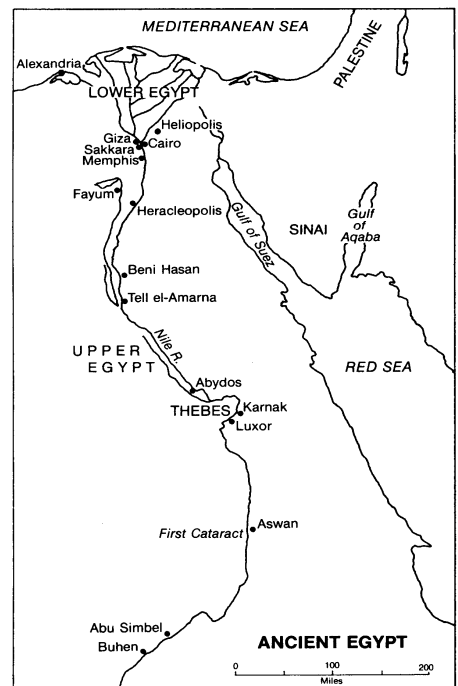


Illustration from *Egypt and Bible History*, Charles F. Aling, p. 8

- II) Notable Connections between Egypt and the Bible
 - A) Abraham (Gen. 12:10-20)
 - B) Joseph (Gen. 37-50)
 - C) Rise of Israel and Moses (Ex. 1-14)
 - D) Josiah (2 Chron. 35:20-22; 2 Kings 23:29)
 - E) Jeremiah (Jer. 42-45)
 - F) Prophecy (Isa. 19; Jer. 46; Ezek. 29-32)
 - G) Jesus (Matt. 2:13-21)

III) Understanding Egyptian Chronology

- A) Necessary to read Egyptian writing – *Hieroglyphics*
- 1) Unknown until the discovery of the Rosetta Stone in 1799
 - 2) Inscribed in three languages: Hieroglyphics, Demotic, Greek
 - 3) Deciphered by Jean Francois Champollion in 1822
- B) Egyptian sources for reign chronologies (order and length of reign of individual rulers)
- 1) Palermo Stone
 - 2) Royal List of Karnak
 - 3) Royal List of Abydos
 - 4) Abydos King List
 - 5) Royal List of Saqqara
 - 6) Royal Canon of Turin
- C) Even with the available chronological evidence, it is still difficult to fix absolute dates in the Egyptian timeline. Absolute dating relies on astronomical dating. This is done with the civil and astronomical calendars in a calculation involving the Sothic cycle of 1460 years, based on the rising of Sirius, the “dog star.” Three risings can be identified: AD 139, 1317 BC, 2773 BC. These dates anchor the counting of years (backwards and forwards) to determine the regal dates of the Egyptian kings. Later regal dates are firm, the middle period is relatively firm, and the early dates can vary 50-100 years.
- D) The chronology followed in this study is accepted by such authoritative sources as:
Chronicle of the Pharaohs, Peter A. Clayton (1994)
Ancient Egypt, J. E. Manchip White (1970)
Penguin Guide to Ancient Egypt, William J. Murmane (1983)
Egypt and Bible History, Charles F. Aling (1981)
 “*Egypt*”, W. S. LaSor, ISBE, rev. ed., vol. 2, pp. 29-47 (1982)
 We will find that this accepted chronology has an excellent correlation with Biblical chronology.

IV) Understanding Egyptian History

- A) Manetho
- 1) Wrote *Egyptian History [Notes about Egypt]* in which he provided a basic structure of Egyptian history
 - 2) Lived during the reign of Ptolemy I, Governor and Satrap of Egypt from 323-305 BC and king from 305-282 BC. Plutarch writes that he was one of two priestly advisors to the king and that he was involved in the introduction of the cult of Serapis.
 - 3) Had access to all the sources we have today, plus some that have not been preserved

- 4) No full text of his *History* survives; known from extensive quoting by Josephus, Sextus Julius Africanus, and Eusebius
- B) Divided Egyptian history into thirty dynasties (ruling houses)
- 1) 32 dynasties now identified for chronological purposes
 - 2) 30 – c. 3100-343 BC; 2 – Persian, Macedonian, Ptolemaic 343-30 BC
- C) The major periods of Egyptian History
- | | |
|----------------------------|-------------------|
| Early Dynastic Period | (3150-2686 BC) |
| Old Kingdom | (2685-2181 BC) |
| First Intermediate Period | (2180-2040 BC) |
| Middle Kingdom | (2039-1782 BC) |
| Second Intermediate Period | (1781-1570 BC) |
| New Kingdom | (1569-1070 BC) |
| Third Intermediate Period | (1069-525 BC) |
| Late Period | (524-332 BC) |
| Graeco-Roman Period | (331 BC - AD 641) |

With this information about Egyptian history and chronology, one is able to take the inspired text of Scripture, study the chronology revealed there, and make a correlation that will open up the historical background in which the story of Moses takes place.