

Naked Bible Podcast Transcript

Episode 273

Exodus 12, Part 2b

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Episode Summary

Scholars who accept the historicity of the biblical story of Israel's exodus from Egypt have argued for centuries about when it occurred in real time. There are several theories, but the two main approaches are the "Early" Date (1446 BC) and the "Late" Date (1267 BC). This episode explains how each date is defended and debated.

Transcript

TS: Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 273: Exodus 12, Part 2B. I'm the layman, Trey Stricklin, and he's the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey, Mike! What's new?

MH: Well, I have started moving my library from my office this week, Trey. I'm about halfway. And it is a burden, let me tell you. I have 3- to 4,000 books and it's just me. I have to pack them. So they're going to sit in my garage in boxes for the next six months or so. So there we are. [laughs]

TS: Moving is no fun for sure. I hate moving. But that's why you should digitize all of your books. There ya go.

MH: This stuff doesn't exist... I work for Logos, so there I am pushing a cart out to my car, and somebody from the office looks at me and says, "What's going on here? You work here. Why aren't these on digital?" It's because we don't have licenses to lots of things. So I probably have about 4,000 books, and I'll bet all but 200 of them are *not* in Logos format. A lot of the higher end stuff, you can't get in Kindle or Logos format. I have some things in pdf. If you counted the pdf, maybe 3,500 of my 4,000 books are in digital. But there's just no other solution, so it is what it is.

TS: Do you ever just sit in your library and just look at your books? Do you just sit there and just...

MH: No. I sit in my office and work. [laughs] I work, if you can call it work.

TS: I would. I'd just sit there and marvel at the thousands of books of knowledge. And you've read every one, right?

MH: No, a lot of them are reference books. Because I can't... It'd be a little different if I were in Wisconsin, where I was 10 minutes away from a research library. That's not the case here, and it won't be the case in Jacksonville, either. So I can't depend on a local university library. We have a Division II school here, but they have next to nothing in biblical studies and other areas that are important to me. So I'm more or less dependent on myself. But the journals I have digital access to. Those are my go-to tools: dissertations and journal articles. But you learn about these books and the journal and reference books all the time. So sometimes I'll buy them; sometimes I won't. But they don't exist in any other form. So there you are. The only thing I sit and marvel at in my office is my portrait of Mori. [laughter] I've had two people make drawings of Mori, so I can sit there and gaze at those, but that's about it.

TS: Well, that's why we listen to the Naked Bible Podcast, because we don't have to buy 4,000 books. We're going to let *you* do all the research and work, and we're just going to piggy-back off your knowledge, if you don't mind, and just listen to the show.

MH: [laughs] Alright. Yeah, that's true. [laughs] What can I say?

TS: Absolutely. That's key.

MH: I'll remember that when I'm pulling my cart out to the car and picking up the boxes.

TS: Doin' it for the people.

MH: [laughs] That's right. Somebody has to do it.

TS: That's exactly right, because otherwise, it's called Google. That's my library.

MH: No, it's called Middle Earth. [laughs]

TS: Exactly. Well, alright, we're just going to jump in and continue where we left off last time.

MH: If you recall our earlier episode, there was an Egyptologist (a very prominent one), Donald Redford, who didn't buy that Raamses was a reference to the pharaoh in Exodus 1:11. We talked about Redford's skepticism in that earlier episode. He just doesn't buy into it. Hoffmeier opposes Redford's skepticism, naturally. That's no surprise. He doesn't think Redford is correct. He thinks it is the pharaoh Rameses II. And Hoffmeier cites other prominent Egyptologists that don't buy into Redford's objections, either. One example is John Currid, and I've

read from Currid's book in previous episodes. Currid is a late-dater. This is what Currid writes about this whole issue:

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Another problem in attempting to identify Rameses was outlined by Donald Redford in 1963. He argued that the biblical Rameses could not be the delta capital of the Ramessides because the latter was called Pr-Rameses in Egyptian texts:

[Citing Redford] But is Raamses to be equated with Ramses II's new capital? [MH: Because in Exodus 1:11, it's Pithom and Ramses. It's not Pr-Rameses. Redford is fixated on this. It's not the same name that you would see in Egyptian texts, is Redford's argument, so it can't be the same thing. It can't be the same place. It's not named after the pharaoh.] The latter during the late New Kingdom bore the name Pr R'-mś-św whence we should expect a Hebrew. פִּירַעֲמֶסֶס [per ra-am-ses] [MH: But biblical Raamses, that's not what we have. So Redford says, "The two names just...] ...seem to have nothing in common.

Manfred Bietak has adequately answered Redford's challenge by demonstrating, on the basis of earlier work by [Sir] Alan Gardiner and Wolfgang Helck [MH: two other very famous Egyptologists], that the *Pr* of Pr R'-mś-św does drop off in various grammatical situations. The abbreviated form [MH: Raamses] could have easily transferred to another language.

Now he's citing Manfred Bietak. And some of you may be able to get this book (in case you're interested) on Bietak's rebuttals to Redford. It's from an essay in a book. The essay is called "Comments on Exodus" in the book *Egypt, Israel, and Sinai*, edited by A. F. Rainey. That is available. You can find it used on Amazon. So if you want that resource, you can get it. Hoffmeier further argues:

...none of the geographical terms found in Exodus 1:11 and the route of the Exodus are known in Egyptian sources prior to the 13th century.

Hoffmeier says, "Look, the rebuttals to Redford's objections that Raamses in Exodus 1:11 cannot be Raamses II's residence. He says those objections have been answered by other Egyptologists. The *Pr* part of the name does drop off, so the fact that it's just Raamses in Exodus 1:11 is no rebuttal. And then he adds (I'll read it again):

...none of the geographical terms found in Exodus 1:11 and the route of the Exodus are known in Egyptian sources prior to the 13th century.

Now that's pretty startling. Because you'd think that wouldn't be true if we have an early date for the exodus. Now you could argue against Mosaic authorship for

the exodus accounting. And you could say that somebody writing after the 13th century (when these place names existed) could be using these place names to tell the story of Moses. But the actual event would have happened in 1446 BC. You'd actually have to argue against Mosaic authorship at this point to hold the early date. Now Wood actually doesn't want to do either. (I'm telling you what I think is the most coherent.) Wood says, "Look. Hoffmeier says none of these place names (these toponyms) are in Egyptian sources from before the 13th century. That's an argument from silence." That's true. But to my ear, it's a little bit startling. Is that the same kind of argument from silence that we might object to in other things? Maybe it is; maybe it isn't. I don't know. But that's all that Wood says. I know Wood, and he's not going to argue (I'm pretty sure) against Mosaic authorship to save the early date in this argument. Instead, he's going to say that's an argument from silence. That's what he does in his article. So I don't think he would go beyond that. So is that a good argument or not?

Well... Third item, Judges 11:26. Now Wood takes this number at face value just like he does 1 Kings 6:1. Let me read you the verse. This is Jephthah (the judge) speaking:

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²⁶ While Israel lived in Heshbon and its villages, and in Aroer and its villages, and in all the cities that are on the banks of the Arnon, 300 years, why did you not deliver them within that time?

Now if you don't recall the context for what's going on in Judges 11, this is Jephthah basically picking a fight (that might be the right way to put it) in the context of Moab, and he's saying, "Look. This is land that doesn't belong to you. Israel has been in this place..." This thing they're arguing about. "We've been here for 300 years." Let me just pick up a few of the earlier verses. We'll start in verse 23. "The Amorites" is another way of referring to the Canaanites (the Rephaim specifically). It's a way of referring to the conquest. The Judges period is after the conquest under Joshua. So Jephthah says:

²³ So then the LORD, the God of Israel, dispossessed the Amorites from before his people Israel; and are you to take possession of them? ²⁴ Will you not possess what Chemosh your god gives you to possess?

You've got your own lands. Chemosh gave you those. This is ours.

And all that the LORD our God has dispossessed before us, we will possess.

²⁵ Now are you any better than Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab? Did he ever contend against Israel, or did he ever go to war with them? ²⁶ While Israel lived in Heshbon and its villages, and in Aroer and its villages, and in all the cities that are on the banks of the Arnon, 300 years, why did you not deliver

them within that time? ²⁷ ... The LORD, the Judge, decide this day between the people of Israel and the people of Ammon."

So he's talking to the king of the Ammonites. He's bringing up the king of Moab. He's bringing up Chemosh and the Amorites and all this stuff. The bottom line for Judges 11:26 is that Jephthah says (and he's not the last judge, he's kind of in the middle), "Look. We've been here 300 years."

Now Wood takes that number at face value. And if you do that, it requires there to be 300 years between the time of the conquest and the time of Jephthah. That would be logical for him to say that and take it at face value, he's saying, "Look, today is, like, 300 years since the conquest."

Now this is Jephthah, and there were six more judges (Ibzan, Elon, Abdon, Samson, Eli, and Samuel) after Jephthah before we get to the beginning of Israel's first king (the monarchy, Saul). If we take the years of each of these judgeships at face value, we get from Jephthah to the life of Samuel 103 years. So that means there needs to be roughly 400 years between the time of Moses... I was going to say Moses' death, but let's just say the time of the conquest. There has to be roughly 400 years between the time of the conquest and the time that Saul becomes king. Now if the early date is right, the conquest under Joshua wrapped up circa 1406. Let's just call it 1400 BC. Four hundred years puts us to around 1000 BC, which [sigh] is workable. That's roughly the date for David's kingship. We have to squeeze Saul in there somehow, because Saul reigned 40 years. David reigned 40 years. Then Solomon gets there in 970.

So we have some number discrepancies there. We have this 400-year period that doesn't quite work numerically. And people like Wood who take this number seriously (at face value) say, "We can fiddle with the numbers here a little bit because various judges could be (and really ought to be) understood as ruling concurrently." So we don't just take the numbers of the judges and string them one after the other. There were a number of judges that ruled at the same time but in different parts of the Promised Land. So he's saying that some of this is going to overlap. (And this is not in dispute either. Everybody recognizes this.) So you can scrunch the chronology (the beginning of the monarchy, the end of the conquest—what Jephthah said). You can make it work, if you want to take the 300-year number at face value. But then he turns it on Hoffmeier and the late date and says, "So how are *you* going to make 300 years work? If you have the exodus occurring in 1267, and then look at the years associated with Moses... They wander around 40 years and now we're down at 1227. And they get into the land. Estimates are 7-10 years for the conquest. So let's just call it 1220. You've got 120 years (in theory, at least—on paper) before the monarchy begins. But now you have a 300-year number in Judges 11:26 to deal with, which is actually bigger if you add some of the judges. Even if you take them as not linear (if there are some that are concurrent), you have at least 300 years to compress

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into 120. How are you going to do that?" So this is a big deal for the early date as well. 1 Kings 6:1... they can live with the Septuagint in Exodus 12:40, as long as you don't impose a math break-down on it. And then Judges 11:26 is a big deal because Wood would just say plainly, "Hoffmeier has a serious problem here. The late date has a serious problem. Concurrent judgeships might be able to handle a 100-year overshoot, but you have an overshoot problem of more than twice that length. What are you going to do with that?" Hoffmeier responds this way. This is how a late-dater would respond:

A literal understanding of certain large numbers may not always be correct if the authorial intent was not literal. Such misplaced literalism would be a "misinterpretation" of Scripture's meaning. Thus Jephthah's statement that Israelite tribes had occupied areas of the Trans-Jordan 300 years earlier since the days of Moses [MH: or at least the end of Moses' life] (Judg 11:25-26) could be a case of hyperbole that is intentionally exaggerating the time in order to strengthen his dispute with the Ammonites.

That's the end of the quote. So Hoffmeier is saying, "Look, Jephthah is exaggerating just to make a point with the king of the Ammonites. We should not take this literally." And Hoffmeier is going to know (and we've had this discussion as well about the use of large numbers being hyperbole). But let's be honest here. I think the legitimate use of hyperbole with large numbers (we talked about the large number problem), those are terms when you're talking about tens and hundreds of thousands. Not 300. So that, to me... This response on Hoffmeier... I said the response of Wood earlier (about the editorial updating of Zoan) was weak. I think this is weak. This really strikes me as a weak response. "Just an exaggeration." I mean, he has to say that. But if I were a late-dater, I'd want more than this. It just has the feeling of, "Eh, what else can I say?" Just like earlier, Wood's response felt like, "Eh, what else can I say?"

So there you go. So the early-daters really are going to push Judges 11:26 as being a number that we take at face value. You could also, to be fair to late-daters (Hoffmeier doesn't get into this)... You could say, "Jephthah? Really? We're getting information from Jephthah now. This is the guy who uttered the insane vow at the end of his judgeship and has to sacrifice his daughter." (And I realize there's more than one view of that, but just work with me here.) "This is the guy that was such an idiot that he did that? Even in this passage, he refers to Chemosh as the god of the Ammonites. That wasn't their god. Chemosh was the god of Moab. It's in the Moabite stone. So Jephthah even gets that wrong. This is no scholar. He's a hack. He's just a judge, and kind of a bad guy, too, in the end (or a stupid guy). Yes, God used him, but he's a bit of a moron. So why should we take Jephthah's understanding of Israel's chronology seriously? He could just be throwing a number out there." That's essentially what Hoffmeier argues.

So you could dress it up a little bit, but at the end of the day, that's the late-date comeback. If I were a late-dater, I would wish for a little bit more on that. I'd wish for something a little bit better.

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Item number four is the lack of external reference to Israel in Canaan earlier than the 13th century BC. Now Hoffmeier and other late-daters argue that the earliest reference to Israel being *in* Canaan (*in* the Promised Land)—the earliest external artifact, inscription, anything—the earliest external evidence we have for Israel even being in the Promised Land (which of course they would be after the exodus) is the 13th century, specifically the Merenptah Stela (or Merneptah—you'll see it spelled both ways). Hoffmeier explains (and you've probably seen a picture of this)... This comes up all the time with the book of Exodus, and just generally in biblical archeology. Hoffmeier writes:

One of the major problems for the early date exodus is the early date conquest. As one who has extensively studied texts relating to Egypt's military activity in Canaan from the 16th through 14th centuries, I have been troubled by two problems. First, among the records of the warring kings of Egypt who had imperial control of Canaan and Syria from ca. 1500-1200 BC, except for the Merneptah stela, there is no reference to Israel or any of the tribes despite the fact that several hundred toponyms are known for the region.

Let me stop there. He's saying, "Look, Egyptian war chronicles use 700 place names from Canaan. They're familiar with Canaan. But there's only one reference, and it comes in the 1200s... There's only *one* reference to Israel (or any of the tribes). Just one! So Hoffmeier is saying, "That's a real problem for the early date. There's nothing in the archeological record about the people, while there is plenty in the archeological record about the places. It sounds to me like the people aren't there yet and that the early date just doesn't work. Now Hoffmeier continues and he says:

Wood points to a recently published inscribed block by Manfred Görg that is stored in the Berlin Museum as possible evidence of Israel's presence in Canaan in the 15th century...

So Wood brings up an artifact, and again, you have access on the episode webpage to this article about this artifact. Wood knows there's an artifact that has, in theory (and I'll just tell you, I think it *is* real—I think it's legit) that mentions Israel in an Egyptian artifact prior to the 13th century (specifically in the 15th century, where you'd need it for the early date). So Hoffmeier says that Wood brings up this object (and this article by Manfred Görg), and he says:

Görg's reading of this name as "Israel" is plagued by serious linguistic and orthographic problems that preclude it from being Israel. I shall address four...

And he does this in his article. I'm not going to get into hieroglyphs here and spellings and linguistic stuff. But you can read that, and maybe you'll get something out of it, maybe you won't.

Thus the only occurrence of Israel from ancient Egypt remains the Merneptah Stela...

He doesn't think Manfred Görg's artifact really says "Israel." That's the issue. Does it include the term Israel or not in this artifact?

This is certainly unexpected [MH: that we only have the Merneptah Stela] since we possess scores of geographical texts and toponym lists, and hundreds of extant toponyms from Canaan from the 15th and 14th centuries, and yet neither Israel nor any of the tribal names are attested. For the period 1400-1250 BC Egypt exercised hegemony over Canaan and Syria. So this silence is problematic for the early date exodus and conquest.

Now Görg's article can be accessed on the episode webpage. It's actually co-authored with two other scholars. Their names are Peter van der Veen and Christoffer Theis (and Manfred Görg). The title is "[Israel in Canaan \(Long\) Before Pharaoh Merneptah? A Fresh Look at Berlin Statue Pedestal Relief 21687.](#)" That's in the *Journal of Ancient Egyptian Interconnections*, and this is a freely available article on the internet. Now Görg has since responded to Hoffmeier. Hoffmeier was writing in 2007. So Görg is aware of Hoffmeier's criticisms that are in Hoffmeier's article. So Görg has since responded to Hoffmeier in a follow-up article, which unfortunately is only in German, and that is Manfred Görg, "Israel in Hieroglyphen." That's in *Biblische Notizen*, which is a scholarly journal in biblical studies, but it's basically all in German. Way back in 2001... He and Hoffmeier have been going back and forth before these present articles that we're citing.

So Wood actually presents a summary of Görg's points (his rebuttals to Hoffmeier) in his article, available on the episode webpage. So if you have the Wood article, you'll see Görg's rebuttal to Hoffmeier. Now my two cents' here, since Egyptian is one of the languages I've had several years of, I think Görg responds well to Hoffmeier. Consequently, I don't think the notion that the Merneptah Stela compels a late date for the exodus is coherent at all. I think Görg's work and the work of these other two scholars is sound. I would say there really aren't any good linguistic problems with the spelling of what would be Israel in this pedestal. So I don't think Hoffmeier has a rebuttal here at all. I think Görg handles him well. But that doesn't mean anything for the debate. "Okay, now we have one artifact apiece with the name Israel in both timeslots (15th and 13th century)." "Whoa, that really helps." I guess it helps rebut Hoffmeier's insistence (or the way he casts doubt) on Israel being in Canaan. So it at least does that. But it doesn't flip the argument to, "Oh, we have to be early-daters now because

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of Manfred Görg.” No, it doesn’t do any of that. It just says, “Now we have one apiece.” So take it for what it’s worth.

Number 5: the pharaoh of the exodus. This is our last content item for this episode. The question is, “Did he survive the Red/Reed Sea incident?” And by the way, the Hebrew text does have *Reed* Sea, not *Red* Sea. *Yam sūp* is Reed Sea, and we’ll get to the terminology when we get there. So the question is, “Did the pharaoh of the exodus survive what happened at the Red Sea?” (I’ll just use Red Sea for now.) Basically, the answer to this question affects the number of possible candidates among Egypt’s pharaohs as to who could have been the pharaoh of the exodus. Whether this pharaoh died in the sea or not, it would have been his firstborn son who died in the last plague. So it doesn’t really matter if the pharaoh dies or not (you’re going to have people take sides on that). What really matters is did that pharaoh lose his firstborn son? Another way of saying it is, whether he was killed or survived, who took the throne next? If it wasn’t the firstborn son of the guy who either survived or died in the Red Sea, well that’s kind of interesting. So the issue is really about the firstborn when it comes to deciding what pharaoh we’re dealing with here. Early-daters aren’t married to whether pharaoh perished in the Red Sea or not. Wood believes that the pharaoh *did* die in the Reed/Red Sea, and that this pharaoh was Amenhotep II of the 18th dynasty. And Wood argues his point this way:

Hoffmeier doubts that the Pharaoh of the exodus died in the Reed Sea.[35] A review of the pertinent texts, however, suggests otherwise. In Exod 14:18 the Lord told Moses that He would “gain glory through Pharaoh, his chariots and his horsemen.” Then, after the Israelites had crossed the sea, “The Egyptians pursued them, and all Pharaoh’s horses and chariots and horsemen followed them into the sea” (Exod 14:23). [MH: By the way, notice that it doesn’t say pharaoh’s horse in there.] When Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, it returned to its place “and the Lord swept (*nāḥ* ar, ‘shake off’) them into the sea” (Exod 14:27). Ps 136:15 uses the same language, but explicitly includes Pharaoh: the Lord “brought Israel through the midst of it...but swept (*nāḥ* ar, ‘shake off’) Pharaoh and his army into the *yam sūp*.” [MH: That sounds like pharaoh’s in there.] The Egyptians were then engulfed in the returning waters such that “the entire army of Pharaoh” perished, “not one of them survived” (Exod 14:28; cf. Ps 106:11). A clear sequence is presented:

1. the waters are parted
2. the Israelites cross on dry land
3. the Egyptian army charges into the sea in pursuit of the Israelites
4. while in the midst of the sea the Egyptians, including Pharaoh, are thrown from their chariots as the waters returned
5. the entire army is engulfed by the returning waters

It is highly unlikely that Pharaoh (the one the Lord would gain glory through), after being thrown from his chariot, somehow miraculously escaped the massive inundation of the returning waters of the *yam sûp*. A straightforward reading of the Biblical texts implies that all of the pursuing Egyptians, including the king himself, drowned in the *yam sûp*.

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Now I want you to remember that line. Wood says that the pharaoh of the exodus drowned in the Red/Reed Sea. Now another scholar, Douglas Petrovich, also likes Amenhotep II as the pharaoh of the exodus, but he doesn't think that pharaoh died in the Reed Sea, and he doesn't see that as a problem for biblical reliability when it comes to these verses that I just trucked through here that Wood uses. So Petrovich rebuts Wood's use of these passages as indicating pharaoh's death. And you can read Petrovich's article. That's also accessible on the episode webpage. So you have one early-dater that says pharaoh died, and another one that says he didn't. Petrovich rebuts Wood's use of these passages, noting that none of them actually says the pharaoh died. The one says the pharaoh gets swept away, but okay. He further points out how Amenhotep II's reign length (this is a bigger issue) cannot accommodate Wood's early date defense if Amenhotep II died. Since Petrovich doesn't think he died, he defends the Amenhotep II identification by different means, zeroing in on the fact that Amenhotep II's firstborn son was not his successor. Now Hoffmeier obviously doesn't think that the pharaoh of the exodus was Amenhotep II, because his exodus is a couple of hundred years later. It's a later dynasty. So Hoffmeier writes this of Wood's identification of Amenhotep II being the pharaoh of the exodus:

There are several problems with [this identification of Amenhotep II being pharaoh of the exodus]. First, Wood muddles Egyptian chronology by using the high chronology for the 18th Dynasty (e.g. Ahmose 1570-1546 BC, Amenhotep II 1453-1419 BC) and the low chronology for the 19th, dating Ramesses II to 1279-1213 BC—the high chronology dates are 1304-1237 BC...

Let me stop here. You have to know there are two systems of Egyptian chronology. One is called the high chronology, which dates things a little bit earlier, and the other one is called the low. So Hoffmeier is saying that Wood is kind of cheating here. To get Amenhotep as his pharaoh, he uses one system for one dynasty and he uses another system for another dynasty. That's cheating. Hoffmeier writes:

According to the now-preferred lower chronology, the 1446 BC exodus lands in the reign of Thutmose III [MH: not Amenhotep II]. Many evangelical scholars cling to the higher chronology because they have determined a priori that Amenhotep II has become their pharaoh of choice for the obstinate potentate that Moses dealt with.

The second problem for Wood's exodus pharaoh drowning in the sea [MH: and you have to pay attention—this is a good rebuttal by Hoffmeier, but it's just a pharaoh candidate] is that the mummy of Thutmose III was found in the Deir el-Bahri cache, while Amenhotep II's was actually discovered in his tomb, one of only a few royal mummies discovered intact. [MH: So Amenhotep II was intact.] In fact, all the mummies of the 15th century are accounted for. According to the X-rays and investigations of these mummies, none [MH: *none*] indicate a death by drowning. Following Wood's logic regarding Ramesses II [MH: remember, Wood had said Ramesses II drowned in the Red Sea], one would have to conclude that none of the 18th Dynasty pharaohs could have been pharaoh of the exodus!

(Because none of them drowned, according to their mummy pathology.) Now this point by Hoffmeier I think is well taken. Drowning as a cause of death for Amenhotep II would be detectable by virtue of pathological inspection. Hoffmeier would argue (like Petrovich) that it's not necessary to say the pharaoh of the exodus died anyway, so it's okay to posit Ramesses II. He's just saying, "Look, none of these other guys drowned." But Hoffmeier knows that there's going to be people like Petrovich that don't have him dying in the Red Sea. So I'm not going to press the point too far, "I'm going to stick with my man, Ramesses II." But he uses this to sort of dig at Wood. And it's a good dig. It's a good rebuttal. But Hoffmeier doesn't press it too far.

But I don't want you to miss the point. So the real question is, "What about the firstborn son?" Now this is interesting enough here. Ramesses II was succeeded by Merenptah (or Merneptah, if you prefer that), but Merenptah was not his firstborn son. So Hoffmeier is going to argue, "Look, I've got a good candidate here (Ramesses II). I got the name in Exodus 1:11. He was not succeeded by his firstborn son. And I don't have to have him drowning in the exodus, so we don't even need to worry about the pathology of the mummy. Who's the pharaoh for the early date? At the very least, you can't say he died, because we have *all* the mummies, and they've all been examined. So you're going to have to exclude that from your argument at the least." But in the case of Ramesses II, he was succeeded by Merenptah, who was actually the 13th son of Ramesses II. We know that from Egyptian texts. He was not Ramesses II's firstborn. It's actually uncertain as to who Ramesses II's firstborn was. He had scores of kids, literally.

And that brings us to (to wrap up) an Egyptological point of curiosity: KV 5. You may not know any of the stuff about the pharaohs, but this is one of the reasons why (it's a peripheral reason, I'll admit it) the discovery of KV 5 was a big deal. This was back in the '90s. And I have a link to this on the episode webpage if you want to go back and read the *New York Times* article. KV 5 was the tomb that was entirely underground. People had been walking over it for decades. It's the largest tomb complex known in the entire spectrum of Egyptology. This is the tomb where scores of Ramesses II's sons were interred. It was discovered by Kent Weeks, who was an American Egyptologist. I don't know what's

happened... It used to be you could go into each one... There was an interactive website called the Theban Mapping Project that appears to be defunct right now. I don't know if they moved it and are calling it something else. Who knows? But you can at least go read the article. This thing is massive. And it has lots and lots of rooms. It's going to take decades to excavate because they're all filled in. And it's all underground. So it could be that we would find (if it's fully excavated)... There may be the remains of Ramesses II's firstborn son there. And then we would find out who he was, and maybe something interesting from hieroglyphs that might be there, or something said about... Who knows?

But what we do know for certain is that Ramesses II was not succeeded by his firstborn. That's the point of contact and the point of knowledge for our purposes that late-daters are going to throw out there and say, "Look, we have a good candidate here."

Now that's what we're going to cover for the date of the exodus. Look, as we've gone through, I've given thumbs up to both sides at different points by virtue of, "This rebuttal's kind of lame." That means the other side has a good argument. So there are good arguments to be made on both sides. I've said that before in prior episodes and now you get a feel for why I said it and why I mean it. There are good arguments on both sides of this. For me, the most significant point I think has to be Exodus 1:11. If it's true that Raamses in Exodus 1:11 is Ramesses II, then the debate is over. The late date is the winner. Defenses of Ramses in Exodus 1:11 against Redford's objections... I think those objections against Redford are workable. Early-daters are going to cling to what Redford says. I think they're workable, but that doesn't mean that he's right or that the rebuttals are right. Ultimately, who knows, but it looks like that is a really telling point. And if you're not going to be a late-dater, you've got to do something with Exodus 1:11. That's the lynchpin right there.

Now as far as the editorial updating (because that's how the early date is going to defend itself against Raamses in Exodus 1:11 being Ramesses II), I mentioned that I thought that Wood's comeback to Hoffmeier on the updating question about Zoan was lame. It is. But I think there's something else going on that neither article mentions here. Let me just throw this out. I'm not sure that formulaic language for editorial updating is required to have an updating. That's Hoffmeier's point: "If you don't have the editorial language that, 'Hey, we updated something here...' If you don't have that, it's not an updating." I don't know if that's really true. And I'll give you an example. Genesis 36:31. This is Genesis. It says this. Back in verse 15:

¹⁵ **These are the chiefs of the sons of Esau. The sons of Eliphaz the firstborn of Esau: the chiefs Teman, Omar, Zepho, Kenaz...**

And then you get these genealogies, a whole list of names. And then in verse 31, we read this:

³¹ These are the kings who reigned in the land of Edom, before any king reigned over the Israelites.

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The names of the kings follow (Bela, Jobab, etc.). The names don't matter for our discussion. The comment matters. Moses could not have written that, because he's writing before Israel had a king. How would he know that these are the names of the kings who reigned in the land of Edom before any king reigned over the Israelites? That's a retrospective statement. That is an editorial comment by a later writer. And did you notice? There's no formulaic language in there. Now I'll grant... This is what Hoffmeier would say if he was listening in here: "Hey, it wasn't about toponyms; it's about kings." Well, that's true. That's true. It's not about toponyms. But it is certainly updated information. And consequently, for me, I think the updating question is still open. I don't think the formulaic language requirement of Hoffmeier closes it. Because of passages like this (and this isn't the only one)... You have comments like this in Scripture where it's very evident that a later hand is updating his readers with information in some way, and it's not always the same way. So you could say (this is like a thesis topic), "It's always the same way with toponyms." Well, maybe it is; maybe it isn't. But is that a requirement? Is there some cosmic rule that says that you cannot have any toponym updating without this language? Who makes the cosmic rule? I don't know.

So for me, the editorial thing is still on the table. It's still an open question. Which is why I don't think that it's case-closed for the late date on the basis of Exodus 1:11. I do think Redford's arguments have been answered pretty well. They're workable. But I think this point about the editorial updating... There's still some uncertainty there for me as far as it being case-closed. I just don't think that's the case.

One last comment. Having said all of that, I still think there are problems with Egyptian chronology. This is where David Rohl and... Not just Rohl. Rohl gets a bad reputation, and in some cases I think he deserves it because he says wacky stuff. But there are other parts of Rohl's work that I find really interesting, and I would use the word "compelling" in a couple of instances. "Yes, we definitely have a problem here that needs to be fixed." It's not just Rohl. It's something called the Ancient Chronology Forum. If you think this is just one renegade Egyptologist guy named David Rohl, you're wrong. There are scholars from all sorts of disciplines (astronomy, Mediterranean archeology, Syro-Palestinian archeology, Egyptology)... They were part of this group called the Ancient Chronology Forum. They published a journal. I don't know how many years ago; it's defunct now. But most of it is online. There are a lot of holes in this. And a number of these holes (these problems) do affect the way Egyptian history and

biblical history align. That's just the reality. I don't know who's right, the "traditionalist" chronology people or some of the Ancient Chronology Forum (the chronological revision people). I don't know who's right. And frankly, neither do any of them. But they're making a case for changing the chronology of these areas in the ancient world, which affects the Bible and affects topics like this. They make cases. And some of the cases really, I think, deserve attention. Some of them... Rohl says nutty stuff. So what? What about the stuff that he says that isn't nutty? You're using his nutty stuff to excuse yourself from looking at it. That's just not good methodology.

So I think there are still problems with the whole system that need resolution. Maybe they can't be resolved. I don't know. So it's because of this kind of stuff that I find this stuff interesting. But you hit a wall with chronology where you just say, for lack of a better way of putting it, a lot of this stuff is insoluble. And for me, I just wasn't going to spend any more time on it. I would rather do biblical theology in its ancient Near Eastern context. I think it's more interesting. I think it's powerful. I think it affects lives. It helps people become better readers of Scripture a hundred times over more than a question like the date of the exodus. I don't want to denigrate anybody's work here because I benefit from their work. I think this whole episode's an illustration of how we benefit from people who do drill down. But I'm actually saying they need to drill down more, because there are people who have, and they have produced serious problems that need to be addressed.

And for me, I'm not going to be a chronologist. That's not my calling. It's not my career. I'm going to go off and do what I do, like on the podcast and stuff that I write in *Unseen Realm*: biblical theology in light of its own ancient Near Eastern context. It's ancient context period—Israelite, first century Jew. That's what I do. That's what I know I'm called to do—to spend the hours that I have on. Not this. So I've tried to tell you why, and give you an idea that, "Yep, there are good arguments on both sides. There are problems on both sides." So be warmed and filled. Pick the one you like. Just be non-committal. It doesn't matter to me. But we're going to move on next week. We're not going to return to chronology. We have other fat to fry. We have the *yam sūp* crossing. What does that mean? Where might it have been? What's the historical and symbolic meaning of this? And there's a lot there, trust me—problems with the itinerary, the location of Sinai (we'll have to get into that at least once more), all that stuff. But we're going to be moving on from chronology if we can help it.

I've decided (made an executive decision here) we're going to do Exodus 13 (specifically verse 1 and verses 11-16)—the consecration of the firstborn. And the question is, "Did Yahweh call for human sacrifice?" Now to many listeners, you may never have even heard that question raised. But the question gets raised because of those verses I just mentioned.

TS: Alright, looking forward to that, Mike. Before we get to Exodus 13, we're going to do a Q&A. We're going to pause to do a Q&A before that. But we still want to hear...

MH: I'm up for that. [laughter]

TS: I'll bet. We're way overdue for a Q&A. So we'll do that. You can send me your questions at TreyStricklin@gmail.com. We have several in the queue already. So just know if you send me...

MH: We're just not quite at the exodus yet. We have one more thing to cover before we hit it. I'm sorry. [laughs]

TS: No, that's great. It's good that you're covering these topics in depth. Otherwise, where else are our listeners going to get this information? So we appreciate the thoroughness of it. And we're interested to see where people come down on this, so please hashtag #NakedBible out there in social media, and get the conversation going, because we want to see. Maybe we'll read some of the quotes out there on Twitter and FaceBook, and anywhere on social media where people are commenting, where they're coming down on this topic. Because I'd be interested to hear people's thoughts on that. Again, next week, we're going to do Q&A. Then the week after that, we'll get into Exodus 13. And with that, I just want to thank everybody for listening to the Naked Bible Podcast! God Bless.