

14 Egyptian Dynasty of the Exodus

This article suggests the end of the 12th dynasty of Egypt as the time of the exodus. Egyptologists consider the 12th dynasty to be the apex of the Middle Kingdom. This dynasty was based at (or nearby) the city of Memphis (Noph or No-Ptah), which agrees with details of the scriptural account and Hebrew tradition.

Pharaoh Amenemhet I may have been the ruler of Lower Egypt (near Memphis) when Joseph was appointed as the second ruler of the land (Genesis 41:40-46) and when Jacob and his family moved into Egypt (Genesis 45:16-20) to buy food during a great famine. Contemporary records of the 11th dynasty based in Thebes refer to "seven empty years" following the death of Mentuhotep III (in Thebes). This may represent a time of famine, co-incident with a seven year period during the reign of Amenemhet I (in Memphis). Seven years of famine did occur over a wide area. (Genesis 41:41-46).

The scriptures say that Joseph died at the age of 110 (Genesis 50:22). This may imply that he lived into the reign of Amenemhet II.

There may be evidence to suggest that Hebrews were living in Egypt as free people during the early part of the dynasty. An Egyptian official named Khnumhotep II is believed to have lived during the reign of pharaohs Amenemhet II and Senusret II. His tomb contains paintings of everyday life in Egypt. Two scenes show Semetic people (possibly Israelites) offering gifts (tribute, or tithes, or taxes) to Egyptian scribes. At this time the Hebrews were not enslaved. One scene includes women and children. This agrees with the scriptural account that the Israelites "became fruitful and began to increase greatly, and they kept on multiplying and growing mightier at an extraordinary rate" (Exodus 1:7). It would be unusual if this scene did not include children. The scene probably represents some occasions familiar to Khnumhotep.

"The oppression" may have begun with Senusret III (Exodus 1:11). It is noteworthy that the scriptures do not claim that the Hebrews were forced to work with stone, nor work on any pyramids. This may have been offensive to Egyptian religious beliefs. They did work making bricks.

It may be that baby Moses was adopted by a daughter of pharaoh Senusret III. This pharaoh had at least four daughters; Sithathor, Menet, Senetsenebtysy, and Mereret. They probably outlived their father and were eventually interred in the royal burial complex at the pyramid of Senusret III. These daughters had the title "kings daughter" and this agrees with biblical terminology (Exodus 2:9).

Pharaoh Amenemhet III was one of the most notable and powerful rulers of Egypt, he was probably the second pharaoh of the oppression. During this time the royalty and priesthood of Memphis were closely linked. At times it was normal for two high priests to officiate simultaneously at the great temple of Ptah in Memphis. This agrees with scripture which states that two priests advised Pharaoh against Moses and Aaron (2Timothy 3:8, 9).

The Israelites were kept in slavery, producing bricks to build the storage cities of Pithom and Ra-amases. There is no need to assume any connection between the city of Ra-amases and later Pharaohs of the same name.

Amenemhet IV was probably the pharaoh of the exodus. The 12th dynasty did not gradually weaken and decay slowly into oblivion. The end of this dynasty was sudden.

Amenemhet IV has no known pyramid. This is reasonable if he died in the Red Sea and his body was lost.

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Amenemhet IV was succeeded by his sister Sobekneferu (possibly his wife), the first known female pharaoh of Egypt. This may be because there was no male heir. The son of Amenemhet IV may have died during the tenth plague. Sobekneferu ruled less than four years, when she died the Twelfth Dynasty came to a finish.

Amenemhet IV shared in construction at two temples. One was a temple begun by his father Amenemhet III and was dedicated to Renenutet and Sobek, the other was a shrine at the temple of Hathor (the cow goddess). Renenutet was represented as the serpent goddess, and Sobek was represented as a crocodile and associated with the River Nile.

The first miracle (Exodus 7:10-12) performed by Aaron was turning his rod into a snake which ate the Egyptian serpents. This would be a humiliation directed toward the goddess Renenutet. The first plague (Exodus 7:19-25) was the turning of the Nile into blood, this was a humiliation of the god Sobek. This plague included canals, and reservoirs (Exodus 7:19). The 12th dynasty was known for promoting irrigation projects, including canals and reservoirs. The goddess Hathor was humiliated by the fifth plague (Exodus 9:1-6) directed against livestock.

The very gods promoted by Amenemhet IV were all humiliated.

Due to the terrible effects of the ten plagues and the loss of elite military forces in the red sea, it is reasonable to assume that the twelfth dynasty would weaken quickly and collapse into anarchy. A time of anarchy did occur beginning with the so called 13th dynasty. The 13th dynasty was not factually dynastic, it appears to be a time of multiple rulers struggling for power. This period is sometimes described as an era of chaos and disorder.

After the Israelites along with a vast mixed company of Egyptians and others departed, then the land of Goshen would have been virtually empty. Sometime later Canaanites or others moved into this "void region". These newcomers would have occupied empty villages, with access to lush marshes, pastures, irrigated fields and gardens, free for the taking. They prospered and eventually became powerful and ruled over Lower Egypt. They were known as the Hyksos (foreign rulers). The Israelites were probably long gone when the Hyksos ruled. The collapse of D₁₂ likely enabled the rise of Hyksos power.

Egyptian chronology gives the span of D₁₂ to be approximately 225 years. Biblical chronology gives the span of Israelite residence in Egypt to be approximately 215 years. The exodus occurred 430 years after Abraham entered Canaan (and Egypt). This would suggest that the Hebrews were resident in Egypt for almost the entire span of the twelfth dynasty. The oppression may have lasted approximately 80 years giving approximately 135 years in Goshen before enslavement. Biblical events may be distributed over the dynasty according to the table below;

List of Rulers 12th Dynasty

Pharaoh	Years	Possible Events
Amenemhet I	29	Joseph appointed as overseer, Jacob enters Goshen, Jacob dies
Senusret I	45	Israel Prospers
Amenemhet II	34	Joseph dies
Senusret II	19	Israel increases greatly, Khnumhotep II dies
Senusret III	39	Israel enslaved, Moses adopted and becomes a prince of Egypt
Amenemhet III	46	The oppression continues, Moses flees to Midian
Amenemhet IV	9	Moses returns, the Exodus, collapse of the dynasty
Sobekneferu	4	End of dynasty
8 rulers	225	

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Assume the “typical lifespan” of a Hebrew person at that time was approximately 60 years. This would imply that four generations of Hebrews lived in the land of Goshen during the twelfth dynasty. This agrees with scripture (Genesis 15:16) which says; “But they will return here in the fourth generation”.

The foregoing points of interest suggest that the 12th dynasty may have ruled Lower Egypt at the time of the residence of Israel in the land of Goshen.

Well known archeologist Lorenzo Nigro PhD directed an excavation at Jericho. Grain seeds from the final Canaanite city were tested for Carbon-14 levels. Two samples of grain from layers associated with the destruction of the city were tested.

Apparently each sample provided a different dating result;

one sample dated to 1347 BC \pm 85 years

one sample dated to 1597 BC \pm 91 years

Taken individually the samples give inconclusive dating results.

If the dating results are averaged the “combined result” gives; 1472 BC

According to the Biblical account the exodus occurred approximately 40 years before the destruction of Jericho. If the combined dating result is reasonably accurate, this would give an approximate date for the exodus as; 1513 BC.