

Dr. Robert Vannoy, Old Testament History, Lecture 30

© 2011, Dr. Robert Vannoy and Ted Hildebrandt

Joseph's Coming to Egypt pre-Hyksos

Map Assignment

As I mentioned yesterday the map has a list of cities, rivers, and other locations, as well as, the portions of land assigned to each tribe. So I want you to draw a map. I'm not looking for some great work of art. So you don't have to spend hours and hours trying to make a very elaborate artistic creation. The purpose is to familiarize yourself with locations. Get a Bible atlas, use that, and find these locations. I will extend the due date of that until Tuesday, since this is already Wednesday. As I said I'm not going to quiz you on that, but it will come up on the mid-term. I'll have a map question on the mid-term. I might just say with tribal borders if you compare Bible atlases you're going to find differences, exactly where those lines are drawn. The reason for that is, when you go to the book of Joshua where those borders are described, it describes them by mentioning a lot of places. This tribe goes from here to here to here. Some of those places are hard to identify as far as sites, and different geographers have drawn the lines slightly differently. It's not something of great significance. The reason I'm saying that is, I may put a map on the screen here, when the tribal borders are slightly different from the one you've seen. If you compare atlases, you'll find those slight differences, but the tribes are still, in almost any atlas you look at, basically the same.

When Did Joseph Enter Egypt?

We were discussing: when did Joseph enter Egypt? We looked at the problem of date, which relates to the problem of the date of the exodus, and with an early date view, it would mean that Joseph entered Egypt prior to the time Hyksos in the native Egyptian times. If you take the late date of the Exodus, that effects the date of Joseph in a way that would place his entry into Egypt during the time of the Hyksos. So where we were in the end of the last hour was looking at some of the kind of arguments that are used to support either an entrance during the time of the Hyksos or an entrance prior to the time of

Hyksos. I had gone over a few of those points in support of the idea that Joseph rose to power during the Hyksos rule. That's where we stopped.

Arguments for Joseph's Coming to Egypt Prior to the Hyksos

1. The Sentiment of the Egyptian Government in Joseph's Time as Strongly Adverse to Shepherds

So let's look at a few of the considerations for the opposite view that would be: arguments favoring Joseph's rise to power prior to Hyksos' time. If he entered Egypt prior to Hyksos time, that's predicated on an early date for the Exodus. I'll mention three things that are pointed out by advocates of this view. Number one, the sentiment of the Egyptian government in Joseph's time as strongly adverse to shepherds is indicative of a native Egyptian dynasty on the throne. In Genesis 46:34, you read, "You should answer, 'Your servants have tended livestock, from our boyhood on, just as our fathers did. Then you will be allowed to settle in the region of Goshen, for all shepherds are detestable to the Egyptians.'" Now that statement, some argue, is indicative of a native Egyptian dynasty on the throne, the reason being the idea that the Hyksos were shepherd kings. In other words, Hyksos were really oriented towards being shepherds. Now as I mentioned previously, that explanation for the meaning of the term Hyksos is something that's disputable. So, to the degree that you would accept the alternate rendering of Hyksos as "foreign rulers" instead of "shepherd kings," would be the degree that you negate this as a line of argument. But some feel that this is a point in favor of the native Egyptian dynasty and so the earlier entry into Egypt. None of these arguments, as I said to begin with, are of a sort that decisively decide this. It's one of those things, we don't have enough evidence to really determine.

2. King Who Knew Not Joseph was a Native Egyptian

A second line of argument, that is really a reversal of one we mentioned in the last class hour, is that the new king who knew not Joseph, who's mentioned in Exodus 1:8, is

best understood as a Hyksos ruler. You see the previous position was, the new King who knew not Joseph was a native Egyptian, of those that threw the Hyksos out. Now the argument is, the new king who knew not Joseph is a Hyksos ruler who came to power and threw the Egyptians out. But this is elaborated on a bit more in this way. If the Israelites were friends and allies of the Hyksos as has often been argued, why were the Israelites then not expelled when the Hyksos were. See the Hyksos ruled from about 1750 to 1570 B.C. The exodus didn't come until quite a time after that. If the Israelites were alive with the Hyksos, why weren't they expelled when the Hyksos were? The conclusions of the advocates of this earlier view is, that the Israelites and the Hyksos were not allies, but they were antagonists, and that the Hyksos oppressed the Israelites during the time of their reign. So that the new king who knew not Joseph, who came in Exodus 1:8, represented the Hyksos rulers who then in turn put oppression on the Israelites.

3. Exodus 1:10 – The Israelites Have Become Much too Numerous for Us

Alright, a third point is the statement in Exodus 1:10, which really follows that statement of the new king who knew not Joseph in Exodus 1:8. Actually Exodus 1:9-10 where that new king says, “the Israelites have become much too numerous for us. Come, we must deal shrewdly with them, or they will become even more numerous. And if war breaks out, will join our enemies, fight against us and leave the country.” The argument is that statement is hard to understand in the mouth of a native Egyptian. Now, there's some difference, when I'm reading from the King James and that's different depending on how you translate. I was reading from the NIV. If you read in the King James, this argument is strengthened. In the King James, you read in Exodus 1:9, “The children of Israel are more and mightier than we.” The NIV says, “the Israelites have become much too numerous for us.” Now, if you're going to take that statement the way the King James translates it, and push it in a very literal sense, the argument is it's not reasonable to suppose that the Israelites were more in number than the native Egyptians. It might be reasonable to assume that they were more in number than the Hyksos element who was

dominating the land. Gleason Archer, in his *Survey of Old Testament Introduction* says, “It would have been the grossest exaggeration to assert that the Israelites were more numerous than the Egyptians, but it was quite possible that they were more numerous than the warrior caste of the Hyksos themselves.” So the argument based on that statement of the numbers of Israelites relative to the Egyptians is used as an argument in favor of the Israelites coming prior to the Hyksos time. Then the new king was the Hyksos and the oppression begins then when the Israelites became too strong and too many.

Now, that’s pretty much the way that this issue has been debated. I think there are certainly things that can be said both for and against placing Joseph in the Hyksos period. The available evidence really doesn’t, I don’t think, give us a basis for a firm conclusion. You’re going to have to come to that conclusion on something other than this kind of inferential material from Scripture. I don’t think it settles it.

What most advocates of this earlier view will do, as well as advocates of the early date for the Exodus - because these two go together, they will say that there’s a gap in chapter 1, between verses 14 and 15. The new king comes on in verse 8 of chapter 1 of Exodus, and then the slave masters are placed over the Israelites. “They built Pithom and Rameses, but they multiply more.” Beginning in verse 15, you have a continuation of further oppression you might say. Now, what is argued here is that there’s a time gap there that’s not apparent in the text. But it’s about the only way that the early date view of the Exodus can hold those things together. We’ll come back to that point, because it’s a very relevant point. We are going to get right back into that when we discuss the date of the Exodus. You almost have to posit a gap there because you have to move from the Hyksos time, down into the 18th dynasty time at the time of Thutmose. So that when the Hyksos are expelled the assumption is that the native Egyptians continued to oppress the Israelites as much as the Hyksos had prior. But, you see that’s an assumption. It’s not at all clear in the text. So that’s really a point, in a sense, that is a weak part of the early date view because it requires that. It’s not impossible. It’s possible, but it’s an assumption needed to make that view work.

Tentative Conclusion

Alright, I think in conclusion, then on this question, we have to remember, we're not altogether certain of the dating of Abraham and, thus, Joseph's entry into Egypt. We haven't yet looked at the problem of the date of the Exodus. I think that, what we can say with certainty, is that Joseph came into Egypt between 1900 and 1700 B.C. And that perhaps the Hyksos were already there. You see the beginning of Hyksos period is another thing of somewhat obscurity. I give you that 1750 B.C. date for the arrival of the Hyksos in Egypt, but that's not firm. The Egyptian chronology is pretty firm back to the time that the Hyksos were expelled. But there's dispute about the earlier Egyptian chronology. There is no hard evidence for it. So that you can't precisely fix the date of the beginning of the Hyksos period. So I think, what we can say is, Joseph came into Egypt between 1900 and 1700 B.C., perhaps the Hyksos were already there. But I don't think we can say much further than that for certain. Okay, any questions on that?

We're going to get back into this when we discuss the date of the Exodus because they are related.

Let's go on then, to VI on your sheet: "The Deliverance from Egypt," which is Exodus 1 to 11.

We'll have to pick that up next time.

Transcribed by Barry Soucy
Rough edited by Ted Hildebrandt
Final edit by Maria Constantine
Re-narrated by Ted Hildebrandt