

Robert Vannoy, Exodus to Exile, Lecture 1B

Early and Late Date of the Exodus

Late Date Arguments

3. Archaeology of Cities in Canaan Destruction Levels at 1200 BC

We've looked at two arguments for the late date view. The third argument for the late date theory revolves around the archaeological excavations at cities in the land of Canaan that are mentioned in the book of Joshua that had been taken by the Israelites at the time of the conquest. In a number of cases those cities that were mentioned in Joshua and taken by Joshua, show a destruction level at about 1250 to about 1200 B.C. For example, in the city of Lachish you have the destruction level 1250-1200 B.C. If you look at Joshua 10:32 you read there, "The Lord handed Lachish over to Israel and Joshua took it on the second day. The city and everyone in it he put to the sword just as they had done to Libnah." There are destruction levels at that same time at Bethel and at Hazor. There's also one at Debir. If you look at Joshua 10:38, "Joshua and all Israel turned around and attacked the city of Debir. They took the king, the villagers, the soldiers and put them to the sword. Everyone in it they put to the sword; they left no survivors. They did to Debir and its king as they had done to Libnah and its king."

If you look at your citations page 5, paragraph c, from R. K. Harrison's, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, Harrison says, and of course as I mentioned earlier Harrison is one of the late date advocates, "Thus if a clear view of the conquest period is to be obtained, it is important to distinguish between the events that characterized it and those that occurred after the death of Joshua, when a resurgence of the native Canaanite population took place. The conquest can be illustrated by the facts of archaeological exploration at sites such as Bethel, Lachish, Debir, Hebron, Gibeah, and Hazor, which show clearly that these places were occupied or destroyed in the latter part of the Late Bronze Age." For archaeological periods in Canaan, the late Bronze Age is 1500 to 1200 B.C. Notice what Harrison then says in this next sentence, "If this destructive activity is to be correlated with the campaigns of Joshua as outlined in the biblical sources," in Joshua 11:16 and following but also chapter 10, "it would appear that the land as a whole

was occupied with comparative rapidity by the Israelite invaders, although not all of the fortified strongholds, including a belt of Canaanite resistance separating the northern and southern tribes, were reduced at that time.” So the argument is that there are destruction levels in these cities that are mentioned as taken by Joshua. Those destruction levels are at 1250-1200 B.C. The assumption then is that those destruction levels are to be attributed to the Israelite conquest and hence support a 13th century, or late date, for the Exodus.

Response:

Now that is an assumption. What you will read when you read Merrill in the discussion of this and other people who have written similar things, if you really read closely in the biblical description of conquests, there are only three cities that are specifically stated to have been destroyed by the Israelites in the time of conquest and those three are Jericho, Ai, and Hazor, where it says the cities were burned. At Jericho the walls fell down, as you know. If you go back you notice what Joshua 10 says about Lachish in verse 32, “The Lord handed Lachish over to Israel. Joshua took the city and everyone in it he put to the sword.” It doesn’t say he burned the city or destroyed the city. So you see equating those Late Bronze destruction levels with the Israelite conquest to make that argument is the third argument.

To review, in support of the late date, 13th century, 19th dynasty Exodus you have first, Exodus 1:11 with Pithom and Rameses. Second, you have no sedentary population at least prior to 1300 in Trans-Jordan from Nelson Gleuck. Third, you have destruction levels in certain cities that are mentioned in Joshua to have been taken by the Israelites. The argument is that those destruction levels are to be attributed to Israel’s initial conquest under Joshua. Now that is more of the problem with archaeology. When you go in there and you find a destruction level, there’s no sign that says this was done by Joshua and the Israelites. In fact there is a certain degree of guesswork involved.

4. Judges Says Nothing about the Palestinian Expeditions of Seti I and Rameses II

The fourth argument is that the book of Judges says nothing about the Palestinian

expeditions of Seti I and Rameses II. Now if we go back here to the 19th dynasty, we know that Seti and Rameses II both conducted military campaigns up into the land of Canaan and even beyond in the north. In the year 1279, Rameses II fought a battle at Kadesh on the Orontes River, that's way up north of Beirut up in Syria. He fought there with the Hittites. The Hittite empire was trying to move to the south and the Egyptians didn't want the Hittites to move down so they sent their armies to the north. They had a battle and it was a standoff. There wasn't really a winner or a loser. Then what they did was sign a non-aggression pact. We have a Hittite copy and an Egyptian copy of that non-aggression pact signed between the Hittites and the Egyptians at the time of Rameses II. So we know Rameses II took an army up through the land of Canaan in the 1200s.

If you look at your citations, page 4, paragraph b, this is again from Finegan's book *Light From the Ancient Past* where he says, "Henceforth the inscriptions of Seti I speak of campaigns in Palestine and Syria, Pekanan ("the Canaan"), Retenu, and Kadesh being among the places mentioned. One inscription said of his return to Egypt, 'His majesty arrived from the countries ... when he had desolated Retenu and slain their chiefs, causing the Asiatics to say: "See this! He is like a flame when it goes forth and no water is brought.'" Actually 'the Asiatics' were not as fearful of Egyptian power as Seti I likes to believe, and his successor, Rameses II, had to battle throughout the sixty-seven years of his reign against them. Although his only victory in the famous Kadesh-on-the-Orontes battle with the Hittites was that of escaping complete destruction, the personal heroism of Rameses II was depicted proudly in numerous Egyptian scenes."

Now the way this argument works is this: if Israel went out of Egypt in the 1400s and you have an early date for the Exodus, that would mean when you come down to this time in the 1300s and 1200s where Seti and Rameses are moving with their armies up and down through the land of Canaan. If you have an early date for the exodus you'd be in the time of Judges. If the book of Judges, where there are clear references to the Midianite oppression, Ammonite oppression, Philistine oppression, and various of these bordering peoples to Israel who were oppressing the Israelites, it is odd that you have no reference to Egyptian armies going up and throughout the land of Canaan.

Response:

So really the argument is from silence because of the absence of any mention in the book of Judges on the campaigns of Seti and Rameses. Do you follow that? It's an argument from silence. That's not a very strong type of argument. It doesn't mean Seti and Rameses couldn't have been going up through there, it just means the book of Judges didn't choose to report about Egyptian activity in the land of Canaan. But that's the argument.

5. Merneptah Inscription Terminus Date

Those are really the four arguments. I want to give you a fifth point that sets a terminus date for the late date. The limit for the late date beyond which I don't think you can go is determined by a stone inscription by Merneptah, the pharaoh from 1234-1222 B.C. In the inscription of Merneptah in the fifth year of his reign, depending on which of those chronologies you take—normally it's put around 1220—he speaks about defeating various people and cities in the land of Canaan. He mentions “Israel” by name among them. Sometimes this Merneptah inscription is called the “Israel inscription.” It's the first reference to Israel in the extra-biblical sources. But what it means is the Israelites must have been in Canaan prior to 1220 B.C. And if you take forty years for the wilderness wandering before coming into the land of Canaan and add that on, it would suggest some time prior to 1260 for the date of the Exodus, 1260 B.C. By 1220 Israel is in Canaan according to Merneptah. So the limit of the late date as far as how late you can push it really is determined by that Egyptian inscription that refers to Israel.

B. Early Date

Let's go to the early date viewpoint—back to the 18th dynasty of Egypt and the 1400s B.C. I think if you look at these arguments for the late date a lot of these are arguments from silence: no sedentary population, no reference to Palestinian invasion by Egypt, these are arguments from silence. The destruction levels of Canaanite cities, it's

assumed that Israel is the agent. It's not clear-cut. The strongest argument for a late date is Exodus 1:11 that mentions Rameses.

1. 1 Kings 6:1 – 480th Year Before Solomon

When we come to the early date, the strongest argument again is a biblical statement. It's 1 Kings 6:1, which says, "In the 480th year after the Israelites had come out of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel in the month of Ziv, the second month, he began to build the temple of the Lord." So in the fourth year of Solomon's reign he began to build the temple, and that was 480 years after the Exodus. We can date the fourth year of Solomon's reign. In the books of 1 and 2 Kings you have what is called a synchronous chronology of the kings of the northern kingdom and the kings of the southern kingdom—Israel and Judah. You are familiar enough I think with the text to know that the way that reads is when a certain king in the north began to reign: it was in the fifth year of the reign of some king in the south and he reigned x number of years, so that the reigns of the northern kings are synchronized with the reigns of the southern kings and vice versa. And when a southern king begins to reign, a certain king in the north begins to reign, and you work back and forth like that. So there's a synchronization chronology provided. There are a couple points in the chronology of the kings of Israel and Judah where we can make links into Assyrian chronology. Jehu paid tribute, for example, to Shalmanesar in 840, that's mentioned in the Bible and also mentioned in the Assyrian records. So you can make the connection. The Assyrian chronological records link the reigns of their kings with astronomical dates like eclipses and things of that sort so that from those kinds of references you can establish an absolute date for the reigns of the Assyrian kings and then work to a date for the Israelite chronology and get absolute dates for certain points in the Israelite chronology. If you have a couple of points then you work backwards and forwards to establish the other dates as you often know how long each king reigned. I've simplified this process, which is extremely complex. If you're really interested, get the book by Edwin Thiele called, *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*. It's a book-length treatment of the

synchronous chronology of the Israelite kings and complicated issues. He's done great work looking at this problem. Most people agree you can come to a firm foundation for the dates of the reigns of Israelite kings.

To make a long story short, we know the fourth year of Solomon was 966-967 because we can work from a later point to check the years of the reigns of the kings. If the fourth year of Solomon's reign is 966 or 967 and that is 480 years after the Exodus, what's that tell you? The Exodus was in 1446 B.C. You go back to 18th dynasty and that's the time of Amenhotep II. For a lot of people that settles the argument—1 Kings 6:1 says so. 480 years before the time of the fourth year of Solomon's reign and you have the date of the Exodus. So there's no further discussion.

Late Date Interpretations of 1 Kings 6:1

I think the question then arises, what do the late date advocates do with 1 Kings 6:1? K. A. Kitchen and R. K. Harrison have a strong view of Scripture yet opt for a late date. There are two different approaches. Generally people say, some suggest this 480 years must be a kind of schematic number. What has often been suggested is that it is a schematic number for 12 generations of 40 years. Taking 40 years just as kind of an arbitrary number for a generation and take 12 times 40 and you come up with 480. Well you say where do you get the 12 if you say it's a schematic for the great leaders from Moses to Solomon. You can count it this way. You have Moses and Joshua, that's two. After Joshua you get six major judges in the book of Judges, that's eight total. And after the book of Judges you get Eli, Samuel, Saul and David, that's four more. So you see as far as major leaders go, from Moses to David you've got 12. Moses, Joshua, six major judges [Othniel, Ehud, Gideon, Deborah, Jephthah and Samson] and then Eli, Samuel, Saul and David. So these are 12 major leaders that span history. But a generation in reality is more like 25 years than 40 years. Twelve times 25 is 300. If you take 966 and 300 then you are at 1266, and you're back to the late date. So that's one way people argue. In other words, they are saying you have to take 480 not as 480 actual years but as a schematic number for 12 generations.

K. A. Kitchen has a different way to deal with this 1 Kings 6:1 passage. He speaks of that 480 as an aggregate number. Now what he means by that is a bit complex. He says the number is an accurate number but it's an aggregate of various component parts that we no longer know about. But that the figure is actual and reliable but it includes components that overlap. So that in actual years the number can be compressed. Now let me point you to page 6 of your citations and let him explain that in his own words. As I have said it's very complex. This is what he argues. Look at paragraph c in the middle of page 6. This is from his book *The Ancient Orient and the Old Testament* and here it's discussing from the Exodus to Solomon, that 1 Kings 6 passage, he says, "Here, the evidence is rather more complicated. The primary evidence and biblical data used so far would indicate an interval of roughly 300 years from the Exodus to the early years of Solomon (c. 971/970 BC)." See he's a late date advocate so he says the primary evidence and biblical data of this late date argument is an interval of roughly 300 years from the exodus to Solomon. "For the same interval, 1 Kings 6:1 gives 480 years, while addition of all the individual figures in the books from Exodus to 1 Kings gives a total of some 553 years plus three unknown amounts which will here be called 'x.'" In other words, if you look at every chronological statement from Exodus to 1 Kings and add them up, you're going to get 553 plus the other unknown amount. Now a lot of these chronological statements occur in the book of Judges. A judge arises and delivers Israel for x years and they were oppressed for 20 years then they had rest for 40 years. Then they were oppressed again and you get all these 40 year, 20 year, and 40 year numbers. The question is: were all these times of oppression and rest sequential, one after the other, or were they more regional with some of them overlapping? At this point it gets very complex. It doesn't matter if you were an early date advocate or a late date advocate you are going to be forced to conclude there is overlapping in the chronology. We will come back to that. A late date is going to have to compress those numbers a lot more than an early date. But everyone has to deal with that 553 years plus some unknown amount.

Again, Kitchen goes further, "Furthermore, David's genealogy of five generations in Ruth 4:18-22 can hardly easily extend over the 260 years or so between him and the

Exodus, and so it is probably a selective one.” Compression is the normal rule for genealogies. “But that of the priest Zadok’s (1 Ch. 6:3-8) generations would cover about 300 years. The genealogies need be no problem; but what shall we make of the 480 and 553-plus-x years, as compared with the roughly 300 years’ interval required by our primary evidence? Now this primary evidence is going back to Exodus 1, Pithom and Rameses and the destruction levels of Canaanite cities.” Here’s his comment, “In principle, this problem is not quite so contradictory as it may appear, if we remember that the Old Testament is also a part of the ancient Near East, and therefore that ancient Oriental principles must be applied. Thus, in ordinary king lists and historical narratives, ancient scribes and writers did not usually include synchronistic tables and cross-references as we do today. Synchronisms were the subject of special and separate historiographic works. In biblical terms, Judges as a narrative with a historico-religious purpose does not deal with synchronisms (except with oppressors as part of its story), while Kings is a synchronous history of Israel and Judah (while also a selective religious writing) in some degree comparable with the so-called ‘synchronous histories’ of Assyria and Babylonia.

Here, an Egyptian example will be instructive as a parallel problem.”—and here he argues for the biblical chronological issue and for an analogy that this is Egyptian chronological writing. “For the five Dynasties Thirteen to Seventeen (the so-called Second Intermediate Period in Egyptian history), the Turin Papyrus of Kings records—or when it was complete—some 170 kings who reigned at least 520 years altogether. Now we also know that they all belong inside the period 1786 to c. 1550 BC, a maximum period of only about 240 years at most.” So here for these 170 kings you add up the lengths of the reigns of each king you get 520 but they all fit in the 240 years. “A hopeless contradiction? No. We know, too, that these dynasties were all partly contemporary the 520 or so years are genuine enough, but were partly concurrent, not all consecutive. This may prove equally true of some of the Judges in early Israel, so that the 553-plus years would then fit into the roughly 300 years, just like the 520 or so into the roughly 240 in Egypt.”

Now, here's where he makes the move back to 1 Kings 6:1. "Now in the Ancient Orient, chroniclers and other writers often used excerpts from fuller records, and this might explain the 480 years—a total of selected figures (details now unknown) taken from the larger total." In other words, something like that 520 years in Egypt that we know from other details was actually 240 so maybe the 480 is a kind of aggregate number like the 520 is in Egypt. We do not know all the details of the aggregate composite. "The various figures are therefore not so refractory in principle, when relevant principles are applied. To work this out in practice within the book of Judges is not easy, simply because we need more detailed information on the period than is available there or from elsewhere. But neither is it beyond possibility (as is evident from an unpublished preliminary study). The problem of the book of Judges is chronologically rather less complicated than other celebrated problems of Near Eastern chronology—such as the Second Intermediate Period in Egypt, or the date of Hammurapi of Babylon, where a similar situation obtains."

So what do late date advocates do with this 480 years that the early date advocates say settles the issue? Late date people come back, saying that 480 is a schematic number for 12 generations or it maybe in some kind of aggregate number taken out of whatever sources were available to the writer of Kings, not explaining what the aggregate was made up of, but saying that it was less than 480 years in actuality. Now do you follow the argument?

Although as I mentioned with Judges you cannot take chronological data straight up, as there may be overlap. The question is, how much overlap? Again you get into this question of history's relation to theology with this issue; I don't think that the date affects the theology. It doesn't really matter. But this question of historical background and historical reliability is certainly an important issue and any information we get may cast light upon historical context and background of the Exodus. We come to this with the attitude: let's try to find out what information there is that throws light on the biblical material.

2. Thutmose III was from 1504 to 1450. Long Lifespan

Let's move on to the second argument. Thutmose III was from 1504 to 1450. He was a great builder with a long lifespan. If he was the king of the oppression then the Exodus would have occurred during his successor Amenhotep II. Now as I mentioned earlier, until recently there was no evidence of 18th dynasty pharaohs building up there in the delta area. If you look at page 5 of your citations, paragraph b, this was taken from R. K. Harrison who was a late date advocate. He says, "The tradition preserved in Exodus that government store-cities were erected by the use of forced Israelite labor has been largely confirmed independently by excavations in Egypt. An ancient site in the Wadi Tumilat, Tell el-Retabeh, supposed to have been Rameses by Petrie who excavated it originally, is now known to have been Pithom. Work at the site has uncovered some of the massive brickwork erected in the time of Rameses II, and since no traces of Eighteenth Dynasty construction or expansion were evident, it would appear that the Exodus tradition of forced labor referred to the days of Rameses II." Now as I mentioned, Harrison could not say that today because for the last 10 years evidence of 18th dynasty construction has been found up there in the delta.

I think the problem for early date advocates is: how could that site of either Qantir or Avaris, presumed to be Rameses, how could one of those sites have been called Rameses two or three centuries before the time of the pharaohs named "Rameses" in the 18th dynasty when there was no Rameses around? Now there are two responses by the early date people to the question of how the Israelites could have been working on Rameses long before the time of Rameses. Gleason Archer was an early date advocate who argues that the name Rameses was known and used earlier than the time of the 19th dynasty. No pharaohs are mentioned by that name yet he has found the use of the name back in the 18th dynasty. If you look in your citations the first page, there's that second entry under Archer "An 18th Dynasty Rameses," from the *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* back in 1974. I'm not going to take the time to read through those two paragraphs but he gives evidence of the use of the name Rameses in the 18th dynasty. Now you go on to page two, the last three lines, he says, "The name Rameses... was

already known and used in noble circles during the reign of Amenhotep III, if not before. It would therefore have been no surprise for a fifteenth century Moses to have been well acquainted with it.” So that’s one argument that the name was used already. That’s still problematic. Why would the city be called Rameses if he was not one of the pharaohs?

But the other argument is that the name is simply the modernization of an archaic place name. In other words, at the time the Israelites worked on that city Rameses, the name Rameses would not have been attached to it. It would be much like saying the Dutch were the original settlers of New York City. If you say to some people who didn’t know much American history the Dutch were the settlers of New Amsterdam they might not know what you’re saying. If you said New York City in the time the Dutch were there it was actually called New Amsterdam not New York City, it would be the modernization of an archaic place name. You might say “that’s kind of arbitrary.”

I don’t think it is because it’s really the same thing that happens in Genesis 14:14. Look at Genesis 14:14. This is where Abraham was rescuing Lot, you read, “When Abraham heard that his relative,” that’s Lot, “had been taken captive he called out to 318 in his household and went in pursuit as far as Dan.” Now compare Genesis 14:14 with Judges 18:7 and 18:29. In Judges 18 you have the story about the tribe of Dan sending some of their people to the north in the land of Canaan to look for another place to live. They found this place and eventually migrated from the land originally assigned to them in the time of Joshua up to the north. You read in Judges 18:7 the five men left and came to Laish where they say that the people were living in safety like the Sidonians, unsuspecting and secure. And then you go down to verse 29 and you read, “The Danites rebuilt the city and settled there. They named it Dan after their forefather Dan who was born to Israel.” So the city used to be called Laish. “There the Danites set up for themselves the idols...” You go back to Genesis 14 and it says that Abraham and his servants pursued to Dan not Laish. In the time of Abraham that place was called Laish, it wasn’t called Dan. It didn’t take the name Dan until the time of the period of the judges. It seems quite evident in Genesis 14 this is the modernization of an archaic place name. Now if you have that from Genesis 14 why not in Exodus 1:11? The city was called

Qantir when the Israelites worked on it. Later, it came to be known as Rameses. So that when people no longer remembered the archaic place name of the site they could read this and they would know what you're talking about.

Look at your citations page 8, in the middle of the page, this is from Merrill Unger's *Archaeology in the Old Testament*. "Archaeology has located Pithom at Tell el-Retabeh and Rameses at Tanis and indicated that these cities were (allegedly at least) built by Rameses II. But in the light of Rameses II's notorious practice of taking credit for achievements accomplished by his predecessors, these sites were most certainly merely rebuilt or enlarged by him. Moreover, since it is true that Tanis was called Per-Re'emaseh (the House of Rameses) for only a couple of centuries, the reference in Exodus 1:11 must be to the older city, Zoan-Avaris, where the oppressed Israelites labored centuries earlier. Accordingly, the name Rameses is to be construed as a modernization of an archaic place name like Dan (for Laish in Genesis 14:14)."

18th Dynasty [Thutmose III fits long Lifespan of Moses; Seti I does not

So to get back to this second argument, in the 18th dynasty Thutmose III was a great builder and there is evidence of 18th dynasty construction in the delta area. He was a great builder with a long life span and that later consideration is important. I think Moses' life span creates a very difficult problem for late date advocates. For the late date advocates, Seti, who would be the pharaoh of the oppression, didn't have a long life span. If you go to the chronological data of Exodus you find Moses is born at the time of the oppression in Exodus 2:1, "The man of the house of Levi married a Levite woman. She became pregnant and gave birth to a son," and that's Moses. Deuteronomy 34:7 says that "Moses was 120 years old when he died, yet his eyes were not weak nor his strength gone." Go back to Exodus 7:7 where you read, "Moses and Aaron did just as the Lord commanded and Moses was 80 years old and Aaron 83," when they spoke to pharaoh. If you go to Acts chapter 7 there is reference to this time of Moses you get more chronological in Acts 7:23 where you read, "When Moses was 40 years old he decided to visit his fellow Israelites. He saw one of his fellow Israelites being mistreated by an

Egyptian. So he went to his defense and avenged him by killing the Egyptian.” That’s when he was 40 years old and that was when he was forced to flee into the wilderness. But then you go down to verse 29, “When Moses heard this he fled to Midian where he settled as a foreigner and had two sons.” Then in verse 30, “After 40 years had passed an angel appeared to Moses in the flames of a burning bush in the desert near Mount Sinai and the Lord spoke to him” and told him down in verse 34 he should go back to Egypt and he would deliver Israel from oppression. So Moses lived 120 years. He was 40 years old when he went into the wilderness and he was in the wilderness 40 years. When he came back after 40 years he would have been 80. And he was 80 when he confronted Pharaoh and asked for Israel’s release. So those chronological numbers about the life span of Moses fit with Thutmose III as the pharaoh of the oppression but they don’t fit with the life span of Seti. There’s just not enough time there.

If you go back to page 1 of your citations you have Gleason Archer in his *Survey of Old Testament Introduction* saying, “No other known Pharaoh fulfills all the specifications besides Thutmose III. He alone, besides Rameses II, was on the throne long enough (fifty-four years, including the twenty one years of Hatshepsut's regency) to have been reigning at the time of Moses’ flight from Egypt, and to pass away not long before Moses’ call by the burning bush, thirty or forty years later.” So the lifespan of Moses fits better, you might say, with the length of the reign of Thutmose than anyone in the 19th dynasty and hence an early date.

3. Amarna Letters: Habiru Debate

Let’s go to one more argument for the early date. The third argument for the early date is based on some references in what are called the Amarna letters to a people who are called Habiru. Those Habiru were people who were attacking Canaanite cities. Some of the early date advocates have said these references to Habiru attacking Canaanite cities were really references to the Israelites attacking Canaanite cities by the Habiru or Hebrews. What is there in these references is the Israelite conquest of Canaan.

Now let’s talk about that idea. In the time of Amenhotep III, down in 1410-1377,

Egypt lost its hold on Palestine. By the time of Amenhotep IV, who also went by another name, Akhenaton, we have these texts called the Amarna letters during the time of Amenhotep IV. The Amarna letters are from city state rulers in Canaan to the Egyptian ruler. If you look at your citations pages 2 and 3, there is some material there from Finegan's *Light from the Ancient Past* about the Amarna letters. You notice that the third line represents correspondence from vassals, princes and governors from Assyria and Palestine to Amenhotep III and Akhenaton, who was Amenhotep IV. I'm not going to take time to read all of that but go to page 3, top of the page, where you read, "In Jerusalem, Abdi-Heba was governor, and he wrote repeatedly to Akhenaton, asking for Egyptian troops and stating that unless they were sent the entire country would be lost to Egypt."

What follows in those indented lines are quotations from some of the Amarna letters. If you go on a little bit below a third of the page you will see one of the letters of Abdi-Heba of Jerusalem. He says, "Why do you love the Habiru," there's that name, "and hate the regents?" But therefore am I slandered before the king, my lord. Because I say: 'The lands of the king, my lord, are lost.' Therefore I am slandered to the king, my lord. So let the king, my lord, care for his land... let the king turn his attention to the archers so that the archers of the king, my lord, will go forth. No lands of the king will remain. The Habiru plunder all lands of the king. If archers are here this year, then the lands of the king, my lord, will remain; but if archers are not here the lands of the king, my lord, will be lost."

So what he is doing is asking Amenhotep IV to send help or these Habiru will take over Jerusalem. Some of these extra-biblical references might seem pretty attractive if you look at the dates on Amenhotep IV. If the Exodus was 1446. Amenhotep IV is around 1380, subtracting the 40 years in the wilderness matches up pretty well with the 1446 early date.

Habiru Discussion and a Late Date Response

However the identification of Hebrew as Habiru is far from certain. The word is

used for a people scattered from Asia Minor, that is present-day Turkey, to Egypt, all the way over into Mesopotamia. If you look at all the references, and there are plenty of books written on who the Habiru were, it seems like it designates a social class rather than an ethnic group. The Habiru seem to have been semi-nomads who wandered around at various times, settled down into a more sedentary living, but they were wanderers. If you look at page 6, paragraph b, this is from Kitchen—of course, Kitchen is a late date advocate—he will not identify Habiru with Hebrew because it doesn't fit his late date theory. But here's his view. "The Amarna Habiru, therefore, have no direct bearing on the date of the Exodus or conquest." So he just excludes them so they cannot support a late date for these events are from the 15-14th centuries B.C.

I think this is a good statement Kitchen can substantiate, "As has been said long ago the Hebrews may have been Habiru," in other words they wandered 40 years in the wilderness and other people may have referred to them as Habiru. "The Hebrews may have been Habiru—but not all Habiru were biblical Hebrews," that's clear, "nor can any particular group in the external data be yet identified as corresponding to the Hebrews."

So it seems we have to be very careful about equating the Habiru of the Amarna letters with Hebrew, even though that may support an early date. As I mentioned, that word Habiru is used for people from Asia Minor to Egypt from the 18th century to the 12th century, and there are references to Habiru in Egypt as late as the time of Rameses IV way down in the 1100s. So either they are not identified with the Hebrews or the Hebrews didn't leave Egypt at the time of the Exodus. So you have to be very careful about the Amarna writings. One cannot equate the Habiru with the Hebrews, and therefore you cannot say the Exodus was early because of that identification.

All right, let's stop at this point and pick up a couple more arguments for the early date the next hour and then go on to something else.