

## Dr. Robert Vannoy, Old Testament History, Lecture 29

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### Joseph's Dates and Egypt

#### Course Instructions

This course is a two part course, so let's just pick up where we left off in the course and just continue on. On that assignment schedule you'll notice I will follow the same procedure that we did the last quarter; that is, there are reading assignments with the due date on Friday of each week. There is the potential for a quiz on that material for each Friday. The books are Schultz, Finegan, and one other book for Friday, April 15th: Edwin R. Thiele, *A Chronology of the Hebrew Kings* (Zondervan, 1977).

Thiele wrote a large volume called *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*, in which he analyzed that chronological issue of the synchronization between the lengths of reigns of kings in the North and kings in the South. That's long been recognized as a problem in biblical chronology - how you synchronize them. Because if you simply take the book of Kings and start adding them up, pretty soon they are out of alignment. So-and-so reigned so many years in the North, and so many years in the South, and then the next guy in the South began in a certain year of the rule of the king in the North and he reigned so many more years. They're interrelated that way. It's a problem if you just take the numbers as they are in the text and try to work out that synchronization.

Now Thiele spent probably most of his life working on that problem. He came up with certain ideas about the ways in which chronologies were kept in the ancient world, particularly in Israel, and some of those methodologies changed from time to time. Things like: when do you start a king's reign? In other words, suppose a king comes on the throne in December (using our calendar). When is the first year of his reign? Is it 1987 or is it 1988? Do you count the first full year, or do you count the section of the previous year as the first year of his reign? It's called accession year or non-accession year. That could make a difference of a year, depending on which way you count them. Other things like co-regencies where one king would reign and then appoint his son to begin his reign, and they would continue reigning together for a period of time; there

would be an overlap. Then the question is: when do you count the end of the reign of the first king? When he ended his rule totally or when the co-regency began? Those are just two problems. Which calendar you use in Israel for the beginning of the year – Do you use the religious calendar or the civil calendar? There are different calendars. There were a lot of factors like that. He worked out the details assuming certain things, principles that do resolve, for the most part, these problems of synchronization chronologically (not totally, but for the most part). That book is a very technical book, a very lengthy book. The one on your assignment sheet is a popularized summary of his findings, which is a short book in a relatively popular style. Unfortunately, it went out of print a couple of years ago, which is a real shame because it's a real service for the purpose of a course like this to understand the nature of that chronology problem.

There are, however, I think around at least a dozen copies of that in the library on the reserve shelf. So, notice the statement there: "multiple copies on reserve in the library, plan ahead." Don't leave that reading until Wednesday of the week of April 15th. You may come there and find that you can't get a book. Try to plan ahead, there should be plenty of copies for everyone.

But for the rest, the readings are in Schultz, where you will read Schultz and also read the corresponding books in the Old Testament; Joshua and Judges for March 11th, and then Judges and Samuel as well; that's chapters 6 and 7 of Schultz. So when you read Schultz, be sure to read the corresponding section of the Old Testament as well.

Now, I also had intended this afternoon to explain that statement made under Friday, March 11, "Map Study." You'll have to do that tomorrow, because I didn't bring enough sheets with me. What I want you to do also this week is a map study. This isn't anything elaborate. It's just that I will give you a list of cities, rivers, some mountains, major geographic locations in Palestine that you will encounter as soon as you come into Joshua and Judges. I'd like you to map them out so you have an idea of where these places are, but I'll give you that list tomorrow. That map then will be due on Friday of this week. Also on that map will be the tribal boundaries. When you get to the latter part of the book of Joshua the land is divided, and borders are assigned to each of the tribes. I

want you to know where the tribe of Judah is, Ephraim, Manasseh, and so forth. There will be a map question on the mid-term exam. The mid-term is April 8th. I won't quiz you Friday on the map, there is a possibility of being quizzed on the reading. I'm not saying that there will be but it's a possibility. I will have a map question on the mid-term exam. What I'll do is put a map on the screen with letters and numbers and I'll give you names and you'll have to match them with letters and numbers. And that will particularly apply to tribal areas, I'd like you to know where the tribes are. Okay?

One other thing: extra credit. You may receive extra credit for the course by reading one or more of the following books, your final grade will be raised by the amount indicated after the title, no one may receive more than 4/10ths of a grade point of extra credit. I have four books listed there, three of them by Walter Kaiser. The first one is by J. Barton Payne, *Theology of the Older Testament* for 4/10ths of a grade point, that's a rather large book. It's a book on Old Testament theology. Any of Kaiser's books 2/10ths of a grade point, so you could either read Payne for four or you could read two of Kaiser for four or read one of Kaiser for 2/10ths of a grade point for extra credit. Now that extra credit is on your final grade. In other words, whatever your average comes out at the end of the quarter, you have done that, and you notice that in order to receive this credit you must give me a written statement that you've read the entire book carefully. That's what I ask. There's a deadline on that though, which is prior to the end of the semester—it's April 29th, notice that. In other words, I don't want you to spend your reading on the last week or two of the semester trying to catch up on extra credit reading. I'd rather you be putting time on your courses. But if you do that by April 29th I'll give you that credit. You give me the statement that you've read the entire book and you've read it carefully; just don't turn the pages and skim it - read it!

It's a four point system. If you had, for example, if you had a 2.64 average at the end of the quarter. If they get 4/10ths of a grade point they would have a 3.04. Which would raise them from a C+ to a B. Or maybe it's a B-. 3.04, it'd be a B- then it'd raise them. It depends on where you fall on the scale, of course, but generally it would make a difference of a plus or a minus.

## G. Life of Joseph ...

### 4. The Significance of These Events in the Context of Redemptive History

#### a. Joseph Temporarily Becomes Prominent Although Judah is the Line of the Promised Seed

If you find your class lecture outline that we used last quarter, we were discussing when the quarter came to an end, “The life of Joseph,” which is G. on page 4. We were discussing, “The life of Joseph,” which is G. on page 4, and we’d come down to 3. under G.: “The Significance of These Events in the Context of Redemptive History.” I had mentioned one thing under that heading and that was that in this section of Genesis 37 unto the end, Joseph temporarily becomes prominent, although Judah is the line of the promise seed. And that’s what we had discussed at the end of the last week before our break. So I want to pick up at that point.

#### b. The Children of Israel are United and Brought to Egypt

This would be B. then under 3. We’re discussing “The Significance of These Events in the Context of Redemptive History.” B.) “The children of Israel are united and brought to Egypt, where in the isolation of Goshen they become a nation.” Through Joseph, the house of Jacob is restored, and unity is restored to that house. There are a couple statements there in the latter part of Genesis, when Joseph has revealed himself to his brothers, and they are aware that here this man, this one that they had sold into Egypt is now powerful, a ruler and could certainly take revenge. He doesn’t do that. If you look at Genesis 45, verse 4. Just after he has revealed who he is, Joseph says, “‘Come close to me,’ when they had done so he said, ‘I am your brother Joseph, the one you have sold into Egypt. And now do not be distressed, do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here. Because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you. For two years now there has been famine in the land, and for the next five years there will not be plowing and reaping. But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So then it was not you who sent me here, but God.’” In other words, that attitude of Joseph is really remarkable from a human

standpoint. He seeks no revenge, but in taking that attitude he restores the unity to the house of Jacob. Now of course that statement was made right at the time that he revealed himself to his brothers. Jacob hadn't even come down into Egypt yet.

### Jacob & Family Move to Egypt

Of course, later the brothers go home, and Jacob comes down. And his entire family is in Egypt, and Jacob dies in Egypt. The brothers were still not too sure what Joseph is going to do to them. Is he just going to wait until Jacob is dead and then get his revenge? So you find in chapter 50 after Jacob has died, verse 15, "When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead they said 'What if Joseph holds a grudge against us and pays us back for all the wrongs we've done to him?' So they sent word to Joseph saying that 'your father left these instructions before he died, this is what you are to say to Joseph, 'I asked you to forgive your brothers the sins and the wrongs they committed in previous affairs. Now please forgive the sins of the servants of the God of your father.' When their message came to him, Joseph wept. His brothers then came and threw themselves down before him, 'We're your slaves!' they said. But Joseph said to them, 'Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish now what is being done - the saving of many lives. So then don't be afraid, I will provide for you and for your children.'" So, with that attitude, the family is united. It seems that the brothers repent of their offense against Joseph, and Joseph forgives them.

### On Benjamin, Son of Rachel and Judah

The envy seems to be overcome in their relationship to Benjamin, the other son of Rachel. Remember, Joseph was the favorite son of his father, and the brothers resented that. But, in this situation, the brothers were very much concerned for Benjamin, who was the other son of Rachel. You get that Leah/Rachel tension within the family of Jacob. That continued on, it seems, at this point. But with this situation they are very protective of Benjamin; they are very much disturbed when Benjamin had to be brought down into

Egypt.

You remember that Judah offered himself for Benjamin as a surety. He seems to speak for all of them in that. But in Genesis 43:3, that's when they had come back from their first journey down there, and had been told, "Don't come back and seek more food, unless you bring Benjamin with you." Jacob didn't want to let Benjamin go because he had already lost Joseph, and he didn't want to lose Benjamin. So you read in Genesis 43:3 "Judah said to him, 'The man warned us solemnly, "You will not see my face again unless your brother is with you!' If you send our brother along, we will go down and buy food for you, but if you will not send him then we will not go down because the man said, "You will not see my face again unless your brother is with you.'" Then down in verses 8 and 9, Judah said to Israel, his father, "Send the boy along with me, and we will go at once so that we, and you, and our children may live and not die. I myself will guarantee his safety. You can hold me personally responsible for him. If I do not bring him back to you and set him here before you, I will bear the blame before you all my life.'" So, Judah offers himself in that way, as surety for Benjamin, and the unity in the house is restored. So everybody contributes something, you might say. Joseph contributes something, Judah contributes something, Jacob contributes something so that the ancestors of the nation are preserved and brought to Egypt where they grow to be a nation.

Now, the climax of this whole section is in Genesis 44:18-33, I think I'll read that. This is after they had taken Benjamin and gone back to Egypt, gotten their food, and left, and Joseph had that silver cup placed in Benjamin's sack and then their pursuers discovered that that silver cup is in Benjamin's sack. And he is then taken back as a prisoner. In verse 18 of chapter 44, you read, "Judah went up to him and said: 'Please, my lord, let your servant speak a word to my lord. Do not be angry with your servant, though you are equal to Pharaoh himself. My lord asked his servants, "Do you have a father or a brother?"' And we answered, "We have an aged father, and there is a young son born to him in his old age. His brother is dead, and he is the only one of his mother's sons left, and his father loves him.'" Then you said to your servants, "Bring him down to

me so I can see him for myself.” And we said to my lord, “The boy cannot leave his father; if he leaves him, his father will die.” But you told your servants, “Unless your youngest brother comes down with you, you will not see my face again.” When we went back to your servant my father, we told him what my lord had said. Then our father said, “Go back and buy a little more food.” But we said, “We cannot go down. Only if our youngest brother is with us will we go. We cannot see the man's face unless our youngest brother is with us.” Your servant, my father, said to us, “You know that my wife bore me two sons. One of them went away from me, and I said, “He has surely been torn to pieces, and I have not seen him since. If you take this one from me too and harm comes to him, you will bring my gray head down to the grave in misery.” So now, if the boy is not with us when I go back to your servant, my father, and if my father, whose life is closely bound up with the boy's life, sees that the boy isn't there, he will die. Your servants will bring the gray head of our father down to the grave in sorrow. Your servant guaranteed the boy's safety to my father. I said, “If I do not bring him back to you, I will bear the blame before you, my father, all my life!” Now then, please let your servant remain here as my lord's slave in place of the boy, and let the boy return with his brothers. How can I go back to my father if the boy is not with me? No! Do not let me see the misery that would come upon my father.”” That’s a very dramatic picture, where Judah presents himself and pleads for himself to be put in place of Benjamin, so that Benjamin is not kept there.

#### Alter’s Take on Joseph Narratives

In this book, I think I mentioned early on in the course, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* by Robert Alter. Alter is one of the advocates of this new so-called literary approach of analysis of Old Testament narrative. Some aspects of this book are good, some are bad. But, in connection with this passage, he makes some interesting remarks that I thought I would read to you. He says, “In light of all that we have seen, about the story of Joseph...”--this is on page 174, of Alter’s *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, “In light of all that we have seen, about the story of Joseph and his brothers, it should be clear that

this remarkable speech is a point-for-point undoing, morally and psychologically, of the brother's earlier violation of paternal and filial bonds. A basic biblical perception about both human relations and relations between God and man is that love is unpredictable, arbitrary, at times, perhaps seemingly unjust, and Judah now comes to an acceptance of that fact with all its consequences. His father, he states clearly to Joseph, has singled out Benjamin for a special love as he singled out Rachel's other son before. It is a painful reality of favoritism with which Judah, in contrast to the earlier jealousy over Joseph, is here reconciled. Out of filial duty and more out of filial love. His entire speech is motivated out of the deepest empathy for his father, by a real understanding of what it means for the old man's very life to be bound up with that of his lad. He can even bring himself to quote sympathetically, verse 27, Jacob's typically extravagant statements that his wife bore him two sons. [Now see that's, "you know, my wife bore me two sons." Jacob says.] As though Leah were not also his wife, and the other ten were not also his sons! Twenty-two years earlier Judah engineered the selling of Joseph into slavery, now he's prepared to offer himself as a slave so that the other son of Rachel can be set free. Twenty-two years earlier he stood with his brothers as he silently watched when the bloodied tunic they had brought to Jacob sent his father into a pit of anguish. Now he's willing to do anything in order not to have to see his father suffer that way again. So, you get a reversal of the earlier situation."

So, I think what we see then, as far as a redemptive historical perspective in the movement of these narratives, is that the children of Israel are united, brought to Egypt, where in the isolation of Goshen we really don't know, as far as I can tell, how long Joseph was in Egypt before Jacob came down into Egypt. We know that there were seven years of famine, seven lean years, and seven fat years. You could say that when the famine was up that would have been 14 years, but we don't know how long was he in prison. He was in prison for a couple years. How long was he there before he went to prison? We don't know exactly. Does it say he was 17 when he went down there? Seems to me approximately 20 years is a reasonable estimate before Jacob comes down into Egypt to be reunited with Joseph.



#### 4. When Did Joseph Enter Egypt? Pharaoh Unnamed

Alright, number 4. is: “When did Joseph enter Egypt?” This, of course, is related to the question of what we’ll look at shortly, and that is the date of the Exodus, but at this point it’s a question in its own right. When you read in chapter 39, verse 1, “Now Joseph had been taken down to Egypt. Potiphar the Egyptian, who was one of Pharaoh’s officials, the captain of the guard, bought him from the Ishmaelites who had taken him there.” The problem is it doesn’t tell us the name of the Pharaoh. See, in Genesis 39:1 it just says, “Potiphar, an Egyptian who was one of Pharaoh’s officials.” And that’s characteristic of not only Genesis here, but also in the early chapters of Exodus. That’s when the Egyptian ruler is spoken of, he’s just referred to by that title, “Pharaoh” and no name is given. That’s part of the reason why it’s very difficult to tie this in directly with Egyptian history which would then give us a date, a firm date. Who was the Pharaoh?

#### Dating of Abraham & Joseph’s Coming to Egypt

Well, we really don’t know. If we work with the biblical chronological date of it, it gets somewhat complex, but we’ve really gone over most of this, in connection with our discussion relating to the patriarchs. Remember, that we said that the dating of the patriarchs rests on two variables. And the two variables are the date of the Exodus and Exodus 12:40, whether you take the Masoretic text or the Septuagint reading, which means was Israel 430 years in Egypt or 215 years in Egypt? But a summary of that then of the patriarchal materials is depending on 1.) the date of the Exodus being 1446 or 1290 B.C. and 2.) whether one follows the Masoretic text or the Septuagint in Exodus 12:40. Did Abraham enter Canaan 430 years before the Exodus or 645 years before the Exodus? The possibilities are, for the patriarchal period, with early dates for the Exodus and the Masoretic text then 2091 B.C. for the birth of Abraham, or with the late dates for the Exodus and the Masoretic text 1935 B.C. for the birth of Abraham. Now, if you take those figures, 2091 and 1935, which I think are the most likely two figures, that’s assuming the Masoretic text in Exodus 12:40, and that’s assuming either an earlier or a late date for the Exodus.

So, if you take that 2091 B.C. figure or 1290 figure, you work this way then. When did Joseph enter Egypt? If you take the 2091 B.C. date, which would mean 2166 B.C. is the date of Abraham's birth. The reason for that is Abraham was 75 years old when he came down into Canaan. Then you take 160 years that Jacob was born after Abraham. We've looked at that previously, you have to trace the ages of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, which you can do. You find that Jacob was born 160 years after Abraham. Jacob was 130 when he came down into Egypt. We find that in Genesis 47:9. Where you read, "Jacob says to Pharaoh, 'The years of my pilgrimage are 130. My years have been few and difficult...'" and so forth. If you assume that Joseph had been in Egypt for approximately 20 years already, so you subtract 20 from that, you get a figure of 270, when you subtract 270 from 2166 B.C., that would give you 1896 B.C. would be the year of the arrival of Joseph in Egypt. So, that could be plus or minus a few years based on this unknown period of how long Joseph had been in Egypt. But approximately 1896 B.C., based on an early date view of the Exodus because this figure is assuming an earlier starting date for the Exodus.

Now, if you assume the late date for the Exodus and work with that 1935 B.C. figure, then you do the same thing. You take the 160, the 130 minus the 20, that's 270; and you subtract the 270 from 2010 B.C., you get 1740 B.C. as the year of the arrival of Joseph in Egypt. So those are really your two possibilities working with the biblical data of length of life of the patriarchs.

#### Date of Joseph's Coming to Egypt and the Arrival of the Hyksos

Alright, what are the implications of those two dates? 1896 B.C. versus 1740 B.C.? If you take the early date, the 1896 date, that would place Joseph in the period of the 12th dynasty of Egypt which was a native Egyptian dynasty. The 12th dynasty reigned from 1991 to 1786 B.C. If however you take the later date 1740 B.C., that would place Joseph in the time of the Hyksos. See that's why there is some interest in this question. The Hyksos were those foreign rulers, who came in and gained control of Egypt for a period of time. Generally dated around 1750 to about 1570 B.C., although the

precise dates of the Hyksos period are somewhat obscure because of the lack of firm historical data. But generally they are placed 1750 to 1570 B.C. So you would see that 1740 B.C. would be shortly after the Hyksos came to power. If that date is correct.

Now, the idea that Israel, or rather Jacob and his family, Joseph, came down to Egypt during the time of the Hyksos is a very old idea. Josephus says that a Hyksos dynasty was ruling Egypt when Joseph became prime minister in Pharaoh's court. That's found in Josephus, not that that's a very good authority because in the same context where Josephus says that he then goes on to identify the Hyksos with the Israelites. He feels that the expulsion of the Hyksos is to be identified with the Exodus. That certainly is not accurate historically. But what Josephus is interested in doing when he speaks about Joseph coming into Egypt during the time of the Hyksos is to establish the antiquity of the Jews, and he uses that kind of a historical argument.

Now what we know about the Hyksos is not a whole lot. They were Asiatic invaders who came to power about 1750 B.C., although the exact time is not clear, but approximately 1750 B.C. They ruled for a couple centuries. The Egyptian historian Manetho, we read about him in Finegan, was a historian from about 250 B.C. He explains the meaning of the name "Hyksos" as "shepherd kings." You've probably heard that before; the Hyksos were "shepherd kings." Manetho felt that the very word "Hyksos" meant "shepherd king." The etymology of that term of that name "Hyksos," however, is much debated. Most scholars today are not ready to accept Manetho's explanation of the meaning of the term as "shepherd king." Most scholars today think the term means "foreign rulers," or "rulers of foreign lands." But in any case, you had these Hyksos who ruled in Egypt at that particular period of time. It's always been a question of some interest whether Joseph came into power during the early days of Hyksos rule, or whether he came to power prior to that under a native Egyptian dynasty. If you take the earlier date of the Exodus, then you're going to pick the date prior to the Hyksos.

Lower Egypt is in the delta area. Upper Egypt is the upper region of the Nile, which is on a map it's down; its reversed. It is known that the Hyksos had their center, their capital, in the delta region. So, again, that fits. That's one of the lines of argument,

to associate Joseph with the Hyksos, because the Hyksos were centered there in the delta. The great Egyptian rulers had their capitals further to the south.

### Arguments for Joseph's Coming During the Hyksos Reign in Egypt

Whether or not Joseph came in with the Hyksos or prior to the Hyksos, of course, does have some bearing on the events of the Exodus and the oppressions that were connected with the Exodus. It's a debated issue. The kinds of arguments that are being used to support one position or the other, apart from the chronological material, are not decisive. I don't think you can really settle it. Let me just give you some idea of the kinds of arguments.

Those who favor Joseph's rise to power during Hyksos rule, that would be the late date, make some of the following arguments: in Genesis 47:17, you have a reference to horses. You read there "They brought their livestock to Joseph, and he gave them food in exchange for their horses, their sheep, their goats, their cattle, and their donkeys." Now, it's generally believed that the Hyksos were the first ones to import horses into Egypt - that there weren't horses in Egypt prior to the Hyksos. So the argument is; horses are mentioned here, this must be during the time of the Hyksos.

Another argument is Exodus 1:8 says, and this argument cuts both ways, as you'll see later. Exodus 1:8 says, "Then a new king, who did not know about Joseph, came to power in Egypt. 'Look,' he said to his people, 'the Israelites have become much too numerous for us'" and so forth. "The new king who knew not Joseph." It's said that that statement is best explained as a native Egyptian ruler who came to power after the expulsion of the Hyksos. In connection with that, it is said that this may explain the silence of Egyptian sources about Joseph and his work when he rose to such prominence in Egypt. There's no trace of that in any Egyptian records. Then the assumption is he rose to power under the Hyksos, when the native Egyptians came back, they just wiped out the history of the Hyksos period. We know almost nothing about the Hyksos period because the Egyptians destroyed all traces of it.

The third line of argument is what I just mentioned a minute ago; the Pharaoh in

the time of Joseph seems to have his residence in the Nile delta area, near the land of Goshen. And that's where Joseph was settled with his family - his father and brothers. The Hyksos had their capital city and exercised their rule from the delta area. So that's a line of argument.

Fourthly, it's said that it is more likely that under Hyksos rule it would be possible for a Semite like Joseph to achieve the high position that he did. In other words, he was a foreigner, he wasn't an Egyptian. It would be more likely for someone like Joseph to rise to that prominent position when there was foreign rule in Egypt than when there was native Egyptian rule.

Then in Genesis 39:1 where you read, "Joseph had been taken down to Egypt by Potiphar the Egyptian who was one of Pharaoh's officials, the captain of the guard bought him from the Ishmaelites who had taken him there." It says, "Potiphar an Egyptian." The point is made that that qualification, or that designation for Potiphar being an Egyptian is understandable only in a period of the Hyksos, when the Pharaoh himself was not of Egyptian lineage. In other words, why would you add the qualifier "an Egyptian"? It seems like that's an exception. What else would he be? He's in Egypt! You'd expect it to just say "Potiphar." But if it's in the Hyksos period here's something unique you see. Here's this Potiphar who's really an Egyptian. It is certainly not a conclusive argument by any means. So, none of those arguments, even though they're plausible arguments, they are not really conclusive. They don't force you to the conclusion that he had to be there in the time of the Hyksos.

I see my time's up, so we'll look at these arguments the other way for coming of Joseph to Egypt prior to Hyksos in the next hour.

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