

**Dr. Jeffrey Hudon, Biblical Archaeology,  
Session 12, Archaeology of the Exodus and the  
Wilderness  
Resources from NotebookLM**

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

**1. Abstract of Hudon, Biblical Archaeology, Session 12, Archaeology of the Exodus and Wilderness, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL**

**Dr. Jeffrey Hudon's lecture** on Biblical Archaeology, Session 12, examines the archaeology of the Exodus and Wilderness. **The lecture explores two main questions:** did the Exodus occur, and if so, when? **Two primary timelines are considered**, an early date during the 18th Dynasty and a later date during the 19th Dynasty, referencing potential Pharaohs and locations. **The lecture also discusses related topics**, including the creation of the alphabet, the Israelites' journey after the Exodus, and the potential location of Mount Sinai, using archaeological evidence and biblical accounts to support its arguments. Finally, the lecture highlights the challenges of archaeological research in this area, acknowledging that many questions remain unanswered.

**2. 24 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Hudon, Biblical Archaeology, Session 12 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Introduction & Languages → Archaeology).**



**Hudon\_BibArch\_Ses  
sion12.mp3**

### 3. Briefing Document

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the key themes and ideas from the provided source, "Hudon\_BibArch\_EN\_Ses12.pdf," focusing on the archaeology of the Exodus and Wilderness:

#### **Briefing Document: Archaeology of the Exodus and Wilderness**

##### **Introduction:**

This document summarizes the main points discussed in Dr. Jeffrey Hudon's lecture, "Archaeology of the Exodus and Wilderness," focusing on the archaeological evidence and scholarly debates surrounding the historicity and dating of the Exodus narrative. The lecture explores the complexities of connecting biblical accounts with archaeological findings, acknowledging the limitations and challenges inherent in this field of study.

##### **Key Themes and Ideas:**

##### **1. The Exodus: A Defining Event & Central Question:**

- The Exodus from Egypt is considered a defining moment in Biblical history and the central historical event for the Jewish people.
- The two primary questions archaeology seeks to answer about the Exodus are: Did it happen? and When did it happen?
- While some critical scholars doubt the historical accuracy of a large-scale Exodus, many conservative scholars and Egyptologists believe that a significant event did occur, even if Egyptian records remain silent.
- The absence of direct Egyptian records is understandable given the humiliating nature of the event for the Egyptians. "Egyptian pharaohs and officials would never, ever admit publicly such a humiliating and devastating event."

##### **1. Two Primary Dates for the Exodus:**

- **Early Date (c. 1445 BC):** This date places the Exodus during the 18th Dynasty, specifically under the reign of Thutmose III. This dating is based on the chronological interpretation of 1 Kings. The capital of Egypt at this time was Thebes (modern Luxor) in Upper Egypt.
- Arguments for this date include:
- Better fit with biblical chronology and the 430-year sojourn in Egypt.

- The Egyptian origin of Moses' name (Ahmose, Thutmose).
- The possibility that Thutmose III's son was not his successor because he died in the 10th plague.
- The striking coincidence of Akhenaten's monotheism with a possible early date Exodus
- **Late Date (c. 1290 BC):** This date aligns with the 19th Dynasty, particularly during the reign of Ramses II. The capital of Egypt at this time was Memphis, close to the Delta.
- Arguments for this date include:
  - The rise of Joseph to power as vizier seems to fit better with fellow Asiatics ruling Egypt (Hyksos period).
  - The mention of the cities Pithom and Ramses (both 19th dynastic names in the Nile Delta) are mentioned in Exodus as cities built by the Israelites.
  - The proximity of Memphis to the land of Goshen (where the Israelites resided).

#### 1. **Circumstantial Evidence Supporting the Exodus:**

- **Deeply Embedded Jewish Memory:** The Passover celebration, with its emphasis on remembering the Exodus, suggests a kernel of truth behind the event. "When you have such a, this such deeply embedded recollection and memory and respect for this event, scholars have to argue that there's some kernel of truth here."
- **Unlikely Origin Story:** The fact that the Israelites' origin story begins with slavery makes it unlikely that they would invent this narrative. "It's very difficult to imagine that a nation, a people, would invent such a tale where their origins are embedded in slavery."
- **Egyptian Influences:** The presence of Egyptian names (Moses, Hophni, Phinehas) and place names (Pithom, Ramses) in the Exodus narrative suggests Egyptian influence.
- **Polemics Against Egyptian Gods:** The 10 plagues are often interpreted as direct challenges to the Egyptian pantheon, demonstrating the impotence of these gods in the face of Yahweh.

- **The silence of Egyptian texts:** The absence of Egyptian records is understandable given the humiliating nature of the event for the Egyptians. "Egyptian pharaohs and officials would never, ever admit publicly such a humiliating and devastating event."

#### 1. **The Plagues:**

- The 10 plagues can be seen as "polemics against the Egyptian pantheon of gods."
- The plagues targeted specific Egyptian deities, demonstrating their impotence. For example, the water to blood targeted the god of the Nile.
- Natural explanations can be given for some plagues (e.g. flooding in Ethiopia causing the Nile to appear red), but the last plague - the death of the firstborn - is seen as clearly supernatural.

#### 1. **The Pharaoh of the Exodus:**

- The lecture discusses potential candidates for the Pharaoh of the Exodus for both early and late dates
- For the early date: The pharaoh most often put forward is Thutmose III. There is also mention of Amenhotep II as a potential candidate.
- For the late date: Ramses II is presented as the leading candidate for the pharaoh of the Exodus.
- The lecture explores the possibility of Hatshepsut, a female Pharaoh, as the one who rescued Moses from the river.

#### 1. **Route of the Exodus:**

- The Bible states that the Israelites avoided the Philistine road due to Egyptian forts.
- The specific route is difficult to determine, and the lecture points to the many different variations scholars have suggested.
- The location of Yam Suph (Sea of Reeds) is still debated.
- The cities Pithom and Ramses in the Nile Delta, built by the Israelites, are fairly certain in their location.
- The Egyptian forts in Sinai were often built at water sources and were a point of contention for the route taken by the Israelites.

### 1. **Mount Sinai/Horeb:**

- The traditional site, Jebel Musa (Mount Moses) in southern Sinai, is debated, but that is where St. Catherine's Monastery is located.
- Another possibility is Jebel al-Lawz in northern Saudi Arabia. This location is based on a connection with Midian and the fact that Moses' father-in-law, Jethro, was a Midianite priest. However, issues with the time it would take to travel there and cross the Gulf of Aqaba make this location less likely.
- Horeb and Sinai are often used interchangeably in the Old Testament, but their precise location remains uncertain.

### 1. **The Tabernacle:**

- The lecture points out the parallels between the Tabernacle's design and the Egyptian royal tents of the 19th dynasty, notably that of Ramses II at Kadesh.

### 1. **Kadesh Barnea:**

- Kadesh Barnea is a site where the Israelites encamped for a significant time.
- The location is well-established with clear archaeological evidence, including Midianite pottery from the time of the Exodus.

### 1. **Conquest of Transjordan:**

- The lecture discusses the Israelite conflict with Sihon, King of the Amorites, and their victory at Jahaz.
- The archaeological site of Heshbon (biblical Hisban), associated with Sihon, has been excavated, revealing no Late Bronze Age remains. This absence is explained by the possibility that the Amorites were a relatively new group in the region and lived in tents, which would not leave substantial archaeological evidence.
- Heshbon was a strategically important location with commanding views of the surrounding region.

### 1. **Balaam and Tal Deir al-Ala:**

- A plastered wall inscription from Tal Deir al-Ala mentioning Balaam is evidence of Balaam being a revered, historical figure.
- This demonstrates how indirect evidence supports the biblical narrative.

**Conclusion:**

Dr. Hudon's lecture highlights the ongoing debate and challenges in using archaeology to confirm or refute the biblical account of the Exodus. While direct evidence is scarce, the lecture presents multiple pieces of circumstantial evidence, theological interpretations, and historical context that suggest the Exodus may have been a real event. The exploration of different dating models and possible routes reveals the complexities of this topic and underscores the importance of continued research in the area. The lecture also emphasizes the limitations of archaeology, acknowledging that not all events leave clear physical traces and the absence of evidence is not evidence of absence.

This briefing document can be used to inform further study on the topic. The recommended books by Hoffmeier and Millard should provide additional resources for those interested.

## 4. Hudon, Biblical Archaeology, Session 12, Archaeology of the Exodus and the Wilderness

### Biblical Archaeology: The Exodus and Wilderness

#### Study Guide

#### Quiz

**Instructions:** Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. What are the two main schools of thought regarding the timing of the Exodus, and which Egyptian dynasties are associated with each?
2. Why do some scholars suggest that Hatshepsut might have been the Pharaoh's daughter who rescued Moses, and what makes this idea difficult to prove?
3. Why do critical scholars doubt the biblical account of the Exodus, and what is the counterargument from conservative scholars?
4. What are two reasons to believe that the Exodus is based on a kernel of truth, even without Egyptian records?
5. In what way were the ten plagues polemics against the Egyptian pantheon?
6. According to the text, what are two pieces of evidence that support the early date for the Exodus?
7. According to the text, what are two pieces of evidence that support the late date for the Exodus?
8. Why might the Israelites have avoided the main road through the Sinai, according to the text?
9. What is significant about the site of Serebit el-Khadim, and how might it relate to the development of the alphabet?
10. What is the significance of Kadesh Barnea, and what archaeological evidence supports this?

## Quiz Answer Key

1. The two main schools of thought are the early date and the late date. The early date places the Exodus during the 18th dynasty, while the late date places it during the 19th dynasty.
2. Some scholars suggest Hatshepsut, who ruled as Pharaoh, might be the daughter who rescued Moses because if Moses was born around 1526 BC, it is chronologically possible. However, this is impossible to prove, and she may have been discredited for other reasons.
3. Critical scholars doubt a large-scale Exodus, suggesting that only small groups of slaves escaped. Conservative scholars and some Egyptologists argue that circumstantial evidence, while no concrete proof, does support the biblical narrative.
4. The enduring memory of the Exodus in Jewish tradition, including the Passover celebration, suggests a core of truth. Additionally, a nation is unlikely to invent a story of slavery as its origin, given common historical narratives of that time.
5. The ten plagues were specifically targeted against the Egyptian gods. For example, turning the Nile into blood was a direct challenge to the Nile god, while other plagues humiliated other Egyptian deities.
6. One piece of evidence is that the early date aligns with the biblical chronology and the 430-year sojourn in Egypt. Secondly, Moses's name is more consistent with 18th dynasty names, such as Ahmose or Thutmose.
7. The account of Joseph seems to fit better during the Hyksos rule in Egypt. Also, the cities Pithom and Ramses were clearly 19th dynastic names for cities in the Nile Delta where the Israelites were said to be building cities.
8. The Israelites avoided that road because it was heavily fortified with Egyptian forts. The Bible states that God directed them away from that path.
9. Serebit el-Khadim is an Egyptian mining operation with temples and pictographs. It appears to be a site where the alphabet may have evolved as a simplified form of writing, created by Semites.
10. Kadesh Barnea was a site where the Israelites encamped for a significant amount of time during their wilderness sojourn. Midianite pottery from the time of the Exodus was found at this site, as well as remnants of a fort that has been researched by archaeologists.



## Essay Questions

**Instructions:** Answer each question in an essay format. Be sure to include examples from the text.

1. Discuss the arguments for and against the early and late dates for the Exodus, analyzing the archaeological and biblical evidence provided in the text.
2. Explain how the absence of direct Egyptian records of the Exodus is understood by scholars, and discuss the types of circumstantial evidence used to support the biblical account.
3. Analyze the significance of the names Moses, Piton, and Ramses, in the biblical text and how they relate to the historicity of the Exodus.
4. Compare the proposed routes for the Exodus, including the evidence for and against the traditional route in Sinai versus the theory of a route through Arabia, highlighting the difficulties in pinpointing locations.
5. Evaluate the significance of the site of Heshbon in relation to the biblical narrative, discussing the limitations of archaeology and how they relate to the history of the Exodus.

## Glossary of Key Terms

- **Upper Egypt:** The southern part of Egypt, located upriver along the Nile.
- **Lower Egypt:** The northern part of Egypt, located downriver near the Nile Delta.
- **Thebes:** The capital of Egypt during the 18th Dynasty, known today as Luxor.
- **Memphis:** The capital of Egypt during the 19th Dynasty, located near the Nile Delta.
- **18th Dynasty:** An Egyptian dynasty that ruled approximately 1550-1292 BC, associated with the early date for the Exodus.
- **19th Dynasty:** An Egyptian dynasty that ruled approximately 1292-1189 BC, associated with the late date for the Exodus.
- **Hatshepsut:** A female pharaoh of the 18th Dynasty who ruled as regent and then independently, and was briefly suggested as the pharaoh's daughter that rescued Moses.

- **Thutmose III:** A powerful pharaoh of the 18th Dynasty, proposed by some to be the pharaoh of the Exodus.
- **Ramses II:** A powerful pharaoh of the 19th Dynasty, proposed by some to be the pharaoh of the Exodus.
- **Akhenaten:** An 18th-Dynasty pharaoh who instituted monotheism worshiping the sun god Aten, considered a heretic.
- **Hyksos:** A group of Asiatic rulers who controlled Egypt during the Second Intermediate Period (c. 1650-1550 BC).
- **Polemics:** Strong verbal or written attacks on someone or something.
- **Sea of Reeds (Yam Suph):** The body of water the Israelites crossed when fleeing Egypt; location is disputed.
- **Serebit el-Khadim:** An Egyptian mining site in the Sinai Peninsula where early forms of the alphabet may have originated.
- **Kadesh Barnea:** A significant location where the Israelites encamped during their wilderness journey.
- **Heshbon:** A city in Transjordan, originally Amorite and later a site of Israelite habitation.
- **Shasu:** A term used by the Egyptians for the Bedouin people of the Sinai region.
- **Jebel Musa:** The traditional location of Mount Sinai, located in the southern Sinai Peninsula.
- **Jebel Al-Laz:** A mountain in northern Saudi Arabia proposed as an alternative site for Mount Sinai.
- **Midian:** A region in northwestern Arabia, the home of Moses' father-in-law Jethro.
- **Tabernacle:** A portable sanctuary used by the Israelites during their time in the wilderness.
- **Ostrakon:** A piece of pottery or stone, usually broken, that has writing on it.

## 5. FAQs on Hudon, Biblical Archaeology, Session 12, Archaeology of the Exodus and the Wilderness, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

### Frequently Asked Questions About the Archaeology of the Exodus and Wilderness

1. **What are the two main viewpoints on when the Exodus from Egypt took place, and how do they differ?**
2. There are two primary viewpoints, an early date and a late date. The early date places the Exodus during the 18th dynasty of Egypt, around 1445 BC, potentially under the rule of Thutmose III. The capital at this time was Thebes (modern Luxor). This view is largely based on biblical chronology found in books like 1 Kings, and the fact that Moses appears to have an 18th dynastic Egyptian name. The late date places the Exodus in the 19th dynasty, approximately 1290 BC, during the reign of Ramses II. At this time the capital was in Memphis, closer to the Nile delta, where the Israelites are said to have lived. The cities Pithom and Ramses that are mentioned in Exodus are 19th Dynasty names, and the late date has the support of several scholars like James Hoffmeier (2nd ed).
3. **Is there definitive archaeological evidence that proves the Exodus occurred?**
4. There is no single "smoking gun" piece of evidence that definitively proves the Exodus. However, there is a significant amount of circumstantial evidence that many scholars, both conservative and some Egyptologists, consider supportive of a historical Exodus. The silence of Egyptian records can be understood as a reluctance to record a humiliating and devastating event from the Egyptian perspective. The Jewish tradition is based around the Exodus, and no ancient culture has origin stories of slavery, indicating there is a kernel of truth.

**5. What circumstantial evidence supports the historicity of the Exodus?**

6. Several factors lend support to the idea of a historical Exodus: the central importance of the Exodus in Jewish tradition, the highly unusual origin story of a people emerging from slavery, the presence of Egyptian names and place names within the Exodus narrative (such as Moses, Pithom, and Ramses), and the depiction of the ten plagues as a challenge to the Egyptian pantheon of gods. Additionally, the route of the Exodus avoided the Philistine route, where there were Egyptian forts, which seems to indicate that the Israelites were avoiding contact with the military forces of the land.

**7. Why is it difficult to determine the route of the Exodus, and what are some of the challenges?**

8. Determining the precise route of the Exodus is challenging because many of the place names listed in the Bible have been forgotten or lost over time, making it difficult to match them to current geographical locations. Additionally, the Bible doesn't mention the name of the pharaoh and this further complicates dating the event. There are also different interpretations of what the "Sea of Reeds" (Yam Suph) is referring to geographically. The Bible states the Israelites avoided the main road along the Philistine coast, indicating they traveled a southerly route through the Sinai. The archaeological record is incomplete in many areas, and scholars still debate whether sites like Jebel Musa or Jebel Al-Lawz in Saudi Arabia is the real Mount Sinai. Finally, a lack of evidence for structures at sites like Heshbon may mean that the Amorites of Sihon had only recently arrived in the area and were still living in tents.

**9. What is the significance of the cities Pithom and Ramses in the context of the Exodus?**

10. The biblical cities Pithom and Ramses, mentioned as construction sites for the Israelites, are associated with the 19th dynasty. While these cities existed in the 18th Dynasty, the names as they appear in the Bible are 19th Dynasty names, which aligns with the late-date theory. However, some scholars argue the Bible might have been updated at some point to reflect their more current name. Pithom and Ramses serve as anchor points in determining the location of the Israelites during their captivity.

**11. Who are some of the key figures and books mentioned as resources for studying the Exodus?**

12. Key figures and resources include:

- **Alan Millard:** A scholar who has written extensively on the Exodus and a co-editor of an edited work with Hoffmeier and Rendsburg.
- **James Hoffmeier:** Author of *Israel in Egypt* and *Ancient Israel in Sinai*, where he analyzes the circumstantial evidence supporting the Exodus, leaning toward a late date in the second edition of *Israel in Egypt*.
- **Nahum Sarna:** A Hebrew scholar and author of *Exploring Exodus* who provides natural explanations for some of the plagues.
- **Davies:** A British scholar and author of *The Way of the Wilderness*, who deals with the route of the Israelites after they left Egypt.
- **Frank Moore Cross:** A scholar who recognized the arguments for Mount Sinai being in the Midian area of Northern Saudi Arabia, south of Jordan.

**1. What evidence suggests the origin of the alphabet could be linked to the Exodus period?**

2. There is a connection between the mining site of Serebit el-Khadim and the development of the alphabet. This site in the Sinai Peninsula has a number of pictographs which transition to a 24-symbol alphabet. This simplified alphabet is believed to have been the creation of Semites. This development of simplified writing may have played a role in how the Israelites wrote down their history. However, exactly when this transition took place is debated, as this may have occurred at Egyptian palaces as well.

3. **Why is there limited archaeological evidence at sites like Heshbon, despite biblical accounts suggesting significant events took place there during the Exodus?**
4. The limited archaeological evidence at Heshbon, despite its prominent role in the biblical narrative as the Amorite capital of King Sihon, is perplexing. One explanation is that the Amorites were newcomers to the area. The Amorites may have had a mobile, tent-based culture that left few archaeological traces. The lack of Late Bronze Age structures could suggest that the Israelites may not have been destroying a great walled city, but a camp of tents, which would not leave behind material evidence. Despite the lack of evidence for the destruction of Heshbon at the time, the event is repeatedly mentioned in the Bible, and is central to the history of Israel.