Egypt And The Bible By Anonymous

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Egypt And The Bible

Â The connection between Bible history and the history and land of Egypt is frequent and important, It was to Egypt that Abraham went down at a time of famine, It was in Egypt that the chosen people dwelt for many years and from Egypt that Moses led them into the Promised Land, It was in Egypt that the Holy Family sought refuge from the cruelty of King Herod. These are well known, well remembered stories, but minor references to Egypt are constantly met with in the Bible while biblical memories still remain green in Egypt's traditions and folk-lore. Â The first actual contact between Egypt and the Bible was in the time of Abraham "and there was a famine in the land (of Canaan); and Abraham went down into Egypt to sojourn there; for the famine was very grievous in the land," Historical research has not yet revealed which king was reigning at that time in Egypt. There is an illustration in one of the tombs at Beni Hassan showing the arrival of a party of Israelites. It was thought at one time that this might be the arrival of Abraham and his suite, but the supposition is not generally accepted by modern archaeologists. The picture shows a company of men, women and children, 37 in number presenting themselves before an Egyptian prince. They are armed with spears, axes, bows and arrows and clubs and they carry gifts which include green eye-paint and antimony powder. The fugitives, if such they were, are richly dressed and appear to be highly civilized. Â Although it is impossible to say, even within the limits of a Dynasty, the date of Abraham's journey to Egypt it is thought that it was a Pharaoh of the North who presented him with "sheep, oxen, asses, camels and slaves", For the camel, one of the items on the list, was hardly known in the South. Â It was natural that Abraham should go to Egypt which, in times of famine, was an asylum for people of neighbouring countries where crops had failed, Refugees of this nature became in time so numerous that eventually they seized the government of the country and set up the dynasty which is known to history as that of the Hyksos Kings. Â It is generally thought that it was during the period of the Hyksos Rule that Joseph was sold into Egypt and that Jacob 'and his family went down to that country "and the Midianites sold him into Egypt unto Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh's and captain of the guard". How Joseph had become overseer of the officer's household and how, unjustly accused by the latter's wife, he was thrown into prison is too well known a story to need repetition, Nor, beyond the narrative of the Bible, is there any Egyptian record of the facts. But there is evidence of the measures taken by ancient Pharaohs, advised perhaps by Joseph of the Bible, to husband during years of plenty the corn that future famines might make so precious. Â Granaries of ancient times have been found in Egypt. They were large brick structures built with high vaulted rooms, At the top was an opening through which the corn was poured and an opening at ground level provided for its removal. Illustrations, also found, show that the corn was carefully measured and its weight written down by a scribe. But "there arose up a new king over Egypt who knew not Joseph". There were large numbers of Israelites in Egypt and

they had been made welcome by the Hyksos Kings, They were to pass from the condition of honoured guests to that of bondsmen, They were called upon to build and to labour in the fields and, as the Bible tells us, to make bricks, A glance at many wall paintings still to be seen in Egypt shows what was involved when the Israelite bondsmen were compelled to make bricks "without straw". A hole is dug at the edge of a pool so that the water may flow over the soil. The wet earth is then formed into a clay sufficiently plastic for moulding and straw or pieces of grass are used to bind the clay together. The chief use of straw in brick making is however to keep the hands of the worker dry and thus make easier the labour of moulding. Lack of straw or some similar substance vastly increases the amount of labour required. Â A considerable body of evidence supports the theory that Rameses II was the Pharaoh of the oppression. Rameses was a mighty builder, monuments erected by him are found all over Egypt and one of the cities built by the Israelites bears his name. He was succeeded by Merenptah who is thought to be the Pharaoh of the Exodus. It is at any rate certain that Merenptah died of what was literally "hardening of the heart". Medical examination of his mummy shows that the cause of his death was atheroma, a disease which makes the heart rigid and inelastic. The mental characteristics of this disease are narrowness of outlook and lack of enterprise. These facts would seem to tally with the description of Pharaoh as recorded in the Bible. Another theory would synchronise the Exodus with the flight of the Hyksos Kings while yet a third would place it in the 18th dynasty. Â Whichever of these three theories may be the true one it is certainly very difficult when comparing Biblical history with that of ancient Egypt to arrive at any exact conclusion. Of the many traces that the sojourn of the Israelites must have left in Egypt only the "Well of Moses", just outside Cairo has been enshrined in local tradition which to this day holds the belief that the well in question sprung up at Moses' bidding. It must be remembered that many Biblical references to Egypt refer to lands which, once part the of Egyptian Empire, now bear other names. With these this chapter is not concerned but it is curious to compare the Bible account of the Assyrian Sennacherib's invasion of the Holy Land with that of Herodotus: "Sennacherib, King of the Arabians and Assyrians marched a large army against Egypt; whereupon the Egyptian warriors refused to assist him; and the priest entered the temple and bewailed before the images the calamities he was in danger of suffering. While he was lamenting, sleep fell upon him and it appeared to him in a vision that the god stood up and encouraged him Confiding in this vision he took with him such of the Egyptians as were willing to follow him and encamped in Pelusium, for here the entrance into Egypt. is ; but none of the military caste followed him, but tradesmen, mechanics, and sutlers. When they arrived there a number of field mice, pouring in upon their enemies, devoured their quivers and their bows and, moreover, the handles of their shields; so that on the next day, when they fled bereft of their arms, many of them fell". The facts as related by Herodotus are the same as those recorded in the Bible except that the rout of the Assyrians is attributed by the former to the field mice and by the latter to the Angel of the Lord. Â And yet in course of time the Assyrians were to conquer Egypt. The Egyptian Pharaoh put up a gallant fight at Thebes but the great city fell, a calamity which the Hebrew Prophet Nahum describes in graphic terms.

The Assyrian conquest was short lived. The next great invasion was that of Cambyses, King of Persia and here again a battle was fought at Pelusium. The Persians were followed by the Greeks and the era of the Ptolemies set in. Their fortunes are described in the 11th Chapter of Daniel. It was under Ptolemy Philadelphus that the LXX version of the Scriptures was written. Of this, tradition relates that 72 translators were engaged in the task and that they completed the work in 72 days. Their work is often quoted in the New Testament

and the Acts of the Apostles. Â Under the Roman era which followed that of Greece the flight into Egypt took place. The ancient town of Heliopolis (now the village of Mataria) is accepted by tradition as the Holy Family's first halt in Egypt and the sycamore tree under which the weary travellers rested is still known as the Virgin's Tree. The Evangelist Matthew gives no detail as to where the Holy Family dwelt while in Egypt and here again tradition implements historical record. According to tradition they lived in the vicinity of what is now known as Old Cairo and a Coptic Church stands on what is believed to be the site of their home.'" Â In the Acts of the Apostles there are three references to Egypt. The first alludes to the Eunuch who served the Queen of Ethiopia. The second concerns Apollos "mighty in the Scriptures" and "who came from Alexandria". The third and last tells of the wheat ship from Alexandria which conveyed Paul and his company to Rome after they had been shipwrecked at Malta. But it is not so much the numerous references to Egypt in the Bible that make of Egypt a Bible land. It is more a question of atmosphere. Today as in biblical days the peasant's life is one of simple, cheerful frugality. Today as then the fertile fields contrast with the desert over which Moses led his people. In spite of modern progress and side by side with modern developments and inventions there is a timeless, changeless element in Egypt and Egyptian life and, to the biblical student, this is one of Egypt's greatest charms ...