



Bible-study: 2020/08/23 (St. Matthew's Episcopal Church, McMinnville) – Exodus 1:8-2:10

[Ask for a volunteer to read the passage.]

So here we are: *Exodus*. And our schematic of Sunday readings – which is called, “the Revised Common Lectionary” – has us begin at verse eight; the purpose, I’m sure, to “catapult” us directly into the next most important event in the history of God’s people. But there’s a cost: which is a loss of some context; of a little background. Not all though, for which I’m thankful. But it may be of interest for you to know that *Exodus* actually begins – in the original Hebrew – with the word “And.” Though this is omitted in the N.R.S.V, which ‘makes clear that *Exodus* is not a new book, *but simply the continuation of the Genesis story*’.¹ And this fact has ramifications for those who might be tempted to dismiss the earlier material – the “material” of Genesis – as “myth.” To do so, then, would be to pull on a loose thread that would unravel a great deal more than just some controversial – *but consequential(!)* – stuff about a naked couple, a talking snake, a garden, a purifying flood and an enormous, floating menagerie called, “The Ark.”

Indeed, Joel Baden offers us this important reminder: ‘We must not be misled by the separation of the Pentateuch into books, either in the case of *Genesis* and *Exodus* or elsewhere. [For, b]efore the compilation of the canonical text, there was no such thing as [“]the book of Genesis[”] or [“]the book of Exodus.[”] The division of the Pentateuch into its five “books” is a function of the [limited] material capacity of [an] ancient [papyrus] scroll: the single literary work of the Pentateuch was too large to fit on a single scroll, and so was broken up into five scrolls, our present pentateuchal books. The book of *Genesis* was never understood to be a literary work separate from the book of *Exodus*: there is no inner- or extra-biblical reference to *Genesis* or *Exodus* as an independent text – nor is there any inner- or extra-biblical reference to any part of *Genesis* or *Exodus* as an independent text. *Genesis* and *Exodus* exist only as the first two volumes of a five-volume work, the Pentateuch...’²

But the episodes relayed (within) *do* stand removed from one-another by a *very* large gap of time, variously described in the Old Testament: in *Genesis* [chapter] fifteen, the interlude is described to Abraham as one to be of ‘four-hundred years’: [v.13]. Later, we hear it was four-hundred-*and-thirty* years: [Ex. 12:40]; a figure which is repeated, *emphasised*: [v.41]. Are we really going to quibble about just three decades? ‘The [small] discrepancy in these time periods can be accounted for...by understanding the 400 [sic.] years as a round figure in *prospect*, while the 430 years should be understood as more precise

¹ Cole, R. Alan (2008), *Exodus (Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries: Volume 2)*, Downers Grove, I. L.: InterVarsity Press, 59.

² Baden, Joel S. (2012), ‘The Continuity of the Non-Priestly Narrative from Genesis to Exodus’, *Biblica*, Volume 93, No. 2, pp. 161-186, 163-164.

in *retrospect*.³ I'm certainly not about to argue. God spoke offhand when He foresaw the sojourn, and that's it.

Nevertheless, this sum is inconsistent with...genealogical data that [is provided elsewhere]: *Exodus* 6[, for instance,] gives us a partial genealogy of Jacob's descendants – of the tribes Reuben, Simeon, and Levi – up until the time of Moses showing only 2 [sic.] generations between Kohath, who came to Egypt (see Gen[.] 46:11), and Moses, who brought the Israelites out (Levi-Kohath-Amram-Moses). The span of a mere two generations between Moses and his grandfather Kohath is[, clearly,] far too short to bridge a period of 430 years.

[And what about t]he infamous pair of Reubenites, Dothan and Abiram, who rebelled against Moses' authority during the wilderness wanderings, [and] were the grandsons of Palu (Num[.] 26:8–9), who in turn is mentioned in Gen[.] 46:9 as one of the 70 migrants to Egypt. Once again, a span of only two generations is nowhere near the length of a 430 year stay in Egypt mentioned by Exod[.] 12:40.

Looking a bit further afield, Nahshon son of Aminada[b], a contemporary of Moses, is listed at the end of...*Ruth* (4:18–20) as the great-grandson of [Hezron], who appears in Gen[.] 46:12 among the original 70 migrants to Egypt. This genealogy account creates a three generation span between those who descended to Egypt and those who participated in the exodus (rather than just two), but it still does not significantly close the gap of 430 years', does it?⁴ (That's a rhetorical question, of course.) No, it does not.

It is probably significant, therefore, that the Septuagint – also known as “The LXX” – a *koine* Greek translation of the Pentateuch made in the Third Century B.C. in Alexandria,⁵ records a *different* figure for the length of time that the Israelites were in Egypt: *two-hundred-and-fifteen* years; which would better fit the above information about how many generations actually languished in slavery – two, which still seems an *awful* stretch, or, more likely, three. And *Saint Paul*, the Apostle, seems to affirm this number, saying to the *Galatians* in chapter three [v.17-18] (in the New Testament) that the 430 years described in *Exodus* twelve encompassed father Abraham's time in Canaan *and* up to [and including] the giving of the Law at Mount Sinai, and did *not* mean *only* the period that there were Jews in Egypt.⁶

Really, though? Or has he – Paul – *seemingly* – misremembered the plain meaning of the text. And shouldn't what God predicted to Abraham basically be where “the buck stops”? But what about those short genealogies? Stephen Mueller argues: ‘it is not altogether evident that these genealogies are complete. To the contrary, there is much evidence which indicates that they are not comprehensive and were not meant to be. Lists of descendants were frequently telescoped or compressed; a lineal descent is portrayed, but some generations

³ See: DeCanio, Frank (14th of June, 2010), ‘Introduction to the Pentateuch’, available at <https://bible.org/seriespage/introduction-pentateuch>, (accessed August 20, 2020). (Author's italics.)

⁴ See: Glatt-Gilad, David (2016), ‘How Many Years Were the Israelites in Egypt?’, *TheTorah.com*, available at <https://thetorah.com/article/how-many-years-were-the-israelites-in-egypt>, (accessed August 20, 2020).

⁵ See: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Septuagint#History>.

⁶ See, for example: Ray, Paul J., Jr. (1986), ‘The Duration of the Israelite Sojourn in Egypt’, *Andrews University Seminary Studies*, Volume 24, No. 3, pp. 231-248.

are passed over without mention. (Compare, for example, *1 Chronicles* 6:3-7 with *Ezra* 7:3, and *Genesis* 11:10-26 with *Luke* 3:34-36).⁷

Okay? Let's do that: the first pairing he suggests for examination is in the table below, and concerns the Levite descendants of Moses' brother, Aaron:

[1 Chron.]	[Ez. 7]
Aaron	Aaron
Eleazar	Eleazar
Phineas	Phineas
Abishua	Abishua
Bukki	Bukki
Uzzi	Uzzi
Zerahiah	Zerahiah
Meraioth	Meraioth
Amariah	
Ahitub	
Zadok	
Ahimaaz	
Azariah	
Johanan	
Azariah	Azariah
Amariah	Amariah
Ahitub	Ahitub
Zadok	Zadok
Shallum	Shallum
Hilkiah	Hilkiah
Azariah	Azariah
Seraiah	Seraiah
Jehozadak	Ezra

And here is the second contrasting genealogy that Mueller draws our attention to – this time Abraham's ancestors:

[Gen. 11]	[Lk. 3]
Noah	Noah
Shem	Shem
Arpachshad	Arphaxad
	Cainan
Shelah	Shelah
Eber	Eber
Peleg	Peleg
Reu	Reu
Serug	Serug
Nahor	Nahor
Terah	Terah
Abram	Abraham

In his commentary on *Genesis*, Kenneth Matthews argues that: "The Bible contains ample evidence of [what *he* calls] "open genealogies" that show the

⁷ *Called to Believe: A Brief Introduction to Christian Doctrine* (2006), Eugene, O. R.: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 80-81.

same telescoping effect [as indicated above], such as Matthew’s report of Jesus’ descent where the Evangelist commits to an artificial symmetry [of three groups of 14].⁸ This is because the concern of the authors in question was less about presenting ‘exhaustive’ (that is, accurate) lists and more about, perhaps, showcasing the most ‘prominent’ relatives.⁹

This would be in accordance with genealogical conventions of the Near East. And Professor Ronald Youngblood agrees with Matthews: In the extant *Sumerian* king-lists, many of the dynasties consist of just *ten* names. The number comes up again and again. It couldn’t be true: the consistency, nor the fact that they relate to *enormous* spans of time; and it ‘suggests selectivity rather than the inclusion of every generation.’¹⁰

But why do these things matter? Because, remember,¹¹ we’re counting backwards from an absolute date in Solomon’s reign to determine when *previous* episodes in the Old Testament – such as this morning’s – occurred. *That* date is from (the Book of) *1 Kings* – ‘the fourth year of Solomon’s reign [when] he began the construction of the Temple of the Lord. This was 480 years after the people of Israel were delivered from their slavery in the land of Egypt.’ [6:1]

With astonishing accuracy – thanks to the mention of an eclipse – a predictable, periodic phenomena – in Assyrian historical records, along with reference to Old Testament Judean kings in the *same* source, it has been calculated that the ‘the fourth year of Solomon’s reign’ when construction commenced on the temple in Jerusalem was October 967 B.C..¹² And *if* the author of *1 Kings* has it right – about the time he records as having elapsed between *that* moment and “the Exodus;” the escape from Egypt, and *if* it was 430 years that the Israelites languished there (and not 215), this seems to put Joseph – spoken of in our first verse, as ‘overseer’ [Gen. 39:4] – in that place during what’s called the “*Middle Kingdom.*” [Begin drawing time-line.]

The Middle Kingdom was a strong, centralized state that emerged from “the First Intermediate Period” – a ‘shadowy’ century-and-a-half, mercifully brief, ‘of starvation and violence’.¹³ In that (earlier) time – as I’ve said before¹⁴ – there had been then at least *two* warring states: ‘The Khety clan of [the city of]

⁸ *Genesis 1-11 (The New American Commentary: Volume 1A)* (1996), Nashville, T. N.: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 303.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 302-303.

¹⁰ *The Book of Genesis: An Introductory Commentary (Second Edition)* (1999), Eugene, O. R.: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 75.

¹¹ See: Randall, Benjamin T. (14th of June, 2020), ‘Back to (Sunday) School’: Bible-study: 2020/06/14 (St. Matthew’s Episcopal Church, McMinnville) – Genesis 18:1-15; 21:1-7’, available at http://www.saintmatthewschurch.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Bible-Study-20200614-St.-Matthews-Episcopal-Church-McMinnville-Genesis-18v1-1521v1-7_BTR.pdf, (accessed August 21, 2020), p.4.

¹² See: Steinmann, Andrew E. (2011), *From Abraham to Paul: A Biblical Chronology*, St. Louis, M. O.: Concordia Publishing House, 43.

¹³ Grimal, Nicholas (2005), *A History of Ancient Egypt*, translated by Ian Shaw, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 137-139.

¹⁴ See: Randall, Benjamin T. (21st of June, 2020), “Back to Sunday School” Bible-study: 2020/06/21 (St. Matthew’s Episcopal Church, McMinnville) – Genesis 21:8-21’, available at http://www.saintmatthewschurch.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Bible-Study-20200621-St.-Matthews-Episcopal-Church-McMinnville-Genesis-21v8-21_BTR.pdf, (accessed August 14, 2020), 3-4.

Herakleopolis moved against their northern and western neighbors to carve out a new royal realm.¹⁵ But another family – the Eleventh Dynasty – the “Mentuhoteps” – based out of Thebes, not only successfully resisted their attacks, but, eventually, crushed their competitor altogether, to unify Egypt once more: and after their campaigning was done ‘we find a reign focusing on building, art, and trade.’¹⁶

It wasn’t, however, to last. Yes, power seems to have passed more-or-less peacefully from the final Mentuhotep – the IVth – to his vizier, Amenemhet, ‘a commoner’.¹⁷ And Amenemhet’s descendants – the Twelfth Dynasty – implemented ‘changes [that] resulted in rising living standards for middle-class Egyptians’.¹⁸ There was an increase in canalization to regulate the waters of the Nile; virgin land was drained, reclaimed, and made productive,¹⁹ ‘huge fortresses’ built.²⁰

But, says Ian Shaw, a historian of ancient Egypt: ‘All this building and industrial activity...may also have exhausted the economy and, combined with a series of low Nile floods...resulted in political and economic decline.’²¹ And in the north of the country, (nearest Canaan), archaeologists have discerned that ‘the material culture...was becoming increasingly non-Egyptian’ as the Middle Kingdom progressed.²² What this evidences *specifically* was the arrival of “Asiatics” (from the East) – *Semites*, and at a site called, later, “Avaris,” some of those discoveries, we saw last week, seem, tantalisingly, to point directly to Jacob and his famous sons.

According to the Scriptures in verse eight, written from the perspective of, we see (on page 48 [in the “brown Bible”]), ‘a new king...over Egypt’, ‘the Israelite people’ then became – and I quote – ‘more numerous and more powerful than we.’ *Genesis* described about seventy Israelites emigrated – Joseph’s family – from Canaan; *and*, at about the same time ‘all the world’ [Gen. 41:57.] came with them. That is to say, ‘all’ of *their* ‘world’ – the Levant. And what historians say is that this foreign group – or rather, some *part* of it – ‘began to consolidate their holdings, ...and established their own domains.’²³ Indeed, they ‘gained the upper hand in Egypt itself.’²⁴ This came about only by ‘serious hostilities’.²⁵ But not an invasion. Rather, from within, and ‘by intimidation’.²⁶ This “part” is called, in the literature, “the Hyksos.”

¹⁵ Bunson, Margaret R. (2002), *Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt (Revised Edition)*, New York N. Y.: Facts On File, Inc., 245.

¹⁶ Hamblin, William J. (2006), *Warfare in the Ancient Near East to 1600 BC: Holy Warriors at the Dawn of History*, London; New York, N. Y.: Routledge (Taylor & Francis), 388.

¹⁷ Bunson (2002), 25.

¹⁸ Shaw, Ian (2003), *Oxford History of Ancient Egypt (New Edition)*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 147.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 152.

²⁰ 154.

²¹ 157.

²² Bard, Kathryn A. (2015), *An Introduction to the Archaeology of Ancient Egypt*, Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 212-213.

²³ Bunson (2002), 245.

²⁴ van Seters, John (1966), *The Hyksos: A New Investigation*, New Haven, C. T.: Yale University Press, 81.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 91.

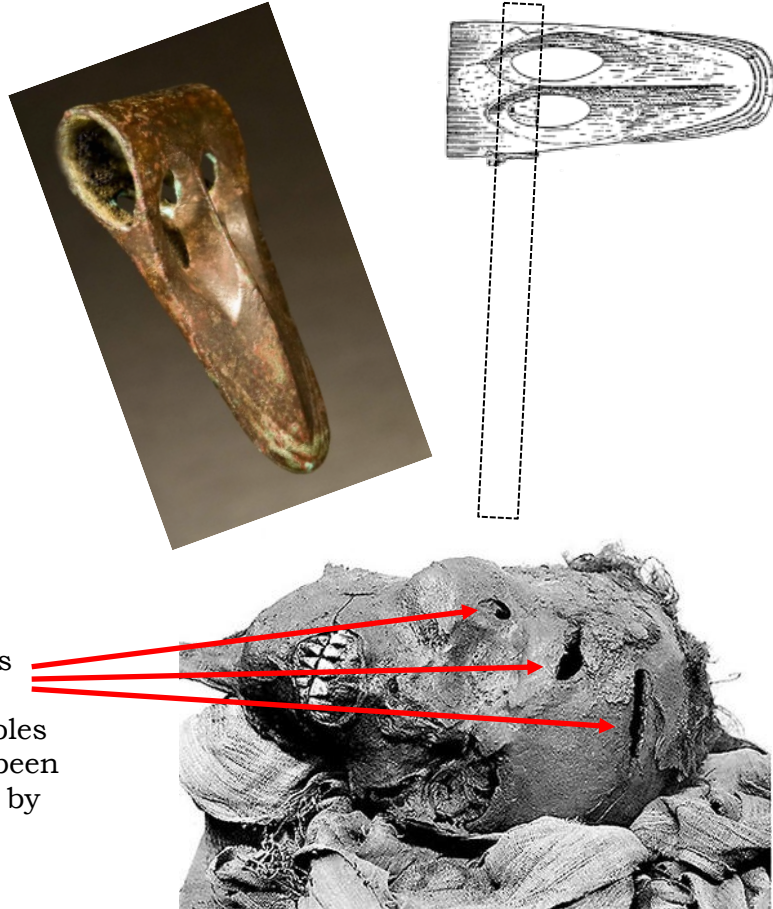
²⁶ Bietak, Manfred (1999), ‘The Hyksos’, in Kathryn A. Bard (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of the Archaeology of Ancient Egypt*, New York, N. Y.: Routledge (Taylor & Francis), pp. 377-379, 377.

How so? To their advantage, they seemed to enjoy, for a while, at least, a certain ‘superiority...of arms’.²⁷ Indeed, the recent discovery of horse skeletons and burials in Tell el-Dab’a, the archaeological site of the Hyksos’ capital, suggests that it was the Asiatic population that settled in the Delta, towards the end of the Middle Kingdom, that introduced horses as well as the know-how and the technology

required to build light war chariots.²⁸ They were also better at producing bronze weapons: ‘The most distinctive element of this sophisticated arsenal [was] the so-called “duckbill” axe blade’.²⁹ See these images here:

The photo on the far right is of the mummified head of Pharaoh “Taa.” Taa attempted to resist the Hyksos, was set upon, and struck down by multiple penetrative blows with this weapon. (Notice the neat, flattened oval holes in his skull, as if he had been pecked with terrible force by a ferocious woodpecker.)

The Egyptians, on the other hand, only had infantry at their disposal³⁰ – infantry who were still mostly using (softer) copper blades,³¹ and arrowheads ‘generally made out of flint’.³² (Stone.) Thus, the status quo was ‘torn...apart’.³³



²⁷ Winlock, Herbert Eustis (1947), *The Rise and Fall of the Middle Kingdom in Thebes*, Macmillan, 161.

²⁸ Hernández, Roberto A. Díaz (2014), ‘The Role of the War Chariot in the Formation of the Egyptian Empire in the Early 18th Dynasty’, *Studien zur Altägyptischen Kultur*, Volume 43, pp. 109-122, 112.

²⁹ Romer, John (2017), *A History Of Ancient Egypt - Volume 2: From The Great Pyramid to the Fall of the Middle Kingdom*, New York, N. Y.: Thomas Dunne Books (St. Martin's Press), 431.

³⁰ See: Shaw, Ian (2017), ‘Egyptians, Hyksos and Military Technology: Causes, Effects or Catalysts?’, in Shortland, Andrew J. (Ed.), *The Social Context of Technological Change: Egypt and the Near East, 1650-1150 BC - Proceedings of a Conference Held at St. Edmund Hall, Oxford, 12-14 September 2000*, Oxford; Havertown, P. A.: Oxbrow Books, pp. 59-72.

³¹ Bunson (2002), 246.

³² See: Genz, Hermann (2013), ‘The Introduction of the Light, Horse-drawn Chariot and the Role of Archery in the Near East at the Transition from the Middle to the Late Bronze Ages: Is there a Connection?’, in Veldmeijer, A. J. & Ikram, Salima (Eds.), *Chasing Chariots: Proceedings of the*

Into three states, that is.³⁴ And then two.

Hyksos rule of the north – the rule of (Palestinian) ‘sheikhs’ as opposed to “pharaohs”³⁵ – was finally brought to an end in 1550 B.C. by the ‘military cunning’ of Ahmose I (of the Eighteenth Dynasty):³⁶ he circumvented the Hyksos’ “superior” land-forces by sailing up the kingdom’s many waterways, and launching hit-n-run attacks from the decks of ships, with, in particular, Nubian archers.³⁷ And frankly, I think this information – about the Hyksos – makes good sense of what we find in this morning’s verses: about the Egyptians coming to suspect that the Hebrews might present an existential threat despite the fact that, in the Scriptures, no overt reason to fear them is provided. After all, the most recent information we had heard – (back) in *Genesis* – was about Joseph’s adept bureaucracy saving his adopted homeland from starvation in years of drought. What could overthrow such a positive legacy? Either full-blown collusion by the Hebrews with other Canaanites in the establishment of the so-called “Hyksos” domain, which is, understandably, passed over in silence by the author of *Exodus*; or just the fact of their being the same ethnicity and culture – religion excluded – as the Hyksos: similar enough so that they might be confused, one-with-the-other, in the mind of the indigenous population.

And certainly the Egyptians and their ‘king’ would have *bitterly* remembered the embarrassment of the ‘anarchy’ the Hyksos wrought among them:³⁸ assuming we’ve done our math correctly so far, today’s verses take place in 1526 B.C. ← This would mean that the (native) pharaoh on the throne – the “native pharaoh” whose daughter adopts the baby Moses – *was* Ahmose. And “Taa” – the man assassinated by duck-bill axe strikes to his face – was Ahmose’s grandfather...³⁹ But is there any evidence of Moses’ existence during the reign of Ahmose? *None*. Not according to the archaeology. Only in the Bible, which doesn’t mention who the pharaoh was at the time of his birth. Indeed, *our* text says of the Israelites that they were put to work building cities by ‘forced labor’[[Gen. 1:11a](#)] – a suitable punishment if the Hebrews had played some role in their countrymen, the Hyksos’, takeover of the nation. But the cities stated are ‘Pithom and Rameses’: [[v.11b](#)]. The latter named after a pharaoh who didn’t rule until at least 1292 B.C.. (See the bracketed area on the timeline on the next page: the so-called, “Ramesside Period.”) That’s three *centuries* in the future.

First International Chariot Conference (Cairo 2012), Leiden, The Netherlands: Sidestone Press, pp. 95-106, 96.

³³ Harvey, Stephen P. and Adams, Matthew Douglas (July 2001), ‘Tribute to a Conquering King’, *Archaeology*, Volume 54, No. 4, pp. 52-55, 52.

³⁴ See: Griggs, Mary Beth (July 2014), ‘Egypt’s Forgotten Dynasty’, *Archaeology*, Volume 67, No. 4, pp. 49-52; and, Wegner, Josef (June 2015), ‘A Royal Necropolis at South Abydos: New Light on Egypt’s Second Intermediate Period’, *Near Eastern Archaeology*, Volume 78, No. 2, pp. 68-78.

³⁵ See: Sève-Söderbergh, T. (December 1951), ‘The Hyksos Rule in Egypt’, *The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*, Volume 37, pp. 53-71, 56.

³⁶ Bunson (2002), 15.

³⁷ See: Wilkinson, Toby (2013), *The Rise and Fall of Ancient Egypt*, New York, N. Y.: Random House, Inc., 189-190.

³⁸ Sève-Söderbergh (1951), 55.

³⁹ See: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ahmose_I Also: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seqenenre_Tao

The Early Dynastic Period		c.3500	— The wheel is invented somewhere in Central Asia.
The Old Kingdom	III rd Dynasty	c.3100	— Egypt unified under one “pharaoh,” Narmer, a.k.a. “Menes.”
	IV th Dynasty	c.2686	— Ph. Netjerikhet or “Djosa.”
	...	c.2613	— Ph. Sneferu takes power
First Intermediate Period	VII th - X th Dynasties; civil war	c.2560	— Great Pyramid of Giza completed by Ph. “Khufu.”
		c.2494	
The Middle Kingdom	XI th Dynasty	c.2181	
	XII th Dynasty	c.2088	— Abraham arrives in Egypt.
		c.2061	— Ph. Mentuhotep II reunites Egypt.
	XIII th Dynasty	c.1991	— Ph. Amenemhet I
Second Intermediate Period	“Hyksos” rule some large part of Egypt.	c.1899	— Joseph brought to Egypt by Ishmaelites.
		c.1859	— Joseph’s father Jacob dies.
The New Kingdom	XVIII th Dynasty	c.1802	— Ph. Sobekneferu (1 st queen of Egypt) dies childless.
		c.1674	
		c.1550	— Ph. Ahmose I reunites Egypt.
		c.1524	— Ph. Amenhotep I
		c.1446	— Moses leads the Israelites out of Egypt: “The Exodus”?
Third Intermediate Period	XIX th Dynasty	c.1388	— Ph. Amenhotep III
		c.1292	— Ph. Ramesses I
		c.1279	— Ph. Ramesses II a.k.a “the Great”
Late Period	XX th Dynasty	c.1189	— Ph. Twosret dies.
	XXVI th Dynasty	c.1077	— Ph. Ramesses XI th dies.
		c.664	— Ph. Psamtik I reunifies Egypt under native control.
		525	— Ph. Psamtik III rd is captured by the Achaemenid Empire.
		332	— Alexander the Great conquers Egypt, making it a province of his Macedonian Empire.
		48	— Julius Caesar arrives. Allies himself w/ Cleopatra in the Ptolemaic civil war.
		30	— Julius Caesar’s nephew, Octavian, makes Egypt a Roman province.
		3 ^{BC}	— The Holy Family flee to Egypt with baby Jesus.