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Joseph the Infiltrator, Jacob the Conqueror? Reexamining the Hyksos–Hebrew Correlation

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The anachronisms in the story of Exodus have long complicated claims to its historicity, yet some of the "usual suspects" endure. Scholarly tradition has generally argued that the expulsion of the so-called Hyksos rulers of Egypt in the sixteenth century BCE was the foundation for the Israelite cultural memory of liberation from Egypt. With the shift in biblical scholarship toward the Persian and Hellenistic periods regarding the crystallization of the biblical texts, scholarship has moved away from extrabiblical correlations pertaining to more ancient contexts. This trend, combined with locating earliest Israel within a generic "Canaanite" milieu, has led to the devaluation of the place of Egypt in discussions of Israel's origins. In this article, I reexamine the "Hebrew–Hyksos" correlation, with a view to defending the great antiquity of memories of interaction with Egypt that were appropriated by developing Israel.

In the context of the ongoing debate surrounding the historicity of the exodus, there are a number of potentially relevant ethnic groups and historical figures that go unmentioned in the Bible. Whether their absence is due to a lack of awareness or to a dismissal of their relevance on the part of the biblical authors, we cannot be entirely sure. I will argue, however, that they cannot simply be overlooked in a discussion that should first and foremost be concerned with the memories preserved in the Bible of Israel's interaction with Egypt (as well as all things deemed Egyptian) that lie behind the crystallization of the written accounts of the same.

Proponents of the historicity of the transition between Genesis and Exodus—the Joseph story—often see the so-called Hyksos rulers of the Egyptian Fifteenth Dynasty (ca. 1640–1550[1]) as ethnically analogous to the earliest "Israelites." This

[1] J. Maxwell Miller and John H. Hayes, *A History of Ancient Israel and Judah,* 2nd ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006), 46. Lester L. Grabbe gives a date of 1650–1550 (*Ancient Israel: What Do We Know and How Do We Know It?* [London: T&T Clark, 2007], 62–63),

view places the "sons of Israel" (or "Hebrews") in Egypt in preparation for the exodus and views their subsequent migration from Egypt as a memory of the Egyptian expulsion of the Hyksos recorded in ancient texts.[2]

I. Manetho via Josephus

The "Hyksos–Hebrew" correlation entered discussion on the origins of Israel as early as the first century CE and possibly earlier.[3] Flavius Josephus dealt with these "shepherd kings" rather comfortably. In his view, their alignment with his ancestors (*C. Ap.* 1.74) upheld his claims of antiquity for the Jews.[4] Despite

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while Amihai Mazar locates the Fifteenth Dynasty a century later ("The Patriarchs, Exodus, and Conquest Narratives in Light of Archaeology," in Israel Finkelstein and Amihai Mazar, *The Quest for the Historical Israel: Debating Archaeology and the History of Early Israel; Invited Lectures Delivered at the Sixth Biennial Colloquium of the International Institute for Secular Humanistic Judaism, Detroit, October 2005,* ed. Brian B. Schmidt, ABS 17 [Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007], 57–65, here 58). Based on the textual and archaeological evidence, David O'Connor is more precise, suggesting circa 1648–1540 ("The Hyksos Period in Egypt," in *The Hyksos: New Historical and Archaeological Perspectives*, ed. Eliezer D. Oren, University Museum Monograph 96 [Philadelphia: University Museum, University of Pennsylvania, 1997], 45–67, here 48–56). Marc Van de Mieroop states that the mid-seventeenth century saw the Hyksos ruling some of "a number of principalities" into which Egypt had been split (*A History of the Ancient Near East ca. 3000–323 BC* [Oxford: Blackwell, 2007], 131–32). Israel Finkelstein dates the expulsion of the Hyksos to the sixteenth century ("Patriarchs, Exodus, Conquest: Fact or Fiction?" in Finkelstein and Mazar, *Quest for the Historical Israel,* 41–65, here 52).

[2] See, e.g., *ANET,* 233–34, relating to the participation of Ah-mose, captain of a vessel on the Nile, in the campaigns to defeat the Hyksos. For a collection of texts contemporary to and following the expulsion, see James B. Pritchard, ed., *The Ancient Near East: An Anthology of Texts and Pictures* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 226–28; and Donald B. Redford, "Textual Sources for the Hyksos Period," in Oren, *Hyksos,* 11–20.

[3] Josephus's polemic (*Contra Apionem*, passim) against the details of Jewish origins in Manetho's *Aegyptiaca* is the oldest surviving testament to the existence of the *Aegyptiaca*. Without contemporary texts confirming the contents of Manetho's writings, we cannot be completely confident that Josephus was recounting precisely what Manetho wrote. Donald B. Redford suggests a fourth-century BCE date for Manetho's sources and even goes so far as to say that Josephus's citations constitute "a fortunately surviving excerpt quoted *in extenso*" (*Egypt, Canaan, and Israel in Ancient Times* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992], 98–101). For a discussion of the veracity of both Manetho's words and Josephus's citations, see Lucia Raspe, who locates Josephus's polemic within a wider context of Greco-Roman attacks (and Jewish apologetics) on the antiquity and credibility of Judaism ("Manetho on the Exodus: A Reappraisal," *JSQ* 5 [1998]: 124–55). See also John Van Seters, *The Hyksos: A New Investigation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966), 121–26.

[4] Raspe cautions against concluding that Manetho actually referred to the Jews in his original text (which we do not have); thus, the alignment of the Hyksos with the Jews may be attributable to Josephus himself ("Manetho on the Exodus," 124–25). I believe that the truth lies somewhere

"quoting" Manetho's understanding of the word *Hycsos* (where *Hyc* meant "king" and *Sos* meant "shepherd"; *C. Ap.* 1.82), Josephus favors his own interpretation, "captive shepherds" (with *Hyc* now meaning "shepherds"), for the sake of accommodating the biblical narrative or "ancient history" (*C. Ap.* 1.83), the context within which Manetho's account is assessed.[5] The term *Hyksos*, however, is best understood as "foreign ruler" or "ruler of foreign lands" and was in use as early as the Middle Kingdom (ca. 2040–1650 BCE) to designate "foreign princes," primarily Amorites or Canaanites.[6] As such, it was not a term associated with a specific ethnic group that descended into Egypt from Syria-Palestine; rather, it was a common designation that came to be used to describe this new regime—and not the people—so that their status as outsiders was maintained.[7] The term *Asiatics* appears to

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between the two positions: Josephus dealt with a widely held belief that Manetho—whose "history" likely bore authority (see Zuleika Rodgers, "Introduction," in *Making History: Josephus and Historical Method,* ed. Zuleika Rodgers, JSJSup 110 [Leiden: Brill, 2006], 1–22, here 11)—had actually referred to the Jews. Using Manetho's account of the Hyksos as Josephus does allows the latter to maintain the biblical claim that the "Israel" that came up out of Egypt was previously in the land. His assertion, however, that this "deliverance" "preceded the siege of Troy almost a thousand years" (*C. Ap.* 1.104) is decidedly anachronistic.

[5] Josephus cites "another copy" as his reasoning behind this alternative translation (*C. Ap.* 1.83), without clarifying the reference. Is this another copy of Manetho or just another Egyptian history? Josephus deals with this interpretation of Jewish history within the constraints of the biblical text (and, of course, his own *Antiquities*), so it is acknowledged that the Israelites came from another country into Egypt (*C. Ap.* 1.104, 223; cf. *Ant.* 2.177). Amid what appears to be the intellectual jostling for the greater antiquity of one's nation (or simply the need to tackle established opinions regarding the antiquity of the Jews), Josephus has to (in this matter, at least) "stick to the script." In arguing for a specifically Roman audience for the *Bellum Judaicum*, Steve Mason relates an awareness of "presumed" information—that which is excluded—to matters of audience identification ("Of Audience and Meaning: Reading Josephus' *Bellum Judaicum* in the Context of a Flavian Audience," in *Josephus and Jewish History in Flavian Rome and Beyond,* ed. Joseph Sievers and Gaia Lembi, JSJSup 104 [Leiden: Brill, 2005], 71–100, here 91–95).

[6] Eliezer D. Oren, "The Hyksos Enigma: Introductory Overview," in Oren, *Hyksos*, xix–xxviii, here xxi. *Hyksos* is a Greek translation of the Egyptian term *Heqau-Khasut,* meaning "rulers of foreign lands" (Manfred Bietak, "The Center of Hyksos Rule: Avaris (Tell el-Dab'a)," in Oren, *Hyksos*, 87–139, here 113). Transliterations of the Egyptian term vary, but the phonetics are relatively consistent. Bietak also concludes that "an Amorite attribution of the dynasty is far more likely [than Hurrian]" (ibid.). Cf. Van Seters, who notes the use of *ʿꜣmw* (for *Amurrite*) to "designate the foreign population of Egypt in the Hyksos period" (*Hyksos*, 188). See also E. A. Speiser, "Ethnic Movement in the Near East in the Second Millennium B.C.: The Hurrians and Their Connections with the Habiru and the Hyksos," *AASOR* 13 (1931): 13–54, here 34, http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/3768469.

[7] Van Seters, *Hyksos*, 187; Redford, *Egypt, Canaan, and Israel,* 100; Grabbe, *Ancient Israel*, 45. The titles of the Hyksos rulers conflated Egyptian royal epithets with Semitic personal names. In presenting the Hyksos onomasticon, Redford suggests that the condition of the script may be testament to the scribes' lack of knowledge of these "strange names" ("Textual Sources for the Hyksos Period," 20–21).

have been used for people who had descended into Egypt and either took control after a long period of gradual settlement or in the wake of a sudden invasion, but "Asiatics," "foreign rulers," and "princes of Retenu" are terms that maintain a sense of cultural disconnection and are contrary to a theory of integration or acculturation over a long period of time. The evidence shows that these people, although "Egyptianized" in their behavior, did not see themselves as Egyptian.[8] In this light, Manetho's (or Josephus's) claim that the Hyksos dominated Egypt for 511 years (*C. Ap.* 1.84) is drawn either from a misunderstanding of Manetho's schematic king list or from a need to accommodate biblical chronology.[9] It would appear, rather, that little more than a century passed between the ascension of the first Hyksos king (of which there were six) and the expulsion of their dynasty.[10]

There were Asiatics in Egypt before the Hyksos came to power (the archaeological record has preserved architecture at Tell ed-Dabʿa/Avaris similar to that in Syria-Palestine); the people living there from the late Twelfth Dynasty onward were likely "subordinate to Egyptian officials."[11] The Thirteenth Dynasty palace constructed above the earlier Canaanite settlement at Tell ed-Dabʿa appears to have accommodated officials favoring Asian burial customs.[12] Yet, despite another

[8] Redford, *Egypt, Canaan, and Israel*, 102. Notably, Retenu is used of the tribal chief under whom Sinuhe finds success in a foreign (Canaanite) land. The Tale of Sinuhe seems concerned with asserting that there is "no place like home," and Retenu, therefore, may be a generic appellation to refer to people in the Syria-Palestine region. In other words, the story is not about where Sinuhe has been but where he has come from and, ultimately, where he will return to. See further *The Tale of Sinuhe and Other Ancient Egyptian Poems 1940–1640 B.C.,* trans. R. B. Parkinson, Oxford World's Classics (London: Oxford University Press, 1999); also Garrett Galvin, *Egypt as a Place of Refuge,* FAT 2/51 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 21–22. The Tale is echoed both in the story of Joseph's success in Egypt and in that of Moses in Midian, but the sentiment of belonging is quite poignantly expressed in Jacob's request that his bones be brought up out of Egypt (Gen 47:29–30).

[9] Redford notes the difficult situation in which Manetho found himself (*Egypt, Canaan, and Israel*, 107). The Egyptian priest listed "Shepherd Kings" for two dynasties (Sixteenth and Seventeenth) following Hyksos dominance, rather than presenting them as contemporaneous regimes; thus he was forced to expand his linear scheme. The Sixteenth and Seventeenth Dynasties—although O'Connor is unaware of a reason to distinguish the two—ruled from Thebes and produced the kings (Kamose and Ahmose, respectively) who besieged and eventually expelled the Hyksos from Avaris ("Hyksos Period in Egypt," 45, 52).

[10] One hundred eight years, according to the Turin Canon of Kings (O'Connor, "Hyksos Period in Egypt," 48). See also Grabbe, *Ancient Israel*, 45; Redford, *Egypt, Canaan, and Israel*, 107; and Bietak, "Center of Hyksos Rule," 114.

[11] O'Connor, "Hyksos Period in Egypt," 56. For a discussion of the Canaanite settlement in the late Twelfth Dynasty (ca. 1800 BCE), see Bietak, "Center of Hyksos Rule," 97–100; James K. Hoffmeier, *Israel in Egypt: The Evidence for the Authenticity of the Exodus Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 63–65; and Israel Finkelstein and Neil Asher Silberman, *The Bible Unearthed: Archaeology's New Vision of Ancient Israel and the Origin of Its Sacred Texts* (New York: Touchstone, 2002), 55.

[12] Bietak, "Center of Hyksos Rule," 103.

Canaanite settlement atop the abandoned palace, Bietak argues against seeing the officials at Tell ed-Dab'a at this time as the predecessors of the Hyksos.[13] This settlement ended abruptly with an epidemic of what appears to have been bubonic plague (Egyptian texts refer to it as the "Asian disease"), and the Fourteenth Dynasty seems to have begun following this, with Nehesy taking control.[14] Nehesy appears to have been Egyptian, but Asian cultural influence played a significant role in his court. His short reign was ended by a "local Asian dynasty," following which the Fifteenth (Hyksos) Dynasty came to power.[15]

II. Was Joseph a Hyksos Scout?

When all of this information is aligned with the biblical story of Joseph's rise to power and the descent of Jacob (Israel) and his family into Egypt (including the subsequent migration of the Hebrews), the temptation to assign at least some level of credence to the biblical narrative is wholly understandable. We should ask, however, whether the Joseph story truly reflects memories of the Hyksos rise to power, given the suggestion that it corresponds to an authentic Israelite memory of "a Semitic prince in the Egyptian court."[16] Some immediate problems from a biblical point of view are that Joseph's rise to power occurred prior to the descent of his father and brothers into Egypt and that there is no corresponding (extrabiblical) evidence for a Hyksos boy being sold into slavery and ending up in Egypt as a precursor for an invasion thirteen years later (which would certainly have made a wonderfully romanticized narrative reminiscent of the impetus for the Greek war against Troy).[17] The biblical text also maintains that Joseph's position, taking charge of "all the land of Egypt" (Gen 41:41), still kept him second to Pharaoh with regard

[13] See also Hoffmeier, *Israel in Egypt*, 63. This does not mean, of course, that the presence of Semitic peoples did not facilitate the peaceful infiltration of the Hyksos rulers at the site, considering that there is no evidence of military conquest at the crucial transitional phase (ibid., 65).

[14] Bietak, "Center of Hyksos Rule," 105, 108; O'Connor, "Hyksos Period in Egypt," 56.

[15] Bietak, "Center of Hyksos Rule," 109.

[16] Mazar maintains that such a story may "contain kernels of old traditions … rooted in second-millennium B.C.E. realia" ("Patriarchs, Exodus, and Conquest Narratives," 58–59). See also Ronald Hendel, "The Exodus in Biblical Memory," *JBL* 120 (2001): 601–22, here 607, http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/3268262; and Redford, *Egypt, Canaan, and Israel*, 422–29. An early alignment of the Joseph story with the historical realia of New Kingdom Egypt can be found in Jozef Vergote's *Joseph en Égypte: Genèse chap. 37–50 à la lumière des études égyptologiques récentes,* OBL 3 (Leuven: Publications Universitaires, 1959). Vergote reaffirmed his conclusions in his "'*Joseph en Égypte*': 25 Ans Après," in *Pharaonic Egypt: The Bible and Christianity,* ed. Sarah Israelit-Groll (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1985), 289–306.

[17] Joseph is seventeen when he is sold by his brothers (Gen 37:2) and thirty when he is elevated to his high position under Pharaoh (Gen 41:46).

to the throne (Gen 41:40b).[18] We are dealing, then, with a solely administrative position, not one to be aligned with Hyksos rule.[19] The evidence for so-called Asian influence in the administration of the Thirteenth Dynasty palace at Tell ed-Dab'a (above) tells us that the Egyptian elite permitted the elevation of Asiatics to such high positions. The argument that the memory of one specific (named) ancestor held such a position survived for over a thousand years is something of a stretch, for the archaeological record shows how relatively commonplace the appointment could be.[20] Even those who argue that this memory has some historical value must concede that the details are so skewed as to render the alignment tentative at best.

In addition, there is the matter of ethnic differentiation; if Joseph's rise to power corresponds to that of the Hyksos, why should we read his subservience to a clearly Egyptian king in the biblical narrative as corresponding to Hyksos administrative control if Joseph were ethnically identical to the ruling elite, as the Hyksos alignment would require? Instead, the Bible is clear that the Egyptians "abhorred" shepherds (in Gen 46:34 the Hebrew term translated as "shepherds," רעה צאן, shares no phonetic affinity with *Hyksos*). This strange statement might be part of the biblical writers' construction of the Egyptian perspective on the Hebrews in preparation for the shift away from Egyptian favor that opens Exodus.[21] Equally, it might belong to a context of sociopolitical debates regarding immigration or a more specific sociological clash between urban life and nomadic culture.[22] In either case, distinction—even cultural polarity—informs the biblical text, and, despite the hints that Joseph had been Egyptianized during his time in Egypt (Gen 41:42–43, 45; 42:23;

[18] Genesis 44:18 should be read in the context of a supplicant addressing an obvious superior. What the brothers see is a man as powerful as Pharaoh (and what would they know of the Egyptian court?), but the comparison is part of the ideology of the tale. As for Gen 45:8, while Joseph appears magnanimous in his forgiveness, he also appears to be enjoying his success in front of his brothers, since now he can provide everything for them in the role of a father (see esp. 45:13).

[19] BDB suggests that the noun שַׁלִּיט in Gen 42:6, "having mastery, domineering," is a later substitution for an earlier (unknown) word. The NJPS renders "vizier," while the NRSV has "governor." Still, it is a leap to read Joseph's position as a memory among Canaanites of the "political primacy" of an ancestor (so Redford, *Egypt, Canaan, and Israel*, 412).

[20] Hoffmeier, *Israel in Egypt*, 93–95.

[21] The new king of Exod 1 either does not know anything about the favor shown to the ancestor(s) of the Hebrew slave population, as suggested by the text, or simply does not care.

[22] Grabbe notes that the first half of the second millennium was a time of great urbanization (esp. in Palestine), with urban populations outnumbering those in rural settings (*Ancient Israel*, 40). F. V. Greifenhagen reads Joseph's instruction to his family in the context of ensuring Israel's separation from the Egyptians by settling his family outside Egypt proper (i.e., in Goshen), although he goes on to deal with the problem arising from Pharaoh's instructing the family to settle "in the land of Rameses," "in the land of Egypt" (Gen 47:11, directly contradicting 47:6, but cf. Hoffmeier, *Israel in Egypt*, 121), and the subsequent ideological dichotomy of separation and assimilation (*Egypt on the Pentateuch's Ideological Map: Constructing Biblical Israel's Identity,* JSOTSup 361 [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2002], 39–40).

43:32),[23] the Bible clearly maintains his status as a son of Israel, with Jacob asserting his patriarchal dominance from his deathbed. Even the children of Joseph, "adopted" by Jacob prior to bestowing his blessing upon them (Gen 48:5–6), bear Hebrew names (Gen 41:51–52), despite the apparent dissociation from Joseph's homeland implied by the accompanying etymologies of the names (and this also despite Joseph's inability to understand Hebrew in Gen 42:23!).[24] With all of this going on, there is no hint in the biblical text that the family envisage a rise to power over Egypt or that Joseph heralds the coming invasion of Jacob and his family/army. Subservience and indebtedness to Pharaoh as a result of his permitting their immigration and settlement cannot correspond to an influx of Asiatics who rise to dominate Egypt for a little more than a century prior to their expulsion, especially when the biblical text would have the "sons of Israel" living (or "dwelling"; Hebrew ישב) in Egypt for either 400 (Gen 15:13) or 430 years (Exod 12:40) prior to the exodus.[25]

Other anachronisms arise in Gen 41:43 and 46:29 concerning the use of chariots, with Pharaoh using one in the earlier verse and Joseph in the latter. If the Hyksos first introduced the chariot into Egypt[26] and its appearance in the archaeological record is to be aligned with the Hyksos invasion, what are we to make of

[23] Note especially Gen 42:23, in which Joseph understands the conversation between his brothers only through an interpreter.

[24] Many factors stand out as contradictory, highlighting for the most part the irrelevance of many details of a story concerned less with historical fact than with didactic theology (YHWH will provide and bring success in a foreign land). The problems with the chronology of the story can sometimes elicit humor, especially when we note that Joseph's sons were born "before the years of famine" (Gen 41:50), Jacob spent seventeen years in Egypt before he died (Gen 47:28)—counting them at least from the time the famine began—and Joseph's sons, at least in their late teens, sat on poor old Jacob's knees (Gen 48:12) as he blessed them (he was 147 years old; Gen 47:28)!

[25] Granted, the maintenance of cultural dissociation from the Hyksos on the part of the Egyptian sources is also found in Exodus, not only in casting Egypt as the "other" but also in Egypt separating itself from the "people of the sons of Israel" (Exod 1:9), a clear affirmation of ethnic distinction. Ascribing this act of separation to the nameless pharaoh (representative of Egypt) lends weight to having Israel as a nation recognized—and thus legitimized—by another (nation). Pharaoh's "rhetoric of differentiation" (Greifenhagen, *Egypt on the Pentateuch's Ideological Map*, 53) sets the stage for enslaving the entire עם בני ישראל.

[26] See James K. Hoffmeier, "Observations on the Evolving Chariot Wheel in the 18th Dynasty," *JARCE* 13 (1976): 43–45, here 43, http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/40001117; also Hoffmeier, *Israel in Egypt*, 64. Redford notes the "fixation" on the use of the chariot with regard to arguing for the Indo-European origins of the Hyksos (*Egypt, Canaan, and Israel*, 99). Cf. Van Seters, who argues that "the question of chariots … ought to be dropped from the discussion" (*Hyksos*, 185). Paula Wapnish states, "The role of Asiatics … in the introduction of the horse and [chariot] to Egypt is still an open question" ("Middle Bronze Equid Burials at Tell Jemmeh and a Reexamination of a Purportedly 'Hyksos' Practice," in Oren, *Hyksos*, 335–67, here 355). Despite a number of equine burials in Egypt during the Hyksos period (ibid.), however, it appears (at present) that there were no chariots buried with them.

Pharaoh using one prior to Joseph's appointment and, more importantly, prior to Jacob's descent into Egypt? Of course, the biblical writers may simply have had no memory of an Egypt without the chariot, so it is possible that all we are seeing here is a vision of Egypt from the time of the composition of the Joseph story (a solution that can apply to practically everything in the story, for there is no prohibition on using names and places long after either cease to exist).

III. The Plot Thickens

The anachronisms are not restricted to the biblical account, for even Josephus's defense of the antiquity of his people with regard to the Hyksos expulsion and the exodus leaves much to be desired when it comes to relative chronology. It serves the chronological pattern of Josephus's argument to have the Hyksos (kings) establishing Jerusalem following their expulsion from Egypt, but letters from the Amarna period (fourteenth century BCE) mention a king of Jerusalem with a Hurrian name (Abdi-Heba), a king clearly subordinate to Egyptian rule.[27] If it was the Hurrian expansion into and dominance of Syria-Palestine that had initially created these Hyksos in forcing some of the indigenous people southward into Egypt (see below), it is highly unlikely that the Hyksos are to be equated with the progenitors of Israel in terms of their establishing Jerusalem if we encounter a Hurrian king in the city some two centuries later. This would suggest a hiatus in Israelite control of Jerusalem (or Israelite descent from Hurrians) to which no ancient source refers and to which archaeology bears no witness.

There are also some hints in Josephus's "Manethonian" quotations that the latter's historical retrospective was chronologically askew. Take, for example, the account of Salatis, the first of the Hyksos kings, foreseeing the ascendancy of the Assyrians (*C. Ap.* 1.77). To which period of Assyrian expansionism was Manetho referring? Assyrian military power in the thirteenth century was significant, but it

[27] EA 286 and EA 287 both have Abdi-Heba stating that it was the Egyptian king who put him in power in Jerusalem. See further Miller and Hayes, *History of Ancient Israel and Judah*, 32–35; Grabbe, *Ancient Israel*, 42–43; Redford, *Egypt, Canaan, and Israel*, 270; and Finkelstein and Silberman, *Bible Unearthed*, 238–40. The Jebusite rulers of Jerusalem, to whom the Bible refers (Josh 15:8, 63; 2 Sam 5:6; 1 Chr 11:4), are likely to have descended from the Hurrians. See Peter C. Craigie "Ugarit, Canaan, and Israel," Tyndale Biblical Archaeology Lecture 1982, *TynBul* 34 (1983): 145–67, esp. 160–61; and Billie Jean Collins, "The Bible, the Hittites and the Construction of the Other," in *Tabularia Hethaeorum: Hethitologische Beiträge; Silvin Košak zum 65. Geburtstag,* ed. Detlev Groddek and Maria Zorman, Dresdner Beiträge zur Hethitologie 25 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2007), 153–61, esp. 154–55. Notably the Bible claims that the "Judahites" lived alongside the Jebusites in Jerusalem, because the Judahites could not remove the former inhabitants from the city (Josh 15:63). This would not correspond to the descendants of Jacob leaving Egypt and attacking Jerusalem or with the Hyksos *establishing* Jerusalem.

had not brought them near Egypt.[28] Not until the seventh century were there successful incursions that saw first Memphis and then Thebes fall into Assyrian hands.[29] Clearly, any reference by Manetho to the Assyrians disrupts the chronology with regard to the Hyksos and "casts suspicion on the whole account."[30] In a similar vein, a lot of the sacrilegious activity Manetho uses to demonize the Hyksos—directed (for Josephus, at least) at the Jews—belongs at the earliest to a fifth-century BCE context in the wake of the Persian conquest of Egypt.[31]

It would appear that the alignment of the stories of Jacob and Joseph with either the Hyksos invasion of or expulsion from Egypt entered the debate as a result of Josephus's having to deal with the details of Manetho's *Aegyptiaca,* which appeared to both corroborate and contradict some elements of the biblical narrative. If we are to take Josephus's Manethonian quotations as genuine, however, the direction of dependence should be considered. For example, Manetho's claims that "those who came from Jerusalem … got the granaries of Egypt into their possession and perpetrated many of the most horrid actions there" (*C. Ap.* 1.275) brings to mind Joseph's control of the grain rations and the ensuing debt slavery of the Egyptians (Gen 47:19). In addition to the confusion arising from attempting to align the biblical chronology with Manetho's clearly muddled attack on Jewish "history" (in the Bible, Joseph was put in charge of the grain before Jacob and his family came down to Egypt; and, according to Manetho, the Hyksos had been expelled, had established Jerusalem, and then came back down to Egypt!), Manetho's account appears suspiciously dependent on the biblical narrative in his reconstruction of this period in Egyptian history, almost as if he purposely sought to find a period in Egyptian history best suited to his cause. We might imagine Josephus's frustration with the whole matter, but his acceptance of the veracity of Hyksos ancestors for the Jews may rightly be called a "fortunate mistake" for our understanding of the great antiquity of memories of the Hyksos, as will become clear.[32]

IV. King Jacob?

Josephus appears unaware of the most interesting onomastic correlation regarding the name of one of the kings of this period. Scarabs bearing the name

[28] Van de Mieroop, *History of the Ancient Near East*, 181–82.

[29] Ibid., 256–57.

[30] Van Seters, *Hyksos*, 123.

[31] Raspe suggests that the tensions between the Jewish soldiers at the Elephantine garrison and their Egyptian counterparts belong to this context ("Manetho on the Exodus," 153). Redford notes the successive invasions of Egypt by the Assyrians, Babylonians, and Persians that likely influenced Manetho's historical reflection (*Egypt, Canaan, and Israel*, 101). See also Van Seters, *Hyksos*, 123.

[32] See A. H. Sayce, "The Hyksos in Egypt," *JR* 21 (1903): 347–55, here 349, http://dx.doi.org/10.1086/473176.

Yaʿaqob-har have been found in Egypt, Nubia, and Palestine, a fact that would surely prompt proponents of the Hebrew–Hyksos alignment to boast of triumph.[33] Granted, we should not be so swift to dismiss as mere coincidence the presence of a king in Egypt during the Second Intermediate (Hyksos) period bearing among his royal titles the (West) Semitic name Jacob. When combined with all of the pertinent data, the memory preserved in the Bible of a Semitic Jacob in Egypt could be for some a keystone to the historicity of the presence there of the family of "Israel," but it could just as easily be argued that Jacob is a name so common in Syria-Palestine that to find correlations with the Hyksos is presumptuous.[34] One name does not settle an argument, and, by comparison, the name Joseph is not found in the Egyptian record at this time. The biblical writers not only show no awareness of a Jacob assuming power in Egypt—they do not even imagine such a thing.

As for the presence of people from Syria-Palestine—or Asiatics—in Egypt at times that would accommodate the Hyksos correlation, there is so much evidence of the presence of such people in Egypt throughout the second millennium that the thread of certainty unravels.[35] The Syro-Palestinian population of Tell ed-Dabʿa (Avaris) may have maintained its distance from its Egyptian neighbors,[36] but this does not necessarily fit with the segregation of the Israelite (Hebrew) population in Exodus, particularly when the Hyksos were in political ascendancy and the Hebrews were slaves of the regime. Further, the Hyksos dominated the region for

[33] Redford, *Egypt, Canaan, and Israel*, 108, 113. Other titles with the personal name Jacob appear in the record, but this form, belonging to a king and containing the epithet meaning "mountain deity," is of particular interest for anyone concerned with the origins of Israel's adoption of the deity YHWH (Redford, "Textual Sources for the Hyksos Period," 20). Interestingly, Bietak suggests that the name "*Yʿakub-Haddu,*" found on a scarab in a grave near Haifa and thought to predate the Hyksos period, should be seen as "an actual forerunner of the Hyksos dynasty" ("Center of Hyksos Rule," 115). If this is the case, then a Semitic ruler named Jacob in Egypt might mark the latter stages of the Fourteenth Dynasty. See K. S. B. Ryholt, *The Political Situation in Egypt during the Second Intermediate Period, c. 1800–1550 B.C.* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 1997), 96. Redford, on the other hand, positions "*Yaʿkob-har*" as the second (Hyksos) king of the Fifteenth Dynasty, attaching the *praenomen* Merusere (*Egypt, Canaan, and Israel*, 110), which Ryholt uses to argue against such a conclusion. While Redford aligns Sheshy with Manetho's Salitis, Jan Assmann begins his king list with Salitis and follows with "Sheshi," placing "*Yaqub-Har*" third in Dynasty Fifteen (*The Mind of Egypt: History and Meaning in the Time of the Pharaohs,* trans. Andrew Jenkins [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003], 480).

[34] It is also interesting to consider whether proponents of a Jacob–Hyksos alignment would have tried to identify historical contexts for any of the other eponymous ancestors of ethnic groups and nations featured in Genesis. To dismiss these ancestors as mere personifications of those groups, nations, or cultural norms would conflict with their own refusal to see the biblical Jacob in this light.

[35] Mazar, "Patriarchs, Exodus, and Conquest Narratives," 59; Grabbe, *Ancient Israel*, 85; Hoffmeier, *Israel in Egypt*, 52–68.

[36] Redford, *Egypt, Canaan, and Israel*, 115.

over a century, while the Hebrews "sojourned" as a subservient people for over four hundred years! The main problem with the alignment of Joseph's rise to power, Jacob's descent into Egypt, and the Hebrews' sojourn with the Hyksos period comes from the Bible itself—and not only from a chronological point of view. The writers simply do not recall this period as proponents of the alignment would prefer. That does not mean, of course, that we cannot see in the biblical text some faint echoes of the Hyksos period. Regardless of the chain of events that led to the Hyksos era and the Fifteenth Dynasty, forces external to Egypt clearly rose to ascendancy.[37] Yet, in light of the Bible's obvious demonization of Egypt from Exodus onward, should we not expect awareness on the part of the biblical writers of this dominance over their (perceived) ancient archenemy if indeed we are dealing with the earliest components of "Israel"? Is it really likely that the biblical writers, clearly concerned with telling stories of ethnic differentiation and great antiquity, would not eulogize both a conquest over the greatest enemy their ancestors had ever known and their dominance over that land that their ancient neighbors (not to mention the historical and archaeological record) could verify? Instead, there is no evidence of Egypt being defeated by "Israel" or the "Hebrews," while Hyksos dominance over Egypt actually occurred, could be verified, and was preserved in the record by the Egyptians themselves.[38] Is this not a story great enough to claim for one's ancestors? Why would the people who became Israel not shout this tale from the rooftops for generations to come? Perhaps a detailed preservation of the expulsion would have meant an embarrassing or shameful end to a triumphant tale, but the biblical writers appear to have had no problem justifying other "shameful ends" when it came to reflecting on the conquests of Samaria and Jerusalem. If the expulsion of the Hyksos was in fact the wholesale expulsion of a population of Hebrews, the skilled writers of the

[37] Redford advocates for the "invasion" hypothesis (*Egypt, Canaan, and Israel*, 111). Finkelstein and Silberman suggest that Manetho's memories of the seventh- and sixth-century invasions of Egypt prompted a presentation of the Hyksos' rise to power in terms of an invasion (*Bible Unearthed*, 55). Van de Mieroop sees the Asiatic incursion into Egypt in terms of the movement southward of people from Syria-Palestine in the wake of the military campaigns of the Hurrians, but he does not clarify whether he understands this as long-term immigration permitting gradual political ascension or the rapid influx of a hostile force (*History of the Ancient Near East*, 123; cf. Grabbe, *Ancient Israel*, 45).

[38] Assmann marks the "wars of liberation" to expel the Hyksos as foundational for the foreign policy of the New Kingdom (*Mind of Egypt*, 197–99). See also Kenton L. Sparks, *Ethnicity and Identity in Ancient Israel: Prolegomena to the Study of Ethnic Sentiments and Their Expression in the Hebrew Bible* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns 1998), 84–85. Similarly, Nahum M. Sarna observes that the Hyksos' experience "had a profound effect upon the national psychology [of Egypt]" ("Exploring Exodus: The Oppression," *BA* 49.2 [1986]: 68–80, here 70). In contrast, the biblical claim that close to half the entire population of Egypt left that country occurs without note! See Redford, *Egypt, Canaan, and Israel*, 408. On how Egypt's ensuing domination of Canaan might have affected perceptions of interaction with Egypt, thus laying the foundations for the ideologies of Exodus, see esp. Nadav Na'aman, "The Exodus Story: Between Historical Memory and Historiographical Composition," *JANER* 11 (2011): 39–69.

Bible could easily have justified the event. Donald B. Redford suggests a subconscious modification of the details of the domination of Egypt by the Hyksos and their subsequent expulsion to dissociate from a memory of conquest as opposed to a "peaceful descent" into Egypt leading to political control.[39] The semantics, however, somewhat disarm the biblical writers in their literary retrospective, in that Redford would have them slaves to monolithic collective memories rather than affording them the ability to shape their memories accordingly.

Although Redford may be correct to suggest that "face saving" plays a part in the biblical recollection, we can be certain only of locating the modification of any details remembered (that is, remembered by Israel) in a much later historical context than Redford suggests.[40] In addition, we should consider the likelihood that we are witnessing in the Bible the purposeful recollection of only one (major) aspect of the Hyksos story—expulsion. While it cannot be stated with certainty that the biblical writers had no awareness of the domination of these ancestors over Egypt, there should be little doubt that their concern was with a (dislocated) memory of expulsion with which correlating information from ancient Egypt can be confidently associated. To assert, however, that the story of Joseph's success relates to a memory of the precursor to the Hyksos conquest is to misinterpret the story of Joseph, which—though addressing in its ideological context the dichotomous concerns of diaspora communities regarding the potential for success in an alien land and a (perceived) desire to return to their ancestral home—is best understood in its literary context as a device bolstering the motif of political (and historical) transition.[41]

What the writers are concerned with "remembering" is a migration from Egypt, recast in terms of divine intervention and liberation from oppression. This is clearly not the story of driving out the Hyksos kings of the Eighteenth Dynasty,

[39] Redford, *Egypt, Canaan, and Israel*, 413.

[40] Of course, Redford is speaking generally of a survival of these memories "in the folklore of the Canaanite population of the southern Levant," and he refers to the Phoenician legend of Io (significantly preserving a connection with the last Hyksos king, Apophis) as well as other relevant stories preserved, for example, by Strabo and Diodorus (*Egypt, Canaan, and Israel*, 412–13).

[41] This is not the place to elaborate on this motif, which I shall do in a forthcoming work. On the Joseph story as a late (exilic or postexilic) "novella" (albeit for some a redaction of an earlier version), see Rainer Albertz, *Israel in Exile: The History and Literature of the Sixth Century B.C.E.,* trans. David Green, SBLStBL 3 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003); also Hans-Christoph Schmitt, *Die Nichtpriesterliche Josephsgeschichte: Ein Beitrag zur neuesten Pentateuchkritik,* BZAW 154 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1980). An important textual analysis of the Joseph story (including an extensive German-language bibliography) can be found in Konrad Schmid, "The So-Called Yahwist and the Literary Gap between Genesis and Exodus," trans. Anselm C. Hagedorn, in *A Farewell to the Yahwist? The Composition of the Pentateuch in Recent European Interpretation,* ed. Thomas B. Dozeman and Konrad Schmid, SymS 34 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006), 29–50.

something that must have been a tumultuous event for the people both of Egypt and of Palestine (especially since it eventually led to Egyptian dominance of Syria-Palestine). What became important for the Asiatic (or Canaanite) elements who became or were incorporated into developing Israel was the act of leaving Egypt—no matter the reason—and settling in the highlands of Palestine (a settlement to which conquest narratives were later attached).[42] This is the only truth that resonated, especially when Egypt came to dominate the region for centuries afterward. Perhaps in this context any idea of reversing the situation in earthly terms (that is, physically dominating Egypt) faded away until it was relegated to the realm and the will of the divine; but when it comes to the biblical recollection of leaving Egypt, we are dealing with a composite retrospective of a number of identifiable historical contexts in which the (latent) memory is purposefully recalled and shaped in a specific way to complement the context of recollection.[43] In other words, it is the combination of many (later) contextual reflections historically (and ideologically) disconnected from the Hyksos experience, an experience that is simply one of the pieces contributing to this composite retrospective.[44] Faint and piecemeal memories of the Hyksos' rise to power in Egypt may certainly have survived in general terms among the people of Canaan (who would have reason to appropriate stories of Asiatics dominating Egypt), but any transmission to "Israelite" lore that may have occurred is conspicuously ignorant of their very own Jacob as a king or any

[42] It is certainly possible, as Redford suggests, that it is to the memory of the expulsion of the Hyksos that we owe many legends not only of military encounters with Egyptian forces but also of origins in Egypt (*Egypt, Canaan, and Israel*, 412). But while the former may be memories of any number of encounters with Egypt spanning the fifteenth to twelfth centuries' dominance over Canaan, the latter may be interpreted in the contexts of popular claims to Egypt's great antiquity, particularly from the times of Hellenistic and Roman hegemony over that ancient nation. On Diodorus, see, e.g., Erich S. Gruen, *Rethinking the Other in Antiquity,* Martin Classical Lectures (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 90–99. It should also be borne in mind, however, that, when it comes to external reflections during these later periods on the origins of Israel or "the Jews," there might be some dependence on the (earlier) biblical traditions themselves (ibid., 251).

[43] This application of latent memories seems to draw from Sigmund Freud's theories on latency (for convenience, see the extract from "Moses and Monotheism" in *The Collective Memory Reader,* ed. Jeffrey K. Olick, Vered Vinitzky-Seroussi, and Daniel Levy [New York: Oxford University Press, 2011], 85–88); and Friedrich Nietzsche's imagery of "islands" of "embellished facts" (*On the Advantage and Disadvantage of History for Life,* trans. Peter Preuss [Indianapolis: Hackett, 1980], 17) surviving due to their importance for the perpetuation of the identity of a given group.

[44] See Donald B. Redford, "Some Observations on the Traditions Surrounding 'Israel in Egypt,'" in *Judah and the Judeans in the Achaemenid Period: Negotiating Identity in an International Context,* ed. Oded Lipschits, Gary N. Knoppers, and Manfred Oeming [Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2011], 279–364, here 309): "References to the Hyksos ought to be treated as tangential and in no way indicative of anything other than false association."

sort of political or military leader.[45] This would be a momentous omission for the biblical writers to make of the man who assumes the eponym Israel and is father of the twelve tribes.

V. Conclusion

Perhaps, then, the considerably hazy memories of the Hyksos' control of and expulsion from Egypt were indeed incorporated into the biblical story of Joseph's rise to power and Jacob's descent into Egypt. If so, I would argue that this was purposefully done with a view to lending credence to a story of Israel's origins for which there was no other evidence in the ancient world. The historical truth claims of the writers would have needed something of note to which they could attach their foundation myths. The fact that we can see in these stories the echoes of the Hyksos' experience suggests the resonance of a memory of that experience in the collective memory of (all of) the people of Palestine.[46] The details were surely lost (they would otherwise have had considerable ideological weight for the biblical writers), but there was enough information of which to assume ownership in the right context. In this regard, there is ample reason to identify the Hyksos' sojourn in and subsequent expulsion from Egypt as contributing to the evolution of the exodus myth—if not as the point of origin of that myth—but only in the shadowy realms of embryonic memory. The Hyksos' experience in Egypt was an event completely irrelevant to the composers of the Jacob *toledot* and one completely unknown to their mid-first-millennium BCE audience. Had they been aware of it, it would have both disrupted the chronology of the Pentateuch and overshadowed the didactic and theological purpose of stories relevant to their contemporary experience(s). It is to Josephus that we owe the explicit alignment of the Hyksos in Egypt with the ancestors of Israel, although later compilers of Manetho's work might have drawn the same conclusions independently. Certainly, the evidence of this Asiatic dynasty in Egypt would have been uncovered in due course, but, without either a Bible or a copy of Josephus in one hand, the motivations for excavation and the ensuing interpretations of finds would likely have been quite different.

[45] See Assmann, *Mind of Egypt*, 198.

[46] Similar to the argument made by Na'aman that "the supposition that such early and deeply entrenched common Israelite religious consciousness could have grown from the experience of a small group does not make sense"—and here he is speaking of the "memory" of coming out of Egypt—any memories of the Hyksos expulsion should be understood in a wider context of its (lasting) effect on the people of ancient Palestine *from whom Israel emerged and developed* ("Exodus Story," 43). While Assmann states that the Hebrews "inherited" the traditions of the Hyksos (*Mind of Egypt,* 283), we should be careful not to marginalize any such inheritance in terms of a transition from one ethno-religious identity to another.

While the critical analysis of the accounts of the expulsion of these Asiatics may not be necessary for appreciating the origins of the ethnic identity of Israel, it is nonetheless fundamental for understanding how those accounts shaped the cultural memory of Israel.[47]

[47] The term *cultural memory* is becoming so popular in studies of the Hebrew Bible that sometimes its meaning can be confused, particularly when it is used alongside the term *collective memory*. It is important to recognize that the latter does not necessarily inform expressions of cultural distinction. A cultural memory is a codified or "sacralized" account of a past event through which a group defines and distinguishes itself. Cultural memory is that which makes the past present, and its most tangible manifestations can be seen in ritual, ceremony, and (religious) festivals. An excellent volume on the subject is Jan Assmann's *Religion and Cultural Memory: Ten Studies,* trans. Rodney Livingstone (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006). Memory studies in general is the subject of an important collection of essays and extracts compiled in Olick, Vinitzky-Seroussi, and Levy, *Collective Memory Reader*.