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When Archaeology Interacted with the Bible: A Study of the Search for the City of Raamses of Exodus 1:11 in the Searcher's Socio Political Context

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WHEN ARCHAEOLOGY INTERACTED WITH THE BIBLE—A STUDY OF THE
SEARCH FOR THE CITY OF RAAMSES OF EXODUS 1:11 IN
THE RESEARCHER’S SOCIO-POLITICAL CONTEXT

A Thesis
Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
Georg Filippou
2019
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APPROVAL BY THE COMMITTEE:

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To my wife Carina and my children Alexander, Anna, and Andreas
who supported me while doing research and writing this
thesis during the summer-months of 2019.
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Ancient Egypt, with its history and inhabitants, has for centuries fascinated people of all ages and social backgrounds. In the western world, the major interest emerged when Napoleon, towards the end of the 1700s, undertook a military campaign in Egypt together with his soldiers and a large group of scientists and researchers he brought with him. The artifacts recovered, stories told, and publications produced by these travelers fascinated Europe. Reports from later explorers and archaeological excavations have increased our knowledge and brought artifacts to many museums around the world. Publications about the ancient Egyptians, their temples, monuments, hieroglyphic inscriptions, but also everyday life and culture, never stop coming from the printing presses. The discovery of the remains from Pharaoh Tutankhamun’s undisturbed tomb in the 1920s caused major headlines, but also the discovery of many smaller artifacts in Egypt today, still in our modern time, are regularly reported in the news. It is as if both professional scholars and laypeople are eagerly waiting for the next fascinating discovery revealing more secrets from the ancient days of this northeastern African country. The interest in ancient Egypt may be deeper than mere fascination about a peculiar people and their culture, which existed for almost three thousand years; it may be that their civilization touches the depth of our souls and brings us in contact with traces of our origin, linking us with the forgotten days of humankind.
Not only has Egypt itself created links to past times, for thousands of years the fascinating narratives of the Old Testament and the Israelites in Egypt have added to the general interest in Egypt’s past. The many aspects from the life of Joseph, the son of the patriarch Jacob, ending up as a slave and then becoming the vizier as pharaoh’s right hand, have thrilled both children and adults. The same is true of Moses, almost killed as an infant by a new pharaoh but saved by the princess and later placed in leadership of the people of Israel leaving their bondage. These narratives from the books of Genesis and Exodus have forever a place among literature with a worldwide distribution through the Bible. The narratives also connect millions of Jews and Christians with their origin whether built on genealogy or on faith. Interest in the biblical narratives, which avoid naming any of the pharaohs involved and (as far as we know today) left no direct and clear traces to be found by archaeologists, has produced volumes of research, publications, and doctoral dissertations worldwide, and still does.

However, some verses in the Bible reveal information that could be used by archaeologists for scientific research. The Bible mentions many geographical locations in connection to the Israelites and the route of the Exodus. While the people of Israel may not have left any traceable objects or remains when they passed by a geographical location, the text in Exodus 1:11 stands out in a specific way. The verse informs us about a particular event in the lives of the Israelites: “Therefore they set taskmasters over them to afflict them with heavy burdens. They built for Pharaoh store cities, Pithom and Raamses” (ESV)¹ Remains of a city can often be found—this study will deal with the search for the city of Raamses.

The purpose of this thesis is twofold. First, I will research what a selected group of authors and scholars has stated regarding their search for the biblical city of Raamses.
This step will involve research of the motive of those researchers who attempted to match Raamses of Exod 1:11 with geographical locations in Egypt, to follow their search within the social and political context of these scholars. Second, based on these scholars’ research, I will attempt to discover what happened when Bible and archaeology interacted in the search for the city of Raamses.

The study begins with some pages of background. There, I have included a section covering the many geographical names we will encounter on this topic and their locations. Next, I provide a short introduction to archaeology and then follows the description of a selected group of scholars and their research. I have divided the study into fifty-year periods. The first three scholars covered, Gerardus Mercator, Edward Robinson, and Carl Richard Lepsius, published mainly before 1850. Then we will follow three other scholars, Frederick Charles Cook, Eduard Naville, and John William Dawson, who mainly published between 1850 and 1900, etc., until today. Since many of these scholars published also before and after the period in which they are considered in the present study, I have not followed these somewhat artificial divisions of fifty-year periods too rigidly but sometimes included what they have written later. I have chosen this approach in order to identify some of the major steps in the search for the city of Raamses as well as the development of the relationship between the Bible and archaeology. Each chapter includes a summary of the respective period regarding the views of archaeology for that time-period. Towards the end of the study, before the main conclusion, I include a final discussion about archaeology and the Bible. That chapter is based both on the scholars followed in this study but also on a wider context of what happened when archaeology interacted with the Bible.
The present topic grows out of my personal interest in Egypt and a wish to know more about the search for the city of Raamses. In addition, my interest in archaeology connected to the biblical countries has fascinated me since my youth. Archaeology, in my younger days, was used in writings and lectures in a way that gave the impression that archaeology proved the Bible to be true. However, today literature about the Bible and the biblical countries often refer to archaeology for disproving the Bible and the biblical narratives. This change prompted in me a wish to find out more about the forces that have been involved in what has been called Biblical Archaeology. In this day and age, with a scientific worldview and where millions of people still view the biblical material as describing historic events, I wished to research the interaction between archaeology and the Bible.

When studying, I found that archaeology during its early years, to a large extent, sprung out of the context of the Bible while it lately has been carried out from a scientific context. This change of context has challenged both the definition and the purpose of archaeology in the countries of the Bible, but also, and especially, Biblical Archaeology and faith in the Bible. However, an interest in archaeology remains and not only do professionals clearly rely on archaeology for establishing a background for the biblical narratives but also the public is interested in connections between the Bible and archaeology. This topic of the relationship between the Bible and archeology is vast and is more suitable for a doctoral dissertation (or several). However, this study will cover this extensive topic only in connection to the fascinating search for the city of Raamses. This study is important as it: (1) gives a valuable historical summary of the different steps involved in the search for the city of Raamses, (2) helps us to get to know and value the many enthusiastic persons who sometimes even risked their lives while exploring Egypt
or working in archaeological expeditions, (3) gives an understanding of how archaeology was and is viewed in relation to biblical studies, (4) shows that the early and sometimes naïve archaeological conclusions have matured and today have become as scientific as in any other discipline, (5) gives a general insight into the development of archaeological research methods, and (6) makes the reader aware of the extent to which archaeology can and should be used in connection to the biblical narratives.

The present study could have been even longer since, of course, more scholars than the ones covered have been involved in research for the city of Raamses. However, the scholars we will follow present a representative picture of both the search for the city of Raamses and their views of archaeology. I have attempted to select scholars who traveled and explored Egypt and Egyptian locations mentioned in the Bible (especially in the early days), in later periods those who were involved in excavations searching for the city, or have been influential in connection to archaeology and its relation to the city of Raamses of Exod 1:11. I have mainly researched the vast published material in English but also several sources written in German. Due to my lack of knowledge in French, only a few French sources have been consulted.

It is my hope that the reader will become as fascinated as I am by ancient Egypt. I also hope that the archaeological research for the city of Raamses and its connection to the Bible will bring a deeper understanding of the biblical material as well as of archaeology.
CHAPTER TWO

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Geography

The following pages will give a brief introduction of the geography of the Egyptian Delta. Here follows a description in order to help the reader to grasp the locations and names of various cities and geographical areas of both ancient and modern Egypt.

Illustration 1. The Nile Delta in ancient times with its several branches.

Picture: Kelvin Case. CC Public domain.
Today, the river Nile has two branches. In the time of ancient Egypt, the river had as many as seven branches (the Canopic, the Bolbitic, the Sebennytic, the Phanitic, the Mendesian, the Tanitic, and the Pelusiac). During the history of the country, the Egyptians built many cities near these branches of the river. The Pelusiac, the most eastern branch, stretched in a northeastern direction to the northeast end of the country (Hassan 2001: 18).

Illustration 2. Map of the Delta of Egypt

The Nile Delta in ancient times with its several branches and with some of the cities that grew up in the area. Note that not all cities existed at the same time.

Picture: Original picture by Jeff Dahl, CC 3.0. A few more locations have been added to the original picture. License: https://creativecommons.org/share-your-work/licensing-considerations/compatible-licenses.
The coming pages will cover the following locations:

**Abou Hamad/Abou Hammad**: A place east of modern Zagazig (northeast of Cairo) in the western part of Wadi Tumilat.

**Abu-Keshêb**: The same site as the modern Tell el-Maskhuta, which earlier carried the name Ahou Kachah, Abou Kachab, Abou Keycheyd, or Abu Keiseheib (Tell el-Maschuta 2019; Lepsius 1853: 435, footnote 1; Naville 1903: 1).

**Avaris**: The old capital of the Hyksos, who ruled Egypt during the fifteenth dynasty. It is located at modern Tell el Daba’, along the Pelusiac branch of the Nile. The name Avaris was also used by later dynasties.

**Bubastis**: The Greek name for the Egyptian city Per Bastet (the house of Bastet) in the area of modern Zagazig in the eastern Delta (Tietze 2001: 208).

**Goshen**: The name is not found in Egyptian sources. If the “land of Rameses” of Gen 47:11 is the same area as “the land of Goshen” of Gen 45:10, then Goshen was most probably located in the eastern part of the Delta, and most probably in the area where the city of Piramesse was later located (Ward 1992: 1076–77).


**Heroonpolis** (Heraopolis): The Greek name for Pithom.

**Land of Goshen**: Se “Goshen” above.

**Land of Rameses**: Se “Goshen” above.

**Pelusium:** An ancient city in the very northeast of Egypt (30 to 40 kilometers east of the Suez Canal) and east of the Pelusiac branch of the Nile where the river entered into the Mediterranean (Melzer 1992: 221).

**Piramesse** (Pi-Ramesse/Per-Ramses): The longer Egyptian name of the city was “House of Ramesses Beloved of Amun, Great of Victories” (Hoffmeier 2005: 53). Pi means “house.” The name of the city is often shortened to House of Ramesses/Piramesse, or similar variants, in more modern descriptions of Egypt. The city was located along the now dry Pelusiac branch of the Nile about 100 kilometers northeast of Cairo and 80 kilometers west of Ismailia on the Suez Canal (Pusch and Herold 1999: 647). It was located just a few kilometers north/northeast of Avaris. When Piramesse was built, Avaris was incorporated and held the harbor of Piramesse.

**Pithom** (*pr-itm*): The name is generally believed to be the Hebrew name with the meaning house or temple of Atum (Hoffmeier 2005: 54). According to Exod 1:11, the city was built by the Israelites. The modern location is debated. It is generally believed to be modern Tell er-Retebah or Tell el-Maskhuta. Lately it has been argued that Pithom moved its location and was first located at Tell er-Retebah and then relocated to Tell el-Maskhuta (Hoffmeier 2005: 64; Bietak 2015: 31).

**Qantir** (*Khatana-Qantir*): The modern name of the area for the location of an ancient city, which today is accepted to be Piramesse, the great city built by Ramses II. Piramesse was located along the now dry Pelusiac branch of the Nile about 100 kilometers northeast of Cairo and 80 kilometers west of Ismailia on the Suez Canal (Pusch and Herold 1999: 647). Piramesse incorporated the older Avaris (the area of present day Khatana), which held the harbor of Piramesse.
**Raamses:** A city built by the Israelites, according to Exod 1:11. Among those accepting this reference as historical, there are generally two views regarding its location. Adherents to an early Exodus in the fifteenth century generally regard the city of Raamses as being an updated name for the ancient Avaris (which later was incorporated with the city of Piramesse). Those adhering to a late Exodus in the thirteenth century generally believe that the city of Raamses is the same city as Piramesse. Liberal scholarship, to a wide extent, does not view the city of Exod 1:11 as referring to an historical city at all.

**Saft el Henneh:** Modern Saft AlHinnah lies between modern Zagazig and Abou Hammad in the western Wadi Tumilat.

**Sile:** A frontier fortress at the border of Egypt. It is probably the modern Tell el-Hebwa located in the northeast Delta between Pelusium and Qantir (Bietak 2001b: 140; Gnirs 2001: 405).

**Tanis:** A city in the northeast of the Delta, modern day San el-Hagar. Tanis became the capital of Egypt from about 1080 B.C. (Graham 2001: 348) and is called Zoan in the Bible, for example in Ps 78:12, 43.

**Tell el Daba’:** The modern name of the location of the old Hyksos capital called Avaris, which lay along the Pelusiac branch of the Nile. Tell el Daba’ is located just a few kilometers south/southwest of modern day Qantir. The Egyptians called the city hwt w’rt, which in Greek (and English) has become Avaris (Aling 1982: 135). When Piramesse later was built, Tell el Daba‘ was one of the areas of the greater Piramesse, where also the harbor of Piramesse was located.

**Tell el-Maskhuta:** The modern name of an ancient city in the east part of the Delta along Wadi Tumilat.
**Tell er-Retebah:** The modern name of an ancient city, west of Tell el-Maskhuta, in the east part of the Delta along Wadi Tumilat.

**Wadi Tumilat:** The wadi and valley are probably in the location of an earlier branch of the Nile that stretched from the Delta to north of Suez (Hassan 2001: 18). A built canal, joining the Nile with the Red Sea, followed Wadi Tumilat.

**Zoan:** A city mentioned in the Bible in Ps 78:12, 43; Isa 19:11, 13; 30:4; Ezek 30:14. This is the same city as Tanis and located in the northeast of the Delta, modern day San el-Hagar. Zoan/Tanis became the capital of Egypt from about 1080 B.C. (Graham 2001: 348; Montet 1968a: 52–53). “The fields of Zoan” of the Bible is a literal translation of the Egyptian “Tanis Prairie” (Montet 1968a: 53).

### A Brief Introduction to Archaeology

In order to discuss what happens when archaeology and the Bible interact, we first need to discuss and define what archaeology consists of in the context of the present study. To simplify, archaeology *today* has three stages: (1) Excavation. Researchers carry out excavations in various geographical locations. This study will only cover excavations in the countries mentioned in the Bible, and specifically carried out in northern Egypt. Seen from the excavator’s point of view, there exist, of course, several more stages, such as the many steps of preparation before an excavation can begin. Those steps are, however, taken “behind the stage” in order to be able to undertake the excavation, (2) Discoveries. An excavation today does not only find artifacts and human remains from ancient times, but also collects animal bones, seeds, etc. Excavators also take detailed notes of where artifacts were discovered, make drawings and take pictures of a site, note the kind of soil of the locus, record changes in color of the soil etc. An excavation
produces many facts that need to be studied, and (3) Publication and presentation of the results from the excavation. This step includes *interpretation* of what was found and discovered by the excavation. It is common that facts are later reinterpreted either by the excavators themselves or by other scholars.

Archaeology as a science has developed rapidly, especially since the First World War (Wright 1957: 25) and excavations today are even more complex in a way that early archaeologists could never have imagined. Present archaeological research often involves many different kinds of specialists and technical tools in order to extract as much information as possible from a dig. To this has to be added the development of linguistics in understanding of the different ancient languages, which has brought an enormous contribution to the understanding of the antiquity.

The results from the many excavations done thus far have helped in explaining what kind of lives ancient people lived and more specifically what kind of houses they built, which crops they grew, what animals they tended, their technology and economy, their religion and which gods they served, how they dressed, etc. Archaeology has also assisted in creating chronology, placing civilizations and historical events on a timeline with the kind of dating-system used today.

Literature about the Bible will, sooner or later, introduce a reader to the term “Biblical Archaeology.” Albright (1966: 1) in the 1960s stated, “Biblical archaeology covers all the lands mentioned in the Bible, and is thus co-extensive with the cradle of civilization. This region extends from the western Mediterranean to India, and from southern Russia to Ethiopia and the Indian Ocean. Excavations in every part of this extensive area throw some light, directly or indirectly, on the Bible.” In later decades there has been much discussion regarding the role and definition of Biblical Archaeology,
whether it should even carry that name and whether it has been “done critically or naively” (Lance 1982: 100). Biblical Archaeology became a heavily debated term and concept. This aspect will be commented on later in this study. Suffice it to say that Biblical Archaeology, for many, the same as archaeology carried out in the countries of the Bible, has been interested in the “material remains relating to the biblical period” (Amitai 1985: 4). When we begin our study, interest in the material remains, in reality often meant treasure hunting in order to find fascinating (often large) artifacts for display in western museums—thousands of artifacts were removed from the countries they were found in and shipped to other countries.

The present day wide and modern definition of archaeology with its tools of research is difficult to apply when we trace the early days of archaeology and exploration of the countries of the ancient Near East. Some of the early scholars of this present study were not undertaking archaeological excavations at all. They may or may not have travelled in the biblical countries, but they described the land and its geography and produced maps and writings that created a better understanding of the narratives of the Bible and also of other ancient writings such as those by Josephus, Manetho, and Herodotus. The more we approach our time, scholars described in this study will move step-by-step into the more “rigid” forms of archaeology with its methods described above.

Before entering into the next section, we need to say a few words about interpretations made by explorers and archaeologists (which is true also about the nonprofessional). Interpretation is not done in a vacuum since one cannot separate the interpreter from the interpretation; it is done from the horizon and position of the interpreter. The publication and presentation of an excavation can reveal much, not only
about the culture and site studied, but also much about the interpreter/archaeologist and his/her society (Silberman 1997a: 138). As will be shown below in the study, both biblical archaeologists and researchers of other schools have been accused of interpreting in a way that has served their own interests.

To summarize, an explorer or archaeologist can contribute in presenting ancient history and geography and can be described as “a bridge-builder and interpreter, making available the insights gained from one’s archeological study to other scholars and to the general public” (Lance 1982: 100). The following pages will introduce us to scholars who all moved between the early days of exploring and early forms of archaeology up to our days of detailed archaeological work. They all contributed and some, who are still active today, continue to contribute to what happens when archaeology and the Bible interact, and specifically how to understand geographical locations, such as the city of “Raamses” of Exod 1:11 and the city of Piramesse mentioned in Egyptian papyri and on monuments.
CHAPTER THREE

THE SEARCH FOR THE CITY OF RAAMSES UP TO ABOUT 1850

The City of “Raamses” and “the land of Rameses” in Old Documents

The Bible (Masoretic Text) reads, “They built for Pharaoh store cities, Pithom and Raamses (רַעַמְסֶס)” (Exod 1:11b). Genesis 47:11 reads, “Then Joseph settled his father and his brothers and gave them a possession in the land of Egypt, in the best of the land, in the land of Rameses (רָמֶסֶס), as Pharaoh had commanded.” We note the difference in spelling between the two names. Also Exod 12:37, Num 33:3, and 33:5 all have the spelling Rameses (רָמֶסֶס) as in Gen 47:11. The Septuagint (LXX) of Exod 1:11 has a slightly different text, “And they built fortified cities for Pharaoh [sic], both Pithom and Ramesses (Ῥαμεσση) and On, which is Heliopolis” (Pietersma and Wright 2007: 52; Rahlfs 1979: 86). The LXX has the name written as “Ramesses” also in Gen 47:11; Exod 12:37; Num 33:3, 5, thus there is no difference in spelling between the names in the Greek version of the Bible.

The Targum Neophyti 1 consists of oral traditions written down probably during the first centuries A.D. Neophyti 1 in Exod 1:11 replaces Pithom with the name Tanis and Raamses with Pelusium (Pelusio) and reads, “And they set over them task-masters so that they oppress them with labours. And they built tall cities for Pharaoh: Tanis and Pelusium” (Castro 1970: 407). Also in Gen 47:11, Exod 12:37, and Num 33:3, 5 the name Rameses is replaced with Pelusium. We note that sometime in history, a tradition had
developed that promoted the belief Tanis to be the location for Pithom and Pelusium for the city of Raamses. The Egyptian writer Herodotus (fifth century B.C.) is the first to use the name Pelusium. Its Demotic form can be found earliest in the Ptolemaic era (Meltzer 1992: 222). While not sufficient information is known about the city of Pelusium today, it seems not to have been established until the first half of the first millennium B.C. In its best days, it was an important location for trading and it was the second most important and busy port after Alexandria (Grzymski 1997). Both the Targum Neophyti 1 and the LXX seem to have a tradition of updating older geographical names with names more frequently used and understood at the time of production of these documents. For example, the LXX has also removed the Hebrew name Goshen and replaced it with the Arabic Gesem (Ward 1992: 1077). With updating of geographical names, probably misunderstandings regarding the locations of these cities also came to be involved. When a major ancient city no longer existed, later writers seem to have thought that major cities that later existed or existed in the time of these authors’ were the same as the cities mentioned in older manuscripts.

The name Rameses is mentioned by the author of the Apocryphal book Judith, which states that Nebuchadnezzar, in a war against Arphaxad, asked for military help from many locations of his empire. Judith 1:9–10 mentions that the Babylonian king also asked for support from “Tahpanhes, Rameses, and all the land of Goshen, beyond Tanis and Memphis, and all those living in Egypt as far away as the borders of Ethiopia” (Moore 1985: 121–22).

Several of the geographical names mentioned in this study are found in the writings of ancient authors. As mentioned above, Herodotus referred to Pelusium. He also mentioned the city of Tanis (Hist 2.166). Manetho (probably third century B.C.) in his
History of Egypt wrote about a Ramessês (probably Ramses II) and that the king went to Pelusium (Hist 98, 101). Manetho also mentioned the city of Avaris in connection to the foreign shepherd people, the Hyksos, who took Egypt and founded the city of “Auaris” (Αὔαρις) (Hist 78, 86).

The Jewish historian Josephus in his book Against Apion used much material from Manetho. Josephus (AgAp 1.86) mentioned a place called Auaris (Αὔαρις) in connection to “the shepherds” (Hyksos) leaving Egypt. Josephus (AgAp 1.288–292) also drew information from the Stoic philosopher Chaeremon and mentioned Pelusium in connection with an Egyptian king “Ramesses,” who banished 250,000 people from the country, but also another Ramesses (a son of the other Ramesses) who finally drew 200,000 Jews out of the country into Syria. Josephus apparently believed that the Hyksos were the same people as the Israelites and seemed to connect the event with a Ramesses (Ramses II?). He wrote, “The so-called shepherds, our ancestors, left Egypt and settled in our country” (AgAp 1:103).

While many of the names of the ancient cities were kept in memory and documented in ancient writings, the location of several of these cities had been lost to history. Regarding Piramesse, the capital city of Ramses II, not only had the location of the city been lost to later generations; it also seems as if the memory of the existence of the city had been lost. Ancient authors who commented on the Israelites leaving Egypt had started to associate the Raamses of Exod 1:11 with other Egyptian cities, possibly since building material from Piramesse was brought and reused at both Tanis and Bubastis. This building material carried inscriptions from Piramesse and as late as the third century B.C. a memory of Piramesse was kept alive. However, these objects from Piramesse may have been accessible only to a few priests in Egypt and not to the general
audience (Kitchen 2003: 256; Bietak 2015: 29–30).\(^3\) If the location of Piramesse was lost and ancient writers used later toponyms for the city, we may wonder how much of the identity of Piramesse remained. Josephus had misunderstood events of the history and connected the Israelites to the city of Avaris because he thought the Hyksos and the Israelites were the same people. The author of Psalm 78, mentioning the Israelites in connection to the “fields of Zoan,” may or may not have misunderstood the location for the events of the Bible, but expressed it in a way understood by contemporary readers and applied a toponym used in his time.\(^4\)

When it was possible to read hieroglyphs again, ancient Egyptian writings began to reveal the existence and life of the Ramesside capital:

I arrived at Pi-Ramesse-miamun [wrote the scribe Pabas], and I found it in perfect condition. It is a noble peerless domain, after the fashion of Thebes. Re himself founded this delightful residence. What a joy to live there! Everything one could wish for, great and small is there. Come let us fest in its honour—let us have the fest of heaven and of the beginnings of the season. How fortunate the day of thy life, how pleasant thy voice when thou didst ordain the building of Pi-Ramesse-miamun, a marvel for every foreign land, the uttermost point of Egypt, the building beautiful with balconies, lapis-lazuli and turquoise, the place where the cavalry are instructed, where infantry are assembled, the resting-place of the archers, and of thy ships which bring thee tributes. (Montet 1968b: 171–72)\(^5\)

With the previous pages of geographical information, the brief introduction to archaeology and a short review of the geographical names in question in other ancient writings, it is time to study the work of a few selected researchers and archaeologists.
What did Gerardus Mercator, Edward Robinson, and Carl Richard Lepsius Search?

Mercator’s *Terrae Sanctae*

Gerardus Mercator (1512–1594), born in present day Belgium, is known especially for having created a new type of world map, which he published in 1569. He based his map on a “new projection which represented sailing courses of constant bearing (rhumb lines) as straight lines,” an invention still used on nautical maps today (Gerardus Mercator 2019). In connection to the present study, Mercator is also known for a map he created over the countries of the Bible. Printed Biblical maps of simpler forms had


The map marks all forty-two Israelite locations/camps during the Exodus, starting with Raamses. However, Mercator did not know the exact location for some of them and added that some of the locations were uncertain or unknown.

Source gallica.bnf.fr / National Library of France
appeared before the time Mercator produced a map of the land where the Israelites lived. The first such printed map appeared in 1525 (Crane 2002: 23–24, 83).

In 1537, Mercator published a beautiful map of Israel, Sinai, and northern Egypt. The map was “researched, engraved, printed and partly published by himself” (Gerardus Mercator 2019). The map is named *Terrae Sanctae* (Crane 2002: 92) and Mercator indicated all forty-two Hebrew camps connected with the Exodus, from the time of leaving Rameses (Exod 12:37; Num 33:3, 5) until the arrival at the Jordan River. At the

Illustration 4. Enlarged section of Mercator’s *Terrae Sanctae*.

At the bottom part, just above the Traianus amnis/Trajan’s river, Mercator marked the location of Raamses (written in Latin).  
Source gallica.bnf.fr / National Library of France.
first location, Mercator has written in Latin “Ramesses pagus quem filij Israhel sub Aegyptia captivitate aedificaverunt duarum & quadra ginta mansionum prima.” The translation should probably read, “The city of Raamses, which the sons of Israel built under Egyptian captivity, the first of forty-two dwelling places.”

Mercator did his own research in preparation for the map. He never travelled in the area, but received much of his information from Ziegler, an earlier mapmaker. In general, Mercator depended on his vast library that in the end consisted of about a thousand volumes, information he received from visitors, and correspondence in several languages (Gerardus Mercator 2019).

It is hard to know exactly how Mercator came to the location pointed out on the map and especially the location of the city of Raamses. Ziegler had left thirteen pages of notes regarding the journey of the Israelites, however, he had not produced locations for all camps along the Exodus route described in the book of Numbers (Crane 2002: 87). Mercator discovered that some of the information from Ziegler was wrong and he made corrections in producing his map. Nicholas Crane (2002: 87), the author of Mercator: The Man Who Mapped the Planet stated, “The only parts of the route which Mercator could plot with some element of certainty were the beginning and the end.”

Mercator placed Raamses just north of the Traianus amnis/Trajan’s canal. At least two pharaohs had attempted to build a canal but it was not until Persian time that Darius I succeeded. Many stelas in granite have been found along the waterway. The stelas have inscriptions made in hieroglyphic and cuneiform writing, identifying the Persian ruler as the builder of the canal. Trajan added a harbor in Old Cairo and connected it to the canal and then named the canal after himself. The waterway connected the river Nile with the Red Sea and was used as a trade route by the Romans and continued to exist a few
centuries after the Arabs had conquered Egypt (Sheehan 2010: 35–36). “The origins of Trajan’s canal lie in a much earlier Holocene eastern branch channel of the Nile that flowed through the Wadi Tumilat toward the depression of Lake Timsha and from there through the Bitter Lakes to the Gulf of Suez” (Sheehan 2010: 35). If, indeed, Mercator tried to point out the exact location of Raamses (it may be that he placed the city somewhere within an area of a possible location), he placed it not by the river Nile, but just north of the Wadi Tumilat, southwest of Bubastis and at the same time almost due north of the Red Sea.

Robinson Traveled to the Countries of the Bible

From the time of Mercator, many years passed until the American scholar Edward Robinson (1794–1863), along with Eli Smith, visited countries of the Bible. Robinson (1841: 76) wrote that his view goes far “to support the usual view of scholars at the present day, that the Land of Goshen lay along the Pelusiac arm of the Nile, on the east of the Delta, and was the part of Egypt nearest to Palestine.” Robinson (1841: 76) was convinced that the Land of Goshen was located in the area of the Nile. He believed that the children of Israel practiced irrigation and grew all the kinds of fruit and vegetables that they later missed and longed for during the wandering in the wilderness, figs, vines, and pomegranates. Since the Bible also mentions that they ate fish, Robinson took that as supporting an Israelite settlement close to the river Nile. He compared the list of foods of the Israelites with the foods of Egyptians in his time and found that they “corresponds remarkably…. All this goes to show, that the Israelites, when in Egypt, lived much as the Egyptians do now” (Robinson 1841: 77).
The only route from Goshen to the Red Sea was, according to Robinson, along the valley where the ancient canal had been located; he (Robinson 1841: 79) wrote, “The Israelites broke up from their rendezvous at Rameses…. Without stopping to inquire as to the identity of Rameses with Heroopolis, or the position of the latter place, it is enough for our purpose, that the former town (as is generally admitted) lay probably on the valley of the canal in the middle part, not far from the western extremity of the basin of the Bitter Lakes.” Robinson had understood that some believed that the city of Raamses may have been the same city as the city of Heroopolis/Heroonpolis. Since the location of Heroonpolis had been lost, Robinson did not spend time in trying to find the exact location of that city. For him it was enough to point out that the city of Raamses lay along the canal close to the western part of the Bitter Lakes, something he stated, “is generally admitted.” Robinson, however, did not explain on what basis it was generally admitted.

Based on Robinson’s location of Rameses, he stated that it was about thirty or thirty-five miles (fifty-six kilometers) from Rameses to the Sea. Robinson (1841: 80) wrote, “A large portion of the people were apparently already collected at Rameses, waiting for permission to depart, when the last great plague took place.” From there Robinson pursued describing the continuation of the Exodus; however, we continue to the next writer.

Lepsius’ Discoveries in Egypt

About four years after Robinson’s visit in Egypt, Carl Richard Lepsius (1810–1884) went to explore numerous sites in the country. Lepsius was a well-educated German scholar and Egyptologist. He wrote about his expedition in Egypt in his book Letters from Egypt, Ethiopia, and the Peninsula of Sinai. The book was published in
1853, but since the expedition took place during the years before 1850, we include it in the time-period in question for this study.

Lepsius had compared the Hebrew and hieroglyphic Egyptian writings and when commenting on the two cities Pithom and Raamses, he wrote, “The Hebrew name of the latter town is רעמסס, and is therefore exactly the same as that of King Ramses in hieroglyphics” (Lepsius 1853: 426). Lepsius concluded that the name of the city could not have been given before a pharaoh with that name had sat on the throne of Egypt. In accordance with that, he stated that the city could not have been built until the time of the nineteenth dynasty since the name Ramses was not used for pharaohs until that time. He wrote, “It seems to me, that we may now point out the historical relation of this town Ramses, with a particular King Ramses, among the many kings of that name. We shall, then, for the first time, learn the full significance of the passage” (Lepsius 1853: 426).

Lepsius had studied many of the ancient writers. He found that Manetho described how the first Hyksos king had fortified the border of eastern Egypt and founded a city east of the Bubastic (Pelusiac) arm in the Sethronic nome (district) and named the city Abaris. However, Lepsius believed that the right name for the nome should be the Saitic nome. Lepsius referred to Strabo and Ptolemy and found that the location of Avaris was in the northern part of the Bubastic/Pelusiac branch of the Nile. He had also noted that Eusebius pointed out that Jacob had sojourned in Raamses and that the city formerly had been called Abare (Lepsius 1853: 426–29). Lepsius (1853: 430) then stated, “To me, indeed, it seems very probable that it [Avaris] was the ancient name of Pelusium.” He is also aware of Josephus who believed that Avaris and Pelusium were the same cities. Lepsius (1853: 434), however, did not believe that Avaris was the same city as Raamses.
Lepsius and his expedition came to the ruins of Abu-Keshêb (Tell el-Maskhuta) in Egypt and he believed this was the old city of Raamses. Lepsius (1853: 438) wrote, “But that we may really seek for Ramses in the ruins of Abu-Keshêb is most decidedly confirmed by a monument which was found upon those very ruins as early as the time of the French expedition. It is a group of three figures cut out of a block of granite, which

Illustration 5. The monument from Tell el-Maskhuta.

The monument found in Abu-Keshêb (Tell el-Maskhuta) showing three figures cut out of a block of granite. King Ramses II is seated between the gods Ra and Tum. The shields of the Pharaoh are repeated six times in the inscriptions on the back.

represent the gods Ra and Tum, and between them the King Ramses II. The shields of
this the greatest of the Pharaohs are repeated six times in the inscriptions on the back.”
Lepsius concluded that the city of Raamses was built by the canal connecting the Nile
with the Red Sea. He also concluded that the builder was Ramses II who worshiped there
(showed on the monument) and gave the city its name. Lepsius (1853: 438–39) added that
it was hard to believe that Ramses I should have founded the city since he only reigned a
short time. Lepsius wrote that it was Ramses II who constructed the canal, and the cities
of Pithom and Ramses were constructed “in consequence of the new canal” (Lepsius
1853: 448). Lepsius stated:

Pithom, therefore, was situated at one end, and Ramses at the other, of the ancient
Nile canal, which was constructed by the great Pharaoh, Ramses-Miamun, in the land
of Goshen. Both were founded in consequence of the new canal, and their direct
connection in the Mosaic narrative, as well as the statement that they were built by the
Israelites, is most decidedly confirmed by the geographical circumstances which have
been exhibited. Taking it in a general point of view, there can be no doubt that the
Israelites were chiefly settled in that very country, namely, below Heliopolis, in the
neighbourhood of Bubastis (Tel Bastah) and of the modern Belbês. (Lepsius 1853:
448–49)

Lepsius continued:

The inference we have arrived at, that if the Israelites built these towns, they must
have been still in Egypt in the reign of King Ramses, who founded them, and that
they could not have departed several centuries previous, no longer rests upon the
name of one single town, which might be explained by an accidental inexactitude of
the writer, or by a confusion in dates, but upon the close connection of a series of
facts, which reciprocally support and explain one another. Hence the oppression took
place more especially under Ramses, and the Exodus resulting from it under his son
and successor Menephthes…. Moses only returned from Midian upon hearing of the
death of the first, and it seems that the event of the Exodus was directly connected
with the change of government. (Lepsius 1853: 449)

If Lepsius is correct, the city of Raamases was located along the canal and built by
the Israelites in the time of Ramses II. According to Lepsius, it follows that the Israelites
were still in Egypt during the beginning of the nineteenth dynasty, oppressed by Ramses II and with the Exodus taking place during the reign of Merneptah. Since Abu-Keshèb was viewed as the city of Ramses, Lepsius concluded that the Israelites left a different Egyptian town and walked in a different direction compared with those authors who believed that Raamses had been located at Pelusium (Lepsius 1853: 446–47).

**What Motivated Mercator, Robinson, and Lepsius to Locate the City of Raamses?**

**Mercator Mapped the World**

Gerardus Mercator (1512–1594) was born in present day Belgium and had been educated at the University of Louvain (present day Leuven). When he was in his twenties, he struggled with doubts. He saw contradictions between the teachings of Aristotle and what he found in his personal biblical studies and scientific observations.

Mercator had been born in a devout Christian family (Catholic) during the years when the Protestant reformation spread over Europe. He never stated that he was a Lutheran but probably sympathized with Protestantism (Gerardus Mercator 2019). “That Mercator had formed his own views there is no doubt. But it would be many years before he would commit those views to paper” (Crane 2002: 132). He was arrested in 1544 and put in prison for seven months charged with heresy. “His inclination to Protestantism, and frequent absences from Louvain to gather information for his maps, had aroused suspicions” (*Encyclopædia Britannica* 2002d: 26). The leadership of his university took his side and when released he was allowed to continue with his normal life with publication and studies in science. He left the conservative Catholic and anti-Lutheran city of Leuven; one of the reasons was probably the persecution he had experienced. He
settled down in the more tolerant and peaceful Duisburg, where he spent the remaining three decades of his life (Crane 2002: 153).

Mercator was married and he and his wife Barbara shared an enthusiasm for the Gospels (Crane 2002: 76). During the years, major portions of his income came from selling the terrestrial and celestial globes that were produced in vast numbers, so numerous, that many still exist today (Gerardus Mercator 2019). Mercator has been called “the first modern, scientific cartographer” (Crane 2002: xi) and the term Atlas, used for all types of maps today, comes from his description of the creation of the world and its following history (Encyclopædia Britannica 2002d: 26).

Mercator also worked with other areas of science than geography. “Mercator was the first to link historical dates of solar and lunar eclipses to Julian dates calculated mathematically from his knowledge of the motions of the sun, moon and Earth. He then fixed the dates of other events in Babylonian, Greek, Hebrew and Roman calendars relative to the eclipses that they recorded. The time origin was fixed from the genealogies of the Bible as 3,965 years before the birth of Christ. This huge volume (400 pages) was greeted with acclaim by scholars throughout Europe and Mercator himself considered it to be his greatest achievement up to that time” (Gerardus Mercator 2019).

Mercator had a broad field of interest and produced writings of different kinds, not only on geography, but also on philosophy, chronology and theology. For example, he wrote on both the Gospels and the Old Testament. While in Duisburg, he produced a Concordance of the Gospels and a detailed commentary on the first part of the book of Romans (Encyclopædia Britannica 2002d: 26). Mercator was different from other scholars of his time in that he did not travel much. He gained knowledge from his vast library that consisted of more than one thousand books and maps. He further learned from
personal meetings and correspondence in six different languages with “other scholars, statesmen, travelers, merchants and seamen” (Gerardus Mercator 2019).

Maps over Palestine were probably the most common printed map in Mercator’s day. Crane (2002: 83) stated, “Among geographers, the place where God first revealed Himself was also the first place which should be explored by the children of the Church of Jesus Christ.” On his map of Palestine and Egypt, Terrae Sanctae, Mercator made it clear that his intention of the map was to give a better understanding of both testaments (Crane 2002: 90). Crane (2002: 82) wrote, “Mercator knew Palestine better than any place outside the Low Countries. He had grown up with its miracles and revelations. He knew its history. Palestine had been the subject of the first map that most of his generation had ever seen. And like the Bible maps of this boyhood, his would show the route described in the Fourth Book of Moses. The immigrant boy from the Brethren house would begin his mapmaking career by recording the trek taken by the Israelites from bondage in Egypt to salvation in the Promised Land.” The map Mercator produced is very detailed. At the top of the map, Mercator wrote two verses from the Bible and included a picture of Jesus standing with a cross in his hand (see page 19). An earlier mapmaker, Ziegler, had left much information and coordinates for some of the locations of biblical sites. Mercator, however, found mistakes with parts of the information and he replaced some names of places with information found in a recent Latin translation. Sometimes Mercator found more than one location for most places and he had to find the “best-guess” for the right location (Crane 2002: 86–89).

To sum up, Mercator lived in a time when it was natural that one could be a firm believer in God and in the historicity of the Bible, and at the same time—without contradiction—be a respected scientist studying the creation of God. He was a child of his
time when well-educated scholars studied and wrote in many different areas of investigation and produced literature based on the Bible. The use of reason for coming to new knowledge goes back to the ancient Greek philosophers. During Mercator’s lifetime, Copernicus introduced the heliocentric view of the world, and the two centuries following Mercator’s death are counted as the Enlightenment when scholars similar to Mercator flourished and created much of the kind of scientific thinking taken for granted in our time.

So why did Mercator point out the location of the city of Raamses on his map? For Mercator, the narrative of the Israelites was history, the city of Raamses was a city that had existed and just waited to be placed on the right spot on a map. Mercator certainly included Raamses because he wanted readers of the Bible to know as exact as possible where the Israelites had built the city and to point out the location where the Exodus started.

Robinson’s Travels and Research

Edward Robinson (1794–1863), a well-educated American scholar, had studied both in Unites States and in Europe, at Göttingen, Halle, and Berlin (Schaff and Schaff 1959: 59). For example, he had studied law at Hamilton in New York. He taught Hebrew, Greek, and mathematics. He also taught literature and became professor-extraordinary of Biblical literature and librarian at Andover Theological Seminary. He was also an assistant in the production of several works on grammar and dictionaries to the Bible (Schaff and Schaff 1959: 59). His *Greek and English Lexicon of the New Testament* was for many years the standard authority in the United States and England (Edward Robinson 2019). He also authored *Harmony of the Four Gospels in Greek* (1845) and
Harmony of the four Gospels in English (1846), books that were important in his time (Encyclopædia Britannica 2002h: 112).

In 1841, Robinson published the book (in three volumes) Biblical Researches in Palestine, Mount Sinai and Arabia Petræa based on a journey taken in 1838. While not revealed in the title of the book, the journey also included travels in Egypt. The book became well-known since it was published at the same time in England, Germany and the United States (Encyclopædia Britannica 2002h: 112).

In the time when the Ottoman Empire still ruled, he visited the biblical countries together with Dr. Eli Smith, who was an Arabic scholar and missionary from the American Board in Syria. They travelled and researched every important location in Palestine and Syria, but also important places in Egypt. In October 1838, he returned to Europe and then for two years worked on Biblical Researchers in Palestine, Mount Sinai, and Arabia Petræa, a publication that built his name and reputation. The book was published in 1841. He visited Palestine again in 1852 for research and published in 1856 the second edition of the book Biblical Researchers, and in a supplemental volume, Later Biblical Researchers in Palestine and the Adjacent Regions (Schaff and Schaff 1959: 59).

The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia (Schaff and Schaff 1959: 60) states, “He was thorough and indefatigable in his investigations, skeptical of all monastic legends, reverent to God’s revelation…. He is probably the most distinguished Biblical scholar whom America has produced, indeed, one of the most distinguished of the nineteenth century.” Robinson and Smith located numerous ancient places mentioned by the biblical books. Robinson’s book gave him the reputation as a “Founder” of Biblical Archeology, and had an influence on following decades of archaeological excavations and studies. He
Further discovered the Siloam tunnel and Robinson’s Arch in Jerusalem. The Arch is named to honor him (Edward Robinson 2019).

The following quote from Robinson’s (1841: 46) Researchers in Palestine gives a good picture of the context of his childhood and youth, which built a foundation for his career:

As in the case of most of my countrymen, especially in New England, the scenes of the Bible had made a deep impression upon my mind from the earliest childhood; and afterwards in riper years this feeling had grown into a strong desire to visit in person the places so remarkable in the history of the human race. Indeed in no country of the world, perhaps, is such a feeling more widely diffused than in New England; in no country are the Scriptures better known, or more highly prized. From his earliest years the child is there accustomed not only to read the Bible for himself; but he also reads or listens to it in the morning and evening devotions of the family, in the daily village-school, in the Sunday-school and Bible-class, and in the weekly ministrations of the sanctuary. Hence, as he grows up, the names of Sinai, Jerusalem, Bethlehem, the Promised Land, become associated with his earliest recollections and holiest feelings.—With all this, in my own case, there had subsequently become connected a scientific motive. I had long meditated the preparation of a work on Biblical Geography; and wished to satisfy myself by personal observation, as to many points on which I could find no information in the books of travelers. This indeed grew to be the main object of our journey—the nucleus around which all our inquiries and observations clustered.

Robinson (1841: 377–78) described the way he performed his research:

We early adopted two general principles, by which to govern ourselves in our examination of the Holy Land. The first was, to avoid as far as possible all contact with the convents and the authority of the monks; to examine everywhere for ourselves with the Scriptures in our hands; and to apply for information solely to the native Arab population. The second was, to leave as much as possible the beaten track, and direct our journeys and researches to those portions of the country which had been least visited. By acting upon these two principles, we were able to arrive at many results that to us were new and unexpected; and it is these results alone, which give a value (if any it have) to the present work.

Robinson (1841: 379) further summarized the content of his book and wrote,

“This account contains nothing but what we ourselves saw, or what we learned on native authority; and is wholly drawn out from our notes written down upon the spot; together with such historical notices as I have been able to collect.”
We notice the words above, “in my own case, there had subsequently become connected a scientific motive.” Robinson was well educated and his own description of his work methods shows his scientific approach—he wanted to present a well-researched study that to a major extent was based on empirical methods. He is, however, not only a scientific explorer but also a believer in God and in the Bible.

Robinson had a firm faith in the biblical narratives and believed God could perform miracles. This is, for example, clear when he wrote about how the Israelites passed through the Red Sea. Robinson (1841: 82–83) stated, “The Lord, it is said, caused the sea to go (or flow out) by a strong east wind. The miracle therefore is represented as mediate; not a direct suspension of, or interference with the laws of nature, but a miraculous adaptation of those laws to produce a required result. It was wrought by natural means supernaturally applied.” While Robinson believed in a miracle in connection to the crossing of the Sea, he still made detailed mathematical calculations regarding how the crossing could have happened. Robinson (1841: 84) described how the about two million persons could have passed the sea; if each row of passing people consisted of one thousand persons, then there would have been a two-thousand-person long caravan covering perhaps not more than about three kilometers. In such a way, he wrote, they could have passed before the pursuing Egyptian army would have reached them.

In summary, Robinson was one of many Americans who had a firm belief in the historicity of the Bible. He was a believer from early childhood who in his work and thought-patterns followed empirical methods for his scientific research. For Robinson, God had acted in history in various geographical locations and Robinson not only wished, but also realized his dream, to place these on a map and to describe them in a book.
Similar to Mercator, he used reason and logic to extract information from both the Bible and from observations in the region of the biblical narratives, and then presented his results to the wider audience. Robinson’s book *Biblical Researchers in Palestine* was very well received, showing that his method of research was well appreciated in his time. He did not write much about the city of Raamses, but why did he mention the city and the Exodus from it? For him the Exodus was an historic event and geographical locations such as Goshen and the city of Raamses were names of places that had existed in history. Even if their exact locations had been lost to history, he presented information, based on which, he could point out their approximate position for his readers.

**Lepsius Researched Egypt**

Carl Richard Lepsius (1810–1884), a German scholar who had studied Greek and Roman archaeology at several German universities (Peck 2001: 289), had also studied archaeological philology and comparative languages (*Encyclopædia Britannica* 2002f: 287). His PhD, at the Berlin University in 1833, was about classical archaeology (Lesko 1999: 442). He also worked on cataloguing archaeological artifacts from Egypt and made valuable contributions in building the chronology for the history of Egypt (*Encyclopædia Britannica* 2002f: 287). Lepsius became a professor at Berlin University in 1846 and some time later, he was appointed as director for the Egyptian Museum in Berlin (Lesko 1999: 442). His leadership made the Egyptian collection one of the best in the whole world (*Encyclopædia Britannica* 2002f: 288).

Lepsius produced about a hundred forty works within his field, and for twenty years, he held the position of editor for the journal *Zeitschrift für Ägyptische Sprache und Altertümkunde*, which still exists as an important Egyptological journal (Lesko 1999:
Lepsius is considered the “founder of modern, scientific archaeology” 
(Encyclopædia Britannica 2002f: 287). He is also viewed as the greatest scholar within Egyptology after Champollion (Dawson and Uphill 1972: 173–74) and one of the fathers who laid a foundation for the following years of Egyptological research (Peck 2001: 290).

In 1842, the King of Prussia took the initiative to send a scientific expedition to “investigate and collect, with an historical and antiquarian view, the ancient Egyptian monuments in the Nile valley, and upon the Peninsula of Sinai” (Lepsius 1853: 6). A few pages later in his book, Lepsius (1853: 12) wrote that they were to, “investigate the remains of ancient Egyptian and Ethiopian civilisation [sic] still in preservation in the Nile valley and the adjacent countries.” The leadership of the expedition was entrusted to Lepsius and careful plans for the journey and detailed plans were produced in cooperation with the Royal Academy of Sciences and then approved by the King. Lepsius was placed in charge of an expedition, which was “the best equipped and qualified of any scholarly group to follow the French Egyptologists in the entourage of the Napoleonic army’s campaign in Egypt forty years earlier” (Peck 2001: 289). Lepsius also brought back to Europe fifteen thousand artifacts collected by the expedition (Peck 2001: 290).

The Prussian expedition took place between the years 1842 and 1846. In 1849, Denkmäler aus Ägypten und Äthiopien was published—twelve vast volumes, which are still used for research today. This was probably the largest publication on Egyptology ever and included 894 folio plates “extremely accurate compared with earlier works of this type” (Dawson and Uphill 1972: 174).

The expedition conducted a thorough work. They visited numerous locations and spent, for example, six months at Giza, Abusir, Saqqara, and Dahshur. They further spent seven months investigating the area of Thebes, which shows how thorough they were in
their wish to investigate and record their finds (Peck 2001: 289). Lepsius was a careful worker and his team of specialists had also been selected with care and he added “depth and detail to any further understanding of Egyptian antiquities” (Peck 2001: 290). A few years later, in 1866, he returned to Egypt and did research in the Delta area and there discovered Tanis, the capital of the twenty-first dynasty (Lesko 1999: 442).

The Prussian expedition “virtually marks the end of the wasteful and destructive period of amateur archaeology and the beginning of a transition to modern Egyptology. Lepsius went to Egypt not with loot in mind but to catalogue, classify, and fix dates. Lepsius the scholar was the first to bring order out of chaos, to attempt the almost impossible task of establishing a chronology and initiating the process of interpreting Egyptian history as a cultural continuity” (Bratton 1967: 74). Lepsius (1853: 7) himself wrote about “our strictly scientific labours.” Lepsius (1853: 360) further stated, “Had my vocation placed me in a political position, my motto would have been Reverence and Freedom, and with reverence and freedom … science must also be pursued. Reverence, for everything that is venerable, sacred, noble, great, and approved; freedom, wherever truth and a conviction of it are to be obtained and expressed. Where the latter is wanting, there fear and hypocrisy will exist; where the former, insolence and presumption will luxuriate in science as in life.”

Lepsius’ book Letters from Egypt has a long section of ninety-three pages called “The Hebrew Tradition” where he covered everything from the uncertainty of Hebrew numbers, to the Pharaohs of the Exodus according to various ancient writers, various dates for the Exodus, etc. He used the expression “a critical examination of the Exodus of the Israelites” (Lepsius 1853: 446). He described the Israelites in Egypt and the Exodus as historic events. For example, he identified Sethosis I as the pharaoh on the throne when
Joseph became the “first minister of the king” (Lepsius 1853: 484). He depicted that the oppression took place under Ramses II and the Exodus happened when Merneptah ruled (Lepsius 1853: 484–85), and he believed the Israelites lived below Heliopolis, in the vicinity of Bubastis and the modern Belbês (Lepsius 1853: 448–49). As mentioned above, Lepsius (1853: 438) believed he had found the location of the city of Raamses in the ruins of Abu-Keshêb. He based this conclusion on a monument found there already by the expedition of Napoleon. The granite monument depicted the gods Ra and Tum, and between them, Pharaoh Ramses II, and on the back of the monument, the inscriptions repeated six times the shields of Ramses II (see illustration on page 25). Lepsius (1853: 8) also believed he had pointed out the true location of Sinai for the first time.

Lepsius (1853: 362) stated that many of the biblical authors lived many centuries later than the events they described. For a Christian reader, he made a separation between the “practical religious meaning” of the Old Testament and “the dates of periods” described. Lepsius (1853: 362) found the 430 years for the Israelite sojourn in Egypt and the 480 years between the Exodus and the building of Solomon’s temple very problematic and he stated that they “have been entirely abandoned by me.” Instead he found the Levitical genealogies more trustworthy and stated, “I immediately obtained a true historical foundation, and a chronology bordering, at least, on a perfectly reliable one, as far back as Abraham, and this not only most satisfactorily coincided with all the other historical relations in the writings of the Old Testament, but also with the already established Manethonic-Egyptian computation of time” (Lepsius 1853: 362). He viewed the 480 years as twelve generations of forty years each (Lepsius 1853: 457). Lepsius (1853: 360–61) wrote about his views:
That section of my volume which endeavours to establish the relation of the Egyptian to the Old Hebrew Chronology, will meet with most opposition. Considering the intimate connection that necessarily subsists between the philological and dogmatical method of examining the Biblical Records, it is perfectly natural, that whenever a step in advance, or an error, strives to obtain a place on the philological side, theological interest, so much more universally distributed, takes a part either for, or against it. Whoever would dispute its right to do this, must deny to theology in general its character as a science. The Christianity, which derives its origin and its sustenance from the Bible, is essentially and intrinsically wholly independent of all learned confirmation. But it is the duty of theology, whose task it is to fathom Christianity in a rational manner, and prove its results, to decide scientifically what are the essential points in the holy Scriptures on which it founds its system of Christian beliefs. Should its true supports not be recognised, but imaginary ones placed in their stead, it will not injure Christianity, but the theological system, or that portion of it which was built on unstable ground. That truth which is discerned by the sound progress of any science whatsoever, cannot be hostile to Christian truth, but must promote it; for all truths, from the very beginning, have formed a compact league against everything that is false and erroneous. Theology, however, possesses no other means than every other science to distinguish scientifically, in any department, between truth and error, namely, only a reasonable and circumspect criticism.

Lepsius (1853: 362) also believed that “strict science” had had a “purifying reaction upon the dogmatic comprehension” regarding the understanding of the Old Testament.

To sum up, Lepsius was a thoroughly educated German scholar well-known for his systematic and scientific research in Egypt. As stated above, he used a scientific approach also to the Bible and to biblical scholarship. He viewed, in general, the biblical narratives as describing historic events. He wrote about these events and connected them with historic pharaohs, other historic events, and geographical locations. However, he had abandoned “one piece of the cake,” several references of biblical chronology. At some point Lepsius began using his human reasoning, not only for researching biblical texts, but also in questioning certain statements of the Bible, or perhaps understanding them in a different way compared with traditional interpretations.

So why did Lepsius point out the location of the city of Raamses? He certainly believed in the historicity of the majority of the biblical narratives connected to the
Israelite sojourn in Egypt. While questioning the chronology, he stayed with the geography. As a scholar, he wanted his readers to know the right position of an important city since the location had been lost to history. He believed that he and his scientific approach had found the right location.

The Worlds of Mercator, Robinson, and Lepsius

Did Mercator live in a different world than that of Robinson and Lepsius? In many ways he did, but common to all three scholars is a mind formed by reason, logic, empirical observations, and a scholar’s ability to present knowledge in publications that influenced the world. This movement of human reasoning grew out of Greek philosophy, much of it preserved in Roman culture with ideas of “rational natural order and natural law” (Encyclopædia Britannica 2002c: 504). The movement came into full bloom in the Enlightenment of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, a backdrop for Robinson and Lepsius. By understanding the universe and its research, humanity could improve human lives (Encyclopædia Britannica 2002c: 504).

As demonstrated above, the interest in science also motivated scholars like Robinson and Lepsius to research and describe ancient cultures. Other scholars were soon to undertake similar research when travelling to Mesopotamia, Asia Minor and other areas not covered in the present study. Competition between national interests of European states and between Catholic and Protestant scholars also had an influence on the explorations of countries in the ancient Near East (Silberman 1997a: 140–41). For example, “The birth of archaeology was very much intertwined with the politics and economics of the British Empire in the nineteenth century” (Hallote 2017: 116). Also the decipherment of the Rosetta stone in 1822 and the aim to read the ancient hieroglyphs
was not only a scientific endeavor but included a competition between French and British scholars. Eventually, the French Jean-François Champollion made a major breakthrough in understanding the Egyptian language and is credited with having deciphered the ancient writing.

For centuries, Egypt had been seen only from the biblical perspective. Now Egypt could be understood from the writings of the explorers. Up to the 1800s “the Bible stood virtually unchallenged at the centre of the intellectual and religious life of the western world, a unique self-contained legacy from the ancient Near East” (Moorey 1991: 1). As seen in the writings of the scholars covered this far, they did not question that the events described in the biblical narratives had happened some time in history. Further, both archaeology and the Bible were by many scholars viewed as “substantially trustworthy sources of historical information” (Moorey 1991: 72). For many researchers, as Robinson clearly stated, the Bible was a foundation for their work and enthusiasm for the Bible was the springboard for doing research in Egypt (Amitai 1985: 4).

While both Robinson and Lepsius expressed that their research was based on scientific methods, their studies were not always carried out in the critical ways of our time. We may smile when Lepsius referred to a monument with Ramses II flanked by gods, to point out the location for the city of Raamses. As will be shown below, he is not the only one to reach immature conclusions (Moorey 1991: 55). As Neil Asher Silberman described, it is almost impossible to separate one’s ideology from archaeological research where one’s ideology functions as “an unexpressed, yet artificial and often self-serving construction of reality” (Silberman 1997a: 141). The Bible had formed much of the world of the explorers and artifacts found were used to explain the Bible and the Bible could explain what they saw—the danger of circular reasoning was apparent. However,
generally their discoveries did much to improve the understanding of Egypt and the
Bible, a process that was going to continue. This development will be seen in the next
section covering the years from about 1850–1900. Thus far, up to 1850, the Bible held a
central position in explaining the origin of man and supplied the worldview. Mercator,
Robinson, and Lepsius did not have to prove the Bible; also, scholars like them in general
viewed the content of the Bible as authentic. Systematic investigations, geographical and
archaeological, could be undertaken in geographical locations mentioned in the Bible.
Archaeology was in its embryo. The term “Biblical Archaeology” had been born and was
used in 1839 in the English publication Biblical Archaeology by Johann Jahn, which gave
several generations of students at seminaries in America, a definition of archelogy, which
later was going to change (Zevit 2004: 8–10). Results from investigations and
archaeological expeditions explained the Bible, illuminated its background, and gave a
description and picture of Egypt independent of the Bible. While it was stated that
Lepsius did not come in order to loot Egypt, bringing fifteen thousand artifacts out of the
country would today probably be viewed as treasure hunting by many eyes.

The scholars studied thus far searched for the city of Raamses of Exod 1:11. In the
following time periods of this study, researchers were also going to look for the lost city
of Pharaoh Ramses II, a city described in Egyptian monuments and papyri, and discussing
whether the two cities were the same or not.
CHAPTER FOUR

THE SEARCH FOR THE CITY OF RAAMSES BETWEEN ABOUT 1850 AND 1900

What did Frederick Charles Cook, Eduard Naville, and John William Dawson Search?

Cook and the Speaker’s Commentary

Frederick Charles Cook (1804–1889), an English churchman and linguist, edited the Speaker’s Commentary on the Bible, published between 1871 and 1882 (Frederic Charles Cook 2019). Cook himself wrote the commentary on the book of Exodus.

Cook was not an archaeologist and probably did not visit Egypt in order to trace the location of the city of Raamses. Rather, he belonged to the sphere of scholars who commented on the issue based on available information from other sources. Cook (1871: 487) wrote,

Amosis, or Aahmes, to whom the building of several cities in the Delta is attributed by contemporary monuments, gave the name “Rames” to one of his own sons.... It may not be assumed that the name of the city was taken from this prince, but the probability that the same, or that a similar name should be given to both at the same time, is sufficiently obvious. It may be added that Ramesses was likely to be the true name of one of the treasure cities built by Aahmes, because the king was a restorer of the worship of Ra. He was a great builder, and had special reasons for fortifying the Eastern district, which previously bore the name Rameses. It is also certain that Egyptian cities often took their name from a district, in which case the prefix “Pi” is not used.

Cook referred to the pharaoh today named Ahmose, the first ruler of the eighteenth dynasty in the middle of the sixteenth century B.C. Cook took the view that the eastern
district of the Delta most probably was called Rameses long before Ramses II of the
nineteenth dynasty came to power. Cook built the theory that pharaoh Ahmose may have
named both the city and the prince, but he also introduced the view that a city built in a
district could take the same name as the district itself. This explained, of course, that the
name of both the district and the city did not depend on the much later pharaoh Ramses II
for their names. Since the Bible (according to 1 Kgs 6:1), in the eyes of many readers at
Cook’s time, placed the Exodus several generations previous to the reign of Ramses II,
Cook’s view also helped readers not to question that part of the biblical chronology. With
this explanation, Cook showed that it was not necessary to question the biblical
chronology regarding the Exodus, as opposed to Lepsius and others who had set biblical
chronology aside in order to place the Exodus in the time of Ramses II, whom Lepsius
believed had given the name to the city.

Cook (1871: 486–87) further commented on the fact that Exod 1:11 has “Pi”
(meaning “house”) in the name Pithom but not in the name Raamses. This shows that he
was aware of the existence of the city Piramesse (prefixed with Pi) of Ramses II in
Egyptian inscriptions that had been translated from hieroglyphic writings. Cook believed
it unlikely that Moses in the same sentence omitted the “Pi” of Piramesse/Pi-Rameses
when he included it in the name Pithom. Cook believed that the author of the Pentateuch
used the name of the district at the time the Israelites began to occupy the territory in
Egypt, an explanation that, for Cook, answered the question of “the missing Pi,” an issue
that scholars had been aware of for some time.
Naville “Discovered” Pithom—the Sister-City of Raamses

Eduard Naville (1844–1926), a thoroughly educated Swiss Egyptologist, “liked to work on great temples and large monuments” (Dawson and Uphill 1972: 214). As an archaeologist, he came to excavate many sites. After archaeological work at Tell el-Maskhuta, Naville published *The Store-City of Pithom and The Route of the Exodus* in 1883. During the following years came several updated editions of the book; this study uses the edition published in 1903 since it covers the time-period under investigation.

The excavations at Tell el-Maskhuta caused Naville, like Lepsius who shared the same view, to connect the Israelite Exodus with Ramses II. One of Naville’s reasons for doing so was that he found no older monuments at the site than from the time of that pharaoh and thus concluded that it was Ramses II who forced the Israelites to build the enclosure and the excavated buildings he believed to be storehouses (Naville 1903: 13). Naville’s excavations found many rectangular chambers, which made him write, “I believe them to have been built for no other purpose than that of storehouses, or granaries, into which the Pharaohs gathered the provisions necessary for armies about to cross the desert, or even for caravans and travelers on the road to Syria. It is also very likely that the Ptolemeis used them as warehouses in the trade with Africa” (Naville 1903: 12).

At the site, Naville found walls made out of bricks. In his book, Naville referred to what the visitor Villiers Stuart, who came to see the excavations, wrote: “I carefully examined the chamber walls, and I noticed that some of the corners of the brickwork throughout were built of bricks *without straw*. I do not remember to have met anywhere in Egypt bricks so made. In a dry climate like Egypt it is not necessary to burn the bricks:
they are made of Nile mud, and dried in the sun. Straw is mixed with them to give them coherence” (Naville 1903: 11–12).?

While excavating at Tell el-Maskhuta, Naville arrived at the view that the site was not the ancient city of Raamses as Lepsius had been almost certain it was. Instead, Naville believed he had found the ancient Pithom, the “sister-city of Raamses.” Naville further based his conclusion that Tell el-Maskhuta was ancient Pithom on the following reasons: (1) Monuments and inscriptions found showed that they all had been dedicated to the god Tum, showing that Tum was the god of the city. Naville admitted that, “the name Pi Tum, the abode of Tum, is not to be found on the monuments … but it may have been carved on the top of the tablet, or in some of the lines which are now obliterated” (Naville 1903: 3–4); (2) On monuments at Tell el-Maskhuta, Naville found all the names belonging to the eighth nome, and he stated, “We may therefore assert without any hesitation that we know the site of Pithom and the region of Succoth” (Naville 1903: 8); and (3) With the view that Tell el-Maskhuta was ancient Pithom, Naville reinterpreted the name “Patumos of Arabia” found in the writings of Herodotus. Naville believed that to be the Greek name for Pithom (Naville 1903: 38).

At the end of his book, Naville wrote, “the site of Pithom has been determined exactly, and it has been found that the city was at the end of the canal near the coast of the Arabian Gulf” (Naville 1903: 34). While this study is not about Pithom, but focuses on its “sister-city” Raamses, it is worth noticing that Naville’s finds and publication caused much public interest and attention (Jackson 1956: 90). That he had found the walls built by the children of Israel, “served powerfully to promote biblical archaeology in 1883;” however, other scholars refuted his interpretations (Moorey 1991: 6).
Naville did not write much about the city of Raamses; however, he briefly mentioned the name in connection with discussing Pithom. In one instance, he stated that the site of Raamses “is still uncertain” (Naville 1903: 13). Later in his book he wrote, “It is useless now to discuss the site of the city of Rameses, which will only be ascertained by farther excavations. It is quite possible that we must understand the name as referring to the land of Rameses, rather than to the city; the land must have been either west or north of Pithom” (Naville 1903: 28). While Naville had his critics, the assertion that Pithom, the sister-city of Exod 1:11, had been found, showed that archaeology now stood one step closer to finding the city of Raamses. A few years later, in 1906, W. M. Flinders Petrie published that he had found the city of Raamses at Tell er-Retebah. In Naville’s *Archaeology of the Old Testament*, released in 1913, he supported Petrie’s view and wrote, “What Prof. Flinders Petri has found in this mound show conclusively that it was the City of Raamses. We know now the site of the two cities built by the Israelites: they guarded the southern road from Palestine, and were a very effective protection for Egypt” (Naville 1913: 97–98).

Dawson, the Geologist Who Commented on the Bible

John William Dawson (1820–1899), a Canadian, became a professor of geology and principal of a university in his country. In his *Modern Science in Bible Lands* from 1888, he commented on topography and geology of the biblical countries in connection to the biblical narratives. Dawson also addressed the book of Exodus and presented his comments from his profession as a geologist. Dawson (1888: 370) wrote that Ramses II seemed to have been the king who oppressed the Israelites and that the Exodus happened during the reign of his son Merneptah or another immediate successor. He stated that
Ramses II had his court in Tanis/Zoan and that the city of Raamses probably was the same city as the old Hyksos capital (Dawson 1888: 374, 376).

Dawson knew about Petrie’s excavations in Tanis organized by the Egypt Exploration Fund. The report from that excavation contributed to Dawson’s understanding of Tanis as a very beautiful city (Dawson 1888: 376). Dawson (1888: 372) further referred to research showing that Wadi Tumilat was recognized as the biblical land of Goshen. He was aware of Naville’s book about Pithom, published only a few years earlier, which located Pithom at the site of Tell el-Maskhuta in the eastern Wadi Tumilat area (Dawson 1888: 371–72). Regarding the city of Raamses, Dawson (1888: 379–80) wrote, “There seems little reason to doubt that this Rameses was not, as some have supposed, Zoan itself, though that city has sometimes been called by the name Rameses, but a store city or garrison town at the western end of the Wady Tumilat, at or near the places now called Abou Hamad and Saftel Henneh.”

Dawson (1888: 373) further referred to recent surveys and stated it was “certain that this valley [Wady Tumilat] once carried a branch of the Nile, which discharged its waters into the Red Sea. This branch, or a canal representing it, must have existed in the time of Moses.” Psalm 78 twice mentions the Israelites and the ten plagues connected to a place called Zoan or more specific “the fields of Zoan” (Ps 78:12, 43). Apparently, since the book of Exodus connects the Israelites with the district of Rameses, the city of Raamses, and the ten plagues taking place somewhere in that neighborhood, some scholars had suggested that Zoan and the city of Raamses were the same city. Dawson was aware of that theory, but did not support it. His theory rather placed the city of Raamses somewhere in the western part of Wadi Tumilat.
What Motivated Cook, Naville, and Dawson to Locate the City of Raamses?

Cook on the Defensive

Frederick Charles Cook (1804–1889), an English churchman who had studied at St. John’s College in Cambridge and at Bonn, held many respected ecclesiastical offices and positions and became chaplain in ordinary to Queen Victoria in 1857 (Dawson and Uphill 1972: 67; Thomas 2004: 98). He was a well-educated biblical scholar and a “remarkable linguist, acquainted, it is said, with fifty-two languages” (Jackson 1958a: 264). Because of critical biblical scholarly writings, plans were made to refute the critics and present the church’s traditional beliefs. Cook was chosen to be the chief editor of the production because of his knowledge of the Hebrew language and of the archaeology of the countries of the Bible (Thomas 2004: 98–99). The commission formed to organize the project, divided the Bible into eight parts and chose biblical scholars to write a commentary on each section (Frederic Charles Cook 2019). The commentary came to consist of ten volumes and was produced between the years 1871–1882. Cook wrote the introduction to several biblical books, as well as the entire commentary of many books of the Bible. It is for this commentary, which became known as *The Speaker’s Commentary*, that Cook is best known. In several books, at the end of his life, Cook criticized the revisers and their work of the New Testament of the Revised Version (Jackson 1958a: 264; Thomas 2004: 99).

Cook was the author of the commentary on the book of Exodus for *The Speaker’s Commentary*. As demonstrated above, in connection with the Exodus, he gave explanations to “problems” that other scholars had pointed out. Scholars mostly questioned a fifteenth century date and placed the Israelites in the time of Ramses II, a
theory that did not create any problems regarding the geographical names connected to Ramses II. However, a belief in an early Exodus in the fifteenth century caused one such “problem”—the question of how the district of Rameses and the city of Raamses could carry these names long before Ramses II came on the throne. Another question was why “Pi” was missing in one of the names of Exod 1:11. *The Speaker’s Commentary* came with explanations to such questions.

Cook did not deal with the exact location of the city of Raamses; he rather discussed the kind of textual and archaeological questions that had started to emerge. These questions came from the finds of archaeology, inscriptions translated from Egyptian monuments, papyri where the name Piramesse was found, and from a deeper study, based on logic and reason, of the biblical texts.

So why did Cook comment on the texts dealing with the city of Raamses? Without doubt, Cook wished to meet critical arguments with logical and reasonable answers, which sought to inspire renewed confidence in the Bible. Cook’s answers dealt with studying an issue from another angle compared with the views of the critics.

Naville “Found” Evidence for the Israelite Oppression

Eduard Naville (1844–1926) was an English scholar who spent many years educating himself much more thoroughly compared with other Egyptologists. He had studied at the University of Geneva, King’s College in London, and at the Universities of Bonn, Paris and Berlin (Dawson and Uphill 1972: 213). While in Berlin, he had studied under Lepsius. He came to Egypt for the first time in 1869, and from 1882, he worked for the Egyptian Exploration Fund (Jackson 1956: 90). From 1891, he worked at the University of Geneva as professor of Egyptology (Jackson 1956: 90). Naville was active
and published for many years; he wrote numerous articles and many books (Dawson and Uphill 1972: 214). He was also a philologist and had an interest in religious writings. One of his early publications dealt with the *Book of the Dead* (Switalski 1997: 113).

Naville excavated at many sites in Egypt and he is considered an archaeologist of the “old school” having no interest in small artifacts, which would later come to characterize archeological excavations; he rather enjoyed research on great monuments and temples (Lesko 1997: 113; Dawson and Uphill 1972: 214). Naville “possessed a formidable intelligence and could argue his case extremely effectively” (Dawson and Uphill 1972: 214), and he held strong views which “tended to color his conclusions” (Lesko 1997: 113).

His work at the site Tell el-Maskhuta resulted in the publication of *The Store-City of Pithom and the Route of the Exodus*. It is interesting to note the titles of some of the early publications from explorers and archaeologists. A later book by Naville carried the title *The Shrine of Saft el Henneh and the Land of Goshen* (1887). Many publications had no “neutral” titles dealing only with the archaeology of a certain area or of a specific country; often titles contained a name or an event from the Bible.

In general, Naville viewed the narratives of the Bible as historic. For example, commenting on the route of the Exodus, he stated, “This seems to me at present the most probable route of the Exodus. I think it agrees best with what we know of the geographical names, and of the nature of the land. Besides, it does not suppose very long marches, which would have been quite impossible with a large multitude” (Naville 1903: 31). Further, “Standing … on the spot [where the passage of the Red Sea took place] which I believe to be the site of Migdol, and looking around me, I could not help being struck how well the nature of the land was in accordance with the event described in
Exodus” (Naville 1903: xi). In 1913 he wrote, “Although the narrative of Scripture is very concise, and there are no unnecessary details, it tallies so well with the circumstances, especially with the local conditions, that it is impossible not to attribute it to an eyewitness” (Naville 1913: 104).

With the help of archaeology, geography, and his personal visit to the country, he had figured out the most probable route of the Israelites. There are, however, some instances showing a somewhat critical view of the biblical text. Naville (1903: 30) wrote about the location of the crossing of the Red Sea:

There the sea was not wide, and the water probably very shallow; there also the phenomenon which took place on such a large scale when the Israelites went through must have been well known, as it is often seen now in other parts of Egypt. As at this point the sea was liable to be driven back under the influence of the east wind, and to leave a dry way, the Pharaohs were obliged to have there a fort, a Migdol, so as to guard that part of the sea, and to prevent the Asiatics of the desert from using this temporary gate to enter Egypt, to steal cattle and to plunder the fertile land round Pithom. That there was one spot particularly favourable for crossing, because of this well-known effect of the wind, is indicated by the detailed description of the place where the Israelites are to camp.

While Naville viewed the event of the crossing as historical, he leaned toward a more natural explanation of the way through the sea. He had found out that at the place of the thought crossing, as well as in other locations, a wind regularly drew back the sea in a shallow area. Since the wind regularly did this, the Egyptians, according to Naville, had to have a fort in that location, which prevented Asiatics from entering Egypt there. However, in the case of the Israelites, Naville described how the natural phenomenon opened a way out of Egypt. In his book Archaeology of the Old Testament, published in 1913, he also showed reluctance towards the numbers in the Bible. He wrote, “I believe no value must be attributed to the numbers given in the Hebrew text…. We must remember that our text is not original; it is a transcription, if not a translation, and when
numbers are presented by letters, it is easy to make an error of transliteration which entirely changes the numbers” (Naville 1913: 93). This view made him distrust the biblical number of Israelites leaving Egypt (Naville 1913: 100).

While being somewhat critical and leaning towards natural explanations, he had not accepted historical criticism/the higher school of criticism. For example, above we mentioned that the contents of the biblical narratives made Naville attribute them to an eyewitness. In that context Naville also stated, “Supposing with the critics, that this chapter is a compound of two documents, the Jahvist and the Priestly Code, written by two authors living at four hundred years’ interval, since according to this theory the idea that they copied an old document is excluded, they must have both followed an oral tradition” (Naville 1913: 104). Naville was aware of the Wellhausen School of viewing the Bible, but did not go as far as that school had done in its analysis of the Bible. In the introduction to Archaeology of the Old Testament, Naville stated he belonged to the minority who believed in a Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch and ranked himself among the “anti-critics” (Naville 1913: ix).

So why did Naville comment on the city of Raamses? Naville in general had a firm belief in the historicity of the Exodus narrative of the Bible, as well as of the geographical names mentioned in the biblical text. Since he believed he had found the site of Pithom, the discovery of the location of Raamses was a matter of time. The solution for finding the other lost city of Exod 1:11 depended only on more investigation. When, some years later, Petrie’s excavations presented sufficient with evidence that Tell er- Retebah was the site of Raamses, Naville chose to embrace that view too.
Dawson Chose a Conservative View

John William Dawson (1820–1899) was a Canadian scholar educated at the College of Pictou and the University of Edinburgh. He became superintendent of education in Nova Scotia in 1850, and a few years after that, he received the position as professor of geology and principal of McGill College and University in Montreal, a position he held until retirement. During his thirty-eight years as administrator, “he transformed McGill from an understaffed, insignificant school into a progressive university with a worldwide reputation” (Encyclopædia Britannica 2002b: 922). Dawson is viewed as one of the founders of the science of paleobotany. It is interesting to note that he accompanied the well-known Charles Lyell as he visited Nova Scotia for the first time in 1842 (John William Dawson 2019). It was Lyell who presented the view that the natural forces of today’s nature also explained the formations on earth in past history.

Dawson is known by many only as a geologist and administrator who did much to increase knowledge regarding Canadian geology and paleobotany (Encyclopædia Britannica 2002b: 922). He was knighted in 1884 (Jackson 1958b: 367).

Dawson did not believe that natural forces were an explanation of the creation. He was conservative in his views and wrote many books on the theme of the relationship between the Bible and science: The Bible and Science (1875); The Origin of the World According to Revelation and Science (1877); Egypt and Syria, Their Physical Features in Relation to Bible History (1886); Modern Science in Bible Lands (1888); Modern Ideas of Evolution as Related to Revelation and Science (1890) (Jackson 1958b: 367). Dawson was a Christian who wrote against Charles Darwin’s theory of evolution of man. He believed that science and the content of the Bible complemented each other. Also his books on geological subjects “maintained a distinctly theological attitude, refusing the
theory of human evolution from brute ancestors, and holding that the human species only
made its appearance on this earth within quite recent times” (John William Dawson
2019).

In Modern Science in Bible Lands, Dawson (1888: 367) stated that modern
science had approached the books of Exodus, “along three lines of investigation.” He was
somewhat negative to the first, higher criticism. He then stated, “A second line of
investigation, of a more promising nature, is that of archaeological research, which seeks
to deduce from Egyptian monuments some contemporary evidence for or against the
Hebrew history. This has, in modern times, yielded valuable and positive results”
(Dawson 1888: 368). The third line dealt with topographical surveying and exploration.

Dawson travelled in Egypt and was positive towards archaeology. He stated that
archaeology had contributed much but he also hoped for more, “which may throw light
on the biblical history; and what is known tends to raise our ideas of the power and
importance of the Hebrew people during their sojourn in Egypt” (Dawson 1888: 370).

When visiting Wadi Tumilat he wrote, “The relations of this valley accord admirably
with the scriptural notices of it. It would be the only way of convenient entrance into
Egypt for Jacob with his flocks and herds. It was separated to a great degree from the rest
of Egypt, and was eminently suited to be the residence of a pastoral and agricultural
people, differing in their habits from the Egyptians, and accustomed to the modes of life
in use in Palestine. Possibly it may have been thinly peopled at the time, owing to the
then recent expulsion of the Hyksos” (Dawson 1888: 373). He held it certain that the
children of Israel during their sojourn in Egypt, to some extent, were spread out in Lower
Egypt. He saw this in the narrative when the Pharaoh gave various tasks to Joseph’s
brothers, but also that Moses’ family lived near pharaoh’s palace, which Dawson thought
probably was located in Zoan or its neighborhood (Dawson 1888: 374). He stated, “Moses and Aaron passed to and fro between Zoan and Rameses, acting as ambassadors of their people, and it is evident that this state of things continued for some time, neither party venturing to take a decisive step” (Dawson 1888: 380).

Dawson (1888: vii) was clear on why he wrote his book: “The motive of this work is the desire of the author to share with others the pleasure and profit of a tour in Italy, Egypt and Syria, in which it was his special aim to study such points in the geology and physical features of those countries as might throw light on their ancient history, and especially on the history of the sacred Scriptures.” It is clear from the paragraphs above that Dawson viewed the biblical narrative as historical and his book commented on the narrative from both Dawson’s profession as a geologist but also from the view as a Christian.

So why did Dawson comment on the location of the city of Raamses and placed it somewhere in the western part of Wadi Tumilat? As a conservative Christian and scholar in a time of biblical criticism, he viewed the Israelite sojourn in Egypt and the Exodus as historic events. Placing the city of Raamses on the modern map sent a signal that the city had existed in the history of Egypt and in ancient geography.

The World of Cook, Naville, and Dawson

During the fifty years between 1850 and 1900, many discoveries and publications challenged both the traditional biblical views of the world and the origin of man. They also shook the foundations of the Bible itself. However, many discoveries and interpretations of artifacts from excavations also came to strengthen the narratives of the Bible.
Amazing artifacts and inscriptions from the Assyrian Empire shed light upon the Bible in the 1850s. These excavations found many names mentioned in the Bible such as names of Assyrian kings like Tiglath-Pileser and Esarhaddon, and major cities like Nineveh and Nimrud. Rawlinson found the names of Hezekiah, Jerusalem, and Judah on an inscription by King Sennacherib (Curtis 1997: 141–42; Fagan 1997: 413; Moorey 1991: 10; Stronach and Codella 1997: 144–45); and Layard “was able to list in Assyrian and Hebrew some fifty-five rulers, cities and countries appearing both in the Old Testament and in the newly discovered Assyrian texts” (Moorey 1991: 11). All of this strengthened the historicity of biblical narratives.

However, despite these sensational discoveries in support of the biblical narratives, several publications attacked the foundations of the Bible. Already in the 1830s, Charles Lyell had published his view of uniformitarianism, that the present is the key to the past in explaining the geology of the earth, a theory challenging parts of the book of Genesis. When in 1859 Charles Darwin published On the Origin of Species, which explained the origin of life as a slow process without the need for God as a creator, this publication deeply challenged the foundations of biblical teachings. The book seriously questioned the credibility of the Bible.

Darwin’s views came to be spread more or less during the same time-period as those of Julius Wellhausen, suggesting that the Pentateuch was made up of various sources put together. Similar ideas had been published long before the time of the German theologian Wellhausen; however, his publications had a deeper influence and popularized some of these ideas (Hasel 1982: 29). Wellhausen believed that the content of the Pentateuch had its origin in oral traditions that had developed “through the prophets to the law, rather than from the law through the prophets, as it is presented in the
Old Testament” (Encyclopædia Britannica 2002i: 572). Not only did Wellhausen question the authorship of Moses, this approach seriously questioned the historicity of the first books of the Bible in that it suggested a very late composition for some sections of the books. His view, called the Documentary Hypothesis, has been the main view of scholars regarding the Pentateuch until the benefit and credibility of that hypothesis began to change only a few decades ago.

These kinds of attacks on the Bible resulted in various reactions. As demonstrated above, scholars like Cook and Dawson retained a conservative view and defended the teachings of the Bible. Dawson defended the biblical view of man’s origin and belonged to the school believing that science and the Bible complemented each other. Cook and The Speaker’s Commentary as well, took the position of defending traditional biblical views. The commentary on the book of Exodus included scholarly explanations of “problems” in the biblical texts. The attacks on foundational biblical teachings “accelerated a demand for scientific reaffirmation of the authority of the Bible and a close examination of the origins of the Christian faith” (Moorey 1991: 18).

Both Cook and Dawson were well-educated and used scientific methods in their scholarship while retaining faith in the Bible. Other researchers felt free to study the world with a more strict scientific approach and freed from traditional biblical views and biblical theology. While Naville did not embrace the fullness of historical/higher criticism and called himself an “anti-critic,” he still explained some wonders of the Bible as caused by natural forces and questioned the numbers in the Bible. Many scholars and archaeologists found it liberating that theology and theologians no longer were those dictating theories regarding the origin of man and the history of civilization (Moorey
Despite serious challenges, the interest in the Bible remained strong among many. This time-period of fifty years saw the rise of many societies with an interest in the Bible. One such was the Society of Biblical Archaeology founded in London in 1870 (Moorey 1991: 3). Another was The Egypt Exploration Fund (EEF), which later changed its name to The Egypt Exploration Society (EES), formed in 1882. The EEF had the goal of raising money in order to excavate sites in the Delta of Egypt. It was believed that the Delta concealed documents that could solve many issues connected to the biblical history. The Fund hoped to find records of the four centuries of the Hebrew sojourn in Egypt at places such as Goshen, Pithom, and Ramesses (Drower 1985: 9). Naville was the first scholar who came to work for the EEF. The title of his first book, *The Store-City of Pithom and the Route of the Exodus*, is an example of the intentions of the society. However, the willingness to relate the Bible to realia brought not only early and immature conclusions but also damage to the credibility of Biblical Archaeology.

The interest in the people of Israel, the Exodus from Egypt, and hope of finding the geographical locations mentioned in the narratives of the Bible remained strong among many and became the foundation for raising the economic funds needed for the early exploration of both Egypt as well as Palestine. This interest has continued among nonprofessionals as well as among scholars with a high regard for the Bible (Whitehouse 1995: 16–17).

We may not have to point out that reason, human logic, and empirical investigation were the methods used in research. Scientific methods had come to stay. The systematic study of Egypt had also started to open up access to Egyptian writings.
The major change among scholars’ opinions involved worldview—it was the worldview that had mainly changed during the passing decades and with that the view of the Bible. Material culture from archaeological excavations remained the same, but compared with earlier years, the interpretation of it and scholars’ worldview grew in importance. Biblical Archaeology was much about connecting realia to the content of the Bible in a time when the Bible was under attack. Cook, Naville, and Dawson worked in an era when adherents with differing views of the biblical content took their positions in the trenches and got involved in a war that not only dealt with how to perceive the Bible but also how to interpret material culture and how to view Biblical Archaeology.
CHAPTER FIVE

THE SEARCH FOR THE CITY OF RAAMSES BETWEEN ABOUT 1900 AND 1950

What did William Matthew Flinders Petrie, Alan Gardiner, Thomas Eric Peet, Pierre Montet, and William F. Albright Search?

Petrie “Found” the Lost City of Raamses

William Matthew Flinders Petrie (1853–1942) was involved in archaeological fieldwork, mostly in Egypt, for about sixty years (Drower 1999: 615). He began his work in the area of the pyramids of Giza. A few years later, from 1883, he worked in Tanis for the Egypt Exploration Fund. He came to Tell er-Reṭebeh probably in the winter of 1905–1906 because in 1906 he published the *Hyksos and Israelite Cities*, which includes the report of the excavations at Tell er-Reṭebeh.

Twenty years prior to Petrie’s excavation, Naville had been digging at Tell er-Reṭebeh and stated that he had probably found a camp from Roman times. Petrie thought differently and believed it to be the oldest site ever found east of Bubastis. Compared with Naville, he found no support for a Roman occupation at the site (Petrie 1906: 28). Besides remains from early dynasties, Petrie (1906: 28) found a “temple of Ramessu II with sculptures in red granite and limestone; part of a tomb of an official who was over the store-houses of Syrian produce; and the great works of Ramessu III.” He stated, “All of these discoveries exactly accord with the requirements of the city of Raamses, where both the second and third kings of that name are stated to have worked, and where a
store-city was built by the Israelites along with that of Pithom, which is only eight miles distant. The absence of any other Egyptian site suitable to these conditions, which are all fulfilled here, makes it practically certain that this was the city of Raamses named in Exodus” (Petrie 1906: 28).

In the temple, Petrie (1906: 30, ills. XXVIII, XXXII) found a stela from Ramses II with an inscription ending with the words, “‘building in cities upon which his name is to eternity’” (Petrie 1906: 31). Petrie wrote, “This allusion to building in the various cities called after Ramessu suggests that this city was one of such—that is, Raamses” (Petrie 1906: 31). On the remains of a doorjamb, Petrie also discovered an inscription reading, “‘Chief archer, keeper of the granaries’” and Petrie commented, “That there were granaries here for storing the Syrian produce, is important, as showing that this was a store-city of Ramessu II” (Petrie 1906: 31). Petrie found important buildings and even inscriptions with the word “granaries” at a site mentioning pharaoh Ramses II’s name. With these finds, we may understand when Petrie (1906: 2) concluded, “This site thus occupied by him [Ramses II] is now seen to fulfil in every way the accounts of the city of Raamses, where, with the sister city of Pithom, the Israelites are stated to have been employed. The site of the temple founded by Ramessu has been found, and also much of the temple sculpture. Thus we can now identify another of the fixed points in the narrative of the Exodus.”

A few years later, Petrie himself summarized his finds and observations, “The positions of the fortresses which the Israelites were employed in building lie to the east of Goshen. The city of Rameses, now Tell Rotāb, is about twelve miles along the narrow marshy valley; and Pithom, now Tell-el-Maskhuta, is about ten miles further east. The city of Rameses is identified by the remains of a town and temple built by Rameses II. A
large scene from the temple front, representing Rameses slaying a Syrian, is now at Philadelphia…. Pithom is identified by the mention there of the temple of Tum or Atum, Pa-Tum” (Petrie 1912: 33–34). Some years later Naville (1924: 21) gave his support to Petrie’s position and interpretation of the stela found in Tell er-Retebah. Naville wrote, “I conclude that this stela contains a clear statement that Tell Reţâbah is the site of Raamses.” This view was in opposition to the view of other scholars that the city of Piramesse was built on the site of Avaris, the same location as Pelusium (Naville 1924: 21).

Gardiner Undertook a Detailed Study of Piramesse

Alan Gardiner (1879–1963), a well-educated British Egyptologist, linguist, and philologist, had specialized in translating Egyptian inscriptions and writings. Gardiner was “a most painstaking and systematic worker throughout his life” (Dawson and Uphill 1972: 111). Gardiner was involved in the creation of The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology. Related to the topic of this study, Gardiner is well-known for a series of articles in that journal in 1918. The articles carry the headline The Delta Residence of the Ramessides.

In these articles, Gardiner undertook a detailed and almost overambitious study regarding the city Piramesse of Egyptian inscriptions. He researched both dated and undated inscriptions. Gardiner probably divided the writings into these two groups because dated manuscripts made it easier to connect the activities described in a document in relation to Piramesse. Gardiner stated, “The texts of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Dynasties make constant reference of a town named … Pi-Ra’messe-mi-Amûn, ‘House-of-Ramesses-Beloved-of-Amûn,’ which, from the frequency of the
Egyptian king’s presence there as well as from other indications, has to be recognized as the royal Residence in the Delta throughout that period” (Gardiner 1918a: 127).

Gardiner worked systematically and covered an enormous amount of sources. He found several places that derived their name from Ramses II, for example Abu-Simbel in the south of Egypt. He then worked systematically to exclude those that could not possibly be the same as the lost Piramesse. Gardiner (1918a: 129) wrote, “Our first step must be to eliminate from the discussion certain localities which, while they derive their name from one of the Pharaohs called Ramesses, yet cannot claim to be either the Residence-city or yet the Raamses of the Bible.”

Gardiner found expressions in Egyptian papyri and other inscriptions that became clues in his study. For example, he stated, “We have only to suppose that ‘The-Waters-of-the-Sun’ was the term applied to the entire Bubastite [Pelusiac] branch in order to understand how that term could be used in connection with Pi-Raʿmesse. Pi-Raʿmesse was near the sea, and accordingly lay near the mouth of the Bubastite Nile-arm. But the Bubastite Nile-arm debouched in the Pelusiac mouth” (Gardiner 1918c: 259). He based his views on what was thus far known and believed that Piramesse should be sought “eastward of the Bubastite branch of the Nile” (Gardiner 1918c: 251).

Regarding Piramesse, he wrote, “The original name of the city, in its complete form, was … ‘House-of-Ramesses-Beloved-of-Amūn-Great-of-Victories,’ and the boastful addition here made to the royal nomen conveys a significant hint as to the position of the city near the military road to Asia” (Gardiner 1918a: 136). Gardiner compared several sources and found, for example, that some of the Targums had replaced the name Raamses in Exod 1:11 with “Pelusin.” In Gen 47:11, one Targum had “Pelusin” whereas another Targum had “Pelusim.” After comparing also with the writings of Josephus and
other ancient sources, Gardiner (1918c: 253) was strongly leaning towards a conclusion that Piramesse “stood on the site known to the Greeks as Pelusium, ‘the city of mud.’” When discussing the location of the Hyksos capital Avaris, Gardiner (1918c: 255) admitted that there was not sufficient data available for a specific location. However, he was drawn to a location close to Pelusium, or maybe at the same location as ancient Pelusium, as he noted in Josephus’ writings.

In several articles both from 1918 and later, Gardiner disagreed with other scholars regarding their views of the location of both Avaris and Piramesse. Since the so-called Stela of 400 years was found in Qantir, M. Clédat had suggested that Avaris had been located there. Gardiner, on the other hand, placed Avaris somewhere between Qantir and Pelusium. Based on expressions in Egyptian papyri, such as “the waters of Avaris,” Gardiner (1924: 92) disagreed with Clédat, since Gardiner believed Qantir (Thel-Ḳāntarah) “has never been situated on the Nile.” He disagreed with Brugsch who supposed that Piramesse was the same city as Tanis, whereas he believed that Piramesse should be close to the sea and, therefore, could not be located in the area of Wadi Tumilat (Gardiner 1918b: 187; 1918c: 252).

Gardiner (1918a: 128) supported Naville who “finally settled the question of Pithom” and agreed that Tell el-Maskhuta was the ancient Pithom. Inscriptions found at Tell el-Maskhuta indicated to Gardiner that Succoth, the first place the Israelites stopped at, was either the same city as Pithom or a location in its neighborhood. This lead Gardiner (1918a: 128) to state, “that Raamses had to be sought nearer the entrance to the Wâdy Tûmîlât.” However, he strongly disagreed with Naville who placed the city of Raamses in the area of Wadi Tumilat. Gardiner accused Naville for not paying attention to his arguments; Gardiner meant that the texts of the Bible made it clear that the Exodus
narrative was placed in the capital city of the Pharaohs. Only then could pharaoh’s
daughter have found Moses in the river Nile by and only then could Moses and Aaron
have stood up early in the morning to meet Pharaoh by the river, something that would
have been impossible had they been living in the Wadi Tumilat region (Gardiner 1924:
89). Gardiner also criticized Petrie who located Raamses at Tell er-Retebah, arguing that
Petrie did not have sufficient evidence for that claim, especially since no inscription in
support of that view was found by Petrie (Gardiner 1918a: 128–29).

Gardiner’s detailed study in 1918 made it clear that if a city of Raamses of Exod
1:11 ever had existed, it must have been the same as the Egyptian city Piramesse.
Gardiner (1918c: 261) wrote, “Either Raamses-Rameses of the Bible is the Residence-city
of the Ramessides near Pelusium, or else it is a town unknown to the Egyptian
monuments, the existence of which is merely postulated.” Further, “To sum up: whether
or no [sic] the Bible narrative be strict history, there is not the least reason for assuming
that any other city of Ramasses existed in the Delta besides those elicited from the
Egyptian monuments. In other words, the Biblical Raamses-Rameses is identical with the
Residence-city of Pi-Ra’messe near Pelusium” (Gardiner 1918c: 266).

Some forty years later in Egypt of the Pharaohs, Gardiner indicated a change of
mind since many impressive monuments by that time had been found in Tanis. He stated
that it is agreed the biblical Raamses was located at the same site as the Hyksos capital
Avaris, which he had come to believe to be “none other than the great city which was
later called Dja’ne, Greek Tanis, the Zoan of the Bible” (Gardiner 1961: 258). In the
same article, he also mentioned that important finds made at Qantir may swing the
pendulum towards that area for the location of Piramesse.
Peet Worked within the Vagueness of Biblical Statements

Thomas Eric Peet (1882–1934), a British Egyptologist, published in 1922 *Egypt and the Old Testament*, which contained comments on the Exodus narrative. Peet took the view that there were many statements in the Exodus narrative creating a vagueness, not only when in history the Bible placed the Exodus, but also regarding other parameters. For example, Peet noted the many claims that many details of the narrative indicate that the author of the narrative was well familiar with Egypt and Egyptian customs. Peet, however, wrote, “It is all the sort of vague general knowledge which any ancient tourist spending a few weeks in Egypt at almost any date after about 1600 B.C. might have acquired from his dragoman” (Peet 1922: 93).

Peet was well aware of Petrie and Naville who believed they had found ancient Raamses, respectively Pithom in the Wadi Tumilat. He criticized them for basing their conclusions on too vague evidence, including that they found no inscriptions supporting their views. Peet wrote, “Had it not been for the existence in the minds of so many scholars of a preconceived notion that the Israelites left Egypt by the Wadi Tumilat it would probably never have commanded acceptance” (Peet 1922: 89). Regarding the geography of the Exodus narrative, Peet (1922: 84) pointed out that, “there is a curious geographical confusion underlying the early chapters of Exodus.” He continued, “We see then that we cannot without further enquiry assume the town of Raamses to have been in the Wadi Tumilat…. Nor does the occurrence of the name in Ex. 12.11 [sic], along with that of Pithom … lend any support to the idea, for the passage contains not the slightest hint that the two places were near to one another” (Peet 1922: 85). Peet referred to the thorough study by Gardiner in 1918 and agreed with him that if Raamses and Rameses of the Bible existed, they were almost beyond doubt the same as the Egyptian Piramesse.
Peet, in agreement with Gardiner, believed that Piramesse lay at the site of Pelusium, which for him was the same as the location of Avaris of the Hyksos (Peet 1922: 85).

Peet (1922: 108–9), though, believed that the name of the city of Raamses came from pharaoh Ramses II, but pointed out that “this evidence proves nothing, since geographical names of the sojourn are much later than the period at which the events took place; because the town which the Israelites built was called Raamses in, say 900 B.C. it does not for a moment follow it was so called when the Israelites built it, and therefore we may not argue that this building, which incidentally need not mean the original foundation, took place as late as the reign of Ramesses II, or for the matter of that Ramesses I.” Peet saw different possibilities regarding the biblical name of the city and the time of the Exodus. Peet (1922: 90–91) stated:

This, however, need not for a moment prejudice the belief in a much earlier date for the actual sojourn. Of the geography as we have it there are two possible explanations. If tradition had preserved any geographical names from the time of the actual event the compilers would naturally replace these by their modern equivalents in cases where a change of name had taken place, as, for example, Pi-Ramessu (Rameses) for Avaris. If, on the other hand, tradition had preserved no geography of the sojourn at all, it is by no means unlikely that an editor would, in order to increase the brightness and verisimilitude of his narrative, introduce what appeared to him suitable place-names from his own knowledge of Egyptian geography, doubtless confined to a few place-names in the Northern and Eastern Delta. Between these two possibilities we have no means whatsoever of deciding and we shall be wise not to try.

To sum up, Peet did not find many firm facts and statements connected to the Exodus. Only one aspect was sure, the city-name Raamses could be traced to Ramses II. However, that did not give the time of the Exodus. Peet was dependent on ancient geography and placed the biblical Raamses at the location of the Egyptian Piramesse and Avaris, which he believed to be Pelusium somewhere close to the Mediterranean coast.
Montet “Discovered” Piramesse at Tanis

Pierre Montet (1885–1966) was a French scholar, Egyptologist, and archaeologist who worked many years in Egypt (Dawson and Uphill 1972: 206). He began excavations at Tanis in 1929 and already in 1930; he wrote that he had strong reasons to believe that Piramesse and also Avaris had been at the site of Tanis (Montet 1930: 28). Montet believed his whole life that Piramesse and Avaris had been located at the position of Tanis. In his book, *Egypt and the Bible*, published in French in 1959 and in English two years after his death, he wrote that scholars disagreed on the location of Avaris. He added, “The site has in fact been fixed, however. The monuments of San el-Hagar date back beyond the New Kingdom and belong neither to Tanis (founded only at the beginning of the XXI dynasty) nor to Per-Ramses. They are the remains of Avaris” (Montet 1968a: 9). Since it was believed that Piramesse had been built on the same location as the old Hyksos capital, Montet presented support connected to Avaris. He wrote, “Egyptian and Greek texts allow us to describe Avaris as a city dedicated for all eternity to the god Seth, the residence of the Hyksos, and a commercial city very advantageously located to the east of Bubastis” (Montet 1968a: 9). He further referred to a stela indicating that “four hundred years before the foundation of the XIX dynasty by Ramses I, the worship of Seth had already been solidly established at San el-Hagar” also that numerous signatures of the Hyksos kings had been found at San el-Hagar, more than in any other location (Montet 1968a: 9).

At Tanis, Montet found remains of an abundance of monuments, stela, and obelisks with inscriptions from the Ramesside times. He wrote, “Even more convincing is a description of the San el-Hagar tell that contains more monuments of Ramses II and his immediate successors than any other site in Lower Egypt” (Montet 1968a: 55). Further,
“Na-Ramses on the banks of the Pety Canal belonged to Per-Ramses. It corresponds perfectly with what the Bible calls Pharaoh’s store city” (Montet 1968a: 55, 57).

Montet (1968a: 19, 22) stated that Egyptian documents showed that both Ramses II and his son Merneptah stayed long periods in the Delta area. Montet placed the enslavement of the Israelites in the time of Ramses II stating that only that pharaoh fit the picture. According to Montet (1968a: 21) the drastic changes for the Israelites came when Ramses II decided to establish himself in Lower Egypt and build his new capital there. Ramses needed many new workers and probably did not want to enslave his own native Egyptians; instead, he selected the children of Israel who had been living in the area peacefully grazing their herds. Montet (1968b: 171) wrote, “But all this changed when the pharaoh came and settled on the country with a swarm of scribes and courtiers and soldiers. A new city had to rise from the desert and the ruins. Architects, masons and cutters of stone were not lacking in the workrooms, but there was a chance that there might be too little unskilled labor for the humbler tasks, dragging stones and moulding bricks, and it was then that people noticed the presence of the Children of Israel. A census was taken of them at once.”

Montet (1968b: 170–71) speculated as to some of the reasons for Ramses II to move the capital to the Delta: (1) He was far away from the priesthood of Amun, (2) He avoided “the heat of the summer in Thebes,” (3) He wanted a strong fort in the Delta, at a distance from the frontier, a place where he could assemble and train his soldiers, (4) In the Delta Ramses could do and create what he wanted, and (5) Perhaps there he also avoided the bans “which were imposed in Thebes.”

Eventually, the city of Piramesse was destroyed. Montet explained that the war between Thebes and the Delta, when Thebes became the stronger, explained the total
destruction of Piramesse and the many destroyed monuments. The city was then not rebuilt until the time of Smendes, the founder of the twenty-first dynasty, when he came to power over the Delta (Montet 1968b: 172, 222–23).

Montet’s discoveries of architectural remains from the Ramesside times, which also included countless inscriptions, came to convince many of Tanis being the site for Piramesse and the site for the biblical city of Raamses. Many scholars, therefore, abandoned the earlier views that Gardiner’s Pelusium or Petrie’s Tell er-Retebah was the correct site for Piramesse/Raamses (Hoffmeier 2005: 53).

Albright Confirmed Other’s Views

William Foxwell Albright (1891–1971) was an American scholar with a doctorate in Semitic languages. He worked mainly within Palestinian archaeology but visited Egypt a few times (Running and Freedman 1991: 236). Albright himself did not excavate in Egypt for Piramesse or biblical Raamses, but since he became an influential voice of Biblical Archaeology, it is of value to know his views regarding the city of Raamses and the Bible.

To a large degree, Albright had a high regard for the Bible and its narratives. He also viewed archaeology as an important discipline that had, and would continue to throw light on the claims of the Bible. The increased knowledge regarding the geography of the countries of the Bible was also important to him. He was an experienced archaeologist accustomed to working with all the tools and excavation methods that had developed since World War I. He had a sharp mind and was not afraid of criticizing scholars who he thought were being too critical in their views of the Bible. Albright (1940: 194) wrote,

With our present knowledge of the topography of the eastern Delta the account of the start of the Exodus given in Ex. 12:37 and 13:20ff. is perfectly sound topographically,
and Alan Gardiner, who long objected to its historicity on topographical grounds, has recently withdrawn his objections (1933). Many additional pieces of evidence for the substantial historicity of the account of the Exodus and the wandering in the regions of Sinai, Midian, and Kadesh can easily be given, thanks to our greatly increased knowledge of topography and archaeology. We must content ourselves here with the assurance that there is no longer any room for the still dominant attitude of hyper-criticism toward the early historical traditions of Israel.

Albright (1940: 184) believed the Israelites had been living many centuries in Egypt before leaving for Canaan. He stated that either Seti I or Ramses II “was probably the Pharaoh of the Oppression, during whose reign the Exodus took place” (Albright 1955: 16). He wrote that Seti I and then Ramses II built at Tanis, the city called “House of Rameses.” Here Albright referred to Exod 1:11 and Gen 47:11. He stated that “the land of Rameses” was the same district as the “plain of Tanis” in Psalm 78:12, 43 (Albright 1950: 8). He wrote, “Various sites were proposed for Raamses, identified by nearly all with the Residency of Ramesses II, called Pay-Ra’mesese, ‘the House of Ramesses’ in Egyptian, but the correct solution, previously adumbrated by Brugsch and others, was not found until Montet excavated at Tanis (Zoan), beginning in 1929. Raamses, the Residence of Ramesses the Great, is Tanis itself” (Albright 1955: 17).

While Albright traveled in Egypt the winter of 1947 to 1948, he visited the sites of both Tell el-Maskhuta and Tell er-Retebah. He became convinced that Gardiner’s views were correct that the former was Succoth and the latter was Pithom (Albright 1948:15; Running and Freedman 1991: 238). Albright (1940: 194) had already several years earlier written, “The tradition in Ex. 1 that the Israelites were forced by the Egyptian corvée to take part in the construction of the store-cities Pithom and Raamses is also independently supported by the excavations at Tell Retabeh … and Tanis, both of which were built (or rebuilt) by Ramesses II. Since Tanis was called Per-Re’emasese (The House of Ramesses) only for a couple of centuries (cir. 1300–1100), it is most improbable that the
tradition could arise if it were spurious.” Albright (1955: 17) criticized Naville whom he believed was mistaken in identifying Tell el-Maskhuta with Pithom and added, “We are now practically certain that it was the adjacent modern site of Tell Retabeh, where Ramesses II is known to have built extensively.”

In summary, Albright mainly based his judgement on the results from previous archaeologists; he disagreed with those who seemed to have drawn their conclusions from too vague evidence. He agreed with Montet’s view, that Tanis was the site for ancient Piramesse and biblical Raamses.

What Motivated Petrie, Gardiner, Peet, Montet, and Albright to Locate the City of Raamses?

Petrie, the Establishe of New Work Methods

William Matthew Flinders Petrie (1853–1942) was a British scholar. Compared to all other researchers covered in this study thus far, Petrie had not attended famous universities obtaining a formal archaeological education. He had been sick and delicate as a child and because of that, both of his well-educated parents schooled him at home. He learned geology from his mother and mathematics, science, and surveying from his father. Together with his father, who was a civil engineer and surveyor, Petrie measured Stonehenge (Drower 2001: 39). When he was thirteen years old, he read Piazzi Smyth’s book about the Great Pyramid that created in him an interest in ancient Egypt (Dawson and Uphill 1972: 228). Petrie came to Egypt around 1880 and tested Smyth’s “sweeping mathematical” (Silberman 1997b: 308) ideas of divine involvement in the building of the pyramid. He surveyed the whole area and took measurements. Petrie’s detailed measuring and analysis disproved many mathematical claims and speculations regarding the
measurements of the Great Pyramid. Petrie’s work not only refuted Smyth and various theories that divine influence had been involved in the building of the Great Pyramid, he also disproved claims that the British somehow were related to the Israelites. The scholarly world caught the attention of Petrie, possibly because of his careful work (Drower 2001: 39; Silberman 1997b: 308; Dawson and Uphill 1995: 329; Smyth 1864).

In Egypt, Petrie was sad to see how many of the ancient remains were badly treated and how much damage early explorers had caused. This partly motivated him to work on behalf of the Egypt Exploration Society (EES). He started digging in Tanis and worked for the Fund between 1884 and 1886. Because of disagreement with the Fund and the wish to be independent, he established a new institution, the Egyptian Research Account, which a decade later became the British School of Archaeology. It was during these years he was made Edwards professor at University College in London in 1892, a position he held until 1933. He later returned to work for the EES. Petrie excavated in numerous places in Egypt and for a short while also in Palestine in a career of fieldwork that lasted nearly sixty years. He made many major discoveries as an archaeologist; he was especially delighted that he found the Merneptah stela, which contained the earliest Egyptian mention of Israel (Drower 1999: 615; 2001: 39; Dawson and Uphill 1972: 228; Encyclopædia Britannica 2002g: 342).

Already while working in Tanis, Petrie had begun inventing many new and important work methods that came to influence generations of archaeological work. Earlier excavators had not overseen the work themselves and had only saved material culture that could be sold as antiquities. Petrie, on the other hand, carefully supervised and directed his digs and recorded everything found. He started seeing a value in broken pottery and in the smallest artifacts, which he believed contributed to the dating of a site.
He worked slowly and systematically. In 1904, these new methods were published in *Methods and Aims in Archaeology*, which also introduced the use of the camera in fieldwork. Petrie was full of energy and worked long days. “The hours of work at Tanis were from 5.30 until 11.30 am, and 2.30 until 6.30 pm, but the recording of the objects would keep Petrie busy until 10 or 11 o’clock at night; in addition, he did all his own cooking. Walks of fifty kilometres or more to visit ancient sites presented no obstacle to him at all, despite the fact that he was often ill owing to the poor conditions in which he lived on his excavation” (Spencer 1982: 39). His energy also resulted in Petrie being quick in publishing the results from his excavations; he wrote more than a hundred books and a thousand articles and reviews. Petrie was known among the Egyptian workers as “Father of Pots” (Drower 1999: 616). Petrie was a practical man who did not have only his workers do the digging. He was respected by his workers “probably largely due to the fact that he was the only European they had seen who was not afraid of getting dirty” (Spencer 1982: 39).

Since his work is viewed as a turning point in archaeology and Egyptology, he is described in scholarly circles as the father of scientific archaeology or the founder of modern archaeology. He also received the title of father of Palestinian archaeology because of his excavations in Tell el-Hesy where he dated the site based on the pottery found (Drower 1999: 616; 2001: 39–40; Fisher 2018: 112; *Encyclopædia Britannica* 2002g: 342; Dawson and Uphill 1972: 229; Bratton 1967: 80–81). Perhaps the most important contribution to the scientific work by Petrie is the system called Sequence Dating, which he built on “Furtwängler’s method of dating painted and decorated pottery as an archaeological chronometer and expanded it so that it could be used for all types for the first time, systematically arranging predynastic Egyptian material, and thus inventing
sequence dating” (Dawson and Uphill 1972: 229). While setting an example for many others for how to work as an archaeologist, Petrie has been criticized for not always following his own methods. This “largely through impatience and an eagerness to move on to new sites and new challenges” (James 1995: 2760).

In *Egypt and Israel*, Petrie stated, “The purpose of this volume is to illustrate the general historical setting of the narratives of the Old Testament and Christian times; to see how we must understand them as part of the history of the period; to see what consistent conclusion we can reach on taking into account all the circumstances; and to show the point of view of a general historian in regard to these narratives” (Petrie 1912: iii). This statement shows that Petrie generally believed in the historicity of the biblical material, but the passages above show that he also regarded the Exodus narrative as an historic event.

Petrie believed that the names of the biblical city Raamses and the district of Rameses showed that these belonged to a period after the time of Ramses II. He also noted that Egyptians constantly made raids into Palestine down to around 1194 B.C. without these raids being mentioned in the period of the Judges. This he took as support for Israel’s entering Canaan some time after that date. Based on these views Petrie believed an Exodus around 1450 B.C. to be “flatly contrary to the known history” (Petrie 1912: 37). Petrie generally believed in the historicity of the Bible and of the Exodus, however, like Lepsius almost a century earlier, he had a problem with the chronology of the Bible and both of them set aside a fifteenth century B.C. Exodus.

Petrie commented on and wrote about the city of Raamses because he was an archaeologist with wide experience of excavation at locations mentioned in the Bible and he believed the Exodus was an historic event. His excavations and important finds at Tell
er-Retebah led him to conclude he had found the city of Raamses, so of course he had to publish his finds and tell the world of his discovery.

Gardiner, the Detailed Researcher

Alan Gardiner (1879–1963) was a British Egyptologist. He received one of the best educations due to his father being a rich businessman. Gardiner was educated at University College in London, the famous Charterhouse, and Queens College at Oxford. He took courses at École des Hautes Études and Collège de France and later in Berlin. He was an Egyptologist and philologist with an excellent knowledge of the Egyptian languages, regarding both grammar and vocabulary. Gardiner served in many places, for example, as Research Professor in Egyptology of the University of Chicago, 1924 to 1934, but without ever visiting America. He mostly preferred not to work in positions at Universities since he wished to work on publications without being interrupted. Gardiner was one of the important persons in the Egypt Exploration Fund and assisted when it was reorganized as the Egypt Exploration Society in 1919. Gardiner received many awards because of his works; in 1948, he was knighted (Dawson and Uphill 1972: 111; Černý 2001: 145; Simpson 2004: 408).

While young, he came to read many books about Egypt and had the opportunity to visit the Egyptian collection at the Louvre. When his family moved they lived close to the British Museum and as a boy he visited the museum many times, mainly due to his interest in collecting stamps. His father was not fond of his collecting stamps and one evening encouraged the boy to develop one of his other interests, that of Egypt. Gardiner did and continued for the rest of his life. At the age of fifteen, Gardiner wrote his first article on an Egyptian topic about the reign of one of the pharaohs. He combined
information from two scholarly articles and wished to write the best account of that Pharaoh ever written (Černý 2001: 142–43; Simpson 2004: 407). “Doing Egyptology became for him a duty.… One gets the impression that he was prompted as much by desire that his work should stand as an example to the future Egyptologists as by a wish to assure himself that he lived up to his father’s expectation” (Černý 2001: 142–43).

Gardiner was a diligent and systematic Egyptologist his whole life. He spent much time in translating and publishing previously unpublished Egyptian texts, especially the cursive scripts of the New kingdom. He wrote twenty-six books about Egyptology where he was the author of the whole or part of the book. Famous are his three editions of *Egyptian Grammar*. He also published more than two hundred articles including linguistic studies. One of his best-known books was on the Egyptian history, *Egypt and the Pharaohs*, which was based mainly on Egyptian writings (Černý 2001: 143; Dawson and Uphill 1972: 111–12; Alan Gardiner 2019; Simpson 2004: 408). Gardiner’s greatest discovery happened in the Sinai Peninsula where he observed “the earliest known Semitic alphabet” (Simpson 2004: 408) and its “role as an alphabetic link between the Egyptian hieroglyphic and the Semitic alphabets” (Dawson and Uphill 1972: 112).

Gardiner was strongly critical towards Naville and other scholars whom he viewed as not doing a scientific study but rather “were naively using the Bible to find the Delta sites associated with the exodus story” (Hoffmeier 2005: 52; Gardiner 1924). Gardiner wanted evidence and logical reasoning. For example, Gardiner did not believe that the city of Raamses was located in the Wadi Tumilat area. Since the Bible seemed to locate the city and the area of Goshen in the Wadi Tumilat district, Gardiner (1918c: 265) commented, “All this is good logic, and would be valid argument if the narrative of the sojournin in and departure from Egypt were a single homogeneous account, to be
regarded as sound historical evidence. It is easy to show, however, that the entire story is clothed in a legendary form, and legend has no care for strict topographical exactitude.” Further, if one takes the view, “namely that the Exodus story, whatever nucleus of truth it may contain, has come down to us in purely legendary garb, we shall not feel disposed to insist upon the distance between Rameses and Succoth, nor to equate ‘the land of Rameses’ exactly with ‘the land of Goshen.’ On the contrary, our verdict will be that the Biblical town of Raamses-Rameses keeps alive a dim recollection of the very city where the Pharaohs of the Oppression and of the Exodus actually resided” (Gardiner 1918c: 266).

Gardiner was criticized for his view and was perhaps misunderstood that he held the whole story of the Exodus as being mythical. He stated, “I had most clearly and explicitly affirmed my conviction that the story, as a whole, reflects a definite historical event, namely the expulsion of the Hyksos from Egypt” (Gardiner 1924: 88). Further, “Until there emerges evidence of a character wholly different from that already available, I submit that the details of the story [the book of Exodus] ought to be regarded as no less mythical than the details of the creation as recorded in Genesis. At all events our first task must be to attempt to interpret those details on the supposition that they are legend” (Gardiner 1924: 88, Gardiner quoted himself from one of his earlier articles in Recueil Champollion).

Why did Gardiner write about the city of Raamses and the city Piramesse? The account above shows only partially that Gardiner approached his Egyptological studies from an emphasis on the archaeology of Egypt as opposed to a desire motivated by the biblical narratives. Gardiner aimed at pointing out Piramesse, not Raamses of Exod 1:11. His articles in 1918 traced the Egyptian city Piramesse and its location. Almost as a “side
effect,” came the conclusion that this Egyptian city must have been the one the biblical Exodus narrative refers to, if there was at all some truth in the biblical reference.

**Peet Found Few Facts in the Biblical Text**

Thomas Eric Peet (1882–1934) was a British Egyptologist, archaeologist, and linguist. He was educated at Merchant Taylors’ School, Crosby, and studied mathematics and Classics at Queen’s College, Oxford. He studied archaeology in Italy, excavated there, and published the book *The Stone Age and Bronze Age in Italy and Sicily*. His first work in Abydos in Egypt was for Garstang in 1909 and during the same year, he began work in Egypt for the Egypt Exploration Fund under Naville but later worked independently. From 1913 to 1928, he was lecturer in Egyptology at Manchester University. He served as a lieutenant in World War I. In 1921, he directed excavations at Tell al-Amarna, a work for the Egypt Explorations Society. In 1923, he studied Egyptology at Oxford. He began studying Egyptian with Gardiner but was mainly self-taught in Egyptian, Coptic, and Demotic. He had a gift for learning languages and gained excellent knowledge of the Egyptian language. Peet conducted valuable work regarding the transliteration of papyri and the study of Egyptian writings, which resulted in several publications. From 1920 to 1933, he served as Brunner Professor of Egyptology at the University of Liverpool. From 1933, he was professor in Egyptology at the University of Oxford, which lasted only a short time due to his too early death. The University’s Egyptology library at Queen’s College in Oxford is named the Peet Library to honor him (Dawson and Uphill 1972: 223; T. Eric Peet 2019; Gunn and Simpson 2004: 435).

Peet showed in *Egypt and the Old Testament* that he himself had made a detailed study of the Israelite sojourn in Egypt and the Exodus narrative and he had researched the
publications by Naville, Petrie, Gardiner, and others. He was aware of the various existing views of when in time the Exodus could have taken place and what questions are raised depending on the various views. For example, he mentioned the issue of Jacob coming to Egypt. If Jacob was placed in an area already at that time called “the land of Rameses,” named so after pharaoh Ramses II, that view created a very late dating that few would have been prepared to accept (Peet 1922: 78).

As demonstrated above, Peet wrote about the “compilers” of the biblical material. He mentioned the two solutions regarding dating; either later editors updated older geographical names of the original narrative, or the compilers added later geographical names to a narrative that originally lacked such names (Peet 1922: 90–91). Peet’s statements about compilers and editors of the text show an influence from several German theologians. This is clearly demonstrated when Peet in several places mentioned the various sources of the Documentary Hypothesis. In one instance Peet (1922: 127–28) wrote, “If, however, the reader will take a marked Bible and read only those passages in the story of the exodus which are derived from the oldest document, J, he will find that the narrative, far from being confused, is remarkably straightforward.” Further, when discussing the southern route of the Exodus, Peet (1922: 133) wrote, “not a single place name in J, E or P can with certainty, or even with probability, be placed there [peninsula of Sinai].” Peet (1922: 78, 106, 134) took the view that the narrative consisted of many sources, was heavily biased and that the writer of the text lived eight hundred or a thousand years after some kind of events took place. He took the view that one needs to ask whether the original narrative contained geographical names and locations and whether the narrative is consistent with itself. Peet (1922: 106) stated, “We must therefore be prepared to reject as later embellishment much of the story as it appears in the Book of
the Exodus, and to imagine the actual event as of a much more humble nature.” Peet did not find much to be facts in the Exodus narrative; later he also mentioned that he did not “for a moment” believe that two million people could have “maintained themselves in the desert” for the traditional period of forty years (Peet 1922: 106–7). Peet (1922: 136) stated, “any attempt to deal scientifically” with the route of the Exodus must recognize certain points, such as the late date of the compilation of the material of the book of Exodus.

Peet clearly had a critical approach to the narratives. As demonstrated above, Peet believed the geographical names to be anachronistic; he stated that they could not be used to show the route of the Exodus. The only way to find the route of the Exodus was with “application of common sense to the problem” which could only hope to trace the route that the much later compliers thought the Israelites took (Peet 1922: 126). When summarizing the chapter on Exodus in his book, Peet (1922: 145) wrote, “The varying conclusions to which the searchers after truth in these matters have come only serve to show the inadequacy of the evidence to prove anything whatsoever.” In connection to his account on the Exodus, Peet also, as previously stated, criticized some scholars for making wrong conclusions based on too little evidence. He stated, it “is typical of the way in which the facts of archaeology are twisted and distorted in the service, so-called, of biblical study” (Peet 1922: 84, footnote 1). With this critical spirit, it is a bit surprising to read when Peet (1922: 106) wrote, “That an exodus occurred need not for a moment be doubted. It has already been pointed out that the whole incident of the sojourn in Egypt is bound up so closely with the revelation of Jehovah that it is hardly likely to be a pure invention.”
Peet was a well-educated scholar who walked in a tradition of approaching the Exodus with a scientific mind and common sense. Having accepted the Documentary Hypothesis, he found very few facts in the Exodus narrative. Why did he comment on the city of Raamses and its location? Peet knew from Egyptian sources that the city Piramessé existed, and archaeology helped him locate that city to ancient Pelusium. Peet was an Egyptologist and archaeologist and his aim was to explain from where the editors of the narratives took the expression “city of Raamses” of Exod 1:11. To him the name was an anachronistic reference of a later editor.

Montet Found Remains of Piramessé

Pierre Montet (1885–1966) was a French scholar, Egyptologist, and archaeologist who was educated at the University of Lyons and then worked for the French archaeological oriental institute (Institut français d’archéologie orientale) in Cairo. Montet served in World War I and received several medals. For some years, he excavated in Byblos in present day Lebanon. Montet was professor at the University of Strasbourg from 1919 to 1948 and at Paris’ Collège de France 1948 to 1956. Montet published eighteen books, some of which were published in English, and numerous of articles. The Institute d’Égyptologie at the Strasbourg University was named after Montet.

When he undertook his first major excavations in Byblos, he found what was then believed to be the earliest alphabetical writing. He also found royal tombs and showed evidence for the many contacts between Egypt and Byblos. Montet’s most important contribution came from the work at Tanis where he worked from 1929 until the start of World War II. His discoveries of the many undisturbed royal tombs there have been compared with the discovery and the treasures of the tomb of Tutankhamun. In Tanis, he

Montet, in general, connected the biblical account of the Israelites within the history of Egypt. As stated above, this can be seen when he placed the Israelites in the context of Ramses II. Another example of the same view came from the kind treatment of Joseph’s brothers. That Pharaoh allowed them to settle down in Goshen with their families and flocks, “seems to reflect the policies of the Hyksos rulers. The native pharaohs were far less lenient” (Montet 1968a: 10). However, Montet (1968b: 203) stated, “The account of the Exodus can in no way be considered an historical document. All the same, the chronicler who made Moses’ interlocutor an impressionable, cunning, superstitious yet stubborn man may have come near the truth. He has certainly recreated the atmosphere of those discussions, at the end of which the Children of Israel left Egypt.” Montet (1968a: 7) did not believe the Israelites were in Egypt for 400 years, he rather prefers the shorter 215 years supported by the LXX. Montet saw an historical kernel in the narratives, while at the same time regarded them as assembled by a later “chronicler.”

Montet commented on earlier excavators and their search for biblical cities. Regarding the location of Pithom, Montet (1968a: 57) wrote, “Its remains are at Tell el-Maskhuteh, a site which has not been the object of systematic excavations…. Some red brick buildings have been identified as the stores built by the sons of Israel, but this view must be abandoned once and for all.” Montet was an experienced archaeologist who required more solid evidence than buildings of bricks for an Israelite connection.
Montet explained why the name of Piramesse sometimes lacked the prefix “Pi” in some writings. He stated, “It is customary to drop the pr when Per-Ramses is used in a title such as ‘royal son of Ramses’ or the name of a god. In granite columns, on the pedestals of statues and bas-reliefs it is said that the king is beloved of the gods of Ramses—Seth, Amon, Pre, Ptah, Tem (Atum), Anta, and Wadjit—in precisely the place where on other monuments it is said that the king is beloved of Ptah of Memphis or Min of Coptos. Each example of these gods—and they are numerous—proves that at San el-Hagar we are on the site of Per-Ramses or, through abbreviation, Ramses” (Montet 1968a: 55). In the context of these comments, Montet did not specifically point out that he commented on the missing “Pi” of Exod 1:11, however, that reference exists on a previous page; Montet generally stated that the Egyptians sometimes abbreviated city names.

Montet was an Egyptologist familiar with the Egyptian writings. From Egyptian inscriptions, he knew of the existence of Piramesse. He was acquainted with the city of Avaris from classical authors and with Raamses of the Bible. He believed all three cities had existed at the same location. What made him search for the city? Egyptian sources showed that Piramesse certainly had existed and Montet did not believe Petrie had found the correct location for the city. With the discovery of all the Ramesside remains and inscriptions at Tanis, it was logical and reasonable to believe that he had found Piramesse and with that Avaris and the biblical Raamses. Similar to Gardiner, Montet was more interested in Egypt and finding Piramesse, than searching for the city of Raamses because it was mentioned in the Bible. With the discovery, he believed from about 1930 until his death that he had found all three cities.
Albright Supported the Bible

William Foxwell Albright (1891–1971) grew up in a missionary family and received most of his early education from his mother. He had severe problems with his eyesight and an accident gave him a crippled right hand. These physical problems contributed to his choice of an academic career. As a youth, he studied at Upper Iowa University and served for a short time as a principal in a high school. From 1913, he studied at the Oriental Seminary at John Hopkins University. There he received his PhD in Semitic languages in 1916. He remained there and taught Akkadian and Arabic. He served for a short time in the US Army during World War I. In 1919, he went to Palestine to do research for the American School of Oriental Research (ASOR). He remained in Palestine as director for ASOR until 1929 when he continued as professor at John Hopkins University. Between 1933 and 1935, he worked part time for the University and part time for ASOR in Palestine; in 1935 he resigned from ASOR and worked for the University until he retired in 1958.

Albright is mostly associated with archaeology of Palestine although he worked also in Jordanian Petra and travelled and did some research in Egypt. He published many influential books, including, for example, *Archaeology of Palestine and the Bible*. In all, he published over one thousand items and received hundreds of honors and rewards. Between 1930 and 1968, he edited the *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*. Albright played an important part in authenticating the Dead Sea Scrolls and was one of the first to recognize the importance of the scrolls for a deeper understanding of the Bible. Albright received wide respect within academic circles due both to his achievements and his knowledge. He also sat in five different learned societies but was active in several others. While he was still alive, the ASOR facility in Jerusalem changed
its name to the W. F. Albright Institute of Archaeological Research in his honor (Stilley 1999: 227–28; Encyclopædia Britannica, 2002a: 222).

Albright had a high view of archaeology. He stated, “Biblical archaeology covers all the lands mentioned in the Bible, and is thus co-extensive with the cradle of civilization. This region extends from the western Mediterranean to India, and from southern Russia to Ethiopia and the Indian Ocean. Excavations in every part of this extensive area throw some light, directly or indirectly, on the Bible” (Albright 1966: 1). He further wrote, “The recovery of the ancient Orient is the result of extensive surface exploration, followed by intensive excavation. Thanks to the former, the geography of Bible Lands was mapped and their archaeological remains still standing above ground were recorded; ancient sites were examined and identified where possible; manners and customs, languages and traditions were studied and described before they were swept away by progressive waves of westernization and nationalism. Excavation brought to light ancient cities, with their palaces, temples, private houses, and tombs” (Albright 1955: 1). However, Albright’s view of the Bible and the Bible’s version of the history of the world seems a bit complicated. First, Albright had accepted an evolutionary perspective of man. This can be seen when he wrote how much he appreciated the invention of radiocarbon dating (Albright 1954: 538). For example, he wrote that we can date back “as far as 60,000 or 70,000 years” (Albright 1966: 4). He also stated, “At least a hundred thousand years [have] elapsed since man first learned to make artifacts” (Albright 1955: 132).

Since man had existed for so long time, Albright, on the one hand, had a high view of the Bible. He stated that the Bible “represents God’s culminating revelation to man at the latter’s coming to the age of maturity…. Yet some ask us to believe that the
Bible reflects so primitive a stage of cultural and even biological evolution that it no
longer has a meaning for modern man!” (Albright 1955: 132). He further stated,

But though the Bible arose in that world [a world of peoples and history?], it was not
of that world; its spiritual values are far richer and deeper, irradiating a history which
would otherwise resemble that of the surrounding peoples. The importance of
archaeological discovery to the Bible student consists in the fact that we can at last
study the history of the Chosen People in the same way as we do that of any other
people—as the story of an evolving organism, standing in symbiotic relation with
surrounding peoples, borrowing from all sides and transforming all that it borrowed.
We can thus distinguish more clearly between the eternal spiritual verities and those
which are evanescent. (Albright 1955: 4–5)

However, while Albright had a high view of the Bible, he also employed a critical
view. Albright (1966: 8) distinguished “between the first eleven chapters of Genesis, and
the rest of the book. The first eleven chapters are neither history nor theology; they are
not poetry, but neither are they prose. They are in a special category of their own, which
originally must have been poetic in form, and certainly had from the beginning an
irreducible religious content which was never lost. These traditions were handed down
from time immemorial, and gradually deepened their spiritual character as they took their
final (and present) form.” He believed the narratives consisted of oral traditions later
written down and rearranged with changes in emphasis (Albright 1954: 542; 1966: 9), but
that “as a whole the picture in Genesis is historical, and there is no reason to doubt the
general accuracy of the biographical details” (Albright 1950: 6). Albright (1940: 190)
believed it likely that “the whole story of Moses was added to the epic nucleus soon after
the Conquest of Canaan.”

Both in his early and late writings, Albright made some use of the Documentary
Hypothesis. For example, Albright (1940: 189; 1966: 14) mentioned the sources J, E, D
and later editorial work done on the texts. Albright is both critical and positive towards
the school of Wellhausen. He viewed that school to wrongly build on the assumption that
the text of the Pentateuch did not change after an assumed redaction around 500 B.C. He referred to the understanding of the Dead Sea scrolls and a deeper study of the LXX when claiming that there were more written traditions than the MT. He stated that the text we have in the Hebrew Bible was, “by no means the same as it was when these documents were originally written and compiled. Consequently the attempt to break a text down into minute units, sometimes sharing a single verse, even a short verse, among three different sources, is quite futile. But although these fundamentalist ‘higher critics’ are quite wrong in their presuppositions, it does not necessarily follow that the Documentary Hypothesis in general is wrong. But it does have to be treated with much more critical circumspection than has hitherto been the case” (Albright 1966: 14–15). He also wrote about “The impossibility of the views of Wellhausen on the evolution of Israelite religious culture” (Albright 1954: 544).

In addition, Albright’s view of God was complicated. Albright (1940: 186) stated, “The principal deity of the pre-Mosaic Hebrews was a mountain god, or was invested with mountain imagery…. The mountain-deity in question is clearly the storm-god Hadad, generally called Baal (lord) by the Canaanites, and often addressed as ‘great mountain,’ or the like, in Accadian invocations to Amurrur, the ‘Western One,’ i.e., the storm-god of the West.” Further, he wrote, “The chief god of the Patriarchs was believed to have been Shaddai, as we read again and again in the Priestly code (confirmed by evidence of personal names, three of which appear in Numbers while one, Shaddai-ʽammi, is attested by contemporary Egyptian inscription), and several other divine names are reported” (Albright 1940: 184–85). He also took help of archaeology from neolithic Jericho regarding triads of gods, stating, “Early Hebrew popular religion was presumably similar, with a father, El, a mother whose specific name or names must remain obscure
(perhaps Elat or Anath), and a son who appears as the storm-god, probably named Shaddai ‘the One of the Mountain(s)’” (Albright 1940: 187–88).

The examples above illustrate that Albright used both the tool of archeology in approaching the Bible and, in his view, a “milder” form of the critical tools developed mainly by German scholars. He believed in the general historicity of the Exodus narrative, which can be observed in the way he discussed various points connected to the narrative. For example, when he stated that it was easier to reconstruct the route of the Exodus when several of the early stops were known; the identified stops made it impossible to believe in a southern crossing of the Sea, rather did the Israelites cross the marsh areas near Tanis (Albright 1955: 84–85). Based on research in Transjordan and lack of settlement there until the thirteenth-twelfth century B.C., Albright saw how that could explain how freely the Israelites could pass these areas. At the same time, Albright wrote how that caused a “serious obstacle to any much earlier date for the exodus, since both Edom and Moab appear as states in the traditions of the Wilderness Wanderings” (Albright 1955: 87).

Albright was frustrated when excavations of the site believed to be Ai in ancient Canaan indicated that the place was uninhabited at the traditional time of the conquest. He wrote, “the writer [Albright himself] refuses to take the view that the Ai episode (Jos. 7–8) is legendary, and thinks that there has been a certain interchange of names between the adjacent sites of Bethel and Ai, only two miles apart, so that the Canaanite ‘Ai’ has been brought to light by the excavations at ‘Bethel’” (Albright 1955: 88).

Albright’s complex relationship to the Bible can also be noted regarding his wish both to prove and not to prove the Bible with the help of archaeology. Albright (1955: 133) wrote, “We no longer trouble ourselves with attempts to ‘harmonize’ religion and
science, or to ‘prove’ the Bible. The Bible can stand by itself.” On the other hand, he wrote that no finds disprove the biblical content (Albright 1955: 4).

To sum up, Albright used archaeology to “demonstrate the historicity of many controversial parts of the Old Testament” (Moorey 1991: 71). He could do that because he had firsthand knowledge of both the geographical area of the Bible and of archaeology. “This enabled him to control and critically assess the work of archaeologists in a way other biblical scholars, without this experience, could not” (Moorey 1991: 72). While Albright believed man had existed for more than a hundred thousand years, that the first eleven chapters of the Bible were not historical, and that the Pentateuch consisted of oral traditions in written form originating from different sources, he still viewed much of the information in the Bible as reliable.

Why did Albright comment on the city of Piramesse/Raamses? While Albright viewed some parts of the Bible as mythical, he seems to have accepted much of the geography of the Exodus. He believed in the existence of the city of Piramesse in Egyptian writings and he believed in the city of Raamses in the biblical account. Montet’s archaeological discovery of an abundance of monuments and inscriptions from the Ramesside period at Tanis convinced Albright of Tanis being the fulfillment of both cities.

The World of Petrie, Gardiner, Peet, Montet, and Albright

The years between 1900 and 1950 involved major events that caused changes on many levels. Several of the scholars treated in the present study were drafted in World War I, a war that involved countries that used to be viewed as Christian. World War II and the use of atom bombs, the horrible treatments by the Nazis of Jews and other
minorities, challenged the faith in humankind and the positive views built by the industrial and technological revolutions. The events of the political world also had some effect on the geography, archaeological endeavors, and on the view of the Bible. A new nation was also born in 1948 with the creation of the state of Israel, which would bring new research in the area of the ancient people of the Bible.

The world wars also interrupted archaeological research for some time, but the work was renewed in times of peace. The work methods of archeologists improved compared with the previous fifty years. Research methods had developed and were no longer dependent only on the pick and spade, but had become increasingly more detailed and scientific, based on empirical research including the use of pottery for dating purposes. Egyptian writings became more accessible and were translated; and the tools for linguists expanded as new dictionaries and grammars were produced. More than previously was it possible to study Egypt from other perspectives; scholars became more interested in the study of Egypt for Egypt’s own sake rather than as evidence of the Bible’s historical accuracy. In 1938, it was stated, “Of twenty recent expeditions operating in Egypt only one has any essential relation to the Bible narrative: the excavator of Tanis [Montet] believes that he is in a position to show that this site was the biblical Rameses. The other nineteen expeditions have been concerned with ancient Egypt per se.… The sojourn and the Exodus are of less importance than the common social, moral, and religious stimuli of the ancient orient” (Wilson 1938: 220). Thus, the archaeology of a country, in this case Egypt, had begun to replace the archaeology of the Bible. The knowledge of Egypt, the amount of material culture found, and that it now was possible to access Egyptian writings had also made Egyptology “too large and too complicated for the inclusive grasp of a single man” (Wilson 1938: 202).
Major changes in the political and academic worlds, but also the rise of a better material standard in the western world contributed to a more skeptical view of religion in general and of the teachings of the Bible. In a world less positive towards religion, the views of Darwin on the origin of man and of Wellhausen regarding the Bible now reached out more widely to both the academic world and to common people.

Some archaeologists’ lack of critical methods and interpretations also had negative effects on Biblical Archaeology. Some of the early conclusions coming from archaeological excavations were immature and caused some scholars to look down on Biblical Archaeology. For example, Petrie’s discoveries of remains from Ramses II at Tell er-Retebah interpreted as proof of the discovery of the biblical city of Raamses, received criticism from other scholars. Especially Gardiner became severely critical towards the way some archaeologists, such as Naville, worked. Gardiner and Naville, in several articles published in the early 1900s, held a high polemic tone concerning this topic. In one article carrying the title *The Geography of the Exodus*, Naville wrote, “I must state that Dr. Gardiner and myself belong to opposite historical schools” (Naville 1924: 18). Naville stated clearly that his research also rested on a “strictly scientific ground” and that “science, sound historical principles” were his guide (Naville 1924: 19). While the debate included the methods used, it concurrently dealt with interpretation and the view of the origin of the biblical material.

During the time-period in question, it became increasingly more common that scholars belonged to different schools of thought and interpreted finds in different ways. Some were more traditional and in general accepted the biblical narratives as historical. Some, such as Albright, combined parts of the scientific worldview with the Bible. He had accepted the long existence of man while retaining a belief in the general historicity
of the biblical content. Other scholars, such as Peet, saw some kernel of truth in the narratives but, in agreement with the school of Wellhausen, believed that the text had undergone major changes and alterations. As demonstrated above, Gardiner used expressions such as “legendary” when describing the biblical narratives. It became progressively more accepted to view the content of the Pentateuch as oral traditions written down centuries later than the time of the events described in the text. Scholars had begun to change their views of the origin of man and the origin and credibility of the Bible—their worldviews had changed. Now the worldview of a scholar carried more weight when interpreting. This was a strong contrast to earlier times, when most of the academic world had viewed the Bible as describing historical events. While worldview had started to play a role in interpretation already during the previous period of fifty years, it could now involve totally opposite worldviews in approaching the biblical narratives. The condemnation of those who did excavations and research in Egypt and connected it to the Bible seems to have had a long-term effect. Very few, since that time, “have integrated their work with biblical studies, in particular as it relates to the exodus tradition” (Hoffmeier 2005: 52).

Parallel to the above mentioned changes in the academic world and biblical scholarship, one has to point out that in the years between the two World Wars, Biblical Archaeology, “had an academic status and a self-confidence that it had not enjoyed before and was rarely to achieve again” (Moorey 1991: 55). This was the case because of men such as Albright and others, who built up Biblical Archaeology. The discovery of the tomb of Tutankhamun, the Dead Sea Scrolls, and other major archeological finds during these years continued to stimulate the research of the Bible and the interest in what archaeology could achieve. Biblical Archaeology was still used to prove the credibility of
the Bible, but had started to set out from that harbor and began a journey towards the harbor where it would more be used to illuminate the background of the biblical narratives.

Regarding the search for the city of Raamses and the city of Piramesse, the eyes of scholars had started look to the region of Qantir. Egyptian scholars had found interesting remains when excavating in that area; palaces and dwellings from Ramesside officials had begun to come to the surface that soon again was going to change the scholarly view of the location of Raamses/Piramesse (Pusch 2001: 48).
CHAPTER SIX

THE SEARCH FOR THE CITY OF RAAMSES BETWEEN ABOUT 1950 AND 2019

What did Labib Habachi, Manfred Bietak, Edgar B. Pusch, and William G. Dever Search?

Habachi Had an Eye for Details

Labib Habachi (1904–1984), an Egyptian scholar and Egyptologist, explained that already in 1928, the Egyptian archaeologist Mahmud Hamza in the area of Qantir had found a doorjamb and a lintel from a second door, which both dated from the time of Ramses II (Habachi 1954: 489). Hamza had also found blocks, potsherds, and molds related to the Ramesside period. This led Hamza “to identify it with the long-sought Piramesse; a theory which was accepted by few scholars and rejected by many others” (Habachi 1954: 444).

In 1942, Habachi researched the area of the villages of Khatana and Qantir and in 1954, he published an article of more than a hundred pages regarding his discoveries. He wrote, “Since then [1942] I have been much interested in the history of the district. I inspected the whole area, picked up the inscribed blocks from the houses, the fields and the canal newly dug in the last few years and succeeded in persuading the Cairo Museum to purchase some blocks coming from the same district” (Habachi 1954: 443). The excavations did not provide much information and he did not find much value in the gathered objects. Habachi (1954: 443) continued, “Yet it was evident that a big town
flourished in the place round about Khatâʿna in the Old Empire.” The article by Habachi is a study of discovered monuments connected with Egyptian kings and queens including the Ramessides. In the article, Habachi (1954: 447) stated, “These studies will pave the way to establishing the identification of Khatâʿna-Qantîr with Avaris-Piramesse and to understanding their history in the proper way.”

While in Khatana-Qantir, Habachi (1972: 62) himself found many doorways or parts of doorways with inscriptions connected to “several important people of this period, including kings’ sons, priests and officials attached to the palace and the army. Such doorways were placed on dwellings or rather offices of important persons, who in most cases must have been living in the capital.” The discovery of doorways with names of important persons offered important support for Habachi’s argument that this was the long-sought capital Piramesse (Habachi 1954: 500).

Habachi admitted that the ruins found in Tanis were the most impressive in Lower Egypt and that the same kind of remains could only be found at important locations in Upper Egypt. Habachi knew that Tanis had hundreds of blocks, obelisks, statues, and columns with the name of Ramesses II. He wrote, “But all these important and numerous objects are found either reused in buildings of the Tanite Kings or lying near them” (Habachi 1972: 60). He further noticed that the monuments in Tanis “found in situ are only those of kings of the XXIst and XXIInd Dynasties, while no earlier monuments are found in their original places” (Habachi 1972: 61). Habachi found, on the other hand, that many monuments of the Ramessides in Khatana-Qantir were mostly discovered in their original locations or near to them. The ruins of the area originated from the time of the twelfth dynasty up to the Ramesside period. This further supported Habachi’s conviction
that the site had been an important city until the time of the Ramesside kings (Habachi 1972: 61–62).

The god Seth was the only god related to the capital Avaris. The same god was also among the many worshiped gods of the Ramesside capital (Habachi 1972: 60). Habachi knew that Montet referred to inscriptions of “Seth, lord of Avaris” found on statues at Tanis and that Montet took that as evidence for Tanis being the site of Avaris. Habachi wrote that the same inscription also had been found on a statue at Tell El-Moqdam and agreed with another scholar (Weill) that if we take the statues with the inscription at Tanis “as a proof for locating Avaris at Tanis, the same argument can equally well be applied to Tell El-Moqdam, well-known to represent Leontopolis of the Delta” (Habachi 1972: 60). Also in Bubastis, blocks had been found with the name Seth as well as blocks from the Hyksos rulers, which had not been found in Tanis itself. Habachi raised the question how it was possible that Tell El-Moqdam and Bubastis had monuments, which should have been in the capital Avaris and in Tanis itself? Habachi (1972: 61) wrote, “Bubastis took stones from other places to be reused as building material for its temples. On these blocks we found names of deities foreign to the place, thus proving that the blocks were brought from other sites.”

Habachi (1972: 63) had noted that Avaris had been located on the Pelusiac Branch of the Nile, which fitted with Qantir and not with Tanis, which had been situated by the Tanitic Branch. According to Manetho, Avaris was part of the Sethronitic nome, which also fitted Qantir but not with Tanis, which used to lie in the Tanitic nome.

Regarding all grand monuments at Qantir, Habachi stated, “They were all located in an environment that so exactly fitted a description written by an ancient scribe—a wonderful place with ponds for fish, pools for birds, meadows with every kind of fruit,
and marvelous palaces—that I was sure that it was the Hyksos capital of Avaris” (Kamil 2007: 76). Realizing that the gods of the capital had been worshipped there and seeing the remains left at the site made him conclude this could only be “that of a place where kings resided,” the residence of the Ramesside kings (Habachi 1954: 557).

Despite Montet’s view that the right location for Avaris and Piramesse was at Tanis, Habachi now presented logical evidence pointing to the weakness in Montet’s reasoning. Habachi presented clear arguments, which drove a wedge into the view then held by many scholars, that Tanis fulfilled the requirements for being Avaris and Piramesse. Habachi believed that not until the correct location was established would it become possible to discuss the arguments for other suggested locations for Avaris/Piramesse. He wrote, “This discussion will show us that such places have taken numerous blocks from Khatana-Qantîr” (Habachi 1954: 559).

Habachi wrote a report on his observations to the Antiquity Department but found that his arguments and finds attracted little interest. Montet was an authority on Tanis so neither he nor other scholars changed their opinions. Habachi stated, “Believe me, it is so hard to dispel a conclusion that has gained currency and a professional hearing” (Kamil 2007: 77). Habachi had spent much time during many years in gathering material to prove his conviction that Khatana-Qantir was the correct site of Avaris-Piramesse but he was unable to convince the critical scholarship. In 1972, Habachi (1972: 63) stated that the excavations by the Austrian archaeologist Manfred Bietak brought “to light more documents assuring the identification which I proposed first in 1952. With these excavations, run in the most scientific way, there is no longer any doubt that Avaris lay here and not in Tanis.” Habachi had been convinced for many years, but he had to depend on an Austrian scholar for a final establishment of the Hyksos and Ramesside capitals.
Bietak Excavated for Decades at Tell el Daba‘

The Austrian archaeologist Manfred Bietak (1940–), best known for excavations in both Tell el Daba‘ and in Qantir, is credited with having finally established the location for Avaris and Piramesse. Bietak (1984: 142), as Gardiner also did, commented on the existence of several locations carrying the name Ramses. Bietak explained there were several Egyptian towns that included “Ramses” as a part of their name, however, the names of other towns were written in a different way in order to distinguish them from the capital Piramesse. For example, some added another local distinguishing label. Very deceptive is the name of the temple city of Abu Simbel in the south and a Nubian establishment by Ramses III. However, these are clearly geographically identified in order not to be confused with Piramesse. In addition, the capital Piramesse had added the words “Great of Victories” to its name. When the residence Piramesse was mentioned, there were no more detailed geographical indications added, since this was not needed for the capital city of Ramses.

Bietak (1984: 133) referred to the papyrus Anastasi, which gives geographical information as to the location of Piramesse. The city was by the border of every foreign country and in “the end” of Egypt (die “Front jedes Fremdlandes” und “das Ende Ägyptens”), and was located between Djahi and Ta-meri, which is in the northeast of Egypt. Probably a need to maintain control of Egypt’s interests in the Levant forced the leadership to create a political center in the northeast, which enabled quick responses when the political climate required access to the Levant (Bietak 2017: 62). When Bietak in the 1960s realized that Piramesse was described as located on the then most eastern branch of the Nile, “He painstakingly mapped all the branches of the ancient Delta and established that the Pelusiac branch was the easternmost during Ramesses’” [Ramses II]
reign while the Tanitic branch (i.e. the branch on which Tanis was located) did not exist at all. Excavations were therefore begun at the site of the highest Ramesside pottery location, Tell el-Dab’a and Qantir” (Pi-Ramesses 2019). Piramesse was in an excellent strategic location east on the inside of a large meander of the Pelusiac branch of the Nile (Bietak 1984: 138). According to Bietak (1984: 129), further research and excavations at both Tell el Daba’ and Qantir showed that this is the only possible location for Piramesse.

The city of Piramesse stood partly on the location of the old Hyksos capital Avaris. When Piramesse was built (having its center at Qantir), Avaris became the southern part of the Ramesside capital and functioned mainly as the harbor (Bietak 1986: 322). More recent work at Tell el Daba’ indicated that the large “harbor basin was reduced in size by sedimentation in its northern part and that buildings invaded its space, it is possible that, at that time, the main harbor was moved somewhere else within this sprawling city which covered approx. 600 hectares” (Bietak 2017: 63).

The city of Avaris was perhaps founded as a part of the strategy against Asiatic immigration into Egypt. It was probably king Khety, the first king of the First Intermediate Period, who around 2040 B.C. established the town at present Tell el Daba’. Then the first king of the twelfth dynasty, Amenemhat I, reestablished the city. In the beginning of the late twelfth dynasty came an influx of people from the Syro-Palestinian area, which is demonstrated by the type of architecture and methods of burials used within the settlement (Bietak 1999: 779; 1986: 321–22). The area continued to be used in the later part of the eighteenth century B.C. Excavation had indicated “an egalitarian social organization of ordinary citizens. The material culture is less Egyptianized and more Syro-Palestinian in character than earlier” (Bietak 1999: 780). It is possible that Tell el Daba’, in the beginning of the thirteenth dynasty, was “the center for launching
expeditions to foreign countries, such as mining expeditions to the Sinai and seaborne expeditions to the Levant” (Bietak 1999: 779). From the time of the Hyksos, the town experienced a major expansion (Bietak 2001a: 352). During the later part of the Hyksos period a large citadel was erected in the western part of Avaris, near the eastern bank of the Pelusiac branch of the Nile. The citadel was discovered during excavations in 1991. “Its stone blocks have royal inscriptions of the Hyksos, which can be seen as evidence that it was a royal citadel” (Bietak 2001a: 353). The citadel was “surrounded by a fortification wall with angular buttresses. Inside were found gardens and some monumental architectural remains” (Bietak 1999: 781). Excavations found thousands of pieces of lime wall-plaster with paintings of Minoan style. This was a surprise and
demonstrated contact with the island of Crete (Bietak 1996: 73; 1999: 781). The Hyksos citadel was destroyed and then rebuilt by the eighteenth dynasty (Bietak 1996: 64).

Inscriptions at Elkab, in the tomb of Ahmose, son of Ibana (not to be mistaken for the pharaoh carrying the same name), reveal that the first eighteenth-dynasty Theban king, Ahmose, captured Avaris (Bietak 1999: 781). During the early Eighteenth Dynasty, the settlement had “significant storage facilities and military camps” (Bietak 2017: 60).

When the nineteenth dynasty built Piramesse, the city was established two kilometers north/northeast of Avaris in present day Qantir with a royal palace. The palace, erected by Seti I and probably completed by Ramses II, measured 500 x 400 m. Piramesse had one of the largest palace royal precincts in Egypt, dating to the Thutmosid Period by scarabs and pottery (Bietak 1984: 139–40; 2017: 65). In the south (Tell el Daba‘), Seti I rebuilt a temple of the god Seth with the purpose to honor the god. It was from this god the pharaohs of the nineteenth dynasty claimed their descent (Bietak 1999: 782). The name Avaris continued to be used for the city during the reign of Seti I and Ramses II later changed the name of the city naming it after himself. Then, at least until the twentieth dynasty, the name Avaris was used for the area of the harbor, which is demonstrated by an inscription on a Naos door (Bietak 1984: 133, 139–40; 1999: 782). Avaris functioned as the major harbor measuring about 400 x 500 m and could, according to the second stela of Kamose, harbor hundreds of ships (Bietak 2017: 59, 64).

Tell el Daba‘ has been occupied for more than a thousand years, from the beginning of the twelfth dynasty until the Third Intermediate Period (Bietak 1996: 5). As shown above, the issue for archaeologists no longer dealt only with the location of Avaris and Piramesse. With the establishment of the position of the cities, based on archaeological research, archaeologists could now start telling the story of the cities.
However, probably the river started to silt up and thus no longer enabled travel and transportation on the river as well as access to the sea. This is probably the reason why the city was abandoned and Tanis became the new major city in the northeast (Bietak 2017: 63).

Pusch Gave No Comments on the Biblical City of Raamses

A German Egyptologist from the Pelizaeus Museum, Edgar B. Pusch (1946–), joined the excavations at Tell el Daba’ and Qantir in 1984 and worked closely with Manfred Bietak during many years at these sites. Pusch himself, or in cooperation with other authors, has been involved in publishing information from the excavations at Qantir and Tell el Daba’.

Pusch (2001: 48) described that with the long duration of excavations in Tanis and Qantir, “all data led to the final localization of the Ramessid capital in the region between Qanti and el-Khata’na, which has come to be generally accepted.”

Research showed that the central part of Piramesse had a size of ten square kilometers while the whole area of the city covered more than thirty square kilometers. The region now consists of many, mostly privately owned, smaller settlements, cultivated areas, and countless irrigation canals. The goal was not only to excavate palaces and temples but also to reveal the life of everyday people. Since large portions of the area belonged to private owners, excavations could only be carried out in smaller segments of the city, which thus far have revealed valuable results (Pusch 2001: 48; Pusch and Herold 1999: 647).

Earlier remains from the Middle Kingdom and The Second Intermediate Period belong to the area at Tell el Daba’. The remains of Piramesse date from about 1300 B.C. to the early first millennium, from the early eighteenth dynasty until the Third
Intermediate Period, showing that the city existed for only about three hundred years before it was abandoned. The first fully preserved stratum belongs to the time of the pharaohs Seti I and Ramses II (Pusch 2001: 48; Pusch and Herold 1999: 647). “Thus, the city came into existence much earlier and lasted longer than has been estimated from the textual evidence. It is now clear that the capital continued to be occupied after the end of the 20th Dynasty” (Pusch and Herold 1999: 647).

Artifacts show that both Hittite and Mycenae workers were present in Piramesse. Their tools and artifacts have been found in a large area of workshops connected to the chariotry and stables. The existence of Hittite workers is probably explained by the peaceful relations existing between Egypt and the Hittite empire because of the marriage between Ramesses II and the daughter Maat-hornofru-re of king Hattusili III (Pusch 2001: 49).

Since 1980, excavations have revealed cemeteries, habitation areas, a chariot garrison, workshops, and horse stables. Pillars from the chariot garrison connect it to Ramesses II and date to his thirtieth regnal year. The function as a chariot garrison is based on about four hundred objects connected to chariots but also the marks of horses’ hooves in the courtyard floor. In addition, Egyptian writings confirm the existence of a chariot garrison in Piramesse. Later archaeological research has found parts of a palace-like structure below the royal stud with more stables, pillared halls, and a room with a polychrome stucco floor, including gold-plating. Some of these finds are dated by inscriptions to the time of Ramesses II and are probably related to the creation of the new residence (Pusch 2001: 48–49; Pusch and Herold 1999: 648).

Excavations have revealed the site for a sanctuary belonging to the goddess of love and war, Astarte. She was a protector of “the royal horse team.” These are the first
remains located in Egypt of this kind of sanctuary. Astarte’s name was found written in hieroglyphs on a portico column of the stables (Pusch and Herold 1999: 649).

Piramesse had a vast bronze production area that covered at least thirty thousand square meters. The finds show a high technology and that alloying was done in different ways, with recycling, mixing of fresh metals (copper and tin ingots?), and cassiterite cementation. Several hundred people worked there with building material for the new capital. Every day they produced enormous amounts of melted bronze used for large doors, statues, etc. (Pusch and Herold 1999: 647–48; Rademakers, Thilo, and Pusch 2018: 503–25). Workshops for production of glass have also been found. Research has shown that the main source for silica for the workshops in Piramesse did not come from sand but from crushed quartz, something Petrie had already suggested (Pusch 2001: 48; Rehren and Pusch 2008: 30). Some of the above-mentioned artifacts illustrate the connections the Egyptians of the New Kingdom had with foreign countries. Before the discovery of these remains, this was mainly known from Anatolia where cuneiform archives have been found at Hattusa/Boghazköy (Pusch and Herold 1999: 647).

Pusch has written about Piramesse exclusively from the perspective of archaeology of Egypt. However, in the article about Piramesse in The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt, Pusch (2001: 48) stated that in early Egyptology Piramesse “was believed to be identical with the biblical city called ‘Ramesses,’ from which the Israelites departed Egypt on their Exodus.” The sentence by Pusch mainly informed about the history of the search for Piramesse, but it seems as if he nowhere commented on the Bible and the narratives connected to the Exodus.
Dever Found Some Traces of Historic Material among the Myths and Folklore of the Bible

William G. Dever (1933–), an American scholar, is the archaeologist who strongly contributed to the view that archaeology should be a discipline separated from the Bible. Dever has a wide and long experience of archaeological work mainly in Israel, but has not excavated in order to search for the city of Raamses. However, since his views of archaeology and of ancient Israel have been influential, partly due to his many publications on the issue, it is valuable to know his position in this area.

Dever (1997: 70) wrote, “It is well known that nowhere in Egyptian literature, in history, or in the archaeological record is there a reference or artifact that would indicate that the ‘proto-Israelites’ were ever in Egypt.” Dever took the view that almost the entire content of the first six books of the Bible consist of myth and folktale (with some traces of historic people and events) (Dever 1997: 69). He wrote that the early Israelites originated from and emerged in Canaan and stated that with this “there is neither place nor need for an exodus from Egypt” (Dever 1997: 67). He mentioned that he saw only a few references in the biblical text dealing with “specific details of an Egyptian sojourn that might be identified archaeologically” (Dever 1997: 70). In this context, he referred to the cities of Pithom and Raamses where the Bible, according to Exod 1:11, placed the Israelites. He stated that Pithom (Per-Atum) possibly could be the city of Tell el-Maskhuta or Tell er-Retebah. He wrote that the city of Raamses (Piramessse) “has now almost certainly been located at Tell el-Dab’a, near Qantir” (Dever 1997: 70). Dever stated that his opinion about the location was based on the work done by Bietak. Dever pointed out that these three cities in fact had an Asiatic population, which archaeological evidence confirmed. These cities were Asiatic/Canaanite colonies in Egypt during the
Middle Kingdom/Hyksos era (Dever 1997: 70–71). Dever (1997: 71) argued that the presence of Asiatic people lent “support to the long-held view of some biblical scholars that at least some constituent elements of later Israel had actually stemmed from Egypt.”

To sum up, Dever did not believe in an Exodus or a military conquest of Canaan by an Israel that spent centuries in Egypt. When he searched for archaeological evidence for the biblical narratives of the Exodus, he found some evidence in the fact that the two geographical names of Pithom and Raamses could be traced to locations in the Delta. The city of Raamases of Exod 1:11 was, for Dever, almost certainly the area of the ancient Tell el Daba‘.

**What Motivated Habachi, Bietak, Pusch, and Dever to Locate the City of Raamses?**

Habachi Was Convinced of His View

Labib Habachi (1904–1984), one of the early Egyptologists produced by Egypt itself, was the son of a merchant and grew up in a home that practiced the Coptic Christian faith. It was of vital importance to his father that his sons in the family received a good education (Kamil 2007: 43, 48). His father placed him in a strict school of the Maronites, who acknowledge the Roman Catholic Church and the Pope but had an Eastern liturgy. From the monks he learned that he could achieve his goals and he developed a good habit of reading more than was required. One of the teachers later remembered Habachi as an unusually dedicated student. Habachi deemed that the Maronite school made him grow in his character (Kamil 2007: 50). For some time Habachi taught mathematics at the Egyptian University, but when the department of Egyptology opened, he decided to join that faculty, despite his father’s warnings regarding a change of career (Kamil 2007: 60). Habachi studied Egyptology under many
well-known scholars such as T. Eric Peet. In addition, the University gave personal attention to the students. Habachi highly valued the fieldtrips to various archaeological sites. In 1928, Habachi was one of the first Egyptians who graduated with a BA in Egyptology (Kamil 2007: 60–62).

Habachi thereafter spent thirty years working for the Antiquities Department of the Egyptian government, eventually becoming the Chief inspector. During these years, he travelled widely in the country and was involved in numerous excavations. In total, he took part in more than one hundred and eighty documented excavations (Labib Habachi 2019; Kamil 2007: ix). When Egypt planned to build the High dam in the 1960s, he was involved as Chief inspector in identifying the problems the construction would cause (Kamil 2007: x). In 1967, he accepted a position at the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago as an Archaeological Consultant to its Nubian Expedition (Kamil 2007: 61, 228).

Habachi published many books and articles in professional journals. He was given a state award for his book *Tell Basta*. He was awarded many honors and was a member of several professional societies. In 1966, he received an honorary doctoral degree from the New York University (Kamil 2007: x). Labib Habachi “was unquestionably Egypt’s most productive and internationally recognized Egyptologist of the twentieth century” (Kamil 2007: ix). However, Habachi’s career was not easy in the beginning. He faced discrimination because he was a Copt, considered an outsider among Egypt’s professional class. Two years passed before he was employed by the Antiquity Department (Kamil 2007: 64).

Over time, Habachi held many different posts, travelled widely, took part in many excavations, and became well acquainted with Egypt’s antiquities. “He had an
encyclopedic knowledge of the subject of his specialization, he was an invaluable source concerning the results of fieldwork, and his familiarity with ancient Egyptian monuments, reliefs, paintings, and graffiti—often small, obscure, and hard to reach—was gained largely through his own fieldwork” (Kamil 2007: ix). Habachi was also present “in Tanis while Pierre Montet was extracting minute fragments of gold leaf from a disintegrated mask found in a royal Twenty-second Dynasty tomb” (Kamil 2007: 67).

Habachi’s experience made him an excellent Egyptologist. “He developed a sharp appetite for knowledge, a flair for seeking out archaeological clues, and an eye for an anomaly, whether a subtle change in the color of the soil, a sandy mound in a field, or an object out of context” (Kamil 2007: 69). Habachi’s choice to become an Egyptologist made him enter a discipline that for long had been dominated by scholars from the West. “Many of his most perceptive archaeological observations, based on a deep understanding of ancient history and contemporary society, were rejected out of hand because they cast doubt on earlier, European conclusions” (Kamil 2007: ix). Towards the later part of his life, he was recognized for his achievements. In Encyclopedia of the Archaeology of Ancient Egypt, Edgar Pusch, who himself later came to work in Qantir, and his co-writer stated, “The main credit for establishing the location of Pi-Ramesses at Qantir goes to two Egyptian scholars, Labib Habachi and Mahmoud Hamza. It was Habachi who first connected the ancient site of Pi-Ramesses geographically with the capital of the Hyksos, Avaris…. Fifty years later, Habachi’s theory was confirmed by Manfred Bietak … and by the Pelizaeus-Museum mission” (Pusch and Herold 1999: 647). Seventeen years after his death, the Austrian Archaeological Institute published Habachi’s book Tell al-Dab’a and Qantir: The Site and its Connection with Avaris and Piramesse (Kamil 2007: 269).
Only his closest relatives and friends knew that “Habachi was a pious man who went to church regularly” and even as an old man did he bow down to kiss the hand of the priest (Kamil 2007: 263). However, his private faith was kept to himself, never revealed in his professional life, thus he was “rendered professionally sterile” (Kamil 2007: 264). In addition, his publications demonstrate this separation between the private life and the public scientific work. Compared with the early excavators in Egypt, such as Naville and Petrie, none of Habachi’s book or article titles carry a name of a biblical event or a name connected to biblical geography. Habachi dealt exclusively with the archaeology of Egypt, and sites and events connected to that field. However, in his long article of 1954, Habachi (1954: 444) wrote, “the kings of the XIXth and XXth dynasties built to the north of the old town [Avaris] a new one with magnificent temples, palaces, offices, houses and barracks. This was the town known as Piramesse in the papyri and as Rameses in the Old Testament and which occupied the place round about the modern village of Qantîr” (italics supplied).

Was Habachi involved in the search for Raamses? Actually not. As an Egyptologist, he worked with the ruins and monuments that constituted the archaeology of Egypt. The existence of Piramesse of Egyptian inscriptions was well known and the search for the city had been going on for at least a century among western researchers and archaeologists. Habachi’s excellent knowledge of sites and inscriptions of various monuments, and his mind for details and observations caused him to realize that Montet’s conclusions regarding Tanis did not carry sufficient support. Habachi had found a better candidate for the location of Avaris/Piramesse; he published his views but decades passed before the majority of other scholars accepted this view. His brief comment that Piramesse was the same city as Raamses of the Old Testament reveals that he believed
that the Bible referred to the Egyptian city of the Ramessides. Whether he believed in an Exodus, placed the event of the Israelites in the time of Ramses II, and how he thought about the Documentary Hypothesis probably remain unknown.

Bietak’s Scientific Methods Found Avaris and Piramesse

The Austrian archaeologist Manfred Bietak (1940–) studied archaeology at the University of Vienna and obtained his PhD in 1964 and an honorary PhD in 2009. Between the years 1961 and 1965, he was involved with UNESCO’s archaeological rescue expedition in Nubia. During the years 1966 to 1972, he first functioned as the Scientific Secretary and later as the Scientific Counsellor at the Austrian Embassy in Cairo. Bietak founded the Austrian Archaeological Institute in Cairo, which he directed until 2009. He has been the chair of several Austrian archaeological societies and member of various international committees connected to science and Egyptology. As mentioned above, he is best known for his excavations in both Tell el Daba‘ and in Qantir where he began work in 1966. Bietak has also excavated at Thebes, where he discovered the huge tomb of Ankh-Hor. Since 2013, he has conducted excavations at the Middle Kingdom Palace, Bubastis. Bietak has written several books and numerous articles for professional journals. In addition, he has edited or co-edited eight periodicals, one of which was the journal *Egypt and the Levant*. Since 2015 Bietak has been Principal Investigator and head of “The Hyksos Enigma,” which explores “the origins of western Asiatic populations in the Nile Delta during the Middle Kingdom (c. 2000–1800 BC) and the Second Intermediate Period (c. 1800–1530 BC) and how the Hyksos seized power in Lower Egypt. Research also is focused on the reasons for the decline and failure of the Hyksos
15th Dynasty and its lasting impact on the Egyptian culture of the New Kingdom” (Manfred Bietak 2019; Pusch 2001: 48).

Bietak took a critical view of the Bible and the biblical narratives. As late as 2015, Bietak published the article On the Historicity of the Exodus: What Egyptology Today Can Contribute to Assessing the Biblical Account of the Sojourn in Egypt. Bietak (2015: 26, 27) used expressions such as “the birth legend of Moses,” the “priestly source,” and the “Exodus compilers.” All these terms signal that he viewed the biblical material as a collection of various sources put together and partly consisting of legends/myths. Bietak (2015: 18–20, 30–31) wrote about the “Proto-Israelites,” which is an expression used to indicate the early Israelites. (The scholarly view today holds that perhaps a few of the Israelites had some kind of origin in Egypt, but the majority originated in Canaan itself.) Since archaeologists in Thebes have found the structure of a four room house, an architectural feature common in Israel in Iron Age I, it is believed that some of the proto-Israelites may have been prisoners taken by Ramses III during a raid in Transjordan and forced to work as slaves in Egypt. Bietak took the view that both these groups, proto-Israelites from Egypt and early Israelites in Canaan, experienced some kind of hardships—the Canaanite Israelites (who never were in Egypt) may have experienced oppression during the Egyptian occupation of Canaan, and the proto-Israelites experienced suffering in Egypt. He speculated that these two experiences of oppression then might have merged into one narrative of the enslaved Israelites described by the book of Exodus.

Bietak confirmed that the northeastern area of Egypt had Semitic toponyms that even exist in Egyptian writings. These names, he wrote, originated from Semitic-speaking people living there during the New Kingdom. “One has to mention particularly in this
respect Wadi Tumilat, which would fulfill in every aspect the model of the land of Goshen (or the land of Ramses) in the Bible” (Bietak 2015: 30). Bietak (2015: 28–29) wrote, “The toponyms of Raamses, Pithom, and Yam Suph correspond to the Ramesside toponyms of Pi-Ramesse, Pi-Atum, and (Pa-) Tjuf, respectively. This correlation is not only in name alone, to some extent, fragments of their geographical information were apparently transmitted to the compilers.” Bietak (2015: 29) stated that, “most of the abovementioned toponyms also appear after the Ramesside Period and can be used to explain a much later composition.” Bietak (1984: 128) wrote that Pi-Ramesses is probably רעמסס (Gen 47:11; Exod 12:37; Num 33:3) in the Masoretic Text and the variant רעמס (Exod. 1:11).

Irrespective of the time the book of Exodus was composed, Bietak (2015: 26) placed the biblical narratives in the time of Ramses II; he wrote, “Several biblical passages putting the living area of the children of Israel near the palace and center of administration show that the famous residence Pi-Ramesse was meant.” He further suggested that the long Israelite sojourn in Egypt possibly came from the period of four hundred years mentioned by the so-called “Stela of 400 Years” (Bietak 2015: 32).

Bietak (1984: 132–33, 136–37; 2001a: 353; 2015: 25, 29–31) in several publications commented on secondary cults that sprung up in northern Egypt. The name Piramesse is not mentioned in Egyptian texts after the twentieth dynasty, but reemerged again in third century B.C. on inscriptions connected to priests of secondary cults of the gods from Piramesse. Bietak stated that the Egyptians around the fourth century B.C. looked back on the glorious past and independent of each other, secondary cults of the gods of Ramses appeared in locations that had received building material for new residences from Piramesse. Bubastis, Tanis and possibly Pelusium had taken stones from
buildings in Piramesse. This emergence of secondary cults in Tanis, Bubastis and possibly in Pelusium could probably be explained by the inscriptions found on the building blocks taken from the ancient capital of Piramesse.

According to Bietak, these cults led to false assumptions among both Egyptians and Jews of the location of the ancient city of Piramesse and may explain why versions of the Targums\textsuperscript{10} stated that Pelusium was the location of the ancient Piramesse (Bietak 1984: 132, footnote 59 and 9; 2015: 25). However, Bietak took this reasoning even further and wrote that many Jews in the time of the exile and later had entered Egypt and lived there. Bietak (1984: 132) explained that they apparently sought to establish links with their tradition and to find the places of residence of their ancestors. Bietak believed their Jewish theologians depended on the opinion of that time as to the location of Piramesse/Raamse. Thus, they connected the ancient Egyptian capital of Piramesse with their city of Raamse in the Scriptures and developed their interpretations regarding the Exodus. According to Bietak, Jews of the diaspora in the third century B.C. connected Piramesse with Tanis, Bubastis or the area near Bubastis. Bietak (2015: 31) stated, this “developed into the northern and southern theories of the Exodus routes at that time.” In this context, Bietak (1984: 132; 2001a: 353) commented on Psalm 78, which mentions Zoan, the biblical name for Tanis. He believed this Psalm was composed after the time of the Jewish exile in Babylon since it uses the name Zoan when describing the events connected to the Exodus. Bietak (2001a: 353) stated, “This explains why in the Bible the town of Raamse/Ramesse was located at Tanis and to the east of Bubastis in the Wadi Tumilat. Without knowing the original position of Avaris or Piramesse, the identity of those two towns (and their association with the biblical town of Raamse/Ramesse) were kept in memory until Manetho’s history of Egypt, according to the first-century Roman
historian Josephus, became known and was reinterpreted.” Bietak took the view that Jews around the fourth century B.C. probably viewed Tanis to have been the site of Piramesse, which had been abandoned many centuries earlier. Bietak (2015: 25) stated, “Jewish exiles in Egypt trying to reconstruct a memory of their forefathers followed contemporary Egyptian opinions in identifying Zoan … with Pi-Ramesse and the Fields of Zoan … with the Sea of Reeds.”

Bietak entered the field of Egyptology at the time when the search for the Egyptian city Piramesse, known from Egyptian inscriptions, and the biblical city of Raamses had been going on for about a hundred and fifty years. With scientific methods, he excluded Tanis, which had monuments but not pottery from Ramesside times and which had not been located at the Pelusiac branch of the Nile. Research by Hamza and Habachi had suggested Khatana-Qantir as the correct location—Bietak’s scientific research confirmed their suggested location. Bietak primarily searched for the Egyptian cities Avaris and Piramesse. As a critical scholar of the Bible with the view that the Exodus narrative was a late construction, Bietak’s comments on the biblical city of Raamses are of more secondary character. Bietak’s approach in this area is twofold, based on archaeological remains he commented on the Egyptian cities. Then, based on the fact that the literature (the Bible, various versions of the Targums, Manetho, etc.) mentions geographical names connected to ancient Egypt, he commented on that and presented his views and explanations as to why these names occur in the ancient writings. He found possible connections between the historical cities and the names in ancient literature. However, it is very clear that Bietak has a critical view of the biblical material. For example, his view that the book of Exodus is a compilation, put together by an editor, and that various oppressed groups merged to form the people of Israel.
Pusch and Teamwork Revealed More about Piramesse

Edgar B. Pusch (1946–) is a German Egyptologist who for many years has been connected to the Pelizaeus Museum at Hildesheim in Germany. He studied Egyptology at the University of Bonn. Pusch arrived to Egypt in 1969 and worked at the Qubbet el-Hawa project in Aswan, which caused further interest in archaeology. His doctoral dissertation carried the title Das Senet-Brettspiel im alten Ägypten (The Senet Board Game in Ancient Egypt). Having completed his dissertation, he began work as an assistant to the director at Roemer and Pelizaeus-Museum at Hildesheim. Through that work, he encountered Manfred Bietak, who at that time directed the Austrian Archaeological Institute in Cairo. Pusch became enthusiastic about Bietak’s approach since Bietak had a wider interest than the study of tombs and temples; he sought to know more about settlements and urban areas. By that time, the area of the Delta had received little attention and was of particular interest. The district of Tell el Daba’/Qantir was very large and the northern part, connected with Piramesse, became the workplace for Pusch from 1984 to the end of 2014 in the joint Austrian-German excavations of Avaris/Piramesse. Pusch himself wrote or co-authored several books and numerous articles in journals and encyclopedias. He produced a few children’s books on archaeology, for example, Schen-Nufe und Hotepi. Ein archäologisches Kinderbuch. He also spent much time and writing on the topic of ancient Egyptian board games (Schultz 2016: 9; Franzmeier, Rehren, and Schultz 2016: 11–13; Rehren and Pusch 2005: 1758, footnote 2; Hoffmeier 2005: 54; Finkel 2007: v).

Pusch is described as a person who “always knew exactly what he wanted and had clear ideas about what to do next and how. Only through his great interest in detail did he
manage to make unexpected discoveries together with his employees and to achieve results that were traceable down to the smallest detail” (Schultz 2016: 9). Pusch had gifts for organization and was appreciated for his work with exhibition openings and other events. “Especially in difficult and unexpected situations, he often found a good solution, regardless of whether it was an unexpected toilet repair before the visit of the Federal President, a seat for desperate guests of honor at crowded events or the loving care of endangered water lilies in an exhibition” (Schultz 2016: 9).

Pusch seems not at all to have searched for the city of Raamses of the Bible. He rather excavated and published the work from Piramesse. Many of his articles have been a collaborative effort—a team work where he co-authored the publication with several other scholars. As an archaeologist, he had a genuine interest in Egypt with a wish to know more, not only about Piramesse but also about the people who lived there—those employed in the bronze and glass workshops, those who played board games, and others.

Dever Challenged the Concept of Biblical Archaeology

Being a son of a Christian minister probably made it natural for William G. Dever (1933–) to become involved in biblical studies early in life. Dever, an American Archaeologist, spent his undergraduate years at Millan College, did an MA in Semitics at Butler College, and earned his PhD at Harvard University in 1966. Dever served as Professor of Near Eastern Archaeology and Anthropology at the University of Arizona between 1975 and 2002, where he started up a new graduate program of Syro-Palestinian Archaeology. In 1971, he was appointed long-term Director of the W. F. Albright Institute of Archaeological Research in Jerusalem. In 2008, he joined the faculty of Lycoming College and became Distinguished Professor of Near Eastern Archaeology.
Dever has been involved in or directed archaeological excavations in Israel, Jordan, and Cyprus and has more than three decades of field experience. For some years, he served as the editor of the *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*. He has received wide appreciation for his contributions from archaeologists and scholars within the field of Near Eastern studies and has received many awards and honors. Dever has written a dozen books and more than hundred and fifty articles in addition to entries to encyclopedias and dictionaries, reviews, etc. Important are the multivolume final reports from the excavations at Gezer. Worth noticing is *Did God Have a Wife? Archaeology and Folk Religion in Ancient Israel*, in which Dever argued that folk religion, not the Hebrew Bible, is the source for a reliable picture of Israelite religion. Based on an inscription found, he went so far as to state that the Israelites viewed Asherah as Yahweh’s consort (Gitin, Wright, and Dessel 2006: ix–xi; William G. Dever 2019; Dever 2003; Kotter 2006: xiii–xxiv; Dever 2005: 167).

Dever made major contributions in the field of archaeology. While excavating at Gezer, “emphasis was placed on excavation methodology and a multidisciplinary approach to fieldwork that included the systematic collection of animal bones, plant remains, and soil samples and the integration of a geologist … as an essential staff member of the excavation team…. These practices soon became standard operating procedures at the vast majority of excavations in Israel and Jordan” (Gitin, Wright, and Dessel 2006: x). Dever (1974: 38) wrote that they collected “more than a million seed samples from Gezer from every period between about 3300 B.C. and 100 A.D., as well as fragments of animal bone which can be analyzed with new methods to yield information about the use of domestic animals for food, and even about the method of slaughtering. These are the new kinds of information which we are recovering in our attempts at the
total reconstruction of ancient societies. This is certainly a far cry from the narrow ‘political history’ … as the objective of some ‘Biblical Archaeology’ recently.”

The last sentence brings us to one more area within archaeology where Dever had a major influence. He wished to change the way many American scholars viewed archaeology in relation to the Bible and he argued for the study of the material culture as a base for the history of Israel. This new view that exclusively used archaeology for history writing was in contrast to many archaeologists, as demonstrated in this study, who had employed the Bible and archaeology for creating the history of the Israelites. “With a distinctive clarity and sense of purpose, Bill sought an understanding of the archaeological data devoid of any biblical reference, which could wait until after the data had been properly excavated, analyzed, contextualized, and thoroughly studied. Only then would it be proper to reconsider the texts (usually the Hebrew Bible) and work at reintegrating them with archaeological and historical evidence” (Gitin, Wright, and Dessel 2006: xi). With such an approach, Dever believed in and strongly argued for a very different picture of the Israelite history compared with the biblical narratives. However, Dever reacted against the “minimalists” who deny any kind of value in the biblical narratives and he has argued for a real Israel in the Iron Age. He wrote, “I am not reading the Bible as Scripture, that I am in fact not even a theist…. My view all along—and especially in the recent books—is first that the biblical narratives are indeed ‘stories,’ often fictional and almost always propagandistic, but that here and there they contain some valid historical information. That hardly makes me a ‘maximalist.’ Secondly, I use abundant archaeological evidence to demonstrate that the context, within which alone these stories are intelligible, is not that of the Persian much less the Hellenistic era, but that of the Iron Age, i.e., pre-exilic” (Dever 2003; 2019).
Dever argued that the Old Testament is made up of several sources. For example, he used expressions such as, “The literary traditions of the J and E narratives of the Pentateuch were crystallizing,” and the “P (or Priestly) source of redactors, who shaped the final version of the Pentateuch precisely in the Persian period” (Dever 1997: 82). In addition, he took the view that oral tradition lies behind much of the biblical material and that large portions of the narrative material, for example the books of Joshua and Judges, have been written down several hundred years later than the events in question (Dever 2003; 2017b: 629). Dever (1997: 67) argued that Israel emerged in Canaan and with that, there was “neither place nor need for an exodus from Egypt.” He stated, “As a Syro-Palestinian archaeologist, I regard the historicity of the Exodus as a dead issue” (Dever 1997: 81). He viewed “the entire Descent-Exodus-Wilderness-Conquest cycle” (Dever 1997: 69) as folktale/myth, rather than history. As stated above, Dever, anyhow, believed it possible that the narratives contain some historic data interwoven between the threads of myth and folktale. For example, the memory of Canaanites/the Hyksos may have been part of the Exodus narrative and “some raw-source data for the historian” may be found in the Joshua tradition (Dever 1997: 82). He stated, “The Biblical narratives about Abraham, Moses, Joshua and Solomon probably do reflect some historical memories of actual people and places” (Dever 2006: 76). As stated above, while Dever did not believe the Exodus narrative to be history, he still placed the event in the time of Ramses II (Dever 1997: 68).

His critical view can be seen in statements such as, “the crossing of the Red (Reed) Sea is obviously a miraculous tale” (Dever 1997: 71). He further stated, “the present evidence for the Kadesh-Barnea episode has little historical basis; it appears to have become significant only in the time of the United Monarchy, when the Exodus
theme was crystalizing in the literary tradition and when a pilgrimage festival to the site apparently began” (Dever 1997: 73).

As stated above, the sites in Egypt, today believed to be Pithom and Raamses of Exod 1:11, had a population of Canaanites living in them. In Dever’s view, the biblical reference to these cities may also contain some traces of historical value. Dever commented on the location of the biblical city of Raamses because, as an archaeologist who only built on empirical evidence, Raamses (and Pithom) offered to him almost the only available connection between the Exodus narrative and the empirical discipline of archaeology.

**The World of Habachi, Bietak, Pusch, and Dever**

The years between about 1950 and 2000 involved no World Wars, but other kinds of tensions, local wars, and conflicts that had an effect on archaeological pursuits. America came to replace the previous powers of France and Britain in the Middle East (Moorey 1991: 87). The Six-Day War in Israel in 1967 changed the borderlines, which in turn opened up opportunities for archaeological research by Israeli archaeologists in new areas.

Another kind of war affecting scholars, not a political war but one of worldviews—the worldview of the Bible versus that of science—was fought on the battlefield of thinking. While archaeology for decades had been used to connect the biblical narratives to realia and thus give support to the Bible, the winds turned, and archaeology came to be used to disprove the biblical narratives. Whereas the biblical worldview previously had been the accepted view, now the scientific was the foundational view in the scholarly world. This purely scientific approach to research was
sooner or later going to clash with the concept of biblical archaeology and challenged “basic assumptions as they had not been questioned before” (Moorey 1991: 114). Dever was a key player in the divorce between the Bible and archaeology.

American archaeologists were almost entirely “Protestant biblical scholars and clergymen sponsored by seminaries and departments of religion in colleges and universities. This was in marked contrast to the role of secular scholars among the prominent field archaeologists, especially from Britain and Israel, actively involved in the study of those periods most relevant to Biblical Studies” (Moorey 1991: 138). Many biblical scholars, especially in Germany, were increasingly more skeptical towards the use of archaeology in connection to biblical studies and secular professional archaeologists looked down on Biblical Archaeology and its practitioners (Moorey 1991: 139). Dever (1974: 32–33) began a campaign and wrote against Biblical Archaeology:

Let me begin with the name of our discipline itself. In the first place, we ought to stop talking about “Biblical Archaeology.” There probably is no such thing, and I would say that by definition there cannot be. The term “Biblical” here becomes an adjective, a qualifier tacked on before the word Archaeology, suggesting inevitably that there is a special kind of Archaeology which is appropriate to the Biblical period. Yet I don’t think that one of us in the field would say that “special pleading” is legitimate or that we are guilty of it in digging Biblical sites. We assume that we are using the same kind of methods that our secular colleagues use in excavating anywhere else in the world. So the term “Biblical Archaeology” at the very least is misleading, and the sooner we abandon it the better. Even at best is a careless and imprecise way of speaking, since it does not reflect the principles on which we really operate.

Dever (1974: 13) further stated,

The tools [with] which we have been equipped are largely Biblical languages and history…. Our interests have been dominated, not surprisingly, by the Biblical sites…. Our focus has been further restricted to sites of the Old Testament period…. Our orientation has been more toward the literary remains, especially the Bible, which for us looms largest as the principal surviving document from the Ancient Near East and undoubtedly as the one document uniquely “authoritative.” Our objective has been to recover what I would characterize as the “political history” of the sites which we have excavated. This is in striking contrast to the concern elsewhere in the world
for anthropology or cultural history…. I would say that American Palestinian Archaeology has been political history or nothing at all.

Dever sought to establish archaeology in Palestine as an academic discipline, which was to be separated from biblical studies. He wished to see scholars trained as archaeologists with a more contemporary view of archaeology comprising more of the social sciences. He wished to see a Syro-Palestinian archaeology replacing the outdated Biblical Archaeology (Moorey 1991: xvii, 139). Dever (1974: 39) wrote, “Although I resist it in principle, I would rather see the Archaeologist become primarily a professional excavator and technician, who publishes his material in purely descriptive form, than to trust historians and Biblical scholars who publish archaeological reports where fact and fancy are so intertangled that the evidence is forever obscured.” In Confronting the Past, written in his honor, Dever is described in the following way,

One of Bill’s most significant and enduring contributions to the field of archaeology … is his concern and aspiration for increased rigor and professionalism in the discipline as practiced by Americans…. Bill constantly worked to raise the level of professionalism within “Syro-Palestinian Archaeology” (for many years the term that championed over the more cloistered “Biblical Archaeology,” to which he returned later in his career). His goal in this pursuit was clear: to bring the archaeology of the southern Levant more in line with the anthropologically oriented archaeology that was practiced in the New World.” (Gitin, Wright, and Dessel 2006: x)

An example of this is, as mentioned above, Dever’s excavations at Gezer where they collected more than a million seed samples, animal bones, etc. to find out more about everyday life in ancient societies, which Dever viewed as “real” archaeology compared with traditional Biblical Archaeology (Dever 1974: 38). Dever (2017b: 644) asked for a knowledge, as he later worded it, which was “empirically grounded, not an ideological construct.”

The separation between archaeology and biblical studies continued as other scholars in similar words described a need for separation: “Archaeological materials
should not be dated or evaluated on the basis of written texts which are independent of these materials; so also written documents should not be interpreted on the basis of archaeological hypotheses” (Thompson 1974: 3–4). Thomas L. Thompson further stated, “No less than Syro-Palestinian archaeology, Israelite history must proceed as a discipline independent of biblical exegesis. So too, biblical exegesis needs to be understood as an historical-critical discipline with its own autonomy apart from historical and archaeological research” (Thompson 1987: 40). However, while Dever believed the old version of Biblical Archaeology had died, he was open to a new definition of the term “as a dialogue—all that it can and should be” between archaeology and biblical studies. He further stated that Biblical Archaeology depended “upon the health of the two separate and autonomous disciplines with which it intersects: Biblical studies and Syro-Palestinian archaeology” (Dever 1995: 54).

Albright’s method of using archaeology to support and explain the Bible had been dominant in the English-speaking world but had never been accepted by German scholars. With Dever and others, the critique on traditional Biblical Arachaeology also arose in English-speaking areas. Although the opinions of Dever, Thompson, and other critical scholars differed in many ways, their arguments more and more removed what Albright had established within Biblical Archaeology (Moorey 1991: 104). Archaeology became limited in what it could offer, the confidence in the Albrightian method shattered, and the use of archaeology for establishing the biblical history was deeply challenged (Moorey 1991: 137). Peter Roger Stuart Moorey (1991: 153), who authored the book A Century of Biblical Archaeology, wrote that these new views, “virtually destroyed the archaeological case for a history of the Patriarchs in the terms proposed by Albright, regarded at the time in many quarters as the major achievement of biblical archaeology.
Then it forcefully challenged the belief that biblical traditions might be historically evaluated in terms of archaeological evidence and archaeological data structured through Biblical narratives.”

Biblical studies of the Old Testament changed focus “from history to literature” and in the end of the 1980s, the heated debate connected to Biblical Archaeology had calmed down (Moorey 1991: 173). This separation between archaeology and biblical studies did not go without protest. In 1957, G. Ernest Wright published *Biblical Archaeology* in which can be found much archaeological material in connections to biblical events. However, he, who had spent much time in establishing a historicity of the Bible, also began to use a milder language. He stated,

Yet the scholar also knows that the primary purpose of biblical archaeology is not to “prove” but to discover. The vast majority of the “finds” neither prove nor disprove; they fill in the background and give the setting for the story. It is unfortunate that this desire to “prove” the Bible has vitiated so many works which are available to the average reader. The evidence has been misused, and the inferences drawn from it are so often misleading, mistaken or half true. Our ultimate aim must not be “proof,” but truth. We must study the history of the Chosen People in exactly the same way as we do that of any other people, running the risk of destroying the uniqueness of that history. Unless we are willing to run that risk, truth can never be ours. (Wright 1957: 27)

Albright (1966: 1) explained his view, “Biblical archaeology is a much wider term than Palestinian archaeology.” An article in *Biblical Archeologist* on this issue stated, “The term biblical archeology in the tradition of Albright is one that is fully grounded in empirical study; it is as critical a discipline as modern biblical research itself. If there are those who are unaware of this and who consequently raise a condescending eyebrow when they hear the phrase biblical archeologist, then that—as the saying goes—is their problem. The term biblical archeology is not only an honorable one, it is, as I shall argue shortly, a necessary one” (Lance 1982: 99).
The clock could not be turned back; Biblical Archaeology became “an aspect of Biblical Studies rather than a branch of archaeology; misunderstandings and tensions in the past have usually arisen when the reverse was taken for granted” (Moorey 1991: 175). A Biblical Archaeology concentrating on illuminating the background of the biblical narratives and reconstructing “ancient ways of life,” rather than proving the Bible, caused less resistance (Moorey 1991: 141). The preface of Confronting the Past states about Dever, “In his later scholarly work, he has unabashedly achieved [his] objective, and thus in a way has come full circle to a reformulated and unapologetic form of ‘Biblical Archaeology’” (Gitin, Wright, and Dessel 2006: xi). At the end of the fifty-year period of this study, in the conclusion of the book Exodus: The Egyptian Evidence, William A. Ward (1997: 111–12) wrote,

The biblical and nonbiblical sources simply tell two different tales. But this does not mean we are confronted with having to choose which one is correct or with having to harmonize the two into some kind of coherent whole. This has been the main error of two centuries of modern biblical study. We must, rather, understand that a choice is unnecessary and that it is impossible to create a coherent whole, for we are dealing with two totally different kinds of source material. … We need neither choose nor harmonize, simply recognize each kind of evidence for what it is and forget the dual burden of choice and harmony; choice is not necessary, and harmony is not possible.

Habachi, Bietak, Pusch, and, of course Dever who contributed, were indeed affected not only by the consequences of the harsh polemic between Naville and Gardiner in the early 1900s, but also by the slow but steady separation between archaeology and biblical studies. All this happened in the context of the dominant view that the Bible consisted of folktales and did not describe historic events. Habachi kept his faith to himself and his scholarly writings dealt exclusively with matters related to Egyptology. Pusch seems not even to have commented on the biblical material at all. As stated above, Bietak’s writings show his critical view when he commented on the biblical content.
Dever’s writings not only show his critical view of the Bible, but also demonstrate that he was also involved in forming a new relationship between the Bible and archaeology. Interestingly, he defended some of the biblical material against “minimalists” who tried to present all of Israel’s history as a very late invention.

The idea of doing research with scientific methods had existed and gained ground since the enlightenment, and even earlier. It now happened that this thinking reached archaeology of biblical lands and the biblical studies itself with the demand that these disciplines also be carried out in a scientific way. This was not only a matter of methodology, it was one further step towards a strict material worldview and a step away from a spiritual/biblical view that dominated many scholars described in the early part of this study. The scholars described in this period of fifty years all had to decide on which side to stand, and they all chose the scientific approach. If they had a personal faith, it was kept private.
CHAPTER SEVEN

WHEN ARCHAEOLOGY INTERACTED WITH THE BIBLE

This study has followed fifteen scholars from the 1500s to the present day. In general, the early scholars viewed the Bible as the Word of God while the later ones perceived the Bible as the word of man. As a result, the early scholars viewed the Bible as historically trustworthy and regarded the Exodus as an historic event. The later scholars of the study generally viewed the Bible as oral traditions, folklore, and as story; historical criticism was part of their worldview. In general, there is also a shift in the motivation of their research. The early scholars set out from the Bible and commented on the biblical city of Raamses whereas the later ones searched for and commented on the Egyptian city Piramesse. If the later scholars mentioned the biblical city at all, their comments were more of a secondary nature. Whereas the early scholars generally used archaeology to discover what the Bible describes (the city of Raamses), the later scholars often used archaeology to discredit the biblical content. In summary, the early scholars had a biblical worldview, whereas the later had a scientific view of the world.

Each of the chapters above have ended with a brief analysis, in connection to certain scholars, of the interaction between the Bible and archaeology regarding the city of Raamses/Piramesse for the fifty-year period under investigation. This final chapter will undertake a similar discussion but in the context of a wider perspective of the interaction between the Bible and archaeology.
How It All Started

The word “archaeology” existed already in old classical Greek and simply meant “ancient time.” Plato, about four hundred years B.C., used the expression in that way and he is probably the first writer adopting the phrase. The historian Josephus used the word in the same manner; his work the *Jewish Antiquities* actually carried the title *Jewish Archaeology* (Ιουδαϊκης Αρχαιολογίας). The expression was not used in post-classical Greek and was not employed in Latin (de Vaux 1970: 65; Page et al. 1957: 2–3; Wright 1971: 70). When the word reappeared in the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries it came “to mean that branch of learning that studies the material remains of man’s past” (Daniel 2002: 574) and “especially their excavation” (Wright 1971: 70).

For two or three centuries prior to the birth of scientific archaeology, ruins of past cultures were of interest to private collectors and treasure-hunting western museums. Archaeology, as we view it today, began with an interest in the remains of Greek and Roman civilizations. This kind of research started with the eighteenth century excavations of Italian Pompeii and Herculaneum, buried by the volcano Vesuvius in A.D. 79. Scholars such as Heinrich Schliemann, who excavated at Troy and Mycenae, M. A. Biliotti at Rhodes, Ernst Curtius at Olympia, and Alexander Conze at Samothrache in the end of the 1800s, are viewed as having begun a form of more scientific archaeology (Daniel 2002: 575). As stated above, Lepsius did a similar scientific work in Egypt already in 1849. In Israel, Petrie started systematic excavations in 1890.

Biblical Criticism and Archaeological Research

This study has followed scholars searching for, or commenting on, the city of Raamses of the Bible and/or the city of Piramesse of Egyptian writings and monuments.
The backdrop for all these scholars, except for Mercator, is the development of the biblical criticism of the 1700s and 1800s. While the use of an analytic approach goes back to the Enlightenment, the tools of logic and empiricism have been applied to biblical criticism at two levels. Historical criticism (previously called higher criticism) and textual criticism (previously called lower criticism) deal with different levels of biblical analysis. Historical criticism views the whole Bible (or sometimes parts of the Bible) as having a purely human origin. Textual criticism, on the other hand, is a search for understanding the biblical text, establishing the text of the original manuscript, and searching to understand what the author wished to express with the words used in the writing, etc.

Gerhard F. Hasel pointed out the German scholar Johann Solomo Semler as a key figure in the development of the methods of historical criticism. Semler published the four volumes *Abhandlung von der freien Untersuchungen des Kanons* (Treatise on the Free Investigation of the Canon) between 1771 and 1775, in which he challenged the traditional view that God inspired the Bible. Semler “claimed that the Word of God and Holy Scriptures are not at all identical” (Hasel 1982: 19). If some parts of the Bible are inspired, that implies that other parts are not. This, of course, opened up the opportunity for one scholar to say that section A is inspired while sections B and C are not. Another scholar may say that sections B and C are inspired while A is not.

Both Robinson and Lepsius regarded the biblical narratives as historic. While Robinson did not question parts of the Scripture, Lepsius did. He conducted a “critical examination of the Exodus” (Lepsius 1853: 446) and he “entirely abandoned” (Lepsius 1853: 362) the 480 years between the Exodus and the building of the temple. Is this step only moving within textual criticism or did Lepsius somehow question the inspiration of “Section C” of the narrative? It is hard to analyze and clearly demonstrate Lepsius’
critique; he surely felt free to question a traditional view of the narrative, possibly “encouraged by” the emerging biblical criticism.

The second half of the nineteenth century saw the development of historical criticism, the school of Wellhausen, which taught that different sources made up the Pentateuch. This teaching created a major challenge for the traditional view of the Exodus from Egypt—if this event had not happened in history, then on what foundation could the narratives be based? (Frerichs 1997: 11). Gardiner, Peet, Montet, Bietak, and Dever all took an historical critical viewpoint, which caused them to trust archaeology as a primary source.

The Bible was not the only document that became challenged. The narratives by Homer had also been questioned and had become viewed as literature without an historical foundation (de Vaux 1970: 64–78). Schliemann’s excavations, however, showed that cities in the Homeric narratives had existed and were not just inventions. When no archaeological material existed, scholars tended to view the narratives as fiction. When material culture was found, scholars changed their views and recognized the texts as having an historical basis. It was archaeology that helped to confirm Homer’s texts (Davis 2004a: 23; Wright 1971: 74; Yamauchi 2004: 69–90). Archibald H. Sayce, president of the Society of Biblical Archaeology towards the end of the nineteenth century, “reasoned that if archaeology functioned as an independent test on the conclusions of Homeric criticism, then it could function in the same way in biblical criticism” (Davis 2004a: 24). Sayce was an interesting person, who, despite being an ordained clergy, “separated historical from theological questions” (Davis 2004a: 24). In his opinion, archaeologists and scholars of historical criticism had the same goal, “Both alike are seeking for the truth, and this truth is historical and not theological. It is as
historians and not as theologians that we must investigate the records of the Old Testament, if we are to obtain results that will satisfy the great mass of reasoning men” (Sayce 1895: 25).

The word “historical” is interesting and decisive in this context. For centuries, scholars (and laypeople) had viewed the Bible as describing historical events, demonstrated in this study in the descriptions of some of the early scholars such as Mercator, Lepsius, and Robinson. Although some of the early researchers had questions about parts of the Exodus account, they did not question that the event had taken place some time back in the Late Bronze Age (Moorey 1991: 65). Similar to the views of many tourists visiting biblical countries today, earlier pilgrims and scholars travelled to these countries believing that their faith was related to real events—events described in the Bible (Davis 2004a: 3). The Bible was regarded as a source for true information. For example, early books on ancient Egypt used information from “the Bible and the classical writers as prime sources. Choosing a page at random in the 1878 edition of Wilkinson’s ‘The Manners and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians,’ we find eight biblical references, seven classical references, and two citations of modern Arab customs to illustrate ancient Egyptian life” (Wilson 1938: 215).

In addition, Robinson’s plan to describe the geography of the biblical countries demonstrated a belief that the events of the Bible had occurred in a physical world—a world that could be studied and turned into a map when the location of the various toponyms had been discovered (Davis 2004a: 10). Texts in the Bible could explain “without discussion” what could be observed at investigation of biblical countries (Moorey 1991: 93). Cook’s involvement in The Speaker’s Commentary, with the aim to defend the Bible and inspire renewed confidence in the criticized book, fits in this time
when biblical criticism flourished. In addition, Naville at this time “found” the city of Pithom mentioned in the criticized Bible, and Dawson wrote against Darwin’s theories. All three scholars knew about historical criticism, but none of them had accepted its methodology. Naville found natural explanations of the crossing of the sea and questioned the Hebrew numbers. These issues may belong to the realm of how to understand the text (textual criticism). In any case, both Naville and Lepsius felt free to come with scientific or naturalistic explanations to biblical phenomena. To a certain degree, Petrie followed in the footsteps of earlier scholars. When he published *Hyksos and Israelite Cities*, the title clearly related to the biblical content.

In the present study, Gardiner became the first scholar who brought a significant shift regarding the approach to the Bible. He viewed the biblical content more as legends and believed the Israelite Exodus was a “memory” of the expulsion of the Hyksos. Not only had Gardiner accepted an historical critical view, he also expected a much more scientific treatment of archeological finds when presented as evidence for biblical narratives. As shown above, Peet as well, had accepted the Documentary Hypothesis and did not find many facts in the narratives. Neither did Montet view the Exodus as historical but believed the narratives were assembled by an editor and contained only a kernel of history. While Gardiner, Peet, and Montet commented on biblical material, their main interest was the history of Egypt, not the history of the Israelites in Egypt. Sayce, on the other hand, wrote against Wellhausen’s view of the Bible. Some of Sayce’s publications illustrate this belief in the value of archaeology: “*Fresh Light from the Ancient Monuments* (1890); *The ‘Higher Criticism’ and the Verdict of the Monuments* (1894); and *Monument Facts and Higher Critical Fancies* (1904)” (Davis 2004a: 23).
The sites chosen for research and excavations in the biblical countries had for a long time been related to the Bible since the persons involved in archaeology and research of this geographical area mainly had been “ordained Protestant clergymen or biblical specialists teaching in theological seminars or in departments of religion in colleges and universities” (Moorey 1991: 99). This was going to change soon when scholars with a scientific education entered the field.

**Archaeology Became a Response**

Several shifting views in the academic world had the effect that the historical critical view became more prominent. One such view was the school of Wellhausen, which viewed the Bible as a late document consisting of various sources strung together. Another groundbreaking change arrived when Darwin stated that man was “created” not by God but by a time-consuming evolution. These critical views of the Bible developed a need among many scholars to answer the critics. At this time, archaeology became viewed as a tool that could be used to defend the Bible. Archaeology became a response (Davis 2004a: 23). With an increasing skepticism towards the biblical narratives, the situation would eventually arrive among apologetical scholars that contradictions between archaeological evidence and the descriptions of the Bible “be harmonized to uphold the veracity of scripture” (Moorey 1991: 102).

What Schliemann had done in demonstrating a link between Homer’s writings and historical reality, served as an encouragement for many Bible believing scholars. In addition, Robinson’s research had clearly demonstrated that it was possible to identify many of the sites mentioned in the Bible. Such evidence showed the Bible was accurate and could be trusted. Robinson’s research “was taken as indicating that scientific research
could verify biblical facts” (Zevit 2004: 9). Archaeology discovered realia, which became used, not only to demonstrate the accuracy of the biblical narratives, but also to support biblical teachings—i.e. specific positions of biblical theology (Davis 2004a: 45–46). For some investigators, the only reason for carrying out an archaeological expedition was “its ability to defend the Bible” (Davis 2004a: 77). This way of reasoning built on several assumptions: (1) the biblical narratives described historical events and, for many Bible believing scholars, the Bible was still viewed as the Word of God, (2) archaeology could produce objective realia, and (3) the modernist view that science could present a neutral, immutable, and objective true knowledge unaffected by any scholarly presuppositions (Davis 2004a: 154).

Since the interaction between archaeology and the Bible mainly took place in the region of Palestine, we need to spend some time in that geographical area before returning to what happened when the Bible interacted with archaeology in Egypt. The work method of “objective” archaeology used for defending the Bible became known as “Biblical Archaeology.” It became in essence a Christian movement and especially a Protestant American discipline in Palestine. Biblical Archaeology developed into a tool/weapon in the debate of the content of the Bible (Davis 2004a: viii; Moorey 1991: xvii; Dever 1997: 67). Wright stated, “The biblical archaeologist … studies the discoveries of the excavations in order to glean from them every fact that throws a direct, indirect or even diffused light upon the Bible…. His central and absorbing interest is the understanding and exposition of the Scriptures” (Wright 1957: 17). According to Dever (2017a: 144), it was believed that, in the end, Biblical Archaeology “would confirm the essential historicity of the Bible—and thus validate it as the ground of faith.” Melvin G. Kyle ended his Explorations in Sodom (1928) stating, “Archaeological research is
progressing rapidly and, when the trustworthiness of Scripture is finally and completely established, any theory based upon the untrustworthiness of the ancient documents will come down like a house of cards. *Facts are final*” (Kyle 1928: 140–41; Davis 2004a: 78).

Those associated with Biblical Archaeology believed that faith was dependent “on the historical reality of the events that displayed the Hand of God. If the events that the Bible interprets as the intervention of the divine have no basis in reality, then there is no basis for believing in the biblical witness. Thus, any evidence that might help to buttress the hope of faith is welcome. Here is the ultimate drive for realia. The archaeology of Palestine, the land of the Bible, became biblical archaeology” (Davis 2004a: viii). The question was, Is the Bible (historically) true? “The hope of many was that archaeology would prove the Bible to be true” (Dever 2001: 20–21).

Albright became almost synonymous with Biblical Archaeology. He spent much of his time on the narratives of the patriarchs “because this was the starting point of higher [historical] criticism” (Davis 2004b: 21). Wright connected Biblical Archaeology also with theology as he wrote, “Biblical theology and biblical archaeology must go hand in hand, if we are to comprehend the Bible’s meaning” (Wright 1957: 17). Albright and Wright used archaeology to reconstruct Israel’s history within the Middle Bronze Age. Their views convinced many people as having proved Wellhausen and other critics wrong (Davis 2004a: 110, 116). Thomas W. Davis (2004a: 111) concluded that Albright’s book *The Archaeology of Palestine* (1949) contained “no indications … of the anti-Wellhausen agenda” not because Albright had changed his mind, but “rather of his belief that the battle had been won and the Bible set on relatively firm historical footing.”

Albright was considered the best biblical scholar and archaeologist in the field, which attracted many students. This view ultimately meant that Albright’s model of
Biblical Archaeology continued for many years, up to the 1960s (Davis 2004a: 94). As demonstrated above, Albright used a “milder form” of the Documentary Hypothesis and general biblical criticism. Concurrently, he generally believed in the historicity of the Bible and he accepted much of the geographical information of the Exodus. In line with accepting the geography, he supported Montet’s view that Tanis was the location of Raamses and Piramesse. The search for the city of Raamses was not the driving force in developing archaeology, but it was part of a larger puzzle.

**Biblical Archaeology Encountered Opposition**

Biblical Archaeology came to be attacked and dismantled for several reasons: (1) Scholars argued that biblically related questions should not be the foundation for the study of regions/countries, (2) Realia/material culture stopped being viewed as neutral and objective, (3) both the term “Biblical Archaeology” itself and the method behind it were criticized, (4) several influential archaeologists died within a short time period, and (5) historical criticism gained more ground.

First, although the discipline of Biblical Archaeology in the eyes of Albright, Wright, and others, covered a vast territory, it was only interested in the history of a limited portion of that area and only in questions related to the Bible. This view of archaeology showed a lack of interest in cultures not described in the Bible and in the time-periods prior to or following those described in the Bible. Only a limited part of human activity in the biblical countries was of interest, “the evolution of Spiritual Man” (Davis 2004a: 155). The search for the biblical Raamses is one example of this narrow approach to Egypt.
Dever (2017a: 147) argued that the interest of Biblical Archaeology was in fact not based on archaeology but rather on theology. In addition, archaeologists started viewing nonbiblical issues of equal value. When, for example, scholars found and translated Egyptian writings, the country no longer had to be studied through the eyes of the Bible. Interest slowly developed in the history of the countries mentioned in the Bible for their own sake. Such was the case for the members of the Egypt Exploration Fund (Spencer 1982: 37). Habachi, Bietak, and Pusch are all scholars who demonstrated an interest in Egypt for Egypt’s own sake. The same is true of Dever who showed a genuine interest in the area of Syro-Palestine for the sake of the area itself.

Second, some scholars began to realize that archaeological data in itself could not provide objective answers. Data was dependent on interpretation for their meaning (Davis 2004b: 21) and had been interpreted by the Albrightian school in a certain way. An Israelite conquest was not necessarily the explanation for every destruction in Canaan, and Israel was not necessarily responsible for every conquest (Moorey 1991: 105). Both scholars from within America and Germany criticized the correlations between archaeology and biblical narratives (Moorey 1991: 102, 104).

Third, as stated above, Dever became one of the strong opponents to the term Biblical Archaeology itself. He perceived that the term somehow signaled that Biblical Archaeology was carried out in a different way than archaeology in other areas, that archaeologists outside the biblical field viewed biblical archaeologists as fundamentalists looking for the lost ark of Noah, etc., and that amateurs carried out Biblical Archaeology in a nonprofessional manner (Dever 1974: 16–17). Dever argued for practicing a more neutral Syro-Palestinian archaeology, a term that in fact Albright had invented and presented in 1938 (Davis 2004a: 87). Some archaeologists argued for keeping the term
Biblical Archaeology, for example, those who worked at institutions carrying out
excavations only a short time of the year. They argued that the term Syro-Palestinian
archaeology would make it more difficult to get support and financial help for
excavations. “After all, excavating a biblical city simply has more panache than
excavating a Syro-Palestinian one” (Zevit 2004: 7).

When reading about the history of archaeology, one easily gets the view from
Dever that the work methods of all Biblical Archaeology were nonprofessional whereas
the methods of archaeology in areas not related to the Bible were carried out in a
professional manner. The truth is probably somewhere in the middle. This study does not
deal with how archaeology was carried out in nonbiblical areas. However, several
examples show that early archaeology in biblical countries sometimes was naïve and
needed to mature. For example, Lepsius, mentioned above, argued that he had discovered
the city of Raamses at Tell el-Maskhuta when he had found a statue of Pharaoh Raamses
there. Another example is Naville, who at the same site, found buildings of bricks and
connected them to the Israelites. They viewed the realia found as evidence when in fact it
was not evidence at all. At most, the realia could have been used to build a hypothesis for
the location of the cities of Raamses or Pithom, but not more than that. In addition to
these early and immature conclusions, Albright became involved in a circular reasoning
between archaeology and biblical narratives. Albright had, for example, referred to
archaeological evidence for the destruction of Canaanite sites in the time of the Israelite
Conquest. He viewed the destruction as a work by the Israelites, which, in turn, was used
as a support for the conquest narratives found in the Bible. In other words, Albright had
created too close a relationship between archaeological material culture and the biblical
narratives. He used the Bible to interpret what he saw on the ground and used what he saw on the ground to interpret what he read in the Bible (Moorey 1991: 105, 153).

H. Darrell Lance (1982: 100), who believed Biblical Archaeology would continue to exist, stated, “Biblical archeology will go on, the only real question is whether it is done critically or naively.” Davis (2004a: 155) wrote, “The history of biblical archaeology should function as a warning to the danger of letting our presuppositions overcome the nature of the data.” Moorey (1991: 55) gave a balanced comment on the subject as he wrote, “As often in the infancy of a new branch of study, the advocates and optimists proposed simple archaeological answers to complex Biblical questions. It may now be seen that premature or immature conclusions were drawn from the necessarily restricted range of information offered by the new fieldwork. There was (as from time to time there continues to be) a tendency to jump to conclusions when new discoveries were announced, often in the most preliminary way.” However, the debate around Biblical Archaeology gave birth to many positive improvements “especially the concern for greater methodological precision, and many scholars are now less inclined to jump to unwarranted conclusions regarding the correlation of archaeological data with the Bible” (Hoffmeier and Millard 2004: x).

Fourth, during just a few years, several influential scholars died, those who had shaped the discipline and created the direction. Paul Lapp, who had studied under both Albright and Wright, drowned in 1970. Albright himself died in 1971, and so did Nelson Glueck and Roland de Vaux. Respected and authoritative voices could no longer argue their case.

Fifth, for a long time, historical criticism had suggested that the content of the Pentateuch was fictive. When Biblical Archaeology had not produced evidence for the
Exodus, the Wilderness, and the Conquest narratives, historical criticism became more accepted (Hoffmeier 2004: 53–54). Archaeologists, therefore, preferred to write an history of Israel based on archaeology and not on the Bible. The same happened in Egypt, the works of Habachi, Bietak, and Pusch presented reports based on the archaeology of Egypt. If these archaeologists mention the Bible, their comments on biblical matters are more of a secondary nature.

The process described above led to a separation between archaeology and biblical studies in the minds of many scholars. Ward (1997: 111) concluded that biblical and nonbiblical (i.e., archaeology) sources “tell two different tales.” Archaeology became more secular from the 1970s (Davis 2004a: 41). Today, a large number of archaeologists prefer the term Syro-Palestinian archaeology or some form of political/geographical term, which is not just a shift in name but “reflects a major theoretical and methodological change” (Davis 2004a: vii).

One Discipline Became Two Different Disciplines

When pointing out the lack of professionalism in some examples and various mistakes, we should not allow ourselves to be blind and forget the many correct reports and contributions that came from early (biblical) archaeologists in various locations. Today, archaeological work carried out by Christian archaeologists and institutions, as well as secular archaeologists, uses the same professional excavation methods. Dever (2017a: 147) expressed the idea in a more black and white way as he wrote, “All archaeological work in the Holy Land up to 1967, in both sectors of former Palestine, had been largely unself-conscious. It had proceeded on assumptions derived from one form or another of traditional ‘biblical archaeology.’” What happened in the next decade can be
described as our ‘loss of innocence’—a transformation that was affecting other branches of worldwide archaeology and that brought ‘biblical archaeology’ into the mainstream for the first time in its hundred-year history.” What Dever meant is that both excavation methodology and later publications became more professional. A more scientific approach also meant that archaeology in biblical countries “downplayed the role of ideology and the individual” (Dever 2017a: 147); i.e., archaeologists now interpreted the material culture without using the biblical texts and without the traditional interpretation carried out by the Christian archaeologist. However, it should not be forgotten that secular archaeologists also have presuppositions, but of another kind (see the discussion on page 13 that no interpretation takes place outside of an individual).

Archaeology in the biblical countries became a separate discipline, and so did biblical studies. When archaeology did not present evidence for some of the biblical narratives, scholars felt free to interpret the narratives as not being based in historical reality. Dever (1997: 81) explained, “if one regards the biblical accounts as story rather than history (i.e., as literature), amenable to literary analysis, then the task of critical scholarship perhaps becomes more manageable.” Dever (1997: 69–70) further wrote, “If we stand back, however, and look dispassionately at the entire Descent-Exodus-Wilderness-Conquest cycle in the Hebrew Bible, it reads much better as folktale—i.e., as myth, rather than history. The problem then shifts: It becomes one of literary and, finally, theological critique. That is, how and why and when did the literary tradition of the Exodus in the Hebrew Bible develop and become so dominant in Israelite faith and history, if it did not rest on historical memory?” Related to the present study, is Dever’s view of the Israelites in Egypt, “with new models of indigenous Canaanite origins for early Israel, there is neither place nor need for an exodus from Egypt” (Dever 1997: 67).
A few pages later in Dever’s article “Is There Any Archaeological Evidence for the Exodus?” he stated, “As a Syro-Palestinian archaeologist, I regard the historicity of the Exodus as a dead issue” (Dever 1997: 81). Dever is, of course, not the only one with this view of the Bible; Thomas L. Thompson, Niels Peter Lemche, Gösta Ahlström and many other scholars believe the Bible is made up of “prose fiction, legends, folk tales, theological treaties, and novellas, and thus devoid of history” (Hoffmeier 2004: 53). These voices have been loud and influential in their views of the Bible.

**How Archaeology Is Used Today**

When a majority of the scholarly world accepted that the history of Israel and other countries of the Bible could no longer be written based on the Bible, the history writing had to be based on archaeology as the primary source. Dever (2017a: 151) believed this “new” methodology would create an archaeology “that is more complex, more diverse, more difficult to define.” Wright (1971: 73) wrote that the mute finds mean, “that ancient cultural and political horizons and sequences can only be reconstructed by hypothesis from every kind of critically sifted evidence available.”

Dever (2001: 71) argued, “archaeologists are better off speaking not of ‘laws’ or ‘proofs’ or even of ‘facts,’ but rather of various ‘probabilities,’ some of which are better (i.e., more useful) than others.” J. Maxwell Miller (1991: 101) concluded that an history of Israel based only on archaeological remains, without information from the Bible “would be a very thin volume indeed and would have little in common with the current discussion.”

Today, the results of archaeology are used to provide a context for the biblical content, “illuminating the Bible and the world that produced it” (Dever 2017a: 141), and
answer questions such as “What, Where, When, How, and even Who. It cannot answer the question, What does it mean?” (Dever 2017a: 153). Dever continued with an explanation of what archaeology can do, which illustrates his view of the biblical content: “Archaeology can provide a historical context for events described in the Bible that may (or may not) have happened—that is, a plausible context. But archaeological ‘proofs’ that would validate faith are not obtainable” (Dever 2017a: 153).

Wright (1971: 73) also showed a similar view as he wrote, “Final proof of anything ancient must be confined to such questions as how pottery was made, what rock was used, what food and fauna were present, etc. Certainly that proof does not extend to the validity of the religious claims the Bible would place upon us, and we must remember that the Bible is not a mine for scientifically grounded certainties about anything. It is instead a literature that places before us one of history’s major religious options.”

Wright (1971: 76) further stated, “Conversely, archaeology, dealing with the wreckage of antiquity, proves nothing in itself. It must be analyzed in a variety of ways, and then with all other data available, its meaning in the overall picture of a cultural continuum is expressed by interpretation. Here again it is the interpretation that is at all usable, and that is the product of a human brain with the use of tools available, not in a pure vacuum mistakenly called by some ‘science.’ Instead the brain belongs to a limited person, living and working in a given time and space.” Archaeology can prove only a few things. Archaeology consist of finds and the interpretation of these; interpretations made in human brains. One has to remember that both brave and humbly presented views often are no more than hypotheses.

The more secular and anthropological archaeology, which did not look for biblical connections but described human activities in general, produced reports of a different
kind than before. Descriptions by Bietak, Pusch, and others, which concentrated not only on the lives of the elite and the political history, but on life in the bronze and glass factories in Piramesse, give of course a wider picture of the country. These reports are interesting, but they also demonstrate that archaeology could “stand on its own legs” and had become independent of the biblical narratives. These later archaeologists, of the present study, were all aware of the outcome connected to the debate of Biblical Archaeology. Dever (2017a: 152) explained that archaeology today has moved in a direction for “finding ‘the meaning of things.’ Some archaeologists even advocate ‘reading artifacts’ like reading texts, with similar understandings of the vocabulary, grammar, and syntax of material culture.”

Davis noted that those holding a “minimalist” view of the Bible, that most of or perhaps the entire Bible is fiction, refer to archaeology to support their “ultracritical view of the Old Testament” (Davis 2004a: 79) and in their reasoning, sometimes follow “an almost Wrightian vision of archaeology as realia” (Davis 2004a: 150). Davis observed that today both “minimalists” and “maximalists,” those who accept the Bible (or much of it) as historical, “essentially share the same theoretical and methodological approach to the archaeological record…. Where the combatants disagree is on the value placed on the biblical record” (Davis 2004b: 26). Since both sides use archaeology to support their views, Davis (2004a: 148) concluded, “Ironically, archeology is once again being used as a weapon to further particular biblical-theological perspectives. The new biblical archaeology is not in that way very different from the old.”

David Merling (2004: 40) pointed out the misunderstanding “that there is no difference between what is found and the description of what is found…. The description of the archaeological data is a theory.” Davis (2004a: 126) stated, “Theological beliefs do
influence archaeological interpretation, and a negative theological position has just as much potential for bias as a positive one.” Merling (2004: 41) put it straight, “Those who think archaeology has disproved the Bible live in a Sunday School world.” Merling (2004: 32–33) commented, “If archaeological finds seldom impose on the biblical stories, how is it then that some have concluded that those stories are in error, based on the archaeological data?… In short, whether Miller and Dever are willing to admit it or not, their acceptance that the Bible has been disproved is evidence that they believe that archaeology can prove the Bible. Those who think that archaeology has disproved the Bible have used a false concept of what constitutes evidence and have fallen victims to poor assumptions/expectations.” Roland de Vaux commented on the possibility that archaeology has been used to confirm the biblical text. He stated, “The ‘confirmation’ brought by archaeology to the biblical narrative is rarely without ambiguity (de Vaux 1970: 77). He continued, “Archaeology does not confirm the text, which is what it is, it can only confirm the interpretation which we give it” (de Vaux 1970: 78). Miller (1991: 100) noted another important aspect as he stated, “while declaring the Hebrew Bible an unreliable source and depreciating the relevance of literary-critical research for historical investigation, these colleagues ignore the problems and limitations of the other kinds of evidence and the alternative methodologies that they espouse.”

These views show that it is a somewhat complicated matter to refer to archaeology in support of certain views. One has to be aware of the two-fold use of archaeology: (1) the “mute” material culture and the interpretation of it, and (2) the lack of finds and the interpretation of it. James K. Hoffmeier (2004: 54) stated, “While skepticism dominates the field of biblical scholarship, it hardly represents the majority view of biblical scholars and archaeologists. But historical minimalists have certainly had a disproportionate
amount of influence in the field, and they have managed to control the agenda. One result has been that those who approached the Bible more positively have been put on the defensive and have struggled to know how to operate.”

All involved in the archaeological debate need to be aware of both the arguments used in the discussion, and that those archaeologists “shouting the loudest” may not represent the majority. Certainly, the development of archaeology since the 1970s has made archaeologists more self-conscious. Those involved in the debate, irrespective of their views of the Bible, need to understand how complicated it is to use archaeology in support for various views in a scientifically oriented world.

**Archaeology and Little or Lack of Evidence**

Material culture is mute and many times no archaeological remains have been found in connection to certain parts of biblical history. Nevertheless, many archaeologists, such as Dever, argue their case based on lack of evidence and express bold views. Davis (2004b: 27–28) responded: “Archaeologists are arrogant souls. We claim to know a site and interpret it from a very small window, often less than 10 percent of a site. We miss so much, and yet this does not prevent us from drawing sweeping conclusions from our tiny windows.” Already thirty years earlier de Vaux (1970: 70) had reasoned in a similar way as he wrote, “The earth’s crust has preserved only a small portion of the monuments and objects of antiquity, and archaeology has recovered only a small proportion of these; also, those texts which we have represent only a very small part of that which was written, and even so would not represent everything necessary for the work of the historian. Thus archaeology can mitigate the silence of ancient texts to a certain degree, but one must also admit that lack of archaeological evidence would not be
sufficient in itself to cast doubt on the affirmations of the written witnesses.” De Vaux (1970: 72) further stated, “I want only to point out that it is unwise to dismiss texts for lack of archeological support because new studies or new discoveries may provide that support.”

While it is argued that material culture cannot prove the Bible, it is interesting to note that lack of finds many times is used to disprove biblical narratives (i.e., prove that certain events have not happened). According to Dever (1997: 79), no archaeological record indicate that the proto-Israelites have ever lived in Egypt. Based on lack of evidence, Dever (1997: 73) further believed that “the present evidence for the Kadesh-Barnea episode has little historical basis.” Regarding lacking evidence, Edwin Yamauchi (2004: 88) stated that negative views of the biblical content are often “arguments from silence and therefore represent not so much the inaccuracy of the traditions as the inadequacy of our archaeological data.” Merling has also written about the lack of evidence when arguing a case:

I believe nothing is nothing. Nothing is not evidence; it is nothing, or what I call, to give it some importance, nonevidence…. To assume that one has disproved a specific point of an ancient literary account because one does not know of, or cannot find any evidence of, its historicity is a historical fallacy. To admit that one has found nothing is only proof that one has found nothing…. The lack of evidence cannot support or deny the reliability of a biblical story because it says nothing about why that lack of data occurred. Other explanations may abound. One cannot arbitrarily choose one of several possibilities and conclude that is the only answer. (Merling 2004: 33–34)

Merling referred to David H. Fischer who wrote, “Not knowing that a thing exists is different from knowing that it does not exist. The former is never sound proof of the latter. Not knowing that something exists is simply not knowing” (Fischer 1970: 48). Merling (2004: 32) stated, “Dever’s definition of not ‘historically verifiable’ as meaning ‘not ‘true’’ is a disappointing repetition of the illogic that I believe has created the
presumed divorce between archaeology and the Bible.” Interestingly, Dever (1997: 71–72) stated that lack of evidence need not occur because an event has not taken place. He wrote, “If indeed the Israelites are to be pictured as a band of wanderers, or even as semi-sedentary pastoralists, we would still probably find no remains of their ephemeral camps in the desert.” Kenneth A. Kitchen (2003: 310–11) reasoned in a similar way:

Modern complaints about lack of evidence are often heard. But they usually come from folk who have not done their homework or thought things through with sufficient rigor…. No buildings at Pi-Ramesse are above ground level, either mighty temples or proud palaces—so why should we expect to find the fleeting mud and reed hovels of slaves, long since returned to the mire? And a group of people traveling through Sinai’s landscapes would not be burdened with tonloads of clumsy pottery specially to delight archaeologists when they themselves expected to go from Sinai within a year into Canaan; and still less so during their unplanned, much-extended wilderness travels. Compare, long before, other margin-land travelers who explicitly used water skins (Gen. 24:14), not clumsy amphorae! That goes for their visits to Qadesh-Barnea as well.

De Vaux (1970: 70) expressed it, “There should be no conflict between a well established archaeological fact and a critically examined text. One and the same archaeological fact or one and the same text may allow a choice among several historical interpretations: the proper interpretation is then the one in which both ancient witnesses are in accord.” De Vaux (1970: 78) further stated:

If the results of archaeology seem to be opposed to the conclusions of text criticism, the reason may perhaps be that not enough archaeological facts are known or that they have not been firmly established; the reason also may be that the text has been wrongly interpreted. Accord must finally be achieved between these two means of knowing historical reality, but it can not and must not be attained by a tendentious use of archeological facts. If biblical studies have suffered from an excess of textual criticism, the remarkable and beneficial growth and progress of archaeology must not be permitted to lead to an opposite excess.

It is a fact that the vast amount of archaeological material culture retrieved, and the information it produces, when evaluated, is limited since everything must be interpreted. It is also true that many scholars make serious negative conclusions regarding
the Bible, i.e., interpretations expressed as truths instead of as hypotheses, based on lack of evidence. Readers need to be aware of how common it is that conclusions/interpretations negative towards the biblical content in general are based on absence of finds.

The lack of remains of Israelites in Egypt can rather produce various hypotheses. One (the most common among scholars today) is that the people of Israel has never been in Egypt. Another, in agreement with Kitchen’s argument, is that most of their remains have been destroyed by time. A third hypothesis, as de Vaux wrote, might be that there are remains in Egypt, but they have not yet been found. Since there exist remains of Semitic people in Egypt, a fourth hypothesis suggests some of these remains come from Israelites. However, it is extremely difficult to connect material culture to ethnicity; thus, the remains from Semitic people may only prove that Semitic people lived there.

The Relationship Today between Archaeology and the Bible

There are many views regarding the interaction between archaeology and the Bible and scholars can in general be divided into three groups. Some scholars believe the two disciplines, the study of archaeology and the study of the Bible, tell two different stories. Here we mainly find scholars who do not accept something (in the Bible) to be historical unless proved by science, for example by archaeology. They view Bible and archaeology as having very little in common. For example, Ward (1997: 111), as stated above, expressed such views as he wrote, “The biblical and nonbiblical sources simply tell two different tales. But this does not mean we are confronted with having to choose which one is correct or with having to harmonize the two into some kind of coherent whole. This has been the main error of two centuries of modern biblical study. We must,
rather, understand that a choice is unnecessary and that it is impossible to create a coherent whole, for we are dealing with two totally different kinds of source material.”

This view can be likened to a divorce—the disciplines are so different that they cannot live together. Ward further stated, “We need neither choose nor harmonize, simply recognize each kind of evidence for what it is and forget that dual burden of choice and harmony; choice is not necessary, and harmony is not possible” (Ward 1997: 112). This last quote was the last sentence in the book Exodus: The Egyptian Evidence where Ward wrote the summary and conclusion. What did Ward mean? This school refers to archaeology for writing the history of ancient Israel. The Bible, however, can still be used—not for writing history but for assisting in ethical choices, in creating traditions, etc. Dever (2001: 297) has been thinking in this direction as well; he stated, “The Hebrew Bible does not have to be literally true, in every historical detail, to be morally true or edifying.”

Other scholars may still use the term Biblical Archaeology, but with a different meaning than earlier, where the term describes the dialogue between the two separate disciplines—how archaeology can illuminate the Bible and how the Bible can assist in explaining the results of archaeology. After a long period of rejecting both the term Biblical Archaeology and the concept it stood for, Dever returned to using the term. He tried to fill the old term with a new meaning compared with before. Dever (2017a: 152) stated, “Archaeology and theology must initially be pursued entirely independently, in the interest of honest scholarship. Only later, when the data from both sources have been critically evaluated, can there be a search for what have been called ‘convergences.’ It is in the dialogue between two independent disciplines that our best hope for genuine new
knowledge lies. However, archaeology cannot ‘confirm’ faith, even when it may produce historical certainty.”

Already Wright (1971: 76) had expressed similar views as he stated, “we must begin with the fact that we have actual texts. These must be interpreted by all the means of literary analysis available to us. Then we must reconstruct the archaeological and ecological context as best we can both in the given area and in the widest possible context. Only then can we examine the question as to whether the one illumines the other, or whether a reasonable hypothesis can be reconstructed which best explains what we know at this time.” Miller (1991: 100) stated, “Of course it [the Hebrew Bible] is not a reliable source [for historical information], taken at face value. But neither should it be dismissed as totally irrelevant. Its very existence is a historical fact to be reckoned with. The appropriate question is not whether we should use the Hebrew Bible in historical research, but how we should use it.”

With this view, the disciplines function like two separate individuals, not married, but cohabitating—living under the same roof and occasionally interacting. Archaeology and the Bible are separate “individuals,” but they can help each other now and then. In this study, both Bietak and Dever regularly comment on biblical issues; however, their writings and interpretations are mainly built on archaeological finds, which override biblical data.

Other archaeologists and biblical scholars see a much closer connection between the Bible and archaeology, especially those more “conservative” scholars viewing the Bible as a reliable document describing historical events even if no direct archaeological evidence has been found in support of some major events. De Vaux (1970: 68) expressed thoughts connected to this view, as he wrote, “This spiritual truth can neither be proven
nor contradicted, nor can it be confirmed or invalidated by the material discoveries of archeology.” Hoffmeier (2004: 58) stated, “Biblical archaeology must be viewed as an interdisciplinary science that integrates biblical studies with all facets of the archaeology of the ancient Near East (not just that of ancient Israel). In my view, for biblical archaeology to work effectively and receive the respect it deserves in the 21st century, it will require teams of experts working together to investigate all the dimensions of the subject under study.” Hoffmeier is one of few authors who still expresses a close relationship between the Bible and archaeology, that archaeology and the Bible can be “married” and can live together as two “individuals.”

**Biblical Archaeology—Should the Expression Still Be Used and What Does It Stand For?**

As mentioned above, Albright (1966: 1) had a wide definition of Biblical Archaeology: “Biblical archaeology covers all the lands mentioned in the Bible, and is thus co-extensive with the cradle of civilization. This region extends from the western Mediterranean to India, and from southern Russia to Ethiopia and the Indian Ocean. Excavations in every part of this extensive area throw some light, directly or indirectly, on the Bible.” Ever since Dever and others criticized the concept of and the term Biblical Archaeology, some scholars have argued that there still exists a concept that should be called Biblical Archaeology. As stated above, later in his life, even Dever returned to the name but filled it with another content. Literature of the last forty years demonstrate various opinions regarding what “Biblical Archaeology” labels. This section will briefly look into these questions.
Already in the 1980s, Lance was uncomfortable with the term Palestinian Archaeology replacing Biblical Archaeology. He argued that Palestinian Archaeology had Palestine as the central interest, whereas Biblical Archaeology had the Bible and its interpretation as its focus. He wrote, “For biblical archaeology, the center of interest is the Bible its background and interpretation. Biblical archaeology is a technique for the study of the Bible just like form criticism or redaction criticism or any other exegetical point of view. Biblical archaeology is that subspecialty of biblical studies which seeks to bring to bear on the interpretation of the Bible all of the information gained through archeological research and discovery” (Lance 1982: 100). For Lance, Biblical Archaeology was a much wider concept, impossible to fit within the borderlines of Palestinian archaeology. Lance (1982: 101) argued that those studying the Bible should consider material from all “tells and sites of the biblical world.” Lance wrote, “Biblical archaeology’s past is only a swelling prologue to a long and productive future” (Lance 1982: 101).

In 1984, there was a congress on Biblical Archaeology in Jerusalem. At the opening of the congress, Ephraim E. Urbach expressed similar views as Lance as he stated, “Biblical archaeology is concerned with the material remains relating to the biblical period” (Amitai 1985: 4). At the same conference, Yigael Yadin (1985: 21) argued that some scholars objected based on a misconception of what Biblical Archaeology actually was. He believed these objecting scholars were biased in believing that the school of Biblical Archaeology was unscientific, and he declared that Biblical Archaeology was based on advanced research methods. In his eyes, Biblical Archaeology could not just denote a “dialogue between experts in various disciplines. It is a branch of research in which any scholar engaged in the study of the past of the Land of Israel and its neighbors must be trained” (Yadin 1985: 22). For both Lance and Yadin, Biblical
Archaeology was a discipline of its own which involved research in a much wider area than just Palestine and it was based on scientific work methods. However, despite these views, many scholars considered Biblical Archaeology “as a byword for prejudice and unscientific procedures” (Moorey 1991: xvi).

In 2004, a conference titled The Future of Biblical Archaeology was held. In the Preface of the book containing the various presentations from the conference, James Hoffmeier and Alan Millard (2004: xi) wrote that the focus of Biblical Archaeology “is on the times and places, the physical remains and written documents from across the Near East that relate to the biblical text either as background and context or by more direct contact.” At the conference, Hoffmeier (2004: 58) argued, as stated above, that Biblical Archaeology should be viewed as an interdisciplinary science integrating biblical studies with all aspects of archaeology. Hoffmeier’s and Millard’s views are expressed in a professional way, but their views of Biblical Archaeology as an interdisciplinary science differ from Dever’s view of the concept as just a dialogue between two disciplines. Hoffmeier (2004: 57) also stated, “To a degree, I am sympathetic with those who want to disassociate ‘biblical archaeology’ from ‘Syro-Palestinian.’ Because I am an Egyptologist, I do not want to be known as a ‘biblical Egyptologist,’ that is, one who studies Egyptology purely as a tool for answering biblical questions and disregards other periods and areas that might not have any direct bearing on the Bible.”

At the same conference, Ziony Zevit (2004: 18) stated that Syro-Palestinian archaeology had become the term used in professional circles “in departments of archaeology, anthropology and history.” Zevit (2004: 18) stated, “‘Biblical archaeology’ evolved into a term used primarily in popular culture, in titles of public lectures, magazine articles, books, and undergraduate or seminary courses. The term came to
signal that both textual and archaeological matters would be dealt with in presentations with this title, but not the proportion of archaeology to text and not the professional orientation of the author or lecturer.” Zevit took the view that Biblical Archaeology was not used in professional circles but used in more popular context and at “lower” educational levels.

However, in the same year, Davis (2004a: 148) wrote, “Biblical archaeology still has a validity as a name for the interaction sphere of archaeology and the Bible.” Davis seems to agree with Dever regarding the term Biblical Archaeology. As late as 2017, Rachel Hallote (2017: 111–12) concluded that today Biblical Archaeology “goes by a variety of names, including the ‘archaeology of the Levant,’ ‘Syro-Palestinian archaeology,’ and the ‘archaeology of Canaan and Israel.’ Sometimes the older term ‘biblical archaeology’ is still used.”

There is no consensus regarding the definition of Biblical Archaeology. Dever (2017a: 156) in 2017 summarized how the term is used, “Today the term is used in several ways. (1) It can be used by amateurs or even professionals to refer to the archaeology of Israel, Jordan, or even Syria, Turkey and Cyprus…. It may or may not carry some of the theological baggage of an earlier era. (2) It is still used by Israeli archaeologists to refer to the archaeology of the so-called biblical period in Israel…. (3) Finally, the term ‘biblical archaeology’ is best used to define not the discipline itself but the dialogue between two disciplines: archaeology and biblical studies.” Of course, Dever still wished that Biblical Archaeology should be used for the “dialogue” between two disciplines, but as both Dever’s summary and the various views above show, the expression is used for many different aspects.
It is important that words have a clear definition and send clear messages. How wise is it to use an expression that every time needs to be defined in order not to send unclear signals? It is not easy to fill an expression or a word with a new meaning and scholars have not managed to do it for the last fifty years. It is probably better to speak of “archaeology connected to the Bible” or “archaeology in the countries of the Bible,” or just say “archaeology shows,” expressions that are not so easily misunderstood. Working with archaeology with reference to a country instead of with reference to a specific religion can be viewed as more neutral. However, it is hard to be neutral with reference to anything that human beings research.

**Defending the Bible**

Archaeological research and access to numerous ancient writings have placed us in a unique position where the abundance of information makes it possible to do research and understand the biblical period better than ever. Already in the 1950s, Wright (1957: 25) expressed a similar view based on what was then accessible, “The increasing number of excavations … and the development since the First World War of more rigid archaeological and linguistic methods of study have served further to increase our confidence in the biblical story within known historical periods. The discovery of numerous ancient documents and the increased knowledge of the grammar of the ancient language has made it possible to penetrate deeply within the ancient mind and to understand biblical man more fully than ever before.” Sixty years later, Dever (2017a: 151) agreed as he stated, “we now have a vast source of reliable new information about the Bible and the biblical world, thanks to the progress of archaeology. We know at least ten times as much as we did forty years ago.”
Despite this amount of knowledge, the “minimalists” have taken the view that a vast part of the Bible is a late invention, that the United Monarchy belongs to a “mythical Golden Age that was necessary to restore national pride after the Exile” (Davis 2004a: 149). Dever (2017a: 150) saw dangers and challenges caused by postmodernism, which he described as “a wholesale rejection of the Enlightenment ideals of reason and progress; it is essentially a theory of knowledge according to which there is no knowledge.” While Dever generally has taken the view that biblical events, not supported by archaeological events, must be viewed as not true (the Exodus, the Conquest, etc.), he stated the skepticism towards the Bible had gone too far and was unfortunate when so much archaeological information existed (Dever 2017a: 151). At a certain point in his career, Dever began to defend some parts of Bible history. In his understanding, the biblical narratives are “fictional and almost always propagandistic, but that here and there they contain some valid historical information” (Dever 2003). Compared to some “minimalist” views Dever (2003) did not believe some narratives originated very late in the context of the Persian or the Hellenistic times but in “that of the Iron Age, i.e., pre-exilic.” Dever (2006: 76) viewed himself standing on a “middle ground, neither extreme skeptics or naïve credulists…. We must allow archaeology as it is practiced today to challenge, as well as to confirm, the Bible’s stories. Some things described there really did happen, but others did not. The biblical narratives about Abraham, Moses, Joshua and Solomon probably do reflect some historical memories of actual people and places, but the ‘larger-than-life’ portraits of the Bible are unrealistic and are, in fact, contradicted by the archaeological evidence.”

Dever (2017a: 154) commented on the luxurious and immoral lives of the leadership of Israel in Old Testament times and stated, “All these practices have now
been brilliantly illuminated by archaeological discoveries securely dated to the ninth to seventh centuries BCE. At Samaria, the capital of the Northern Kingdom, we have the large and luxurious palace, constructed of costly Phoenician masonry, filled with ivory-inlaid furniture.”

While Dever did not support a biblical Exodus, he acknowledged that archaeologists have found that Asiatic people populated several cities in the Egyptian Delta. He believed that lent “support to the long-held view of some biblical scholars that at least some constituent elements of later Israel had actually stemmed from Egypt” (Dever 1997: 71). He also held the opinion that some villages from the Iron Age I could be connected “with the emergence of an ethnic group that is characterized by later biblical and extra-biblical textual sources (the Merneptah Stele) as Israelites” (Dever 1997: 78–79).

When some scholars attempt to write the history of Israel based only on archaeological research and with the view that the biblical material originated very late, it follows that not much of the narratives of the Bible is viewed as history. Despite many statements in scholarly literature of archaeology’s inability to substantiate the biblical material, Dever not only referred to the results of archaeology for support of the biblical statements, but also used archaeology to demonstrate the accuracy of the narratives.

**How Should We View Archaeology Today?**

Have archaeologists and their interpretations left the immature childhood years, left the instability of the teens, and become mature adults in their best years? If archaeologists earlier had a childish relationship or an instable relationship with the Bible, how is the relationship going now? Merling (2004: 42) wrote, “In the end, the
relationship between the Bible and archaeology is fluid, not static. Both can help us better understand the other, but neither can, nor should, be used as a critique of the other. They must live separately and be blended and amended together cautiously.” The word “fluid” may be a good word to describe the relationship. Also Davis (2004a: 151) used the same expression as he stated, “The archaeological record can be highly fluid in its meaning and interpretation…. What we may see as primary in an artifact’s importance may have been unknown to the original users…. We seek patterns, a legacy of our processual approach to archaeology, even when they are not there. Sometimes we even create them ourselves, then trumpet the ‘discovery’ of them in the record.”

Davis (2004a: 151–52) used a similar word, “flexible,” and wrote, “An archaeologist must approach a site with a question, but should not seek a specific answer. The danger comes when we try to dictate what the answer should be. We need to remain flexible and respond to the site formation processes and to the material recovered from the site. We must be especially wary when we apparently find what we seek.” Both “fluid” and “flexible” are adjectives, maybe we should use clay (noun) as a better illustration for the use of archaeology and its connection to the Bible. Clay can be formed into a certain shape, if the shape does not “pass the test” it can be formed into a new shape just as a hypothesis is formed and then maybe reshaped and accepted.

Dever (2001: 71) wrote on how to view archaeology and stated, “I suggest that archaeologists ought rarely to use the word ‘proof,’ because the kind of verification that is possible in sciences that investigate the physical world is simply not obtainable for material-culture remains, even though they are also physical objects. New archaeologists today do formulate and test hypotheses, do seek regularities in the cultural process, and in that sense they may aspire to ‘scientific’ status of a sort. Ultimately, however, they are
dealing with human behavior, and behavior cannot be replicated in the laboratory, nor is it predictable.” If one uses archaeology in connection with the Bible or not, one needs to be aware of one’s preconceived views. Davis (2004a: 126) stated, “A preconceived notion is not in itself a bad position to start from; the key lies in recognizing it for what it is and being willing to allow it to be challenged.”

As pointed out above, in the beginning of the present study, Silberman reminded us of how difficult it is to separate one’s ideology when interpreting. He stated, “Beyond the influence of explicit belief systems, however, there may be a more pervasive modern belief system that makes the separation of modern ideology from archaeological interpretation virtually impossible” (Silberman 1997a: 141). He further wrote, “It might therefore be said that it is impossible to strip archaeological interpretation of its modern ideological components. It is, after all, the cultural logic of modern society—its ideology in the broadest sense—that is precisely the conceptual framework with which scholars make sense of the ancient world” (Silberman 1997a: 141).

As stated above, archaeology can provide the context and background to biblical narratives but can also contribute when forming hypotheses about history. In order to present a balanced view one needs to be aware of one’s preconceived views and acknowledge that no interpretation takes place outside a human mind. In addition, it needs to be clear that many scholars and laypeople have put too much hope to archaeology; it can provide many answers but not find answers to all questions. Merling (2004: 42) concluded, “In the past, readers of the Bible have expected too much from archaeology and too much from the biblical record. Archaeology is the scattered collection of what has been found, while the Bible is the scattered record of what would have fit the biblical writers’ theological purposes. Rarely should one expect that these two
agendas would intersect. When they do, scholars and the general public might applaud, but such intersections should not be expected and only cautiously accepted.”

Archaeology can accomplish much, but not all tasks. Sometimes we seem to believe that archaeological excavations and material culture help us to see the ancient world. One needs, however, to be careful of how to view the picture that emerges of the ancient world. We have to ask ourselves whether we are discovering the biblical world, i.e., see the ancient world as it was, or whether we are reconstructing/recreating a biblical world. The latter sends the signal that we build up a picture of the ancient world and then say this is how that world was, when in fact it was not.

**Archaeology in the Future**

Several things happened when archaeology interacted with the Bible. The Albrightian version of Biblical Archaeology disappeared because it could not “prove” the Bible. As a result, the need for and interest in archaeology decreased. Dever (2006: 26) stated, “Not only has modern archaeology not helped to confirm tradition, it appears to some to be part of the process that has undermined it.” Already in 1995, Dever published an article carrying the title *The Death of a Discipline*, in which he expressed his worry that not many Americans any longer were involved in Syro-Palestinian and Biblical Archaeology in the Middle East. The reasons were many, some of which were (1) Excavations had become complicated, expensive, and had less funding, (2) Universities did not as before support the field of archaeology, (3) The traditional base of support from churches and seminaries had been lost, and “national schools” in the Middle East had taken over, as Dever expressed it, “a game *we* invented.” When Dever became more specific in the article, he wrote, “If these schools [American Institutions of higher
learning] continue to move away from the solid historical orientation of earlier scholarship for the trendier ‘Bible as literature’ approaches, the situation will become ever worse. If the actual history of the Biblical world no longer matters, then archaeology is clearly irrelevant” (Dever 1995: 53). Dever was worried because he believed “that one can no longer understand or interpret the Bible adequately without placing it in its original context. Only archaeology enables us to do that” (Dever 1995: 70). When the support for archaeology decreased, it also meant, “less support for excavation, conservation of sites, research, and the professional positions needed to place a well-trained younger generation of specialists” (Dever 2017a: 157).

As late as 2017, Dever (2017a: 155) wrote, “The biblical texts, after two thousand years of interpretation and reinterpretation, have yielded all the information they contain. The only source of genuinely new information lies in archaeology and the independent witness that it provides. Archaeology will complement and correct the biblical narrative, providing a wealth of more contemporary, more detailed, more varied, more authentic information on real life in ancient Israel, not only the lives of the few elites who wrote the Hebrew Bible.” Dever continued to argue that archaeology provides the real picture of Israel. Whether one agrees with Dever or not regarding the “real picture,” archaeology is the discipline that will continue to provide new information that can illuminate the biblical narratives.

The development and wider acceptance of historical criticism form the backdrop of the many changes regarding the views of archaeology’s relationship to the Bible during the last century. It is also necessary to remember the debate of the early 1900s when Gardiner in several articles pointed out that some scholars, in support of the Bible, employed a naïve view of material culture and its interpretation based on too vague
evidence. Hoffmeier (2005: 52) commented that after these debates very few “biblical Egyptologists” have dared to do “serious investigation of biblical history with the aid of Egyptology,” especially in connection to the Exodus narratives.

The question is hypothetical, but one may wonder what would have happened to archaeology had not historical criticism come on to the stage. How would archaeology have been used had all archaeologists believed in the historicity of the biblical content? It was probably healthy that scholars criticized the immature interpretations some scholars undertook in the early years of archaeology. We seldom enjoy criticism, but it certainly refines the product when others look into one’s work and thinking. Perhaps, in a world without historical criticism, archaeologists could still have functioned in the well-developed scientific way they do today—supplying a background for the biblical narratives and forming the foundation for various hypotheses. Limited in what it can accomplish, archaeology can lend support to some hypotheses and, in addition, assist in removing misunderstandings and incorrect interpretations of biblical passages. This situation would perhaps not be too different from how believers act today when they use finds and their interpretations in a careful and responsible way.
CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSION

For centuries, the knowledge of ancient Egypt in the western world came via the books of the Hebrew Bible. When explorers from Europe started traveling to Egypt at the end of the 1700s and beginning of the 1800s, it became possible to gain knowledge of the country apart from the Bible. When Egyptian hieroglyphic writing was deciphered around 1820, the ancient Egyptians themselves started revealing their own history.

Generations of readers of the Bible had assumed that the narratives about the Israelites, their sojourn in Egypt, the Exodus, the wandering in the wilderness, and the Conquest of Canaan were reliable and true depictions of what had happened back in history. The first explorers and archaeologists approached Egypt with the biblical worldview. They traveled to discover the land where the Israelites, according to the biblical narrative, spent several centuries. The store cities Pithom and Raamses of Exod 1:11 became of special interest. It was believed that these cities, built by the Israelites, could be found by archaeological excavations.

The biblical world, which for a very long time had meant so much to the western world, had not been easily accessible during the Ottoman occupation of large portions of the ancient Near East. In the 1830s, Robinson, one of the early researchers, travelled in several of the biblical countries and he located many of the biblical areas and cities. The scientific thinking and research methods that developed out of the Enlightenment, started
to identify locations for biblical toponyms and to discover artifacts illuminating the
narratives of the Bible. With the early explorers, the biblical world became accessible,
and could be studied and described in scholarly writings.

This present study has followed fifteen scholars who searched for and/or wrote
about the city of Raamses, mainly from about 1850 until today. Some of the earliest of
these scholars, based on quite vague evidence, believed they found the city of Raamses.
Lepsius, around 1850, thought he had located the city at present Tell el-Maskhuta
whereas Petrie, some fifty years later, “discovered” the store city at present Tell er-
Retebah. For these scholars and many more, the interest in Egypt and the archaeology of
Egypt sprang out of the context of the Bible.

From the time hieroglyphic writings could be accessed, Egyptian monuments and
papyri revealed the existence of an Egyptian city, Piramesse, mainly built by pharaoh
Ramses II in the thirteenth century B.C. and named after him. The location of the
Egyptian city Piramesse had been lost to history, and so had the location of the biblical
city Raamses. In addition, the existence of the Egyptian Piramesse seems to have been
lost to history. Targumaic interpretation had replaced and probably updated the name
Raamses with the city Pelusium on the Mediterranean coast. In conclusion, if the biblical
Raamses is the same city as the Egyptian Piramesse, then the Bible may have been the
only writing that had preserved the knowledge of the existence of the Egyptian
Piramesse.

Many early researchers were interested in, and saw, Egypt through western
biblical eyes. It has been argued that it was and is wrong to study just the biblical aspect
of a country. However, we should be careful in using our present values when describing
the early researchers. Every search starts somewhere and it is a fact that the search for the
biblical city of Raamses became one of the first steps in finding the Piramesse described in Egyptian writings and inscriptions. Every discipline matures over time and it is healthy that archaeology developed and became interested in Egypt for Egypt’s own sake.

As time went by, the scholars described in this study experienced a change in context for their search. The writings of the later scholars, mentioned here, show that their search for a city mainly sprang out of an interest in the Egyptian writings themselves, they searched for the Egyptian city Piramesse—the biblical reference was of very little, or no, interest. While this shift of context took place, two other significant changes also affected scholars. One was the emergence of historical criticism, and the other was a new understanding of archaeology and especially what has been called Biblical Archaeology.

While all scholars described in this study used scientific research methods, the methods and reasoning became more and more sophisticated. However, none of the early researchers doubted that the Israelites had lived in Egypt and experienced an Exodus—they all believed the Bible described what had actually taken place. The historical critical approach to the Bible would eventually change this view. Semler, at the end of the 1700s, argued for a separation between the Word of God and the Scriptures. Wellhausen’s writings from the end of the 1800s reached the majority of scholars with the view that the Pentateuch consisted of various sources put together by a later editor. From about the early 1900s, the scholars studied in this present research took a significant critical view of the Bible; the later scholars of this study believed the Israelite sojourn, the Exodus, and the conquest were invented “history” in order to produce a background for a people who emerged in Canaan and somehow adopted the name Israel. The Bible, which had been regarded as the Word of God, was now viewed as the word of man.
In the early 1900s, Gardiner criticized scholars such as Naville. Gardiner expected solid evidence for taking a certain view and Naville had very vague evidence to present for his conclusions regarding the location of the biblical city Pithom. This negative view of some of those who searched for biblical locations and the historical critical viewpoint that emerged encouraged few scholars to integrate biblical studies with Egyptology. However, Gardiner’s detailed studies concluded that if Raamses of the Bible had existed it must have been the same city as Piramesse.

Based on archaeological research, Tanis in the northeast Delta was, for a time, viewed as the location for Piramesse until it was discovered that the building materials from the Raameside kings had been reused and moved to Tanis from Piramesse. Habachi and Bietak finally established the location for Piramesse at Tell el Daba‘/Qantir. Rich archaeological finds at this location along the now dry Pelusiac branch of the Nile have strengthened the location for being Piramesse.

Those scholars who view the Israelite sojourn as history and argue for a late Exodus in the thirteenth century B.C. generally view Piramesse as the same city as Raamses of Exod 1:11. Scholars who argue for an early Exodus suggest that the Israelites built the city Avaris. Since Avaris became incorporated in the later built Piramesse, it is believed that a later editor of the Bible updated the original toponym in order for readers to know the location.

The criticism of the Bible, caused by the scientific approach, created a need for Bible believing scholars to defend the Bible. This need was further strengthened because of Darwin’s evolutionary explanations on the origin of man. There was a strong wish to connect the biblical content to realia. The new discipline of archaeology became not only that tool but also a weapon in the hands of clergy and some archaeologists. Towards the
end of the 1800s, Cook both wrote for, and was involved in, the production of the
*Speaker’s Commentary on the Bible* with the goal to defend the Bible. The geologist
Dawson both supported the biblical narrative and wrote against Darwin’s theory. One of
his books, *Modern Science in Bible Lands*, reveals much about his views. During the first
half of the 1900s scholars such as Albright, who built up Biblical Archaeology—an
interpretation of archaeological finds that support the Bible and tried to prove its content
to be true—believed that archaeology could help in understanding the history and
geography of old Palestine.

The views of archaeology as a tool/weapon changed dramatically from the middle
of the 1900s. Scholars had used some of the biblical stories to interpret the archaeological
finds and thus created a somewhat circular reasoning that supported the Bible. When it
was realized that material culture was mute and depended on interpretation in order to be
used, archaeology connected to biblical studies lost much of its power. Dever is one of
those scholars who strongly argued for dividing Biblical Archaeology into two different
disciplines—archaeology as a science to establish the history of Israel (and other biblical
countries) and biblical studies as science to study the Bible as literature (not as history).
This separation was needed, it was argued, because archaeology dealt with material
culture whereas the Bible dealt with ideas. However, in general, archaeology had done
well in producing artifacts and information, but what had been lacking was a critical
examination of both these finds and of the biblical text (Davis 2004b: 24).

With today’s “minimalist” views of the Bible, not even Piramesse is any longer
viewed as the same city as the biblical city of Raamses. “Minimalists,” arguing for a very
late origin of the biblical content, suggest that the name Raamses of the Bible could be
built on northeastern Egyptian secondary cults of the gods of Piramesse that emerged
around the fourth century B.C. Today archaeology is again used as either a tool or weapon but now against the Bible.

Historical criticism of the Bible is similar to the criticism of Homer’s writings. When no archaeological finds had been found, scholars tended to view the content of Homeric writings as not true. When Schliemann presented archaeological support, scholars changed their view of Homer. However, the number of critical scholars and archaeologists are fewer than Christian and Jewish believers. While biblical criticism has had a vast influence in the scholarly world, the Exodus narrative is probably still viewed as historic by millions of believers. The expression Biblical Archaeology is also used but defined differently in different contexts.

While it is a fact that no direct evidence has been found confirming the Israelite sojourn, much indirect evidence supports the narratives. Archaeology confirms that Semitic speaking people lived in Egypt’s Delta during the time of the New Kingdom. Both the general theme and details of the biblical narratives about the Israelite sojourn fit well within Egyptian history during the New Kingdom. During the last one hundred and fifty years, archaeology has produced countless artifacts now seen in museums and vast amount of knowledge of the world(s) of the ancient Near East. These finds support much of the biblical narratives as they both confirm practices mentioned in the Bible as well as provide a context for the content of the Bible.

Large portions of the arguments against the events of the Israelites being historic are based on silence—i.e., lack of direct evidence for the Israelite sojourn. Readers need to be aware of the fact that a lack of evidence is the basis for many of the beliefs that Israel never lived in Egypt, or experienced the Exodus. Is evidence lacking because the events never took place (as many scholars today assume), because the evidence has been
destroyed by time, or perhaps because Israel never left much for archaeologists to find? Perhaps believers have placed too much hope in archaeology.

The arguments both in support for and against the Bible should be analyzed critically. The archaeological finds, or their lack, is one thing. The interpretation by archaeologists, depending on their worldview, of these finds, or their lack, is a different matter. Criticism can also be healthy and we should be very careful in analyzing scientific interpretations, looking, if possible, into both the foundation for and motive behind the various conclusions.

The modern world expected neutral and unquestionable knowledge to exist. Still today, the scholarly interpretations are too often viewed as facts. However, the present, postmodern world knows that no interpretation takes place outside a human brain. Interpretation comes from a brain with a certain horizon/worldview—presuppositions exist. We should be very careful with how we interpret what we see. Each one of us has a brain and can learn to interpret what archaeologists have found. We need to remember to think for ourselves and not leave the thinking and analyzing to the professionals only. It is important to do one’s own homework and then it is equally important to spend time with the thinking done by others who often have been able to spend much time on a subject.

Until about two hundred years ago, a majority of readers probably accepted the biblical content by faith and still, today, millions do that. However, the birth of scientific thinking has so steeped the thinking of many believers of today, including the present writer, that we feel a need for “proving” the Bible true before all critics. When the Bible interacted with archaeology, it was a meeting between faith and science. Science has two aspects. We can all appreciate the scientific research methods that have produced medicine, technology, etc. However, scientific methods are one thing. Scientific
explanations of what we see are a different matter. Scientific research in the form of archaeology has provided much that supports the Biblical narratives. Archaeology is a fascinating discipline as one never knows what will be discovered—tomorrow, next year, five years from now—that will have an effect on our understanding of the Bible. Today we still need faith to accept the biblical narratives. However, it is not a blind faith. It is an informed faith and an educated faith that studies both what the Bible has to say and what science has to say, in this context, what archaeology has to say. It is a careful faith that avoids reading something into the biblical text and the archaeological artifacts. It is an intelligent faith that analyzes in which direction the evidence points.

We have come to the end of this study, but not the end of research. It should be studied how come archaeologists often interpret lack of evidence as indicating that a biblical event has not taken place. Such a study should then be compared with how often a lack of archeological evidence, regarding other ancient writings, is interpreted as indicating that events have not occurred in history. The interested reader may also study more about how much worldview influences interpretations.
ENDNOTES

1 References from the Bible are from the ESV, if not it will be stated.

2 All texts from the LXX are taken from this translation.

3 Kitchen (2003: 256) argued that if the Hebrew Bible was composed late (during the exile to Babylon or later), the biblical authors would not have been able to know about the ancient city of Raamses/Piramesse since, at that time, the memory of that city was only known to but a few priest of secondary cults of the gods of Ramses II.

4 If both the cities of Piramesse and Tanis were located in the area where the Israelites used to be living, then an early author (when Piramesse existed but Tanis had not yet been built) could have written about the Israelites in connection to the city of Raamses. When the city of Raamses (most probably the same city as Piramesse) had ceased to exist and Tanis was in existence, a later author could have written about the Israelites having been in the vicinity of Tanis, when in fact both authors were having the same geographical area in mind.

5 Montet has taken the text from Papyrus Anastasi III, I, II to 3, 9.

6 I am indebted to Angelika Kaiser, language instructor at Andrews University, Michigan, for help with the translation from Latin to English.

7 The quote is, according to Naville, from Villiers Stuart, “Egypt after the War,” p. 81.

8 Gardiner stated that the Palestinian Targum and the Jerusalem Targum had replaced the name Raamses in Exod 1:11 with “Pelusin.” In Gen 47:11, the Palestinian Targum had “Pelusin” whereas the Jerusalem Targum had “Pelusim.” The Targums have been recategorized since Gardiner’s time and it is unclear exactly which texts he had studied.

9 The present author’s lack of knowledge in the French language places limitations regarding the description of Montet’s views of the Bible and its content.

10 Bietak referred in 1984 to Targum Palestine and Targum Jerusalem and, in 2015, to Targum Pseudo-Jonathan. The Targums have been recategorized and it is unclear exactly which texts Bietak referred to in 1984.

11 See note 3.

12 See note 10.

13 The present author translated the quotations from R. Schultz.
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