

# Moses in Egypt

## Moses in Egypt

Key Biblical Events

### Moses

#### Biblical Events

- Moses is born in Egypt, hidden for three months and then placed in the Nile River in a basket to avoid his death.

Now a man from the house of Levi went and took as his wife a Levite woman. The woman conceived and bore a son, and when she saw that he was a fine child, she hid him three months. When she could hide him no longer, she took for him a basket made of bulrushes and... put the child in it and placed it among the reeds by the river bank. (Exodus 2:1-3 ESV)

- Moses is taken into the house of Pharaoh

When the child grew older, she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son. She named him Moses, "Because," she said, "I drew him out of the water." (Exodus 2:10 ESV)

### Moses

#### Biblical Events

- When he is forty, he kills an Egyptian and subsequently flees to Midian.

When he was forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brothers, the children of Israel. And seeing one of them being wronged, he defended the oppressed man and avenged him by striking down the Egyptian. (Acts 7:23-24 ESV)

Moses fled and became an exile in the land of Midian, where he became the father of two sons. (Acts 7:29 ESV)

## Moses

### Biblical Events

- Eventually the Pharaoh who pursued Moses dies.
- Moses receives the call to go to Pharaoh and bring out the people of Israel.

During those many days the king of Egypt died, and the people of Israel groaned because of their slavery and cried out for help. Their cry for rescue from slavery came up to God. (Exodus 2:23 ESV)

And the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush... Then the Lord said, "Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt." (Exodus 3:2, 10 ESV)

## Moses

### Biblical Events

- Moses is used by God to deliver the people.
- Moses takes the people to Sinai where he receives the law of God.

But the LORD said to Moses, "Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh; for with a strong hand he will send them out, and with a strong hand he will drive them out of his land." (Exodus 6:1 ESV)

And he gave to Moses, when he had finished speaking with him on Mount Sinai, the two tablets of the testimony, tablets of stone, written with the finger of God. (Exodus 31:18 ESV)

## Moses

### Biblical Events

- When the people come to the border of the Promised Land, he sends in spies for 40 days. Ten of them say they will be unable to conquer the land. As a result they wander in the wilderness for 40 years.

"But as for you, your dead bodies shall fall in this wilderness. And your children shall be shepherds in the wilderness **forty years** and shall suffer for your faithlessness, until the last of your dead bodies lies in the wilderness. According to the number of the days in which you spied out the land, forty days, a year for each day, you shall bear your iniquity forty years, and you shall know my displeasure." (Numbers 14:32-34 ESV)

## Moses

### Biblical Events

- After 40 years, as the people prepare to enter the Land of Promise, Moses dies at the age of 120 years.

So **Moses** the servant of the LORD **died there in the land of Moab**, according to the word of the LORD, and he buried him in the valley in the land of Moab opposite Beth-peor; but no one knows the place of his burial to this day. Moses was 120 years old when he died. His eye was undimmed, and his vigor unabated. (Deuteronomy 34:5-7 ESV)

# Moses in Egypt

Notable Egyptians

## Bithiah

Daughter of Pharaoh and Adoptive Mother of Moses

- The daughter of Pharaoh:

Now the **daughter of Pharaoh** came down to bathe at the river, while her young women walked beside the river. She saw the basket among the reeds and sent her servant woman, and she took it. (Exodus 2:5 ESV)

- Bithiah

The sons of Ezrah: Jether, Mered, Ephraim, and Jalon. These are the sons of **Bithiah, the daughter of Pharaoh**, whom Mered married; and she conceived and bore Miriam, Shammai, and Ishbah, the father of Eshtemoa. (1 Chronicles 4:17 ESV)

# Moses in Egypt

Timeline

## Moses

Timeline

- We know that Moses was 80 years old at the time of the Exodus. If the Exodus occurred in 1446 BCE, then Moses was born in 1526 BCE.

Now Moses was **eighty years old**, and Aaron eighty-three years old, when they spoke to Pharaoh. (Exodus 7:7 ESV)

- We know that Moses was 40 years old when he left Egypt for Midian. If he was born in 1526 BCE, then he left Egypt in 1486 BCE.

When he was **forty years old**, it came into his heart to visit his brothers, the children of Israel. (Acts 7:23 ESV)

# Moses

## Timeline

- Moses dies at 120 years old. If he was born in 1526 BCE, then he dies in 1406 BCE.

Moses was 120 years old when he died. His eye was undimmed, and his vigor unabated. (Deuteronomy 34:7 ESV)

- This places Moses life during the emergence of the 18th dynasty (1550 BCE to 1292 BCE).

# New Kingdom

Dynasty	Seat	Start	End	Length	First Ruler	Last Ruler
XVIII	Thebes, Amarna	1550 BC	1292 BC	258 years	Ahmose I	Horemheb
XIX	Thebes, Memphis, Pi-Ramesses	1292 BC	1189 BC	103 years	Ramesses I	Twosret
XX	Pi-Ramesses	1189 BC	1077 BC	112 years	Setnakhte	Ramesses XI

# Moses

## Timeline

- The 18th Dynasty was the first of the New Kingdom, the era in which ancient Egypt achieved the peak of its power.
- The dynasty was founded by Ahmose I, who finished the campaign to expel the Hyksos rulers, was succeeded by his son Amenhotep I whose reign was relatively uneventful and he left no heir.
- Thutmose I seems to have been related to the royal family through marriage. During his reign, the borders of Egypt's empire reached their greatest expanse.
- He was succeeded by Thutmose II and his queen, Hatshepsut, who was the daughter of Thutmose I.

# Moses

## Timeline

- After her husband's death and a period of regency for her minor stepson (who would later become pharaoh as Thutmose III), Hatshepsut became pharaoh in her own right and ruled for over twenty years.
- Thutmose III, who became known as the greatest military pharaoh, also had a lengthy reign.
- Before the end of his reign, he obliterated Hatshepsut's name and image from temples and monuments.
- He had a second co-regency in his old age with his son Amenhotep II.
- Thutmose III and Amenhotep II are serious considerations for pharaoh of the exodus.

# Moses in Egypt

## Dating the Exodus

# Moses

## Date of the Exodus

- Our date calculations are based on what is called the “early date” of the exodus.
- There is a “late date” c. 1267 BCE.
- Using this date, the Exodus would take place during the 19th dynasty during the reigns of Seti I and Rameses II.
- The classic movie, “The Ten Commandments,” obviously used the late date names for the pharaohs.

# New Kingdom

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# Moses

## Date of the Exodus

- Proponents for the early date argue on the basis of the internal biblical chronology given in 1 Kings 6:1 and subsequent calculations using other scriptural dates.
- Proponents of the late date consider the 1 Kings reference to be more symbolic than actual and they use of 25 years as a “generation” to make their calculations.
- Using this method they are able to find archaeological synchronism with the Exodus 1:11 that Israel built the cities of Pithon and Rameses.
- Early date advocates consider the Exodus references to be “updated” to the later names for the cities.

# Moses

## Date of the Exodus

- Proponents of the early date give priority to the biblical narrative and look for archaeological confirmation.
- Proponents of the late date give priority to archaeological discoveries and look for ways to make the biblical narrative fit with their current archaeological interpretation.
- **Evidence Unseen** discusses the arguments for the two different periods.
- Also, my [Great Digs](#) video on the Exodus goes into more detail on the dating.

# Moses in Egypt

## The Pharaohs

# Moses

## Pharaoh of Moses' Birth and Childhood

- None of the pharaohs connected to Moses are named in the biblical narrative.
- There are three pharaohs with whom Moses interacted:
  1. The pharaoh who ordered the destruction of the make children who reigned at the time of his birth.
  2. The pharaoh who reigned at the time he fled to Midian.
  3. The pharaoh of the exodus

# Moses

## Pharaoh of Moses' Birth and Childhood

- Who is the pharaoh of Moses' birth and childhood?
- The late date of the Exodus would place Moses' birth during the reign of Tuthmoses III.
- If Moses was born in 1526 BCE, then the most likely Pharaoh was Amenhotep I. He was the second pharaoh of the 18th Dynasty.
- Recently Amenhotep I's mummy was "digitally **unwrapped**" using a 3D CT scan.

## Moses

### Pharaoh of Moses' Exile

- Who is the pharaoh that Moses worked with and from whom he fled to Midian?
- As we have seen, he would have to be part of the 18th Dynasty.
- He would have to reign over 40 years (while Moses was in Midian).
- He would have to die prior to Moses' return to Egypt.
- His son would be the pharaoh of the exodus.

During those many days the king of Egypt died, and the people of Israel groaned because of their slavery and cried out for help. Their cry for rescue from slavery came up to God. (Exodus 2:23 ESV)

## Moses

### Pharaoh of Moses' Exile

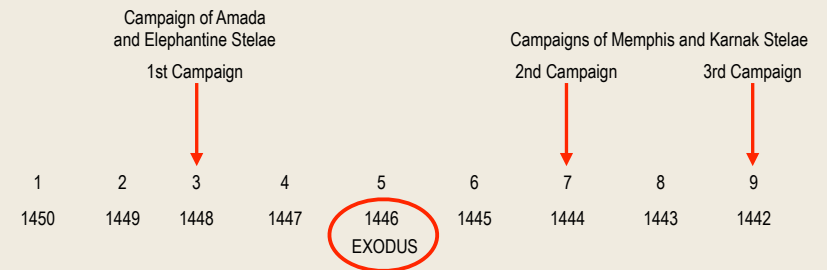
- Using the early date of the Exodus, it is likely the reference is to Pharaoh Thutmose III, one of Egypt's longest-serving monarchs.
- Counting his co-regency with his stepmother Hatshepsut, Thutmose III reigned 54 years.
- There is a good chronological fit with Moses being in Egypt's royal court, then fleeing into the Midian wilderness where he lived for "many days" (40 years) until the pharaoh died.

## Moses

### Pharaoh of the Exodus

- This makes Amenhotep II – Thutmose III's son – the likely pharaoh of the Exodus.
- He is known for engaging in campaigns in years 3, 7 and 9 of his reign. But after his third campaign, we have almost no record of his reign.
- This record of decreased influence may be a result of the destruction of his armies in the Red Sea.
- Sir William Petrie wrote: "Of the remainder of his reign, we know nothing."
- In the words of Manuelian, this "silence ... plays too large a role in assessing [Amenhotep II's] policies, for not a single text has survived which describes a major act or decree of any historical significance."
- The same is true of his monuments, none of which, as Petrie wrote, can be "dated above the fifth year." Furthermore, some of them are only partially complete.

## Chronological Correlations with Exodus



## Moses

### Pharaoh of the Exodus

- The cause of Amenhotep II's death is interesting.
- He was unable to determine if they were the result of embalming or of disease, but they were unusual.
- Though Amenhotep II's exact cause of death is unknown, evidence of disease would certainly fit with the biblical account of the plagues.
- He died in his early 40s—an age corroborated by analysis of his mummy. Interestingly, in 1907, when his mummified body was examined, scientists noticed the presence of unusual tubercles all over the body.
- Grafton Elliot Smith, who studied the corpse, wrote: "The skin over the whole body is thickly studded with small projections or tubercles from 0 m. 002 mill. to 0 m. 008 mill. in diameter."

<https://armstronginstitute.org/882-who-was-the-pharaoh-of-the-exodus#:~:text=According%20to%20Sigmond%20Freud%E2%80%94yes,of%20the%20pharaohs%20named%20Thutmose.>

## Moses

### Pharaoh of the Exodus

- Furthermore it is apparent that Amenhotep II's first-born son and the rightful heir to his throne died at a young age.
- It is believed that this is the reason his successor Thutmose IV creates a "propaganda piece" legitimizing his reign in what is called the "Dream Stele" which we will examine later.

<https://armstronginstitute.org/882-who-was-the-pharaoh-of-the-exodus#:~:text=According%20to%20Sigmond%20Freud%E2%80%94yes,of%20the%20pharaohs%20named%20Thutmose.>

## Moses in Egypt

### Locations

## Tel el-Daba

### Moses' Home?

- Though the biblical record does not give the location of Moses' upbringing, it is not unlikely that Israel was still living in the land of Goshen.
- While the national capital for the 18th Dynasty was in Memphis, after the Hyksos experience a royal presence in the Nile's eastern delta would have made sense for national security.
- Tel el-Daba is an archaeological site in the Nile Delta region of Egypt where Avaris, the capital city of the Hyksos, once stood.
- Bietak's excavation there uncovered a ten-acre royal citadel just west of the earlier settlement, part of a new royal center established at the former Hyksos capital.
- Located just south of where the Pelusiac branch of the Nile once flowed, he found two palaces that were in use during the early 18th Dynasty.
- The site is in the right area and at the right time to be the royal palace where Moses was raised and where he confronted Pharaoh 11 times during the time of the Ten Plagues.

<https://biblearchaeology.org/research/chronological-categories/patriarchal-era/3039-israel-in-egypt>



## Moses in Egypt

### External Evidence



## Sargon Birth Legend

Parallels to the Birth of Moses

Image source: Jastrow, Public domain, August 30, 2014

## Sargon Birth Legend

### Parallels to the Birth of Moses

- During the excavation in c 1850 at Ninevah, a clay tablet was uncovered. Later a smaller portion of the same tablet was discovered in Ashurbanipal's library at Ninevah.
- The tablet told the birth legend of Sargon, king of Akkad. Scholars generally believe it to have been written by the Neo-Assyrian king Sargon II (709-705 BCE) to legitimize his reign.
- The account bears many similarities to the Moses birth account.
- So, the common [minimalist] belief is that the biblical account used the Sargon tradition.

## Sargon Birth Legend

### Parallels to the Birth of Moses

My mother was a high priestess, my father I knew not.  
The brothers of my father loved the hills.  
My city is Azupiranu, which is situated on the banks of the Euphrates.  
My high priestess mother conceived me, in secret she bore me.  
She set me in a basket of rushes, with bitumen she sealed my lid.  
She cast me into the river which rose over me.  
The river bore me up and carried me to Akki, the drawer of water.  
Akki, the drawer of water, took me as his son and reared me.  
Akki, the drawer of water, appointed me as his gardener.  
While I was a gardener, Ishtar granted me her love,  
and for four and ... years I exercised kingship.

## Sargon Birth Legend

### Parallels to the Birth of Moses

- Though there are similarities to the account of Moses, there are differences. For example two completely different genres of literature are involved, one narrative and one legal.
- One account is from Mesopotamia and the other from Egypt.
- The biblical account is also unique in that it reflects a knowledge of Egypt: papyrus reeds of the Nile, bitumen pitch for the basket, and attendants bathing in the Nile.
- In these cultures, the idea behind the basket on the water was the commission of the child into the care of the deity who controls the waters (in Exodus, Yahweh).
- There is no doubt that the Exodus account of Moses' birth, couched in images similar to other Ancient Near Eastern birth legends, would legitimize Moses' identity and vocation with the contemporary audience.
- It also affirms places the story in a similar historical context.

David E. Graves, Biblical Archaeology, Volume 2, (Toronto: Electronic Christian Media, 2018), pp. 73-74



## Weighing the Heart

### Insights into Pharaoh's "Hard Heart"

Image source: <https://ancientegyptonline.co.uk/negativeconfession>

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## Weighing the Heart

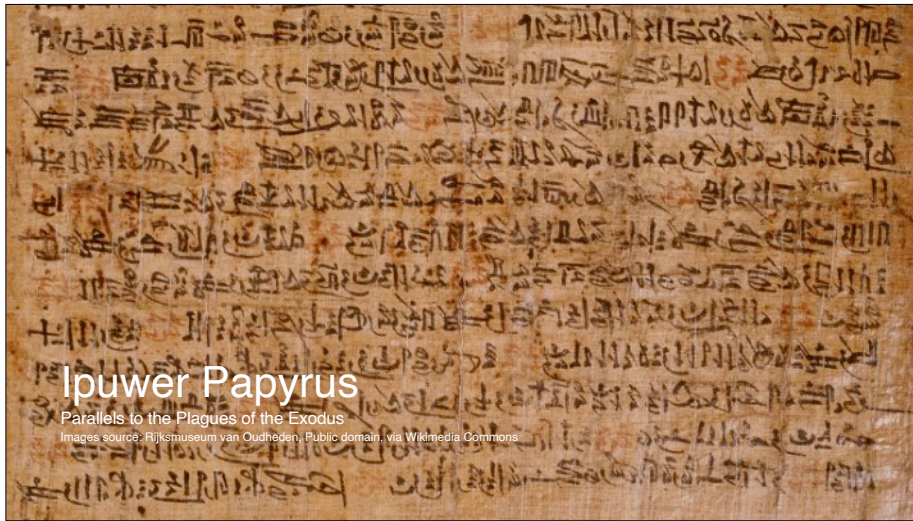
### Insights into Pharaoh's "Hard Heart"

- The heart was placed on the scale and balanced against the white feather of truth. If it was lighter, one went on toward paradise.
- If it was heavier, it dropped to the floor where it was eaten by Amut, a strange demon goddess shown as a creature who was part lion, part crocodile, and part hippopotamus. At that point the soul would cease to exist.
- The Hebrew word translated "hardened" is **קָבַד**, "kabad," which means to "make heavy."
- So, using "Egyptian theology," Moses argued that each time pharaoh rejected God's warning, he was adding weight to his heart and increasing condemnation at the judgment.

<https://www.gotquestions.org/Egypt-in-the-Bible.html>



RightNow Media, Titus Kennedy, Bible Unearthed #2. Impact of Archaeology • 7:00 – 9:30 (2:30)



## Ipuwer Papyrus

Parallels to the Plagues of the Exodus  
 Images source: Rijksmuseum van Oudheden, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

## Ipuwer Papyrus

### Parallels to the Plagues of the Exodus

- This ancient Egyptian text was written by a high Egyptian official named Ipuwer.
- It is alternatively referred to as the "Ipuwer Papyrus," the "Admonition of an Egyptian Sage," or the "Dialogue of Ipuwer and the Lord of All."
- It is a poetic lamentation addressed to the "All Lord," who is typically understood to be the sun god Ra.
- Passages in the poem, such as the river being blood, blood everywhere, plague and pestilence throughout the land, the grain being destroyed, disease causing physical disfigurement, the prevalence of death, mourning throughout the land, rebellion against Ra the sun god, the death of children, the authority of the pharaoh being lost, the god of Egypt being ineffective and losing battle, and jewelry now being in the possession of the slaves, are all occurrences in common with the Exodus story.

## Ipuwer Papyrus

### Parallels to the Plagues of the Exodus

- The precise date for the original composition is unknown, but the singular extant copy was made during the New Kingdom of Egypt (18th, 19th, 20th Dynasties).
- While most scholars suggest it was originally written in the Second Intermediate Period due to content, the linguistics of the text and the date of the copy indicate that it was composed during the 18th Dynasty.
- Indeed, the hieratic script in which it is written was in use during that time.
- Furthermore, the name Ipuwer is also known from inscriptions of the 18th Dynasty, and in particular one from the time of Hatsheput and Thutmose III just prior to the Exodus.
- Its catalog of catastrophic events accord remarkably with those of the exodus plagues, making it possible that the Admonitions could be an Egyptian remembrance and near contemporary account of the exodus plagues.

## Ipuwer Papyrus

### Parallels to the Plagues of the Exodus

#### EXODUS ACCOUNT

[God speaking to Moses]: "Take some water from the Nile and pour it on the dry ground. The water you take from the river will become blood on the ground." (Exodus 4:9)

"And all the water in the Nile was turned to blood. The fish in the Nile died, and the river smelled so bad that the Egyptians could not drink the water." (Exodus 7:20-21)

#### IPUWER PAPYRUS

"Behold, Egypt is fallen to the pouring of water. And he who poured water on the ground seizes the mighty in misery" (Ipuwer 7:5)

"The river is blood. If you drink it, you will lose your humanity, and thirst for water." (Ipuwer 2:10)



## Ipuwer Papyrus

### Parallels to the Plagues of the Exodus

#### EXODUS ACCOUNT

"All the livestock of the Egyptians died... lightning flashed down to the ground. So the LORD rained hail on the land of Egypt... (The flax and barley were destroyed)." (Exodus 9:6; 9:23; 10:7)

"Now at midnight the LORD struck every firstborn male in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sat on his throne to the firstborn of the prisoner who was in the dungeon, and every firstborn of livestock." (Exodus 12:29)

#### IPUWER PAPYRUS

"Gone is the barley abundance... Food supplies are running short. The nobles hunger and suffer... Those who had shelter are in the dark of the storm." (Ipuwer 6:3; 3:3; 7:13)

"Behold, plague sweeps the land, blood is everywhere, with no shortage of the dead... How who buries his brother in the ground is everywhere... Woe is me for the grief of this time." (Ipuwer 2:5, 6, 13; 4:3)

## Ipuwer Papyrus

### Parallels to the Plagues of the Exodus

#### EXODUS ACCOUNT

"And there was a loud wailing in Egypt, for there was not a house without someone dead." (Exodus 12:30)

#### IPUWER PAPYRUS

"Wailing is throughout the land, mingled with lamentations." (Ipuwer 3:14)



## Dream Stele

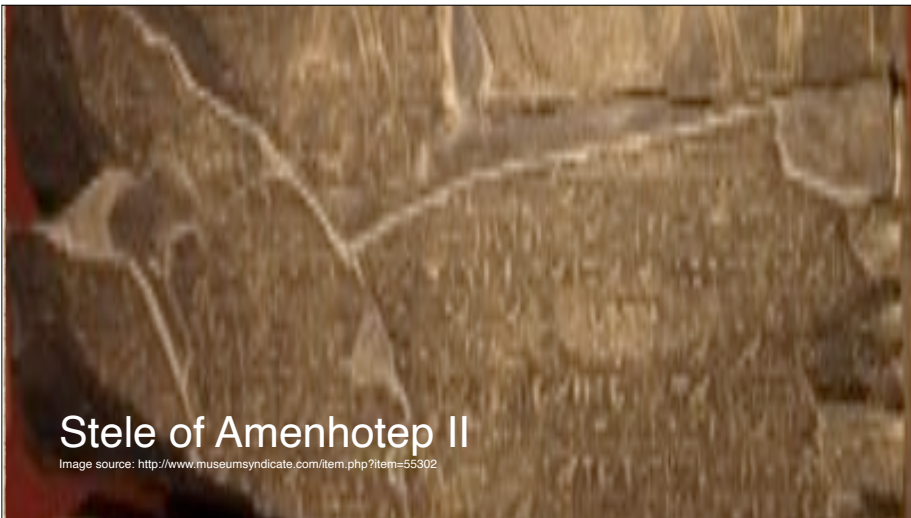
- When the sands were removed and the whole monument was revealed, the Sphinx Dream Stele was found set between the paws of the Great Sphinx at Giza.
- The stele was carved from granite and is approximately 11.8 feet tall, 7.2 feet wide, and 2.3 feet thick.
- When the hieroglyphs were translated, it was found to be a personal yet official text of Thutmose IV, son of Pharaoh Amenhotep II, who reigned in the 15th century BCE.



## The Dream Stele

### Validation of the Death of the Firstborn

- Thutmose IV was not the natural heir to the throne, so he needed “divine propaganda” to legitimize his kingship.
- The natural heir was his older brother and the firstborn son of Amenhotep II.
- According to an administrative papyrus, he was a priest of Ptah, but is thought to have died young, although the details of his disappearance are not known from Egyptian documents.
- If Amenhotep II was the pharaoh of the exodus, then his firstborn son and heir would have died during the final plague, putting his next son in line to take the throne.
- So the Dream Stele may be an external validation of the Exodus account of the plagues, specifically the final plague that killed the firstborn of Egypt.



## Stele of Amenhotep II

- This monumental stone inscription with its accompanying artwork was originally erected at the southern city of Elephantine, and it records the campaign of Amenhotep II to Canaan in which he claims to have brought back over 101,128 captives to be used as slaves.
- Pharaoh Amenhotep II reigned over Egypt beginning in about 1450 BC, during the powerful 18th Dynasty of the New Kingdom.
- Matching chronological information from Egyptian king lists to the Bible, Amenhotep II was possibly the pharaoh of the Exodus, that occurred approximately 1446 BC.

## Stele of Amenhotep II

### Destruction of the Egyptian Military

- While earlier in the 18th Dynasty the Egyptians had a powerful military, especially during the reign of Thutmose III, who conducted 17 known military campaigns, after the beginning of the reign of Amenhotep II there was a steep decline.
- Amenhotep II had only two confirmed campaigns during his reign: the first taking place prior to the Exodus, and the second being primarily a slave raid that occurred soon after the Exodus (recorded on the Elephantine Stele).
- By comparison, other Egyptian military campaigns of the period brought back many fewer captives, the largest total being only 5903. Most scholars consider Amenhotep II's claim to be a massive exaggeration.
- Because this happened right after the Exodus, perhaps it indicates an urgent need to replace the lost slave population in Egypt, or purely propaganda to make it appear that the pharaoh had recovered or replenished slaves lost during the Hebrew exodus.

## Moses in Egypt