

The Sons of Jacob New Evidence for the Presence of the Israelites in Egypt

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Archaeological Evidence

The Israelites and Rameses

When Jacob and his family migrated to Egypt, they were settled in “the land of Rameses.” The Bible tells us, in fact, that they became property owners there (Gn 47:11, 27). During their time in Egypt, the Israelites were used as slave laborers to build the city of Rameses (Ex 1:11), and when they left after 430 years (Ex 12:40), they departed from Rameses (Ex 12:37). From these references, we can conclude that the Israelites spent the years of the Egyptian Sojourn in and around Rameses.

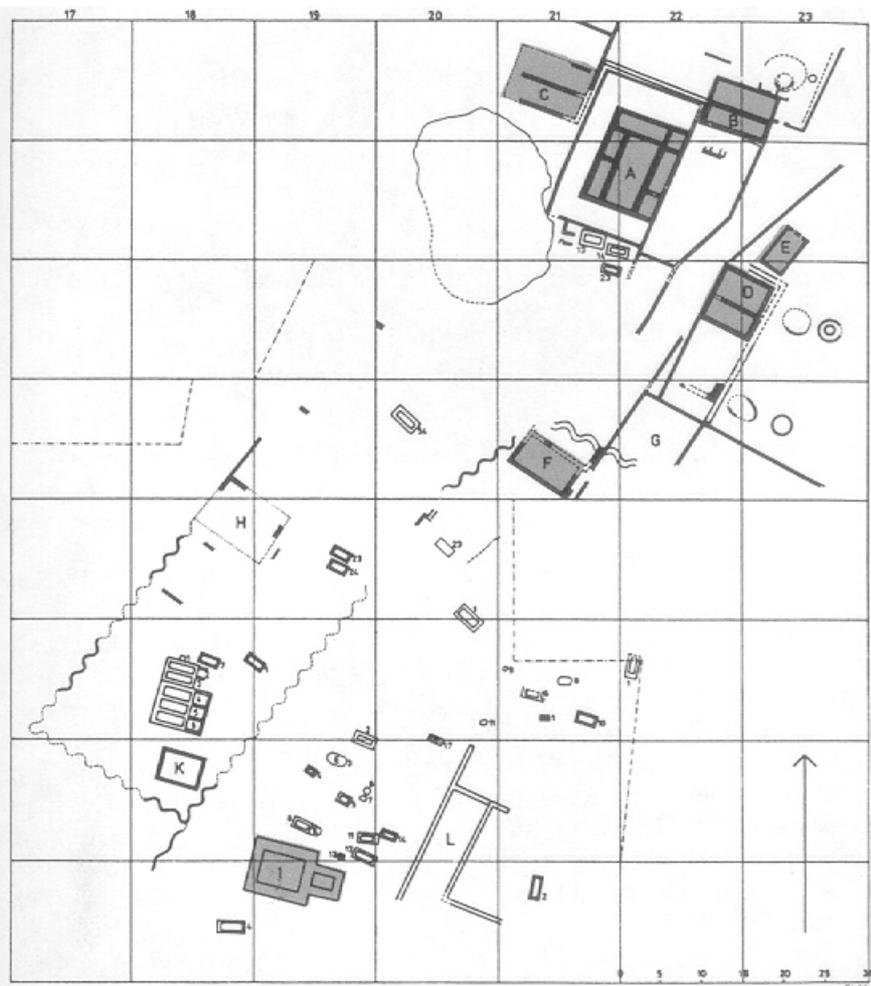
The name Rameses actually comes from a later period than the Israelite Sojourn. It was the name given to a city built by Rameses the Great (Rameses II) in the eastern Nile Delta in the 13th century BC. This more familiar name was then used retrospectively by later scribes when copying the Biblical texts. Although the location of Rameses was in dispute for some years, that dispute has now been settled. We not only know where Rameses was located, but we know much about the history of the ancient

BSP 10:2/3 (Spring/Summer 1997) p. 54

site. Extensive excavations have been undertaken there under the direction of Manfred Bietak of the Austrian Archaeological Institute, Cairo, since 1966 (for previous reports, see Shea 1990: 100–103; Wood 1991: 104–106; Aling 1996: 20–21). It is possible that Prof. Bietak may have, for the first time, found physical evidence for the presence of the Israelites in Egypt.

History of Tell el-Dab’a

Ancient Rameses is located at Tell el-Dab’a in the eastern Delta, approximately 100 km northeast of Cairo. In antiquity, the Pelusiac branch of the Nile flowed past the site, giving access to the Mediterranean. In addition, the town lay on the land route to Canaan, the famous Horus Road. Thus, it was



Asiatic settlement of the mid-late 19th century BC at Tell el-Dab’a

(Area F/I, Stratum d/2). A - small villa with the plan of an Israelite four-room house.,
B-F - small huts; 1 - monumental tomb.

BSP 10:2/3 (Spring/Summer 1997) p. 55

an important commercial and military center.

We can divide the history of the site into three periods: pre-Hyksos, Hyksos and post-Hyksos. The Hyksos were a Semitic people from Syria-Pale...

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