Old Testament Introduction
The Bible’s Buried Secrets
Chapter 6, Merneptah Stele

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/ancient/bibles-buried-secrets.html>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qalTJzk4kO0>

***Overview***

What is for the most part an exact copy of the script follows. There are a few places where individual speakers could neither be heard nor understood: for this we apologize. Every effort was made to be precise: there were just spots that defeated us. Since this is a quote in its entirety it seemed unnecessary to mark it with quotation marks. The notation for each speaker is tedious enough: Narrator, Reader, etc. If you discover bothersome errors, please reply to this website and point them out. You may verify the script more easily by starting to replay it where the “time” stamps indicate discussion begins. The second of the above links is free from advertising and thus easier to use.

The choice of the Merneptah Stele (circa 1213-1203 BC) as a first artifact for study is confusing and counterintuitive. Several other artifacts, in particular those for Enûma Eliš, should have been preferred. The suppression of the Creation, Temptation, Flood, and the like is purely opinion and presupposition; without any statistical basis and devoid of logical warrant. While the investigation of the Creation, Temptation, and Flood is beyond our scope and strength in this paper, it needs to take place: if not here, then elsewhere.[[1]](#endnote-1) Moreover, the quality of evidence that the Merneptah Stele discloses is grossly overrated, especially when contrasted with the Amarna evidence.

***Script***

The Merneptah Stele (time 3:00)

Quote:

N: Near the banks of the Nile in southern Egypt in 1896, British archaeologist Flinders Petrie,[[2]](#endnote-2) leads an excavation at Thebes, the ancient city of the dead. Here he unearths one of the most important discoveries in biblical archaeology, from beneath the sand appears the corner of a royal monument carved in stone. Dedicated in honor of Pharaoh Merneptah, son of Ramses the Great, it became known as the Merneptah Stele.[[3]](#endnote-3) Today it is in the Cairo Museum.

Donald Redford:[[4]](#endnote-4) This stele is what the Egyptians would have called a triumph stele, a victory stele, commemorating victory over foreign peoples.

N: Most of the hieroglyphic inscription celebrates Merneptah’s triumph over Libya, his enemy to the west, but almost as an afterthought, he mentions his conquest of people to the east[[5]](#endnote-5) in just two lines.

Redford: The text reads, “Ashkelon[[6]](#endnote-6) has been brought captive, Gezer[[7]](#endnote-7) has been taken captive, Yano’am[[8]](#endnote-8) (in the north Jordan valley) has been seized, Israel[[9]](#endnote-9) has been torn, its seed no longer exists.”

N: History proves that Pharaoh’s confident boast could be wrong.[[10]](#endnote-10) Rather than marking their annihilation, Merneptah’s Stele announces the entrance onto the world stage of a people named Israel.

Redford: This is priceless evidence for the presence of an ethnical group called Israel in the central highlands of southern Canaan.

N: The well-established Egyptian chronology gives the date at 1208 BC. Merneptah’s Stele is powerful evidence that a people called the Israelites are living in Canaan, what today includes Israel and Palestine, over three-thousand-years ago.

Unquote.

***Beginnings***

If the Babylonian Captivity (586-516 BC) is not a proper starting point for the topic before us, neither is the Merneptah Stele (1213-1203 BC: 1208 BC according to BBS). Nor is it news: for it was first discovered in 1896 AD, over a century ago. When Petrie first discovered the Merneptah Stele, the Babylonian Creation Story (1800-1501 BC, or possibly as late as1100 BC, according to some)[[11]](#endnote-11) was already discovered by Austen Henry Layard[[12]](#endnote-12) (1849 AD) and published by George Smith[[13]](#endnote-13) (1876 AD). So, the Merneptah Stele is neither the chronological, or logical starting point for such a study. One, “Adam and Eve” or “Temptation”, cylinder seal (2200-2100 BC)[[14]](#endnote-14) was also discovered at about the same time. Flood legends are also widely known (Atra-Hasis: 1800-1701 BC).[[15]](#endnote-15)

Some readers will at first find the existence of these Genesis parallels disturbing. However, they are evidence; they also support the idea of widespread knowledge of the creation, the flood, and possibly even the temptation. So, the pagan world is in no place to claim that they did not know about creation, or the flood. Nor are the authors of *The Bible’s Buried Secrets* in any place to feign ignorance of such matters. For Christians, this means that Israel is being called to witness to the world in the context of a world that has “suppressed the truth in unrighteousness.”[[16]](#endnote-16) Israel is not elected to accomplish such a task in a vacuum. In fact, Israel is not elected to accomplish much of anything. What Israel is elected to do is to be a witness to the accomplishments of Yahweh. Yet, in the eyes of BBS, Yahweh is most likely a fictitious being.

There are better beginnings.

***Contradictions***

We note in passing that *The Bible’s Buried Secrets* has already created an internal self-contradiction: for the Documentary Hypothesis can be supported from a 516 BC starting point; but a 1208 BC starting point, with Israel already occupying the central highlands must mean that J and E are already extant.

Diehards will attempt to claim that in 1208 BC such J and E evidence existed only as oral tradition.

For our own satisfaction, we will attempt to hold all of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers in memory to see how far we can get with that. The fact that an extensive literary history already exists, complete with creation, temptation, and flood accounts makes such a claim for oral tradition ludicrous. The fact that this literature is already plagued with textual variants, discloses how impossible it is to keep an accurate report in memory.

So, J and E are clearly not oral, but already extant in writing, and they are almost certainly melded in 1208 BC; the idea of a later J (950 BC), E (850 BC), with melding as late as P (500 BC) is untenable: it is clearly a lie.

If 1208 BC stands, then it becomes harder to discredit Samuel, David, or Solomon: for J and E will now form the foundation for all of these.

The story line clashes.

***Evidence***

Evidently, neither the materials collected by the British Museum, and several other prominent museums; nor the work of contributors, such as James B. Pritchard[[17]](#endnote-17) were important enough for *The Bible’s Buried Secrets* to notice.

Nor should the Amarna Letters (1350-1330 BC), nearly 150-years precedent, have been neglected in this discussion.[[18]](#endnote-18) The Amarna Letters firmly establish the presence of 'Apiru or Habiru in the central highlands, and show that Akkadian Cuneiform is the international language of the period. If the Amarna evidence is accepted, the pre-history/history dividing line is pushed back to circa 1350; we are now only sixteen years after the death of Moses; and we have strong contextual support for Judges: for even without the exact names, the historical context of Amarna and Judges is virtually identical.[[19]](#endnote-19) And why shouldn’t the Amarna evidence be accepted? It seems superior to the Merneptah evidence in every way.

The purpose in selecting the Merneptah Stele as the discussion starting point, other than merely heightening the archaeological drama, is to set the stage for a false contrast with biblical origins. The Merneptah Stele creates the impression that no significant archaeological finds existed before it. We have shown that such finds are not only older, generally; but *The Bible’s Buried Secrets* could not have been ignorant of them. It is this contrast that creates the false impression that the contents of Genesis cannot possibly be historic when examined archaeologically and scientifically.

The evidence looks like it was “cherry-picked”.

***Value***

What exactly does the Merneptah Stele actually establish concerning Israel?

“Ysrỉꜣr waste no/not seed/grain his/its….”

Or, as Redford reads it:

“Israel has been torn, its seed no longer exists.”

The obvious implication is that since Egypt has been attacking Libya, to the west, it now concerns itself with Arabs to the east. The only (weak) indication of any residence in the central highlands to the north is the reference to Yano’am[[20]](#endnote-20). However, we are not at all certain of the identity of either Yano’am or the word rendered Israel. What the Merneptah Stele actually establishes is that a people, possibly Israelites, were attacked by Egyptians, but we cannot know where. In other words, as Thomas L. Thompson[[21]](#endnote-21) has showed, we learned little or nothing. We most certainly did not learn that:

“Merneptah’s Stele announces the entrance onto the world stage of a people named Israel.”[[22]](#endnote-22)

“This is priceless evidence for the presence of an ethnical group called Israel in the central highlands of southern Canaan.”[[23]](#endnote-23)

“A people called the Israelites are living in Canaan, what today includes Israel and Palestine, over three-thousand-years ago.”[[24]](#endnote-24)

In opposition to Thompson’s extreme skepticism[[25]](#endnote-25), scholars like K. A. Kitchen conclude that Israel is the obvious choice.[[26]](#endnote-26) Other scholars, with rare exception, are copycats, aping the conclusions of others; this creates a false impression of academic consensus, which does not exist: for only a few, like Kitchen and Thompson have done the hard work.

The value is less than certain.

***Alternatives***

There are at least two other legitimate translations for Ysrỉꜣr. One is Jezreel, a northern city and/or its adjacent valley, which is sometimes referred to by the Greek transliteration, Armageddon. The other refers to the Libu by their appearance, wearing side-locks: this seems even more farfetched to us, since the topic of the Libu was thoroughly treated at the beginning and main body of the monument, we fail to see the need to return to it.

We think that the first alternative is worth defending, based on the following translation:

“The princes are prostrate, saying, ‘Peace!’ Not one is raising his head among the Nine Bows. Now that Tehenu (Libya [Nubia]) has come to ruin, Hatti is pacified; The Canaan has been plundered into every sort of woe: Ashkelon has been overcome; Gezer has been captured; Yano’am is made non-existent. [Jezreel] is laid waste and his seed is not; Hurru is become a widow because of Egypt.”[[27]](#endnote-27)

In favor of Jezreel:

* This looks like a toponym list: Jezreel is a toponym, Ysrỉꜣr in not a toponym.
* It is unlikely that Egyptian chariots strayed far from the Via Maris: they most likely rode on Nile River barges towed along the Mediterranean pulled by work horses walking the shore; less likely the chariots and horse walked the Via Maris: this has the distinct disadvantage that the chariot horses arrive at battle already fatigued by the journey.[[28]](#endnote-28)
* Jezreel is easily approached from the Via Maris, the rugged hill country is not.
* Jezreel usually gives the battle advantage to chariots, and the disadvantage to infantry (Exodus 14; Joshua 11; Judges 4).
* Rugged hill country gives the battle advantage to infantry, and the disadvantage to chariots.
* Israel was not wiped out by the battles, so the report must refer to planting seed, grain or seed stores, seed crops; else the battle must refer to a different location, such as Jezreel; otherwise, any report of Israel being wiped out must be treated as a false exaggeration. Still, if significant details are false, why isn’t the whole report false?
* The Merneptah evidence is contradicted by the Amarna evidence: for the constant plea of the Amarna Letters is that Egypt is conspicuously absent from the central highlands, and pretty much absent from anywhere else in Cisjordan: Egypt is failing in its covenant duties. The Amarna evidence is in much better agreement with the Bible.
* Ancient kingdoms commonly exaggerated their battle victories; it made good political press for the folks back home. Egypt, was especially good at spinning reports.

While the sum of these observations is not conclusive; taken in aggregate, they are far from trivial: they restore some balance to the overshadowing Ysrỉꜣr hypothesis, and are well worth further examination.

There are credible alternatives still in play.

***Amarna***

I am neither an Egyptologist or an epigrapher; yet, As I read through the few Amarna Letters[[29]](#endnote-29) for which I could find translation; though only a few translations were located, I became increasingly convinced that the 'Apiru are in fact the Hebrews; that Hebrew was more than just an unrelated ancient name, pressed into service to justify the existence of a people that have no justification for their existence. That being said, the Amarna Letters are many times more convincing than Merneptah.

Ysrỉꜣr is admittedly an “afterthought” on the Merneptah surface, an example of 1208 BC graffiti, some mad charioteer’s drive-by shooting. Whereas, each of the Amarna letters (1350-1330 BC) expresses a genuine contextual concern about the 'Apiru: for which we have at least eight solid references in the few documents we found translated.

Amarna is a superior witness.

***Conclusion***

The use of the Merneptah Stele as a starting point is misplaced. Several other artifacts, in particular those for Enûma Eliš, should have been preferred. The evidence that the Merneptah Stele reveals is grossly overstated. The suppression of the Creation, Temptation, Flood, and the like is purely opinion and presupposition; without any statistical basis and devoid of logical warrant.

If Israel is a valid translation for Ysrỉꜣr; it is not more so than Hebrew is a valid translation for 'Apiru or Habiru. In fact, any one of us can make the step from 'Apiru to Hebrew; while even Egyptologists and epigraphers struggled to make it from Ysrỉꜣr to Israel. If Israel is a valid translation; then so is Israel’s destruction: which is contradicted by later historic events.[[30]](#endnote-30)

The Merneptah monument not only appears to have been defaced by irrelevant text; but the Stele itself was created by defacing the back side (reverse) of an earlier monument: the front side (obverse) is the Amenhotep III Stele (1391-1353 BC or 1388-1351 BC).

So, why weren’t these other sources of evidence at least mentioned?

[[31]](#endnote-31)

1. Our goal for a starting place begins with either Genesis 1:1, John 1:1, or 1 John 1:1: nothing else suffices. We are taking baby-steps backwards, because that is the best we can do; nevertheless, there are better starting places than with Merneptah: both biblically and archaeologically. There is a modern false trend that wants to start everything in Africa, making Africa into the cradle of civilization. Such a reconstruction of history exists, at least in part, due to ignorance of the Babylonian corpus, Anatolian corpus, and many other sources of evidence: such ignorance may be, in part, willful. On the other hand, Africa is called the dark continent, because we don’t know much about it. A good dose of evidence might help us all. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Sir William Matthew Flinders (and Hilda. 1871-1957) Petrie (1853-1942), an English Egyptologist, and a pioneer of systematic methodology in archaeology and preservation of artefacts. Works: Giza (1880), Tanis (1884), Tell Nebesheh (1886), Fayum (1887), Palestine (1890), Tell el-Hesi (1890), Tell el-Amarna (1891, temple of Aten), Merneptah Stele (1896), Tell el-Jemmeh, Tell el-Ajjul (1930). Petrie is also credited with the discovery of two different metrical systems at Wadi al-Rababah (Hinnom); yet it is not clear what these two systems are.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flinders_Petrie>

<http://deskarati.com/2012/04/26/flinders-petrie/> [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. The following translation is not identical with that given in *The Bible’s Buried Secrets*.

“The princes are prostrate, saying, ‘Peace!’ Not one is raising his head among the Nine Bows. Now that Tehenu (Libya [Nubia]) has come to ruin, Hatti is pacified; The Canaan has been plundered into every sort of woe: Ashkelon has been overcome; Gezer has been captured; Yano’am is made non-existent. Israel is laid waste and his seed is not; Hurru is become a widow because of Egypt.”

Tehenu are probably Berbers.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Meshwesh>

<http://atlantipedia.ie/samples/tag/tehenu/>

<http://www.worldhistoria.com/temehu-and-tehenu_topic125561.html>

<https://www.temehu.com/Temehu.htm>

Hatti most likely refers to the Hittite predecessors or a people later ruled by the Hittites. They occupied the territory of central Anatolia (Turkey), but there is growing evidence that they were a powerful and significant political and military force in the Holy Land, and may have given Egypt considerable trouble in the south.

<http://www.ancient.eu/hatti/>

Hurru is ostensibly Syria/Palestine; yet, no evidence for this opinion was uncovered.

There is no evidence from this Stele for the presence of Israel in the central highlands. At most it shows that Egypt engaged an unidentified people, with a name sounding something like Israel, at some unknown location, in 1208 BC.

The identification with Israel is not without problems; yet, it fits the era perfectly. It pinpoints a time in the middle of the period of Judges (1356-1050 BC) during which Israel lived in great uncertainty; finally, being dominated by the Philistines. The invasion of Egyptian raiding parties, makes perfect sense for the period; provided that they kept to the Via Maris, and made no attempt to engage the Israelites with chariots in the inland hill country. What makes less sense is that Egypt is not mentioned in the record of Judges. It is possible that the Egyptian war parties never engaged Israel; or (less likely) were mistaken for Philistines; or (more likely) are Egyptian bombast, typical exaggerations of Egyptian prowess; or (most likely) they describe typical raiding parties, which exert no long-term, lasting effect: nothing more than raiding parties counting coup. As was the case with the twelve Israelite spies, the Egyptians entered and exited Canaan largely unnoticed (Numbers 13). Thomas L. Thompson comments in *Early History of the Israelite People*, pages 139, 311, 404:

“References to the Merneptah Stele are not really helpful. This text renders for us only the earliest known usage of the name ‘Israel.’” So, “to begin the origins of biblical Israel with Merneptah ... on the grounds that we have extra-biblical rather than biblical attestation is willful. These texts are, *mirabile dictu*, even less relevant than the biblical traditions.”

“With the ‘Israel’ stele we have only a name in an historical context in which the shifting signification and dislocation of regional and gentilic toponymy over centuries is a commonplace.”

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Merneptah_Stele>

<http://www.worldhistoria.com/temehu-and-tehenu_topic125561.html>

<http://www.ancient.eu/hatti/>

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ashkelon>

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gezer>

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yokneam> [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Donald B. (and Susan) Redford (1934 …), a Canadian Egyptologist and archaeologist, professor at Pennsylvania State University. Works: Karnak, Mendes.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Donald_B._Redford> [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Israel is to the north, not to the east. Yes, this looks like afterthought. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Ashkelon is the ancient southern seacoast city ruled first by Canaanites (?) and later by Philistines. It is possible that the Egyptians conquered the Canaanites in Ashkelon during the late thirteenth century and established a Philistine contingent there to maintain control.

However, the equation of Ashkelon with Canaan is unlikely: for the Philistines are known in the area from the days of Abraham (Genesis 21:32, 34). The Egyptians (Mizraim) are distinctly Hamitic, and direct brothers of the Canaanites: so, it is no mystery that Egypt is involved in Canaanite politics and wars (Genesis 10:6). Because of this Egypt may have been invisible in Canaan as a distinct identity. The Philistines (Philistim) are the direct descendants of Casluhim (Genesis 10:14), and Mizraim aka Egyptians (Genesis 10:13): so, it may have been difficult to distinguish them from Canaanites or Egyptians as well. This close familial relationship between Canaanites, Egyptians, and Philistines may very well explain why Egypt is not mentioned in Judges as anything other than the location of the first steps of the Exodus (9 times): Judges is simply in a position to be more specific: hence Canaanites and Philistines. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Gezer is located in the south-central Shfela plains, not in the central highlands. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. Yano’am remains obscure and unidentified, which is why Redford feels compelled to identify it; yet neither the name nor the location can be verified: it rests on Redford’s opinion alone. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. This is a far from certain identification. [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. Yes, this is evidently a contradiction…. [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/En%C3%BBma_Eli%C5%A1> [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. Austen Henry Layard (1817-1894)

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Austen_Henry_Layard> [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. George Smith (1840-1876)

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George\_Smith\_(Assyriologist)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Smith_%28Assyriologist%29) [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adam_and_Eve_cylinder_seal>

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fall_of_man>

<http://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/highlights/highlight_objects/me/a/adam_and_eve_cylinder_seal.aspx> [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gilgamesh_flood_myth>

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Epic_of_Gilgamesh>

<http://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/highlights/highlight_objects/me/t/the_flood_tablet.aspx>

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Atra-Hasis> [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
16. Romans 1:18 [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
17. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_B._Pritchard> [↑](#endnote-ref-17)
18. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amarna_letters> [↑](#endnote-ref-18)
19. What if we don’t have exact names? The Egyptians don’t provide precise names for the Berber tribes either. Much of the time the Egyptians simply referred to their foes by pejorative pseudonyms. [↑](#endnote-ref-19)
20. See note 3 for a fuller context. [↑](#endnote-ref-20)
21. Thomas L. Thompson (1939 …) See note 3.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_L._Thompson> [↑](#endnote-ref-21)
22. This is simply untrue. There is absolutely no warrant to single this artifact out and claim it to be the entrance marker. It is most certainly not the most recent evidence establishing the dividing line between history and pre-history. As a matter of fact, “the entrance [of Israel] onto the world stage” takes place about 430 years previously (roughly 1836 BC: Exodus 12:40-41; see also Acts 7:6; 13:20; Galatians 3:17). If we are talking about Israel as a person, we should look to Jacob’s birth for a date. If we are talking about Israel as an established nation, we would think in terms of Mt. Sinai in 1406 BC. [↑](#endnote-ref-22)
23. This would be nice to know; yet, at this moment in time, it is only wishful thinking on our part. Israel is not identified with certainty. The location of Yano’am is equally uncertain. Neither the dominant art or text of the Stele relate to Israel in the north; both are clearly about the major conflict with the Libu; Eventually, the Libu (Meshwesh or Ma) will conquer Egypt, establishing their own dynasty: Israel is insignificant in this Egyptian context, there is little reason to mention them. On the other hand, if this actually does identify Israel in the central highlands, it indicates that the Israelites are extinguished; if true, this casts doubt on the possibility of the united David/Solomon kingdom: we can’t have this both ways. [↑](#endnote-ref-23)
24. Again, both Israel and Yano’am are in doubt. There is no establishment of Israel if they exist only to be destroyed: there is a latent falsehood lurking in here somewhere: we can’t have this both ways. [↑](#endnote-ref-24)
25. Thank God for skeptics. They keep us honest, as well as evidence centered and focused (John 20:24-29). [↑](#endnote-ref-25)
26. Kitchen, K. A., *On the Reliability of the Old Testament*, (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 2003, paperback – 2006: 662 pages), pages 137, 206-207, 220, 224. Arguably, Kitchen is, at least for English language scholars, the greatest living Egyptologist and epigrapher. [↑](#endnote-ref-26)
27. Seen note 3. [↑](#endnote-ref-27)
28. We believe that the standard Egyptian practice was to boat (barge) up the coast. The archers, chariots, charioteers, horses arrived at the battle ground in optimum condition. Then the Egyptians displayed their impressive intimidation routine, display of archery, chariot skills, and the like. At this point, most adversaries simply surrendered. If necessary, they fought, but again the objective was to take the battle field with overwhelming force. If the adversary chose to default, so much the better; yet, if the adversary chose to fight, Egypt was ready to give them a lesson they would not soon forget. Such a strategy evidently attracted such far flung places as Crete, Cyprus, Arzawa, Hatti, Mitanni, and others. [↑](#endnote-ref-28)
29. All of the Amarna letters are interesting reading; the haggling over wives is reminiscent of Abram calling Sarai his sister; other background details become more vivid; they show a similarity of background that is hard to deny in this era. So here we are (circa 1350-1330 BC: the period of early Judges), with all these names and places attested as historic realities, which together paint a picture of fourteenth century BC life that matches the picture painted in the Bible with amazing detail. It’s hard to believe that all of this evidence of actual names and places, reduces to fiction.

<http://www.reshafim.org.il/ad/egypt/amarnaletters.htm>

<http://blog.bibleplaces.com/2015/07/new-translation-of-amarna-letters-by.html>

<https://www.ancient.eu/Amarna_Letters/>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amarna_letters%E2%80%93localities_and_their_rulers>

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Amarna\_letters](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category%3AAmarna_letters)

<http://archaeology.tau.ac.il/?page_id=2072>

<http://www.ancientegyptonline.co.uk/amarnaletters.html>

EA 1-EA 7 are concerned with Babylon.

Of particular interest to us are:

EA 8, which mentions Canaanites in the Levant, as well as pirates or thugs, who are impeding international relationships and trade along the Via Maris in 1349-1334 BC. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amarna_letter_EA_8>

EA 9 also mentions Canaanites: they are vassals of Egypt desiring to revolt from Egypt and submit to Babylonia, which parallels the desire of Israel to revolt from Egypt and submit to YHVH. The implication being that harsh treatment is common in Egypt (circa 1350 BC). <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amarna_letter_EA_9>

EA 15 suggests that Assyria is emerging as an international player, reminiscent of Genesis 10:11, 22, even though Genesis probably has an earlier date in mind.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amarna_letter_EA_15>

EA 16 is a second Assyrian letter; the Sutu or Suti nomads, thought to be Semitic, are mentioned here.

<http://www.reshafim.org.il/ad/egypt/a-ashuruballit.htm>

EA 17, the Mitanni and Hatti nations are mentioned.

<http://www.reshafim.org.il/ad/egypt/a-tushratta.htm>

EA 19, another letter from the Mitanni kingdom.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amarna_letter_EA_19>

EA 23 discusses the goddess Shauskha (Ishtar) in the context of Nineveh.

EA 32 is reported to mention the Arzawa (western Anatolia), possibly associated with the Luwians, though we could not locate a translation of EA 32.

EA 35 relates to Cyprus and complains about war with Sumerian Babylon and Nergal, the principal deity of Cuthah.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amarna_letter_EA_35>

EA 45 is reported to mention Ugarit, though no translation of EA 45 was found.

EA 75, EA 79, EA 122, EA 137, and other EA tablets mention 'Apiru (Habiru, or remotely possible, Hebrew), Hatti, Mitanni, Nahma, Beduin, as well as many other people or places. Mitsru (the Egyptians) many have grouped these under the name Retenu (Retjenu, Syrians, Aram).

<http://www.reshafim.org.il/ad/egypt/a-rib-addi.htm>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Habiru>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Retjenu>

EA 100 also mentions the 'Apiru (Habiru, or possibly, Hebrew).

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amarna_letter_EA_100>

EA 144 mentions Sidon with the claim that several Sidonian cities have fallen to the 'Apiru (Habiru, or Hebrew?).

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amarna_letter_EA_144>

EA 149 is a fourth letter to pharaoh from Abi-Milku (Abimelech), which means father-king in Semitic languages; it is more a title than a name: several individuals bear this title in the Bible. Thus, there is little way to know which Abi-Milku is intended, if biblically related at all. Baal is also mentioned, along with Aziru, king of the Amurru (Amorites).

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amarna_letter_EA_149>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aziru>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amurru_kingdom>

EA 153 is an eighth letter to pharaoh from Abi-Milku (Abimelech),

EA 161 is a fifth letter to pharaoh from Aziri, king of the Amurru (Amorites).

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amarna_letter_EA_161>

EA 245 is a fourth letter to pharaoh from Biridiya, king of Magidda (Megiddo). The tablet mentions Lab'ayu, who was active throughout Samaria.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amarna_letter_EA_245>

<http://www.reshafim.org.il/ad/egypt/a-biridiya.htm>

EA 252 was written by Lab'ayu, defending his innocence.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amarna_letter_EA_252>

EA 256 has an interesting reference to Yišuya, which sounds an awful like Joshua.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amarna_letter_EA_256>

EA 270 is a fourth letter to pharaoh from Milkili, king of Gazru (Gezer).

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amarna_letter_EA_270>

EA 271 is a fifth letter to pharaoh from Milkili, king of Gazru (Gezer), in which he complains about the power of the 'Apiru (Habiru, or Hebrew). By now we see that these 'Apiru are present in the Cisjordan with such power and ubiquity, we are compelled to ask... Why aren’t they better identified, since they are such a force? Who are they? If the 'Apiru are not the Hebrews or Israelites, who else could they be? What other disturbing influence was so actively present in Cisjordan circa 1350 BC?

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amarna_letter_EA_271>

EA 273 and EA 274 record the complaint of NIN-UR.MAH.MEŠ, queen of Beit Shemesh(?) about marauding 'Apiru (Habiru, or Hebrew).

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lady_of_the_Lions>

EA 282 is fifth of seven letters to pharaoh from Šuwardata, thought to be king of Gath.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amarna_letter_EA_282>

<http://www.reshafim.org.il/ad/egypt/a-abdu-heba2.htm>

EA 286 is second of six letters to pharaoh from Abdi-Heba, king of Jerusalem, the Jebusite stronghold, in which Abdi-Heba complains about the 'Apiru (Habiru, or Hebrew).

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amarna_letter_EA_286>

<http://www.reshafim.org.il/ad/egypt/a-abdu-heba1.htm>

EA 287 is third of six letters to pharaoh from Abdi-Heba, king of Jerusalem, in which he complains about the 'Apiru (Habiru, or Hebrew), and additionally about the Kašites and their crimes.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amarna_letter_EA_287>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kassites>

EA 289 is yet the fifth of six letters to pharaoh from Abdi-Heba, king of Jerusalem, in which he explains some of the complexity of the era’s political intrigue, which seems to extend all the way to Anatolia and the Arsawa (Arzawa?)

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amarna_letter_EA_289>

EA 323 is fourth of seven letters to pharaoh from Yidya, king of Ashkelon.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amarna_letter_EA_323>

EA 362 is one among about seventy letters to pharaoh from Rib-Haddi, king of Byblos. See EA 75.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amarna_letter_EA_362>

EA 366 is a report of the king of Gath to pharaoh about the defeat of an Habiru uprising. We could not locate a translation.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amarna_letter_EA_366>

Considered as a whole we see that the Amarna letters range all the way from trivial bartering to serious diplomatic discourse; from pathetic boot-licking, buttering-up, stroking, sucking-up to overhanded one-up-man-ship. The twenty-first century is not the originator of complisults, insults, smack, zingers, and more. In the Amarna Letters, we find mention of many of the major city-states involved with Israel over the years.

[http://web.archive.org/web/20021003080635/http://www.geocities.com/Paris/LeftBank/5210/elamarna.htm](http://web.archive.org/web/20021003080635/http%3A//www.geocities.com/Paris/LeftBank/5210/elamarna.htm)

A google search for the “identity of Suti nomads” turns up an interesting discussion in The Bibliotheca Sacra, Volume 54, July, 1897, page 428… it’s just too long to cut and paste: you will do better searching for “identity of Suti nomads” on your own. [↑](#endnote-ref-29)
30. For this reason alone, Ysrỉꜣr ≡ Jezreel, is a much better definition. [↑](#endnote-ref-30)
31. If you have been blessed or helped by any of these meditations, please repost, share, or use any of them as you wish. No rights are reserved. They are designed and intended for your free participation. They were freely received, and are freely given. No other permission is required for their use. [↑](#endnote-ref-31)