



Dr. Bryant Wood

Wood Lecture

On Sept. 23, Bryant Wood, of the Associates for Biblical Research, presented a lecture entitled “More New Evidence for Israel in Egypt,” following up an earlier lecture on this subject a few years ago. Since there was a tendency for royal public inscriptions to be propagandistic, bolstering the image of the Pharaoh, one would not expect the admission of negative events such as escaping Hebrew slaves according to Dr. Wood. Even at biblical Raamses (Qantir/Tell el-Dab‘a, excavated by Austrian archaeologist Manfred Bietak), not a single historical document has been found from the Middle Bronze - Iron Ages. Hence, evidence about the Israelites in Egypt must be circumstantial and indirect.

Some indirect evidence might include the fact that although there was only one Asiatic campaign during the Middle Kingdom (12 Dynasty, ca. 1991-1786 B.C.), nevertheless large numbers of slaves with Asiatic names appear in the records during the reign of Sesostris II (ca. 1897-1878 B.C.), at which time, according to the long chronology for the sojourn in Egypt, the Israelites were already living there. Dr. Wood suggests that these slaves might have been taken from the Israelite population. Prior to this time, the nomarchs (local governors) were a major political force, but under

Sesostris III (ca. 1878-1843 B.C.), their dominance was broken and all the power and wealth came to the Pharaoh. This might be associated with Joseph's buying all the land during the seven years of famine (Gen 47:20-26).

Archaeologically, earlier settlements at el-Dab'a, such as the Royal Settlement of Amenemhat (I), justified of Rowaty (*Rw3ty*)(12th Dynasty) and Avaris (2nd Intermediate Period), indicate a Canaanite presence based on the material culture. Dr. Wood associates a monumental tomb (F/I-p/19-no.1, Stratum d/2 of the late 12th Dynasty) with that of Joseph. While this tomb, which has a chapel and burial chamber, had no associated body, it being removed through a robber pit (Joseph's remains were taken back to Canaan, cf.

Josh 24:32), it did contain an almost twice life-size seated statue of an Asiatic dignitary with a red-painted mushroom-type hairstyle, holding a throw stick at his right shoulder. No parallels to this type of statue exist in Egypt, but a similar figure was found at Ebla, which dates to the same time period. The tomb is possibly associated with a large house, the layout of which resembles structures in the Levant. This house according to Dr. Wood, might have been the house of Joseph, the surrounding structures being smaller and unsophisticated by comparison.

Although this initial Canaanite settlement at Tell el-Dab'a (stratum d/2) is interpreted by Bietak as inhabited by the Hyksos, Dr. Wood suggests that they were Israelites and that the more affluent peo-

ple of the following stratum (d/1), as reflected in their palace complex, imported ceramics and Canaanite store jars should be connected with the Hyksos.

Although the confrontation between Moses and the Pharaoh in Exod 2-12 took place in the Delta in close proximity to the Nile River, the royal residence is usually thought to have been at Memphis. Recently, however, a large temple complex consisting of a large platform and rooms, the remains of which contained fragments of Minoan frescoes and imported Cypriot pottery, was found at Tell el-Dab'a (Area H/I) along the Pelusic branch of the Nile River, dating to the early part of the 18th Dynasty (ca. 1576-1295 B.C.). (Paul J. Ray, Jr.)

