*The relations of Egypt with Canaan in the Late Bronze Age establish the framework for development in the Iron Age.*

In this first part, we cover the time when there was no Bible, although most of the traditions the scribes of Jerusalem elaborated upon arose in this period. Like the authors of the present history, the scribes who produced what became the Torah and the Prophets sought to face the challenges of their own time. The Persian context in which the biblical scribes worked must be understood before setting out to deconstruct the biblical texts and reconstruct the history of ancient Israel. But since history is best served in a chronological sequence, we begin with an inquiry into the situation in Canaan at the end of the Bronze Age.

It is in Egyptian texts that a political entity named Israel and the divine name YHWH are first attested (Redford 1992; Figure 6). Some biblical



**Figure 6:** First record of the precursor of the name YHWH in the list of Shasu-lands of the temple of Soleb (Sudan): *t3 š3-św y-h-w3* 'Shasu-land: Yhw'. From top to bottom: ta /sha / (right to left) sw (w) / yhw3 (after Jaroš 1974, 122).

passages would appear to reflect this notion (Exod. 1:1-8; Ezek. 20:5-9; Hos. 11:1), with others claiming a different origin (Deut. 32:8-9 [LXX], 10-14; with Ezek. 16:3; Hos. 9:10). The historical background of the Exodus tradition is rooted in the Late Bronze Age (1550–1130 BCE), when Israel/Palestine was an Egyptian province called Canaan. The weakening of Egyptian influence over the region fostered the development of a number of local autonomous entities, Philistine and Canaanite city-states as well as the groups that later would coalesce into Israel and Judah (Na'aman 2011b).

### 1.1 The Egyptian Province of Canaan

The existence of Canaan as an Egyptian province lies beyond the reach of the Israelite collective memory transmitted in the biblical traditions, except for a few reminiscences such as such as the name מעין מי נפתוח *ma'yan mê neftoaḥ* "the waters of Neftoah," which is a corruption of "the source of Merenptah" in Joshua 15:9 and 18.15. The use of Canaan as the name of a son of Ham and brother of Egypt in Genesis 10:6 reflects the renewal of Egypt's influence over its old province during the seventh century BCE. Israel/Palestine had always served as a strategic northern buffer zone for Egypt: Egypt established commercial outposts in southern Palestine as early as the fourth millennium BCE (Arad), and further north on the Lebanese coast by 2600 BCE. By 2000 BCE, Egyptian influence spread east to the Golan and the Hauran (*CoS* 1.38). Deportees and migrants from Canaan inhabited northern Egypt and founded a Canaanite city-state in the eastern Nile Delta at Avaris (Bietak 1996; Oren 1997). Avaris was the centre of a Canaanite kingdom that subdued northern Egypt between 1680 and 1550 BCE, a development referred to as the "Hyksos period," between the Middle Kingdom and the New Empire; "Hyksos" is the Greek rendering of the Egyptian *ḥq3wt ḫ3'śwt*, "Rulers of the foreign lands," and from the third millennium onwards this term had designated the kinglets of Canaan rather than a particular people. In the middle of the sixteenth century BCE, Egypt expelled the Canaanites and subdued the homeland of the invaders. In the fifteenth century BCE, Pharaoh Thutmosis III campaigned as far as the Euphrates. The large fourteenth-century BCE archive recovered from the Egyptian site of Tel Amarna contains the correspondence of Canaanite kinglets with their Egyptian overlord (Moran 1996; Goren *et al.* 2004). Yearly reports were sent to the pharaoh as clay tablets which transcribed in cuneiform the Canaanized Akkadian language (Rainey 1996).

The Canaanite city-states developed in the first half of the second millennium BCE as the southern extension of Syrian culture (Ilan 1995). By the middle of the millennium, even before the advent of the Egyptian New

Empire (1550–1050 BCE), the Canaanite city-states experienced a sharp decline (Marfoe 1998, 153–216). Only Hazor and Megiddo survived as sizable cities (Herzog 1997, 164–1655); the others were but shadows of what they had been (Bunimovitz 1995). The situation in the highlands was even worse. Robber barons controlled Shechem and Jerusalem, their respective northern and southern fortified residences on the central mountain range where no other settlement existed. The Amarna letters reveal how 20 "cities" squabbled and fought each other, each "king" assuring Pharaoh of his unwavering loyalty while accusing his neighbour of rebellion (Na'aman 1996). The pharaoh considered them for what they were —village mayors— and turned a deaf ear to their bickering as long as the interests of Egypt were not threatened.

The recovery of Egypt in the sixteenth century BCE resulted in massive deportations from Syria-Palestine to Egypt (*CoS* 2.276–277, in *ANET*: 280–281), adding to the prevalent insecurity. From a population of 140,000–180,000 in the seventeenth century BCE, Israel/Palestine experienced a severe phase of depopulation, with only 30,000–45,000 people in the cities during the fifteenth century BCE.

As a whole, the Late Bronze (sixteenth to twelfth centuries BCE) was an age of decline for Canaanite culture (Finkelstein 1994). The principalities of Lab'ayu at Shechem and 'Abdiḫepa at Jerusalem disappeared from the scene after the fourteenth century BCE, not reappearing until the tenth century BCE as the tribal kingdoms of Saul and David. If "f" indicates the social and economic level in Canaan in a given century $n$, then f (fourteenth century BCE) > f (thirteenth century) > f (twelfth century); f (twelfth century) < f (eleventh century), but f (fourteenth century) = f (tenth century), which means that the downward trend was reversed in the eleventh century with a rapid expansion in the tenth century that regained the level of the fourteenth century BCE.

Small mobile groups, designated as *shasu* (*š3św*) in Egyptian texts and as *sutû* in Akkadian texts, roamed the Central Palestinian Range and the east Jordan plateau. These type 1 nomads survived on the fringe with minimal interaction with the population on the other side of the Jordan and were considered dangerous strangers by Canaanites and Egyptians alike. These *shasu* were the remnants of the local population from the hill country of the Middle Bronze Age.

With the shrinkage of the influence of the Canaanite city-states over the highlands, bands of *'apiru* (= "dusty men?") appeared. Also spelled *habiru* or *hapiru* in modern books, they were outlaws *à la* Robin Hood, raiding villages for their own gain or serving as mercenaries for whoever hired them, until they became slaves, either voluntarily or after being caught in slave-hunts. Etymologically, the term Hebrew derives from *'apiru* (Loretz 1984; against, Rainey 2007).

*Shasu* and *'apiru* shared the same geographic zones and more or less the same survival strategy (Na'aman 1982). They were considered hostile to civilized society, although there would necessarily have been symbiotic aspects in their relationship with settlements. Minimally, they constituted a ready source of slaves, without which civilized society could not develop. At the end of the thirteenth century BCE, Pharaoh Sethos I encountered a group of *shasu* named Tayru near Beth-She'an (Figure 7).

These *shasu* had joined up with the *'apiru* from the mountain of Yarmuth against loyal Asiatics of Ruhma' (*CoS* 2.4D). The stele that narrates the encounter attests to the beginning of some kind of ethnogenesis by which a group of *shasu*, who up to then had never represented an ethnonym, began to display a supra-clan social organization that entailed collaboration with a group bearing an Aramaic name, Tayru.

The Egyptians also encountered some *shasu* further south in the Arabah, where they worked copper mines at Timna. From there, the Egyptians heard about a mountain or a group whose name they transcribed as *yhw3,* which corresponds exactly to the biblical name of Israel's God YHWH (*DDD* 1: 1712–1730; *DDD* 2: 910–919). The Hebrew Bible also claims a southern origin for YHWH, from Seir (Judg. 5:4-5) or further south, from Midian in the northwestern Arabian highlands (Exod. 2:15-16; Hab. 3:7).

The *shasu* were frequently hired or forced into working in the local mines as well as marched off as slaves to Egypt; but in times of drought, they would also seek refuge in Egypt. In any of these different ways, YHWH came into contact with Egypt.

### 1.2 Merenptah: How the Israelites Came to Egypt

The empires that arose during the third millennium BCE along the Nile and between the Euphrates and the Tigris came into contact in the fifteenth century BCE through war and diplomacy. These contacts challenged the notion of empire as covering "the entire world," as the notion of empire had been conceived up until then. How can two empires coexist if both claim to rule the whole world? The question had theological repercussions and led to the formulation of the idiosyncratic religion of Pharaoh Amenophis IV/Akhenaton (1353–1336 BCE), which elevated the sun god Aton above all other gods. Aton was the sole emperor in heaven if not on earth (Redford 1984). The crisis exacerbated by Akhenaton came to a resolution of sorts at the end of the second millennium, with what is now called "implicit monotheism" emanating from the three hundred chapters of the Hymn to Amon:

All gods are three:
Amun, Re, and Ptah, and anyone like them does not exist.
He who conceals his name as Amun,
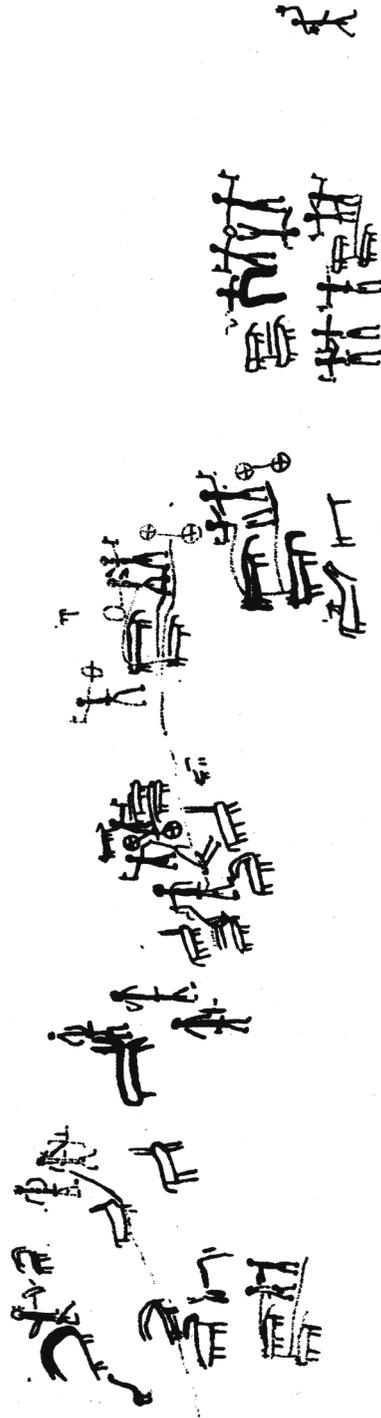he is Re in his face, and his body is Ptah.

**Figure 7:**   Rock drawing of the Egyptian army perceived by friendly Shasus (after Rothenberg 1972, fig. 38).

This type of monotheism claimed that a single divine essence was at work in every known god.

By the thirteenth century BCE, the Egyptian and Hittite empires entered into direct confrontation as they spread their influence over Syria and Lebanon. The showdown took place at Kadesh on the Orontes in 1275 BCE. Although Pharaoh Rameses II (1279–1213 BCE) claimed the victory because he personally escaped unscathed, the small print on his victory inscription reveals that a fourth of the Egyptian forces was annihilated (Lichtheim 1976, 57–72).

The international peace treaty that followed, the first of its kind, fixed the limits between the two empires slightly north of the present Israel–Lebanon border, thus turning Canaan into a frontier zone. This new configuration led the Egyptians to reinforce their rule over Canaan through the dedication of vast tracts of land to Egyptian temples, the replacement of kinglets by Egyptian governors, and the Egyptianization of the local elite (Higginbotham 2000). Rameses II also built a new city in the eastern Nile Delta known from Exodus 1:15 as Rameses.

In view of Exodus 1:15 and the mention of a tribe named Israel in Canaan during the days of Rameses' successor, Merenptah (1213–1203 BCE), older histories of Israel commonly took Rameses II as the "Pharaoh of the Exodus." Israel's 40 years in the wilderness fitted nicely within Rameses' 60-year reign. These speculations, however, fail to take into account that the Exodus Conquest Narrative in Exodus 2–Joshua 10 is not a factual report of what took place in the thirteenth century BCE but a theological construct by Judean scribes during the seventh century BCE, at the earliest. The Israelites labouring at Rameses are not a feature of a tradition from the second millennium BCE but a construct of the first millennium BCE. This is clearly established by the Hebrew forms of the names Moses and Rameses (משה *Moše*, רעמסס *Ra'messes*), which render the same Egyptian sound /s/ in different ways. Both names contain the Egyptian verb *mśy*, "to be born." Rameses means "the sun god (Ra) gave birth to him (Pharaoh)," while Moses reproduces only the "born" part, omitting the divine element (Figure 8 Rameses).

Around 1000 BCE, the sound /ś/ was rendered into Canaanite as /s/ (*samek*), so the current form of Ra-meses, rendered with two *sameks* (רעמסס), indicates its borrowing into Canaanite after 1000 BCE. By contrast, Moses became *Moshe* because the name entered Hebrew tradition before the sound shift in Canaanite which occurred around 1000 BCE (Knauf 1988a: 73–76). The different transliterations indicate that the link between Moses and Rameses II is secondary and that their combination in the story in Exodus cannot establish a date for the historical Moses. The memory of the city of Rameses survived through the writings of the Israelite and Judean scribes in the eighth and seventh centuries BCE.
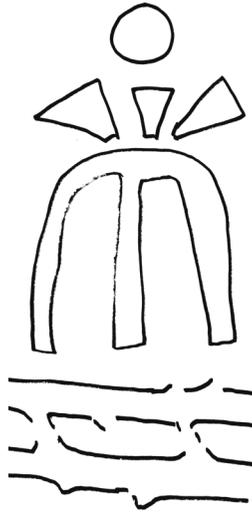
**Figure 8:**    The name Rameses on a seal from Tell Farʿa South, with the hieroglyph *Raʿ* above and *msw* below from which the Hebrew name *Moshe* is derived. Pharaonic names were believed to be endowed with power because they were formed with divine names. They were often reproduced on amulets (after *CSAPI* 3, Tell Fārʿa South #525).

As long as the *shasu* were involved with declining city-states, they did not constitute tribes, i.e. political organizations beyond the extended family. The first tribal names appear at the point when they encountered a world power, such as Egypt. Between 1213 and 1208 BCE, Merenptah defeated three rebellious Canaanite cities (Ashkelon, Gezer, and Yanoam) and a tribe named Israel (*CoS* 2.6). At that time, Israelite prisoners of war entered Egypt. By 1211 BCE, archer contingents had secured the central ridge by patrolling the roads that connected watchtowers. One station along that road was called Springs of Neftoah, likely located northwest of Jerusalem, in the vicinity of the modern suburb of Lifta. The highlands of Canaan now came under Egyptian rule, too. The subjection of the first Israel probably occurred during the Egyptian occupation of the Central Range, the military pacification of which probably began during the reign of Rameses II (Kitchen 1964, 66).

Merenptah's Israel cannot be identified as the direct precursor of the tribes of biblical Israel. In the twelfth and eleventh centuries BCE, various tribes formed in the mountains of Galilee and Samaria, where Merenptah's Israel should be sought: Naphtali, Zebulon, and Ephraim. The god of Merenptah's Israel was probably El. The title *ʼel ʼelohe yisraʼel* (ישראל אלהי אל) in Genesis 33:20 seems to be a relic of the period when Israel's god was called El rather than YHWH.

### *1.3 Sethnakht and an Exodus (1186 BCE)*

As the Nineteenth Dynasty in Egypt was dying, the Grand Vizier Bay/Beya, of Canaanite origin, tried to seize power. Beya was defeated by the founder of the Twentieth Dynasty, Sethnakht, in 1186 BCE. In the ensuing confusion, Canaanites were expelled from Egypt. These events could be the nucleus around which the Exodus tradition grew. Israelites who had been brought to Egypt as Merenptah's prisoners in 1208 BCE, or slightly earlier, had come into contact with *shasu* from Edom and thus encountered the god YHWH. Evicted after the failure of Beya's coup, the survivors settled in the northern Central Range, where Egyptian control was on the wane (1150–1130 BCE). There, they articulated the memory of their salvation as recorded in Exodus 18:1: YHWH had brought Israel out of Egypt. This slogan appealed equally to the local *shasu* and to *'apiru* who had experienced the loosening of the Egyptian grip as a liberation from Egypt, even though most of them had never seen the Nile. Others may have remembered how their ancestors had been forced to seek refuge in the highlands to escape Egyptian rule. Hence, the "Exodus" reflects the conflation of various memories of the encounter with Egyptian colonialism rather than the displacement of populations following the breakdown of the Canaanite city-states.

Other scenarios are possible, such as the flight of an Edomite *shasu* group from the mines of Timna, where they had been press-ganged. In any case, it is crucial to note that the Exodus tradition moved from Israel to Judah and not the other way round.[1] More cannot be said about the historicity of the Exodus, but it is clear that in the centuries that saw the formation of biblical Israel, various groups experienced liberation from the Egyptian yoke in more than one way and on more than one occasion. Rather than focusing on a particular event, the Exodus reflects the interaction of the populations of Israel/Palestine with Egypt from the sixteenth to the twelfth centuries BCE (Na'aman 2011b). In this sense, the Exodus tradition is the aggregation of these memories, which were updated when Israel and Judah interacted with the colonial powers of later times, Assyria and Babylon.

As indicated above, the name Moses is based on Egyptian *mśy*, which was used to form many names in Ramesside times. The Egyptian name of Beya/Bay was Ra'-mes-su-ǧa'u-em-nečeru ("Ra is born in the midst of

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1    The Exodus motive is linked to Israelite sanctuaries (1 Kgs 12:28) and prophets (Hos. 2:17 [MT 2:15]; 8:13; 9:3; 11:1; 12:9 [MT 12:10], 13[14]; 13:4); it is in Hosea that the word "Egypt" has the highest frequency of any biblical book (3.6‰ according to Accordance™). On the other hand, there is no allusion to the Exodus in Isaiah 1–39 or Micah 1–3, presumably predating the second half of the seventh century BCE (Schmid 2010, 158–159; Gillingham 1999).

the gods"). A chamberlain called Ra'messes-em-per-Re' ("Ra is born in the House of Ra") led a series of expeditions to the copper mines of Timna. His career can be followed over several decades (Schulman 1976). Both of these Egyptian officials of Canaanite origin were involved in the muster of groups from YHWH's homeland. Other Egyptian officials of Asiatic origin with a *mśy*-name may stand behind the figure of Moses, but these are the two who are attested in the documentation retrieved so far.

### *1.4 Rameses IV–VI and the End of the Egyptian Province of Canaan*

In the wake of the break-up of the Late Bronze economic and city-state systems during the thirteenth century BCE, warring and plundering bands appear in the written records and are designated as the Sea People by the Egyptians (Breasted 1906, II §307; III § 574, 587; IV §44; *ANET* 262–263). Various groups are recorded under this label. Already at Kadesh (1275 BCE) Rameses II hired the Shardana (*š3-r'-d-ï-n3*). In Libya between 1213 and 1208 BCE, Merenptah fought the Aqawash (*3-q-3-w3-š3*), Tur(u)sha (*t-w-rw-š3*), Luku (*rw-k-w*), Sikil (*š-k-rw-š3*), and Shardana. In 1175 BCE, Rameses III confronted Peleshet (Philistines, *p-w-r'-ś3-t'*), and Tjekkel (*č-3-k-k3-r'*), Danyuna (*d-3-yn-yw-n-3*), and Washash (*w3-š3-š3*). As far as can be seen, these groups originated from the periphery of the Hittite Empire. That empire came apart at the beginning of the twelfth century BCE, enabling the rise of the small Luwian kingdoms that survived until the eighth century BCE. The Sikil and Shardana may have spread west in the Mediterranean and founded colonies on the islands of Sicily and Sardinia. The names of the Aqawash, Danyuna, and Luku recall the Greek names of the Achaians, Danaeans, and Lykians.

The end of the Hittite Empire was precipitated by a major climatic change around 1200 BCE that dramatically reduced the amount of agricultural surpluses that fed the Mediterranean trade system. The sharp reduction of overseas trade rendered many cities irrelevant once the bulk of human activity had begun focusing exclusively on subsistence food production. After 1190 BCE Ugarit was deserted, soon followed by Hazor. Only the largest centres located in the most favourable surroundings of Phoenicia, the Nile Valley, and Mesopotamia survived the crisis.

As is the case with the barbarian invasions of late antiquity, the migration of the so-called Sea Peoples at the end of the Bronze Age is often understood as the arrival of new ethnic groups that overran the Hittite Empire. This view confuses the effect with the cause. It was the power vacuum following the collapse of the Empire that enabled the rise of new political entities. Hence, the *ahlamu* ("youngsters") founded "Aramean" kingdoms on the ruins of the Syro-Mesopotamian Bronze Age civilization from the eleventh century BCE onwards without large-scale migrations of exogenous groups. There were no Aramean people as such. They spoke

various dialects that were later standardized into Imperial Aramaic by the resurrected Mesopotamian empires. Neither the Arameans nor the various Sea People groups formed into ethnic units before consolidating in the territories they had acquired.

Prior to 1190 BCE, the Sea Peoples are only attested as raiders by sea and as mercenaries. In 1175 BCE, however, Pharaoh Rameses III claims to have stopped a massive invasion by sea and land by migrating Sea Peoples. The assumption of much previous scholarship was that the Pharaoh fought them off at the Nile Delta, i.e., the innermost border of Egypt. He then settled the vanquished in military colonies at Ashdod, Ashkelon, Gaza, Ekron, and Gath, where they became the biblical Philistines.

If prisoners-of-war were indeed incorporated into the Egyptian forces, they were certainly not stationed on the frontier they had recently threatened. They would have been stationed on the other side of the realm, as an inscription of Rameses II in the Great Temple of Abu Simbel indicates:

> The Good God, slaying the Nine Bows [...] who carries off the land of Nubia to the Northland (or Delta), and the Asiatics to the land of Nubia; he has placed the Shasu in the Westland, and he has settled the Libyans (*Tjehenu*) on the ridges.
>
> (Kitchen 1996, 67)

The text continues with a mention of the *shasu*, who are said to have been settled in a land the name of which is unfortunately lost. Nevertheless, on the basis of the previous lines, it is clear that vanquished people were deported far away and that the Philistine coast would have been the last place to settle the defeated Sea Peoples. Hence, the arrival of the Philistines in southern Canaan should be explained differently. Rameses did stop an invasion of Sea Peoples, somewhere in Syria, Lebanon, or Palestine, but not in the Nile Delta as was long thought. North of the Egyptian sphere of influence, these people established the kingdom of Palastin in the area encompassing Tell Ta'yinat, between modern Antakya, Aleppo, and Hamath (Hama) (Sass 2010). An 11-line Hieroglyphic Luwian inscription (Aleppo 6) is incised and almost completely preserved on the statue of the king, placed opposite the statue of the storm god of Aleppo in the temple of this god recently excavated in the Aleppo citadel (Hawkins 2009, 169).

After 1135 BCE (the demise of Megiddo VIIA), a group that split out of Palastin penetrated into southern Canaan (Ussishkin 2008). The name Palastin survived in the Luwian Aramean kingdom of Pattina-Unqi. It stands to reason that Rameses III stopped a mass migration somewhere south of Hama and restricted the Sea Peoples for the time being to central and northern Syria. Confrontations on the Nile were the work of pirates.[2]

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2    As Heather (2009) shows, mass migrations might be accompanied by raids or

It was the destruction of the Egyptian strongholds at Megiddo and Lachish around 1130 BCE and the end of Egyptian control over Canaan that allowed the rise of the Philistine Pentapolis (Ashkelon, Gaza, Ashdod, Ekron, and Gath). The Pentapolis, however, never formed a political entity. The kinglets were often at war with one another, but their dynasties ruled the area for the next five hundred years. The notion of a "Philistine land" is first attested around 800 BCE on a stele of the Assyrian king Adadnerari III. All inscriptions from Philistia between the tenth and the seventh centuries BCE are written in Canaanite, with only a few names such as אכיש *'Akish* (Anchyses) and עלית *'Olyat* Goli-ath, צקלג Ziklag, סרן *seren* (from the pre-Greek *tyrannos* employed exclusively in the Bible for Philistine rulers) and פלגש *pilegesh* "concubine" or "secondary wife" (Greek *pallax*, Latin *pellex*).

Rameses III explains how he checked an invasion of Sea Peoples in the Nile Delta:

> The foreign countries made a conspiracy in their islands. All at once the lands were removed and scattered in the fray. No land could stand before their arms [...] They were coming forward toward Egypt [...] Their confederation was the Philistines, Tjeker, Shekelesh, Denye(n), and Weshesh, lands united [...]. I organized my frontier in Djahi, prepared before them: princes, commanders of garrisons and *maryanu*. I have the river-mouths prepared like a strong wall, with warships, galleys and coasters, (fully) equipped, for they were manned completely from bow to stern with valiant warriors carrying their weapons. The troops consisted of every picked man of Egypt. They were like lions roaring upon the mountaintops. The chariotry consisted of runners, of picked men, of every good and capable chariot-warrior [...] I (Ramses III) was the valiant Montu [the War God], standing fast at their head [...]. Those who reached my frontier, their seed is not, their heart and their soul are finished forever and ever. Those who came forward together on the sea, the full flame was in front of them at the river-mouths, while a stockade of lances surrounded them on the shore. They were dragged in, enclosed, and prostrated on the beach, killed, and made into heaps from tail to head. Their ships and their goods were all fallen into the water. (Medinet Habu, ca. 1175 BCE, *ANET* 262)

There is no mention of any settlement of the surviving foes in "Philistia." To the contrary, in the summary of his northern wars, Rameses III mentions the settlement of some Sea Peoples (but not the Philistines) in Egypt itself:

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piracy, 'jump' from one relatively consolidated state to the next, and re-arrange the ethnic composition of the migrating entity with every step. Instead of one or two 'waves' of Sea people at fairly precise dates, one better assumes stages: end of the thirteenth / beginning of the twelfth century, to Cilicia with raids against Cyprus and northern Syria (Ugarit); 1175 BCE, push of the Palastu to central Syria; after 1135 BCE, further push of some Philistines to southern Canaan.

> I [Ramses III] slew the Denyen in their islands, while the Tjeker and the Philistines were made ashes. The Sherden and the Weshesh of the Sea were made nonexistent, captured altogether and brought in captivity to Egypt like the sands of the shore. I settled them in strongholds, bound in my name [...]. I assigned portions from them all with clothing and provisions from the treasuries and granaries every year. (Papyrus Harris I.76, 6–9 in *ANET* 262)

The Onomasticon of Amenope (ca. 1100 BCE) lists over 600 entities or classes of entities in the physical world. Besides the toponyms along the Nile, the cities of the Philistine coast hold a prominent position: the Land of Asqalon, the Land of Ashdod, the Land of Gaza, the Land of Asir, the Sarden people, the Land of the Teucri, and the Land of the Philistines (Gardiner 1947). "Asir" is probably western upper Galilee / southeastern Phoenicia (biblical Asher), with the "Teucri" (Cheker) occupying Dor, as mentioned in the tenth-century BCE travelogue *The Voyage of Unamūn* (Schipper 2005). The list then seems to turn south again, ending with Philistia. How the "land of the Philistines" at the end relates to the "lands" of Ashkalon, Ashdod, and Gaza at the beginning is hard to tell. Did the author distinguish between the Philistine cities and the Philistine hinterland, or is our assumption wrong that the sequence turns back from Asir, and that this "Philistia" is identical with Palastin?

Despite the weakening of Egyptian influence, southern Canaan remained in the Egyptian orbit throughout the reign of Rameses III (1184–1153 BCE). The temple of Amon in Gaza was renovated (*ANET* 260–261), and other Egyptian sanctuaries in the area received endowments. Rameses II (1279–1213 BCE) had initiated expeditions to the copper mines of Timna, and Rameses III maintained the Egyptian presence in the Arabah:

> I sent forth my messengers to the country of 'Atika, to the great copper mines that are in this place. Their galleys carried them. Others, on the land journey, were upon their asses. Their mines were found abounding in copper. It was loaded by the ten-thousands in their galleys. It was sent forward to Egypt and arrived safely. (Papyrus Harris I 78, 1–5; Schulman 1976, 124)

Egyptian mining expeditions continued in the area until the reign of Rameses V (1146–1142 BCE). By contrast, during the Amarna period (*EA* 33–37, 40), Egypt and Syria-Palestine received copper from Cyprus (*Kypros*, Copper Island), where the production and transport of copper ingots was cheaper than those smelted in the Arabah and carried by donkeys and camels to Gaza. Therefore, the exploitation of the mines at Timna and Fenan (biblical פונן *Punon* or פינון *Pinon*) was only viable when the disruption of international trade rendered Cyprian copper inaccessible.

As for the *shasu*, some were brought to Egypt as booty in the wake of Egyptian slave-hunting expeditions in the Sinai Peninsula:

> I destroyed the people of Seir, of the tribes of the Shasu; I plundered their tents of their people, their possessions, their cattle likewise, without number. They were

pinioned and brought as captives, as tribute to Egypt. I gave them to the gods, as slaves into their house(s). (Papyrus Harris I 404; Breasted 1906, 4.201)

Other *shasu* came to Egypt of their own accord during times of famine. Around 1200 BCE, an officer posted to an Egyptian border fortress recorded the entry of *shasu* tribes:

we have just let the Shasu tribes of Edom pass the Fortress of Merneptah-hetep-hermaat, LPH, of Tjeku, to the pool of Pithom of Merneptah-hetephermaat, of Tjeku, in order to revive themselves and revive their flocks from the great life force of Pharaoh, LHP, the perfect sun [...]. (Papyrus Anastasi VI 54–58; *CoS* 3.5, in *ANET* 259)

Egyptian relief operations are also mentioned in Genesis 12:10-20 and chapter 46, revealing a pattern in the relations between Egypt and Canaan in the second and first millennium. Yet, these migrants were not nomads, nor did they represent a specific group or political entity.

The last Pharaohs attested to in Canaan are Rameses IV (1153–1146 BCE), who controlled Lachish, and Rameses VI (1142–1135 BCE), who controlled Megiddo. After the destruction of Lachish Stratum VI around 1130 BCE, the site was abandoned until the establishment of a Judahite village in the ninth century (Lachish V). The ruins of Megiddo remained occupied by squatters until the mid-ninth century BCE (Megiddo VA), when Canaanite tradition revived.