

The Other Exodus: Forgotten History of the Danite Exodus from Egypt!

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Most Jews and Christians know the basic story of the Hebrew Exodus from Egypt, in which Moses took his people on a march through the Red Sea to freedom in the Promised Land. But there is another exciting and little known part of the story, telling of the Hebrew Tribe of Dan who sailed away from Egyptian bondage to the land of Greece to found the ancient Hellenic civilization. Biblical prophecies were fulfilled by them also!

In the days of the Pharaohs, we read of an adventurous hero named Danaos and his followers who dwelt in Egypt. Then came an event, or series of events now corrupted by the mists of time, which caused them to be exiled by the Egyptians. Recorded history tells us that they boarded ships in Egypt and sailed away to establish new homes in Greece.

The beginning of Greek history is often dated to this 'exile' of Danaos and his followers, called Danaoi or Danaan, from Egypt. This event has been dated by historians to about 1450 to 1493 BC. However, it is significant that the Hebrew Exodus from Egypt is dated to the very same time-period: 1447 to 1491 BC. Are these two events related? Could indeed the Danaan 'exile' from Egypt have been a part of the 'Hebrew Exodus'? An analysis of ancient records indicates that this was indeed the case.

The Hebrew Exodus

The Exodus — that wondrous event by which '... the Lord did bring the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt' (Exodus ch.12 v.51), has been called 'Israel's Independence Day' and the turning point in world history. The starting point of their journey was the city of Rameses, located about 6 miles from the present Egyptian capital of Cairo. As God's people set forth on their trek out of Egypt to the Promised Land, Pharaoh pursued with 600 chariots (see Exodus ch.14 v.7), a mighty host that must have stretched half-mile long at three abreast, plus an unknown large number of foot soldiers. Into an opening of the Red Sea they rushed! God temporarily held back the flood, creating a dry pathway long enough to allow His covenant people to escape, but Pharaoh and his army perished as the sea returned. This miraculous event is memorialized in the Song of Moses (see Exodus ch.15 vv.1-18), and sung in victory by the redeemed Overcomers in the Millennial scene of Revelation ch.15. It is therefore a type or shadow of the New Covenant victory of Christians over unbelief, sin, and evil, and contains lessons for all of us to benefit from today.

First century BC, Greek historian, Diodorus Siculus, gave collaborating evidence from the Egyptian point-of-view for the truth of the Bible's Exodus account. Of the Hebrews, he said,

'Their forefathers had been banished out of the whole of Egypt

... in order to purify the land'. The History of Antiquity p.458

There was some truth to this assertion, after Egypt had endured the horrible swarms of insects and pestilential diseases of the ten plagues!

Early Greek geographer and historian, Strabo (born 63 BC), also lent support to the Biblical account, saying,

'Moses told them and taught that the Egyptians were not right in representing the divinity as a wild or domesticated animal, nor the Libyans, nor were the Hellenes wise in giving gods the form of men. For only the One was God which surrounds us all. ... By such doctrines Moses convinced not a few men of reason, and led them to the place where Jerusalem now is'. ibid., p. 459

These 'doctrines' of Moses are known as the Ten Commandments. You can read them yourself in Exodus ch.20 & Deuteronomy ch.5.

A Second Exodus

Some historians claim that the Egyptians left no contemporary surviving accounts of the presence of Hebrews and the Exodus. The *Universal Jewish Encyclopaedia* (iv. 7) reports, however, that as early as the 15th century,

'Egyptian texts ... mention ... a foreign people called "Aporiu" residing in Egypt and performing the service of slaves'.

The encyclopaedia further states that these people are identified by many scholars as the Habiru or Hebrews. Ancient records also report that a Semitic people called Danaan were expelled from Egypt, and sailed to Greece to establish the early Greek civilization. Could the fabled Danaan be a reference to the Biblical Hebrew tribe of Dan? William Ridgeway's *Early Age of Greece* (p.220) dated the Danaan Exodus from Egypt as 1450 BC. This is virtually identical to the date of the Hebrew Exodus, which is dated as 1447 BC by Dr Stephen E. Jones and 1453 BC in Dr Adam Rutherford's *Bible Chronology* (p.120). Other historians use slightly differing dates. *The History of Etruria* (p.95) by Mrs. Hamilton Gray dates the Danaan exile at 1493 BC, which compares to a Hebrew Exodus of 1491 BC according to Bishop Usher's dating (*McClintock & Strong's Encyclopaedia* 111:396).

Two unrelated Egyptian Exoduses did not occur at the same time! Historic evidence indicates that the Danaan were the seafaring Biblical tribe of Dan and were therefore part of the Hebrew Exodus. The Bible tells us that the tribe of Dan were seafarers who stayed in their ships (see Judges ch.5 v.17). The Bible also gives much other evidence of Hebrew seafaring in ancient times, as related in my study *Ancient Hebrew Sea Migrations*.

It should be mentioned that some Christian expositors date the Exodus two centuries later, around 1225-1275 BC, trying to fit a full 400-year captivity entirely within Egypt through a misunderstanding of the Scripture record. (See *Secrets Of Time*, by Dr Stephen E. Jones for details on this issue.) Many scholars agree that this date is too late, and conflicts with the time of the Judges. In addition, Egyptian monuments during the 14th century refer to a region of western Galilee as 'Aseru', which was settled by the Hebrew tribe of Asher after the settlement of Canaan (*Jewish Encyclopaedia* 2:180). Therefore, Israel had to have already settled in Canaan by that time. The *Jewish Encyclopaedia* 5:296 also points out that,

'1 Kings ch.6 v.1 fixes the interval between the Exodus and the building of the Temple at over 480 years. Rehoboam — 41 years after the building of the Temple (1 Kings ch.14 v.25) — is contemporaneous with Shishak, the first king of the twenty-second dynasty (c.950 BC) This would give about 1470 BC for the Exodus. The finding by Flinders Petrie (1896) of an inscription by Merneptah I, in which for the first time *Isir* occurs in an Egyptian text, as well as the contents of the El-Amarna tablets, has corroborated the virtual correctness of the date given above'.

This date of 1470 BC is exactly in the middle of the narrow date range given by other scholars for both the Hebrew Exodus and the Danaan exile from Egypt.

The Semitic Danaan, the Tribe of Dan

The Semitic identity of the ancient Danaan maritime people has been commented on by historians. G.F. Schomann stated,

'Even among the ancients some considered that the [Danaan] settlers who arrived [in Greece] from Egypt were at any rate not of Egyptian descent, but adventurers of Semitic race, who, having been expelled from Egypt, had some of them turned towards Greece'. *Antiquities of Greece*, p.12

These Danaan were not only Semitic; they were Hebrews, according to ancient Egyptian records. Professor Max Duncker, in *The History Of Antiquity* (1:456-466), gave fascinating details of a twofold land/sea Exodus as told in an ancient Egyptian account.

'The narrative of Hecataeus of Abdera, who was in Egypt in the time of Ptolemy I, and wrote an Egyptian history, gives us the most unprejudiced account, composed from the widest point of view, and **connects the emigration of the Hebrews**, whom he does not consider Egyptians, **with the supposed emigration from Egypt to Greece**'.

Hecataeus says,

'Once, when a pestilence had broken out in Egypt, the cause of the visitation was generally ascribed to the anger of the gods. [Editor's Note: The Ten Plagues are called a "pestilence" in Exodus 9:14-15, and were indeed caused by God!] As many strangers dwelt in Egypt, and observed different customs in religion and sacrifice, it came to pass that the hereditary worship of the gods was being given up in Egypt. The Egyptians, therefore, were of opinion that they would obtain no alleviation of the evil unless they removed the people of foreign extraction [Note: This "removal" is the Egyptian appellation for the Exodus of Scripture.] When they were driven out, the noblest and bravest part of them, as some say, under noble and renowned leaders, Danaus and Cadmus, came to Hellas [Greece]; but the great bulk of them migrated into the land, not far removed from Egypt, which is now called Judea. These emigrants were led by Moses, who was the most distinguished among them for wisdom and bravery'.

Hecataeus of Abdera was an historian living in fourth century BC Egypt under Ptolemy I, a general of Alexander the Great. In the extract above, this ancient historian clearly connected both the Hebrews and the Danaan as part of the same Exodus. Therefore, the Danaan were in fact the Biblical tribe of Dan — a seafaring tribe and part of the Hebrew Exodus.

Another marvellous account, although also spoken with a decidedly Egyptian bias, is that of Lysimachus of Alexandria (355-281 BC), whose history was preserved by Flavius Josephus in *Contra Apionem* (ibid., p. 463),

'At the time of king Bocchoris [possibly the Greek name for the Pharaoh of the Exodus], unclean and leprous men had come into the temples to beg for food. Hence there was a blight on the land; and Bocchoris received a response from Ammon [an Egyptian god], that the temples must be purified. The lepers, as if the sun were angry at their existence, were to be plunged into the sea, and the unclean were to be driven out of the land. Hence the lepers were ... thrown into the sea; but the unclean were driven out helpless into the desert. These met together in council; in the night they lit fires and lights, and called, fasting, upon the gods to save them. Then a certain Moses advised them to go through the desert till they came to inhabited regions

... they established a city Hierosyla [Jerusalem] in Judea ...'.

This ancient historic document provides evidence that the Exodus involved two distinct groups with different destinations. Some of the Hebrews expelled from Egypt in the Exodus were 'thrown into the sea' and

sailed north across the Mediterranean to found the earliest civilization in Greece, while Moses led the rest of Israel eastward 'helpless into the desert' of the Wilderness.

The Exile from Egypt

What happened to cause Danaus and his followers to be expelled from Egypt? The reason handed down from the mists of time has obvious corruption to it. The Egyptian accounts refer to two brothers, Danaus and Aegyptus. Danaus was said to have 50 sons, who each married one of the 50 daughters of Aegyptus. According to the legend, each of the daughters then slew their husbands on their wedding night. (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 11th ed., 7:793) Aegyptus was also said to have 'driven out' Danaus from Egypt. Danaus therefore designates some people who had dwelled in Egypt, and Aegyptus seems to indicate a personification of the land of Egypt itself. This strange and contorted legend, if rooted on an actual historic event, seems to indicate that some form of mass slaughter had occurred. It is far more likely that we have here evidence of the tenth plague on Egypt, the slaughter of the firstborn. This event was indeed the decisive event that caused Pharaoh to order the Hebrews to leave the land of Egypt (Exodus ch.12 vv.29-33).

The waterway systems of ancient Egypt played an important part, since the Danaan went into exile on seagoing ships. The modern Suez Canal, linking the Red Sea northward to the Mediterranean, had not yet been built. Instead, a series of canals and waterways linked the Nile River eastward to the Red Sea. The *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, in an article on the Suez Canal, states,

'And so it is that the earliest canals of which history has mention were constructed **to link the Nile valley to the Red Sea** and not to pierce the narrow neck of land which separated the latter from the Mediterranean ... As early as 2000 BC, **a canal** linked the Pelusiac branch of the Nile, via the Wadi Tumilat, with the Bitter Lakes, whence another channel was dug to the Red Sea'.

Historian Alexander Wheelock Thayer, in *The Hebrews In Egypt And Their Exodus* (pp. 93-94), presents evidence that on the night the Exodus began, Moses had a Hebrew force seize the boats on the Nile as well as those on the canal leading to the Red Sea. Thayer says,

'This may reasonably have been, to seize all the shipping and boats on the canal and Jam Suph about Pithom, to hasten ... the business of crossing the Red Sea'.

Thayer assumes that Moses would have been unaware that God would open a footpath through the Red Sea, and originally planned to cross by boat. It also assumes that Moses planned to patiently ferry, presumably in many hundreds of trips, all of the hundreds of thousands of people, animals, and belongings of Israel across the Red Sea while fleeing Egyptian pursuit! This would have been impractical, since,

'... the total number of Israelites [were] probably about two millions. This number is accepted by the best critics'.
Biblical Encyclopaedia by Gray and Adams 1:191

For whatever reason, a Red Sea crossing by boat was never attempted, for the Bible does not record the presence of any boats as the Israelites approached the Sea. Therefore, if Egyptian boats were seized for the Exodus, a different plan was in place. The boats were apparently used instead by the Danite sailors as vehicles to escape from Egypt. The Exodus was most probably two-pronged. It was an escape by both land and sea from the land of Pharaoh!

Danite Migrations to Europe

Whether it was their original intention or not, the Danaan sailed their ships north to the secluded bay of Argos in the Greek Peloponnesus. The *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (5:1257) quotes a leading Israeli archaeologist, Y. Yadin, who states,

'... there is a close relationship between the tribe of Dan and the tribe of Danaoi whose members were clearly seafarers'.

This encyclopaedia also tells us (5:1255),

'... the name Dan should be regarded as a short form of Dan(ann)iel or the like'.

Again the connection with the Greek Danaan is unmistakable. Dr Robert Latham, one of the most respected 19th century authorities, firmly stated that the Danaan of Greece were the Israelite Tribe of Dan. In his *Ethnology of Europe* (p. 137), Latham commented,

'Neither do I think that the eponymus [i.e., founder] of the Argive [Greek] Danai was other than that of the Israelite tribe of Dan; only we are so used to confine ourselves to the soil of Palestine in our consideration of the history of the Israelites, that we ... ignore the share they may have taken in the ordinary history of the world'.

Archaeologist Dr Cyrus Gordon, in his book, *Before Columbus* (p.108), states that they later sailed from Greece to other European coast lands, including Ireland and Denmark. Gordon relates,

'A group of Sea People bore the name of "Dan". The Bible tells how a segment of the seafaring Danites [were part of] the tribal system of ancient Israel (Judges ch.5 v.17) ... The Danites were widespread. Cyprus was called "Ia-Dnan" "The Island of Dan(an)". The same people were called Danuna, and under this name they appear as rulers of the Plain of Adana in Cilicia.

Greek tradition has their eponymous ancestor, Danaos (Dan), migrating from the Nile delta to Greece...'. Note that the Hebrews did indeed migrate from Egypt. Cyrus Gordon added (p. 111),

'Virgil also designated the Greeks as "Danai". Bold scholars see the influence of the Danites in Irish folk lore ... and in the name of Danmark (Denmark): the land of Dan ...'.

There is indeed strong evidence that the Danaan of Ireland, Cornwall and Scotland, the Danaan of Greece and Italy, as well as the Danes of Denmark, were Israelites of the tribe of Dan. The similarity of name would itself seem conclusive; but is there other evidence that these two groups of Danaan were related? Dr H.R. Hall, in *The Civilization of Greece in the Bronze Age* (p.288), stated concerning the Greeks of the age of Homer,

'Athenian funerary lekythoi [painted vases] give us coppery-red or brown hair side by side with dark-brown or black, and generally fair complexions, resembling a certain Irish Celtic type'.

Keating's *History of Ireland* says (p.40),

'The Danaans were a people of great learning, they had overmuch gold and silver ... they left Greece after a battle with the Assyrians, and for fear of falling into the hands of the Assyrians came to Norway and Denmark and thence passed over to Ireland'.

These Danaan colonists did indeed settle in Denmark, which name means, "Dan's Mark" or "Dan's Land". In ancient times, Denmark was settled by a tribe called the "Dani", according to early Roman historian, Procopius (fifth century, AD), who recorded that the Dani were a group of tribes inhabiting the Danish peninsula (vi.xv. 1-6). That these were part of the Hebrew tribe of Dan may be seen in the fact mentioned previously that Biblical Dan was called, "Dani-el or Dananiel", a variation of "Dani" or "Danaan".

Our Exodus from Unbelief to Christ

It is remarkable that the Apostle Paul mentions the Exodus, Red Sea crossing, and trek through the Wilderness saying,

'Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were **under the cloud**, and all passed **through the [Red] Sea**; And were all **baptised** unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea ... Now all these things happened unto

them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come'.
1 Cor.10 vv.1-2 & 11

The ancient history of Israel's Exodus from Egypt and baptism in the Red Sea is an example for our admonition, or instruction, today. It has first, a Spiritual connotation assuring that all who accept the Gospel of Christ receive the promise of eternal life. But in an historical sense, many of the descendants of the people of the Exodus later accepted the Gospel in Europe and became known as Christendom, or Christ's Kingdom on earth. It was largely through the witness of these transplanted Israelites in subsequent centuries that the knowledge of salvation has gone forth into the whole earth (Isaiah ch.49 v.6). Through the continuing efforts of that Servant People, as well as others who also Spiritually come to Him in faith, may that prophesied time come when,

'... the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea'. Isaiah ch.11 v.9