

**THE EXODUS - HISTORICAL REALITY OR BIBLICAL STORY?****Petru Pavăl, PhD Student, "Al. Ioan Cuza" University of Iași**

*Abstract: The episod of Exodus is the reference point of the birth of Israel as a people. Everything that exists in Israel is related to the event of Exodus from Egypt. God identifies Himself as the One who brought Israel out of Egypt: „I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage (Exo 20, 2)”.*

*Unlike other peoples of antiquity - Sumerians, Akkadians, Babylonians - the people of Israel were not an ethnic unit, having their own city or a particular culture, until the Exodus. Unification, or better said, their birth as a nation, became for them the visible sign of God's promise given to Abraham: „And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing (Gen 12, 2)”.*

*Given the centrality of the Exodus in the history of Israel, it is not surprising that many archaeologists and scholars have tried to confirm the historical authenticity of this episode. Moreover, they wondered whether there was a historic exodus of Israel. This question underlies the writing of this article, given that, the Exodus represents the basis of Israel's identity and faith in God.*

*Keywords: Exodus, birth of Israel, chosen people, archaeological discoveries, God's promise.*

**Introduction**

It is common, almost universal, for an ethnic, political or religious group to hold a myth or a story that underpins their formation as a people or religious community.<sup>1</sup> In such manner it can be seen the birth of the Hebrew people, which enters the history through an event that defies the laws of nature: The Exodus.

Given the fabulousness that surrounds the biblical episode of Exodus, where are presented the plagues that afflict Egypt and the passing through the Red Sea, one conclusion can be reached: the event presented by the Bible is just a simple story. However, considering that all these things do not happen naturally and they represent the act of God in the name of Israel, a question arises: is this episod somehow a historical reality?

All these elements formed the intrigue that led to numerous biblical and historical studies, designed to confirm or refute the historical authenticity of the Exodus.

Thus, J Maxwell Miller and John Hayes believe that the idea of the twelve brothers who came to Egypt and after four century excaped twelve tribes is “an artificial theological influence that marked this literary construction”<sup>2</sup>. The two argue their claim by integrating The Exodus into a popular tradition where historical criticism can not penetrate.<sup>3</sup>

Apparently, the two seem to be right in terms of the relationship between historical criticism and popular tradition, but Ronald Hendel comes with a different approach. He believes that history can explore the popular tradition, in relation to the collective memories

<sup>1</sup> Niels Peter Lemche, *The Israelites in History and Tradition*, Westminster Jonh Knox Press, Louisville, Kentucky, 1998, p. 88.

<sup>2</sup> J. Maxwell Miller and John H. Hayes, *A History of Ancient Israel and Judah*, Philadelphia, Westminster, 1986, p. 78.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

of a culture.<sup>4</sup> These memories are made of historical facts combined with authentic details found in archaeological discoveries, with the addition of popular elements, ideologies and myths.<sup>5</sup>

From Hendel's statement we understand that the historical truth about The Exodus of Israel is somewhere inbetween. Gary A. Rendsburg has the same view, saying that there are sufficient archaeological evidence to suport the exodus reality, but, on the other hand, he believes that the Bible idealizes the history of Israel.<sup>6</sup>

### **The Exodus in the Accounts of Pagan<sup>7</sup> Writers**

The exodus theme was also a topic addressed in pagan literature, especially during the last three centuries BC, without giving it some special attention, but only tangentially in the context of Egypt history. These references support the archaeological discoveries, confirming the historical reality of the biblical event.

Signes in regard to the departure of Jews from Egypt appear in *Aegyptiaca*, the work of Hecateus of Abdera. The pagan writer, who lived in the time of Alexander the Great and Ptolemy I, made a presentation of the culture, history and political and religious organization of Ancient Egypt, highlighting the oldest story about the origin of the Jews in Greek literature.<sup>8</sup>

The fragment which speaks about the exodus episode recalls a plague that swept through Egypt, which was seen as a manifestation of divine wrath. The reason for the divinity to curse the Earth by a plague was placed on the account of the sacrifices and rituals of diferent foreign peoples that opposed Egyptians' worship and religion. To tame the divine wrath, it was decided that all the foreigners had to be expelled from Egypt. Hecateus identified in this context two groups: one that went to Greece and other regions, driven by Danaus and Cadmus, and the other group, representing the Jewish community, which was led by Moses in the place called Judea.<sup>9</sup>

The reason invoked by Hecateus is distinct from the reason found in the Bible, but the big picture seen by Hecateus regarding the exodus supports the authenticity of the biblical exodus, where he admits that a group of Jewish people departed from Egypt and settled in Judea. At the same time, Hecateus identifies some particular elements of the chosen people, such as: the division of the people in twelve tribes, ascribed to Moses, and the Jewish religion which is monotheist in contrast with the anthropomorphic polytheism of the Egyptians. In his account, the pagan writer refers also to a biblical source, saying that the law was given to the Jews by Moses, after speaking to God<sup>10</sup>: „These are the words of the covenant, which the

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<sup>4</sup>Ronald Hendel, „The Exodus in biblical memory”, in *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 2001, vol. 120, nr.4, p. 602.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> Gary A. Rendsburg, „The date of the Exodus and the conquest/settlement: the case for the 1100S”, in *Vetus Testamentum*, vol XLII, no. 4/1992, p. 512.

<sup>7</sup> Hecateus of Abdera, Manetho and Strabo of Amasia.

<sup>8</sup> Menahem Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism*, vol. I, The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, Jerusalem, 1976, p. 20.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, p. 21.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid*, p. 22.

LORD commanded Moses to make with the children of Israel in the land of Moab, beside the covenant which he made with them in Horeb” (Deuteronomus 29:1 ).

Another version of the exodus episode is outlined by Manetho, an Egyptian priest who lived in the first half of the third century BC. Unlike Hecateus, who is not showing a negative position towards Hebrews in his account, offering an objective exposition of the exodus event, Manetho presents the episode in a way that has earned him the title of the first anti-Semitic pagan.<sup>11</sup>

He is the author of the *Aegyptiaca*, written in Greek, addressed to Ptolemy II Philadelphus. In his work he speaks about the political and religious history of his native country, from the beginning of the kingdom until the Hellenistic period.<sup>12</sup>

Some of his texts had been taken over by Josephus Flavius, in his work *Against Apionem*. The fragments the Jewish writer refers to describe two outstanding moments in the history of the Egypt which are linked to the Hebrew people.

The first recalls the period in which the Egyptians were led by the Hyksos. This people who came from the East and conquered Egypt, burning cities and temples of the gods, is supposed to have an uncertain origin, according to Manetho. Following the conquest of Egypt, the Hyksos people chose Salitis as their king, settling in Memphis and then on the Bubastites riverside in Avaris. After five hundred and eleven years in which these „shepherd kings”<sup>13</sup> ruled Egypt, they were expelled from the country by the Egyptian king Misphegmutosis.<sup>14</sup>

The historical event was recorded like the exodus of Hyksos people who passed the desert and went to Syria. Due to the powerful Assyrian Empire, they retreated to Judea, building a fortress which was named Jerusalem.<sup>15</sup>

Although Manetho doesn't directly identify the Hebrew with Hyksos people, he still manages to build a bridge between these two peoples, in that the Hyksos migration in Judea and building Jerusalem is a parallel event to the migration and establishment of the Jews in Jerusalem.<sup>16</sup>

The second version that argues with biblical Exodus from Egypt puts in the spotlight king Amenophis, who wanted to receive a vision from the gods. To determine the deities to fulfill his desire, Amenophis was advised by a person with the same name, Amenophis, son of Paapios, to remove the lepers and vicious people from the country.<sup>17</sup> In this sense, the king gathered a number of eighty thousand men, and sent them in the stone quarries near Nile. He subsequently agreed that the unclean could settle in the former city of Hyksos people, Avaris. Here, a former priest of Heliopolis named Osarship, identified by Manetho with Moses, became their leader. He urged the community to abandon the worship of the gods and sacrifice animals that were considered by the Egyptian law to be holy. Following his reform, Osarship took steps to strengthen Avaris, preparing for the war against Amenophis. Supporting the lepers and impure people, Osarship called the Hyksos from Jerusalem to fight

<sup>11</sup>Erich S. Gruen, “The Use and abuse of the Exodus Story” in *Jewish History*, vol. 12, no. 1/1998, p. 102.

<sup>12</sup>Josephus Flavius, *Contra Iulium Apionem*, Ed. Hasefer, București, 2002, p. 85.

<sup>13</sup>Manetho translates the term “hyksos” with “shepherd kings”.

<sup>14</sup>Josephus Flavius, *Contra Iulium Apionem*, p. 87.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid*, p. 88.

<sup>16</sup>Menahem Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors ...*, p. 63.

<sup>17</sup>Josephus Flavius, *Contra Iulium Apionem*, p. 110.

against Egypt. He received the military support and king Amenophis was determined to withdraw, going to Ethiopia and leaving the country in the hands of the people of Avaris. Manetho's account ends with the return of Amenophis, who drives out the unclean from Egypt, following them through the desert up to the borders of Syria.<sup>18</sup>

Regarding this episode Josephus Flavius believes that the Egyptian priest Manetho invented much of this story, including the name of king Amenophis. For Josephus, the first version of Manetho's story is credible, considering that Hyksos people is actually the Hebrew people, who came out of Egypt and settled in Judea.<sup>19</sup>

Although the two versions are in contrast in terms of the context and details of the biblical exodus, by reporting the migration of a people out of Egypt whether they were the Hyksos people or the unclean from Avaris, it confirms the existence of an historical exodus from Egypt.

The uncertainty hanging over the reality of the biblical exodus seems to dissipate gradually, fact supported by Strabo of Amasia, researcher, historian and geographer of Pontus, who had been composing most of his work in the time of Caesar Augustus (64-20 BC)<sup>20</sup>

His main work, *Geography*, which presents a series of drawings of places and peoples that capture the social and religious life of these areas, contains the most important description of the Jewish land.<sup>21</sup> In this segment of the historical and geographical treaty, Strabo describes the Jewish exodus, highlighting its central figure: Moses.

For the Greek geographer, the origin of the Hebrew people must be searched in Egypt. In Strabo's view, Moses was an Egyptian priest who became unsatisfied about how his people related to the divinity, rejecting the anthropomorphic representations of the gods. In response to the Egyptian cult, Moses proclaimed a God who cannot be circumscribed by forms and images made by humans. His message was received by a representative number of people, who left Egypt with Moses and settled in Judea. Here it was born the monotheist religion where the God of Moses could be worshiped away from pagan deities of Egypt.<sup>22</sup>

In short, these are the ideas visible in the image of exodus made by Strabo. The episode which presents significant differences in relation with the biblical event of the Jewish Exodus contains a total opposite approach from the previous versions, because it places at the basis of the exodus a purely religious reason. Moses, together with the group that followed him in Judea, were not expelled and they did not flee because of political or social reasons, but they left Egypt for purely religious beliefs. The reason invoked by Strabo causes the exodus presented in the *Geography* treaty to be the closest to the biblical exodus, alluding to God's involvement in the action of Jews liberation from Egypt.

The accounts of pagan writers, though different, highlight a historical truth: the Jewish presence in Egypt. Their settlement in Judea is another historical evidence discovered in the mentioned works. This two realities are the framing points of the birth and development of the Hebrew people as a nation. On the time axis that starts in Egypt and ends in Judea, the exodus

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*, p. 111.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*, p. 112.

<sup>20</sup> Erich S. Gruen, "The Use and abuse of the Exodus Story", p. 95.

<sup>21</sup> Menahem Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors ...*, p. 261.

<sup>22</sup> Erich S. Gruen, "The Use and abuse of the Exodus Story", p. 95.

of the Jews is their birth as a nation, existent fact in each of the three stories of the pagan writers. The historical observations that were made support the authenticity of the biblical exodus, because the Jewish presence in Egypt, the migration and their settlement in Judea and Jerusalem are the pillars on which were built both the pagan writers versions and the biblical version of Exodus, where the central character is Moses.

### What is the Biblical Exodus Date?

To determine whether or not The Exodus may be a historical reality it is needed to anchor the episod exposed by the Bible in time. Concerning this problem, there were launched two theories which place the exiting moment of the Jewish people from Egypt in the fifteenth century BC, and thirteenth century BC.

Based on the archaeological evidence found at Diber, Bethel and Lachish, William F. Albright formulated the theory of exodus and the chosen people conquest of the Holly land, in thirteenth century BC.<sup>23</sup> In all three sites there were discovered layers of earth that contained traces of violent destruction belonging to the end of the Bronze Age. After the destruction of these cities followed the Iron Age culture, much poorer than the previous one, that Albright identified as being of Hebrew origin.<sup>24</sup>

In the same direction goes James K. Hoffmeier, quoting from Exodus 1:1 “Therefore they did set over them taskmasters to afflict them with their burdens. And they built for Pharaoh treasure cities, Pithom and Raamses”. Based on this biblical evidence, Hoffmeier claims that the city of Raamses is no other then the city of Pi-Raamses (The house of Raamses), the city build by Raamses II from the nineteenth dynasty (1279-1212.)<sup>25</sup> According to this observation, James Hoffmeier argues that the exodus took place in the thirteenth century, in the time of Raamses II.

The thirteenth century theory is highlighted by a very important archaeological discovery. It is the Merneptah Stele, discovered by Sir. W.M.F. Petrie in 1896.<sup>26</sup> He believes that the monument dated around 1207 was engraved a few years after the Exodus.<sup>27</sup>

The document mentions Israel, which appears briefly in a row, in the context of the pharaoh Merneptah story about his military campaign in Canaan: “Israel is abandoned, but its seed is not”<sup>28</sup>. The discovery is the oldest testimony of Israel as a collective entity. Geographical interpretations placed the Israel from the Merneptah Stele in Canaan as a distinct community, receiving the name “proto-Israel”<sup>29</sup>. Regarding the name *Israel*, most

<sup>23</sup> Bryant G. Wood, “The rise and the fall of the 13th - century exodus-conquest theory ” in *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, vol. XLVIII, no. 3/2005, p. 475.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*, p. 476.

<sup>25</sup> James K. Hoffmeier, “What is the biblical date for the exodus?” in *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, vol L, no. 2/2007, p. 227.

<sup>26</sup> Michael G. Hasel, “Israel in the Merneptah Stela”, in *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, no. 296, 1994, p. 46.

<sup>27</sup> Sir. W.M.F. Petrie *Six Temples at Thebes*, apud James K. Hoffmeier, “What is the biblical date for the exodus?”, p. 233.

<sup>28</sup> Michael G. Hasel, “Israel in the Merneptah Stela”, p. 46.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid*, p. 47.



archaeologists<sup>30</sup> agree that it has a kinship with the biblical Israel. This observation is based on the text of the Stele and on the archaeological evidence of Merneptah campaign in Gezer.<sup>31</sup>



Figure 1. Merneptah Stele

The inscription referring to Israel contains an element that can provide additional data on the socio-ethnic entity in the land of Canaan. This evidence is the term *pṛt* which was given two interpretations keys. Starting from the basic meaning, the root *pṛt* can mean “seed” or “fruits of the field”<sup>32</sup>. By using it with this meaning, it explains the plow in hieroglyphic writing alongside the word *pṛt*. An extrapolated sense of the term *pṛt* is “survivor” or “descendent”. However, the text displayed in the Merneptah Stele doesn’t support the interpretation of the *pṛt* root as referring to the descendent, but rather to the grain.

Given the meaning of seed to the *pṛt* root, we can see that Israel designated a type of population concerned with agriculture, which shows that the people was not a nomadic community, but a group which settled in a territory becoming master upon it. Therefore, the Merneptah Stele supports the thirteen century theory, testifying the existence of Israel in the land of Canaan as a collective sedentary entity.

For Bryant G. Wood, Albright’s theory isn’t plausible. He proposes that the Exodus period is the fifteenth century BC. Citing the text from I Kings 6:1 “And it came to pass in the four hundred and eightieth year after the children of Israel were come out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon’s reign over Israel, in the month Zif, which is the second month, that he began to build the house of the LORD”, Bryant Wood considers that the Exodus date supported by the Bible is the year 1446 BC, date that starts from the building of the temple (965- 967 BC) plus four hundred and eighty years.<sup>33</sup> He supports his theory on the basis of the Amarna letters<sup>34</sup>, which show the Canaanite king of Jerusalem Abdu-Heba desperately asking the help of the pharaoh against those whom he called “apiru”, episode dated at the beginning of the fourteenth century BC. In this context, Wood identifies the “apiru” with the Hebrew people, justifying his theory.<sup>35</sup>

About a late date of the Exodus also writes Josephus Flavius, in his work *Against Apionem*. Taking data from Manetho’s *Aegyptiaca*, Josephus identified the Hyksos people with the Hebrews, translating the name “hyksos” not with “sheperd kings” like Manetho, but with „captive shepherds”<sup>36</sup>. Based on this observation, Josephus concluded that those “captive

<sup>30</sup> R. Albertz 1987, G. W. Ahlström 1986, Lemche 1988 Rendsburg 1992, apud *Ibid*.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid*, p. 52.

<sup>33</sup> Bryant G. Wood, “The biblical date for exodus is 1446 B.C.: A response to James Hoffmeier”, in *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, vol. 50, no. 2/2007, p.250.

<sup>34</sup> *The Amarna Letters* Ea, No. 286, in *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, James B. Pritchard, Third Edition, Princeton University Press, New Jersey 1969, p. 487.

<sup>35</sup> Idem, “The rise and the fall of the 13th – centruy exodus...”, p. 489.

<sup>36</sup> Josephus Flavius, *Contra lui Apion*, p. 87.

shepherds” are actually the chosen people ancestors. The analogy enabled him to make a link between the expulsion of the Hyksos and the Jewish Exodus from Egypt, setting biblical Exodus date around 1648 BC.<sup>37</sup>

A more recent dating than that of Josephus, namely the fifteenth century BC, which supports Wood’s theory, is provided by an archaeological document, printed on a granite plate drawn from a statue. It is the board number 21687 located in the History Museum in Berlin.<sup>38</sup> The archaeological evidence had been dated by Manfred Görg and Raphael Giveon



Figure 2. The Plate no. 21687 from History Museum of Berlin

in the time of eighteenth Egyptian dynasty (1550-1298 BC).<sup>39</sup> The dating of the granite piece was made considering the hieroglyphic writing type, given that this writing mode has changed over time. Judging by this principle, Raphael Giveon, an Israelite Egyptologist, dated the inscription around 1400 BC, suggesting that Israel’s exodus took place in mid fifteenth century, during the reign of Amenhotep II.<sup>40</sup>

The archaeological document brings into focus the names of three persons. The first one, which is in the left side, was translated by Aschelon, and the name in the center by Canaan, the form of the name being attested far back to the eighteenth dynasty.<sup>41</sup>

Regarding the decryption of the third name there were some problems caused by the absence of a fragment in the granite plate. In this sense, it was tried a reconstruction of the text and according to it, the name would be translated as Israel. Manfred Görg believes that the reconstructed name can be connected with Israel, because the toponim in question appears with Aschelon and Canaan, fact that was observed also in the Merneptah Stele.<sup>42</sup> The importance of this discovery lies in the fact that it shows the presence of the Hebrews in Canaan, somewhere in the middle of the second milenium BC, which would support the

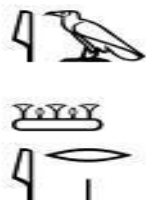


Figure 3 The reconstruction of the hieroglyph that contain the name Israel

Exodus theory of the fifteenth century BC.

Another issue highlighted by the archaeologist Yohanan Aharoni, which also places the Exodus within the same period, is that the Old Testament Scripture describes the cities from the land of Canaan as being well fortified, a real fact belonging to the middle Bronze Age.<sup>43</sup> This situation was completely different from the end of the Bronze Age, where the Canaanite cities were weakly fortified, contrary to biblicaly descriptions.<sup>44</sup> Therefore, Yohanan Aharoni excludes placing of the Exodus in the thirteenth century, because the information provided by the Bible doesn’t match the reality of that period.

<sup>37</sup> Barbara Sivertsen, *The Parting of the Sea*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 2009, p.5.

<sup>38</sup> Peter van der Veen, “Israel in Canaan (long) before Pharaoh Merneptah? A fresh look at Berlin statue Pedestral Relief 21687”, in *Journal of Ancient Egyptian Interconnections*, vol. 2, no. 4/2010 p. 15.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> Hershel Shanks, “When did Ancient Israel begin?” in *Ancient Israel in Egypt and the Exodus*, Susan Ladenm, Biblical Archeology Society, Washington, 2012, p. 36.

<sup>41</sup> Peter van der Veen, “Israel in Canaan (long) before Pharaoh Merneptah?”, p. 16.

<sup>42</sup> Manfred Görg, “Israel in Hieroglyphen”, *Biblische Notizen*, vol. 106/2001, apud *Ibid*, p. 19.

<sup>43</sup> Yohanan Aharoni, “Nothing Early and Nothing Late: Rewriting Israel’s Conquest”, apud Peter van der Veen, “Israel in Canaan (long) before Pharaoh Merneptah?”, p. 20.

<sup>44</sup>Rivka Gonen, “Urban Canaan in the Late Bronze Period,” apud *Ibid*.

The numerous historical and geographical evidences combined with biblical information determined the Israel's exodus from Egypt to be a historical reality, but the fact that these evidences come from different periods made impossible to establish an accurate date of the Exodus. The problem in determining the real date comes from the fact that the Bible doesn't give us many details about the event, such as the name of the pharaoh. Apart from a small reference to Israel's fear of going on the coastal road (Exodus 13:17) the Bible is very poor in offering other notes regarding this event.

This lack of details is due to the fact that the Bible isn't a history book. It presented the exodus event as a national story, which includes both historical facts and popular traditions, referring to the unity of the chosen people and its relationship with God.

The authenticity of the biblical event is provided also by God's involvement, Who is present in history because He reveals Himself in a particular space and time period.<sup>45</sup> While the Hebrew people lived in Egypt, the knowledge about their ancestors' God was lost, fact that determined the divinity to reveal again through Moses and through the nature's wonders that preceded the exodus from Egypt. In this way, God has not only made Himself known by the Hebrews in Egypt, but causes the religious feeling towards Him to revive in the heart of His people.<sup>46</sup>

In this way, the biblical exodus is a call that God addresses to the Hebrew people found in Egypt. The nation is invited to become the son of God (Exodus 4:22), restoring the personal relationship that God had with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Through this relationship, which is established in the act of the Exodus, the consciousness of the Hebrew people as a separate entity is awakened. Therefore, James Muilenburg considers that the beginning of the chosen people should not be ethnically, culturally, mythologically and geographically explained, since the birth of this nation belongs to the divine action that intervenes in the history.<sup>47</sup>

## Conclusion

The biblical Exodus should be seen, first of all, as a sign of God's love and a promise of salvation that will remain valid in the future. Thus, if God brought out the Hebrew from Egypt, He will save them on other occasions as well, fact that transforms the Exodus in a paradigm of how God will react in favor of his people.

At the same time, the recognition of biblical Exodus as a historical reality is very important because on this foundation is built the relationship between Israel and God. The denial of the Exodus authenticity would lead to the transformation of the Exodus into a myth, threatening the faith of the chosen people and the Person of God.

According to these observations, it appears that the Exodus is not a literary fiction nor a purely historical account, such the chronicles of the Ancient Near Eastern peoples state. It

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<sup>45</sup>C.F.D. Moule, "Revelation" in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. 4, G. A. Buttrick, Abingdon Press, New York, 1962, p. 55.

<sup>46</sup> Reist W. Irwin, "The Theological Significance of the Exodus" in *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, vol. 12, nr. 4/1969, p.224.

<sup>47</sup> James Muilenburg, *The Way of Israel*, apud *Ibid*, p. 227.



represents the strong expression of a historical fact commemoration, in a world of constant change, expression meant to become a stability factor of the chosen people.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Israel Finkelstein and Neil Asher Silberman, *The Bible Unearthed*, Touchstone, New York, 2002, p. 70.