

## The Pharaoh of Moses

Having recently returned from Egypt (only \$300 round-trip from where I am in South West Asia), I was wondering why no one said that this Pharaoh is the Pharaoh of the Exodus. The reason is very simple. First, Moses who is attributed with the “authorship” of the book of Exodus does not tell us. The information given in terms to how many years from other events in history makes the Pharaoh any of these: Ahmose I, Amenhotep I, II or III, Tuthmosis I, II, III or IV, Hatsheput (female), Akhenaton, Smenkhkare, Tutankhamun (Tut), Ay, Horemheb, Ramses I or II (the Great), Seti I or Merneptah and any year from 1565 to 1202 B.C. So literally, you can pick one and you will find Biblical and Archeological evidence to back up your choice.

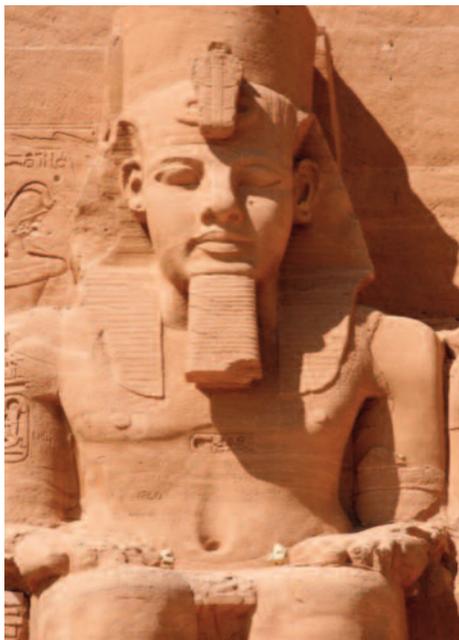
In popular culture, Rameses II is a popular candidate, especially for the movies. On a personal note, I like this choice in that he was 5 feet 7 inches based upon calculations on his mummy and so am I. As a young man he had bright red hair based upon his DNA, as did I. As he aged it turned to auburn as did mine. Based upon his mummy when he died he had white hair. (I am on my way). He also, despite the wonderful statues of him, had a large nose.

Clement of Alexandria dates the Exodus to the time of Ahmose (1570-1546 B.C.) as does Hippolytus. Eusebius dates it around 1320 putting it in the reign of Horemheb. There is one Pharaoh whose name was removed from monuments after his death and every attempt to remove him from history was carried on by his son and future Pharaohs. Stephen Gabriel Rosenberg, a Senior Fellow at the Albright Institute of Archaeological Research in Jerusalem, puts forth another contender which is an interesting choice.

The Book of Exodus says that the Egyptians had slaves and slaves did not build the pyramids which were made of stone

out of mudbricks. The only building project that would demand a large number of mudbricks and mudbrick layers was the city of Akhetaten.

Just as Constantine, centuries later, built a city named after himself, (Constantinople), the Pharaoh Akhetaten or Aknetaton had a city built. He wanted this city which would house 20,000 people finished quickly



and, according to Egyptian records, it was completed within two years by slaves and the Egyptian Army.

He had to move his capital away from Thebes because it was the center of worship for the god Amon Ra. Akhenaten had a new religion, which worshipped the god Aton. What makes this god interesting is that he was the only god. Akhenaten was attempting to introduce monotheism. The focus of worship was the disc of the sun, which was not the god. The god was behind the sun and not seen. The sun rises in the east, so the city was built in the land of the living and not the west where the sun sets, the land of the dead.

They worshipped in the direction of the sunrise, the focus was on the rays of the

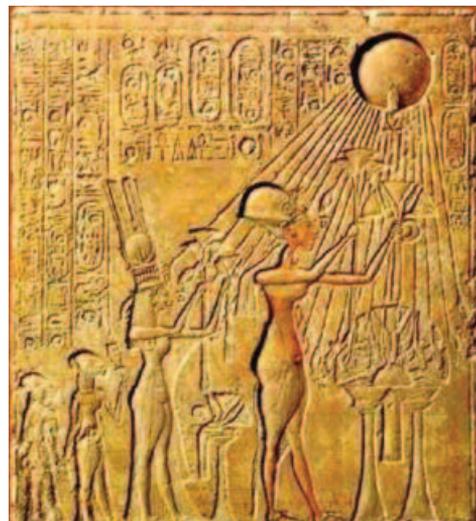
sun on all the people. He is the Pharaoh worshipping with his wife, Nefertiti, who has become known as one of the symbols of Egyptian beauty. He expressed his relationship with the sun-disc as the one of father and son.

You may notice that he form does not look like that of an athletic type of male, this statue even emphasizes it more. There are various theories for this. One is that he thought his wife was so beautiful that he had himself sculpted with feminine features of breasts and wide hips. Another theory: he wanted to be seen as both male and female, or in a sense without gender, representing himself as the image of Aton.

When Akhenaten died, neither of his two sons could succeed him because they both died at birth.

It was Akhenaten's son-in-law Tutankhamun, who inherited a country in turmoil, with people fleeing from this new religion. He reigned for a short time and probably died as a young man from stress. He is commonly known as “King Tut”.

Tutankhamun was succeeded by his tough general Horemheb, who could well have found it desirable to pursue the escaping Israelites to the Red Sea. But that is not recorded. And as a General, a loss



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may not have been recorded. As Rosenberg writes “We now have from Egyptian records all the three elements necessary for the biblical Exodus. A very large mud-brick project built by slaves, a period of turmoil and chaos, like that of the 10 plagues (like the slaying of the firstborn, pharaoh had only a dead son) when the slaves could escape, and thirdly, a basis for the Mishkan, which the Israelites needed in the arid desert, where they had no materials to create such a luxurious building. The time of the escape would have been about 1330 B.C, as King Tut reigned from about 1334 to 1325 B.C. The Egyptian records do not mention the

Exodus, but from their literature it can be deduced that the heretic Pharaoh Akhenaten was the pharaoh of the Oppression and his young son in-law Tutankhamun, the pharaoh of the Exodus.”

This would also agree with the interpretation of St Clement and other Fathers of the Greek Church. One of the themes found in Eastern Christianity is that God speaks to all peoples. St. Justin the Martyr speaks of God teaching the Greek Philosophers through natural law. Is it possible that God was preparing humanity for Moses. This thought entered scholarship through the writing of Sigmund Freud’s *Moses and Monotheism*. He argued that since the Exodus story was his-

torical, that Moses had been an Atonist priest forced to leave Egypt with his followers after Akh-enaten's death.

Freud then argued that Akhenaten was striving to promote monotheism, something that the biblical Moses was able to achieve. Or, from another perspective. Moses grew up being introduced to monotheism and then with his experience with the Burning Bush realized who the one God was, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Studying these ancient religions can affirm that our God throughout time was preparing the world for the coming of His Son in order to bring salvation to all people.

*Fr Jonathan Morse*