

James D. Long, *Riddle of the Exodus: Startling Parallels Between Ancient Jewish Sources and the Egyptian Archaeological Record*, Springdale, Arkansas: Lightcatcher Books, 2002, 2006.

A Review: by Vern Crisler, 2013, 2015.

Anyone who is new to chronological revisionism will find Long's book a pleasant and easy to understand introduction to the subject. He avoids scholarly jargon and endless discussions of Egyptological minutia, and provides interesting tidbits of information along the way. He also includes pictures, charts, and maps that aid in understanding.

From my perspective, I can gladly say that Long is right in his major thesis, that the Exodus occurred at the end of the Sixth Dynasty of Egypt and that the long-lived Pepi 2 was the pharaoh of the Oppression. Moreover, Long provides good criticisms of what could be called the "Cecil B. DeMille theory" which was popularized in the classic

1956 movie *The Ten Commandments*. In this theory Late Bronze Age king Ramses 1 was held out to be the pharaoh of the Oppression and Ramses 2 was held to be the pharaoh of the Exodus—even though Ramses 2 did not drown in the Red Sea. Long also discusses the Israel Stele and shows how it rules out Merneptah as the Exodus pharaoh.

There are some problems, however. Long seems unaware that other researchers have gone before him and have come to some of the same conclusions. If he is aware of them, then he is violating basic canons of scholarship in not providing references to previous researchers in the field.

About the only acknowledgements of prior revisionists are a brief reference to Peter James's *Centuries of Darkness* but only with respect to criticism of Sothic dating, and a short interaction with David Rohl's denial of the Shishak/Shoshenq equation in *Pharaohs and Kings*. There is no mention of Velikovsky, Courville, or anyone else's chronological work.

Until the day comes when credentialed historians take over the field of chronological revisionism, amateur revisionists should do their best to uphold scholarly standards—and that includes competent footnoting and bibliography.

One major problem with Long's thesis is that he relies too much on the *Book of Jasher*. Now the Bible does mention a *Book of Jasher*, but the modern books have nothing to do with the biblical book. One *Book of Jasher* was a forgery by a deist who published it in 1751, while another *Book of Jasher*, which Long depends upon, was first published in 1625. It is likewise a fraud. It not only contradicts the Bible in a number of places but also contains names of towns or territories that only existed in Medieval times, including France (Franza) and Lombardy (Lumbardi)!<sup>1</sup>

Long says this *Book of Jasher* provides the names for the Oppression and Exodus pharaohs: Melol and Adikam,

---

<sup>1</sup> See, Wikipedia entry for the *Book of Jasher*, accessed April, 2013.

respectively. As one would expect from such a work, neither of these names have matched any known Egyptian pharaohs.

The Ipuwer Papyrus is claimed to be referring to the plagues upon Egypt during the Exodus. As we've come to expect from Long, there is no mention of Velikovsky, who popularized this view. In fact, the papyrus was really describing the anarchism prevailing in Egyptian society due to the breakdown of central authority in Egypt after Pepi 2's long reign. This is the standard scholarly account but Long rejects it without providing any good reasons for doing so.

Long also relies on the el-Arish Inscription, which supposedly describes some of the events and characters of the Exodus. As noted in the case of the Ipuwer fragments, there is once again a failure to credit Velikovsky with popularizing this idea. In fact, the el-Arish text was written about 305 B.C. during the Ptolemaic era and provides legendary material about the activities of some Egyptian gods. We learn

about Ra who fights "Asiatic" invaders, about Geb who kidnaps and sexually assaults his own mother Tefnut, and about Shu who is taken up to the heavens. Other than vague word associations, there is nothing in this text that has anything to do with the Exodus as recorded in the Bible.

Long accepts the popular but wrongheaded theory that the Egyptian vizier Imhotep of the Third dynasty of Egypt was Joseph. Interestingly enough, Long also takes notice of the famine inscription of Fifth dynasty king Unas. He claims (rightly in my view) that Joseph ruled under Pharaoh Unas.

Nevertheless, how is Third dynasty Joseph-as-Imhotep reconciled with Fifth dynasty Joseph serving under Unas? Rather simple: Long claims the Third and Fifth dynasties were *parallel*, thus making pharaoh Unas and vizier Imhotep contemporaries. This is a neat little trick but it is impossible. Papyrus Westcar indicates that the Third dynasty came before the Fourth dynasty, and we have inscriptional material that gives us a rather straight-

forward chronology for the Fourth through the Sixth dynasties. In fact, they prove the dynasties were *consecutive*, not parallel. The presence of these consecutive dynasties means the Third and Fifth dynasties were too far apart for Joseph to have lived in both, and therefore Long must choose between Third dynasty Joseph or Fifth dynasty Joseph. He cannot have both.

The city of Pithom is said to be located at Tel el-Maskhuta, but this site has very little archaeological material beyond the seventh century B.C. In recent years Pithom has been identified with Tel er-Retabeh, which has archaeological material going back to the Old Kingdom. Given his belief that the Exodus occurred at the end of the Old Kingdom, Long would be better off adopting Tel er-Retabeh as the storage city.

The location of the route of the Exodus crossing is claimed to be at the Bitter Lakes, which is the currently fashionable and incorrect viewpoint. Long attributes the miraculous crossing to a wind that uncovered a "land

bridge” between Lake Timsah and the Bitter Lakes. He thus prefers a naturalistic account of the parting of the Red Sea despite the teaching of the biblical narrative that it was a miraculous occurrence, not a natural one.

Long also appears to deny the validity of the three-age system: stone, bronze, and iron. This is obscurantist and unnecessary. The three-age system is well-established in archaeology, even if the metal ages have, for the most part, been incorrectly matched to the B.C. time scale.

Aside from reliance on questionable sources or mistakes about Egyptian chronology, the main reason I cannot recommend Long’s book as an introduction to chronological revisionism is his complete failure to interact with archaeology.

For instance, you can read this book cover to cover and still not have a clue as to what type of pottery was found in the land of Canaan just after the end of the Old Kingdom. It was Middle

Bronze I pottery. Even secular archaeologists have noted the correlations between Middle Bronze I pottery and the Israelites, but Long seems completely unaware of any of it.

Though he refuses to acknowledge him, in a sense Long is a true follower of Velikovsky. For Velikovsky also tried to locate biblical events in history by providing a plethora of literary associations. And as with Velikovsky, Long either refuses to allow his chronology to be evaluated in the light of archaeology, or he simply does not understand how to do it.

There is a forward by Rabbi Benjamin Blech, a Talmud scholar with a Master’s Degree in psychology. Blech regards Long’s work as “groundbreaking” and a “totally new perspective” and that may be true in Blech’s case, but not for those who are familiar with the field.

Long’s book gets an A-plus for ease of reading, but a D-minus for scholarship. I cannot recommend the book as a reliable guide to the issues, though it

might serve to peak someone’s interest in the subject. Unfortunately, Long does not provide a bibliography and this means interested beginners cannot follow up on the subject.

The book is 227 pages with xxii introductory pages, and the type size is easy to read. Proofreaders Gerard Robins and R Michael Bar-Ron are to be commended for not allowing any noticeable typos to remain in the book, which is not always the case with self-published material.

End