

# RECENTLY DISCOVERED - THE BERLIN WALL OF ANCIENT EGYPT!

What prevented the Israelites from escaping their bondage in Egypt? Aerial photography reveals the 12th Dynasty frontier barriers that stretched from the Mediterranean Sea to Lake Timsah, and even possibly all the way to Heliopolis - ostensibly to keep out invading "Asiatics". Read the truth about the so-called "store cities" of Exodus 1:11 and how they were part of the eastern defenses of Egypt; and realize that these cities were built -- by the Israelites -- at the SAME TIME as the enigmatic "Wall of the Ruler" and the crocodile-infested canal!

**By John D. Keyser**

The question has often been asked why a large group of people such as the children of Israel, located near Egypt's northeastern border and suffering the sort of hardships and bondage that the Bible ascribes to them, should not simply have slipped across the frontier and disappeared into the desert. On a present-day map, with the Suez Canal mentally removed, there seems to be more than sufficient open terrain for them to give the slip to, or even overpower, any roving bands of border guards. In fact, there were probably some thirty or forty miles of open desert between Pelusium on the Mediterranean coast and the lake known as Kemur. The Israelites could have taken advantage of this to make their escape, but they didn't. Why?

The answer to this enigma can be found on the monuments of Egypt, where, it is revealed, a huge wall was constructed at the EASTERN FRONTIER of the country:

There lay still further to the NORTHEAST, on the western border of the lake called Sirbonis, a place important for the defence of the frontier, called ANBU, that is "THE WALL," "THE RAMPART WALL," "THE CIRCUMVALLATION." It is frequently mentioned by the ancients, though not under its Egyptian appellation, but in the form of a translation. The Hebrews call it SHUR, that is, "WALL," and the Greeks Gerrhon, Gerrha which means "THE FENCES" or "ENCLOSURES."....

Whoever travelled EASTWARDS from Egypt, in order to leave the country, WAS OBLIGED to pass the place of "the walls," before he was ALLOWED to enter the "road of the Philistines," as it is called in Holy Writ, on his further journey. An Egyptian garrison, under the command of a captain, BLOCKED THE PASSAGE THROUGH THE FORTRESS, which only opened and closed on the suspected traveller AFTER A PREVIOUS COMMUNICATION FROM THE ROYAL AUTHORITIES. Anbu -- Shur -- Gerrhon formed at the same time the first terminal point of the great military road, which led from the Delta...to the...desert ....(A History of Egypt Under the Pharaohs, by Henry Brugsch-Bey. Vol.I, second edition. John Murray, London. 1881. Pps.238-239.)

Evidence points to this wall being the result of a LARGE undertaking requiring the labor and expertise of MANY men. According to author J.P. Lepre, "Accounts of this wall indicate a project on the scale of the frontier wall of Britain, built by the Roman emperor Hadrian" -- and known to history as "Hadrian's Wall." (The Egyptian Pyramids, McFarland and Co., Jefferson, N.C. 1990. P.198.)

Taking it at face value, the "WALL OF THE RULER" -- as the name indicates -- would appear to have been no more than a wall in the conventional sense; and there is a story from the time of the Middle Kingdom (11th through 13th dynasties) that describes this aspect of the barrier. An individual by the name of SINUHE-- a sort of Marco Polo of the ancient world -- was forced to flee Egypt because of some sort of trouble he found himself in. Henry Brugsch-Bey outlines the story:

Amenemhat [I] ruled over the WHOLE LAND OF EGYPT with power and might, "from the Elephant-city even to the Athu, or lakes in the lowlands;" and that he was wise in thought and deed we learn from many a phrase in the long since faded papyri of ancient origin. Let us first consider the childlike simple narrative OF HIS CONTEMPORARY, the Egyptian SINEH [SINUHE], who, from some unknown cause, left the court of his lord and king, and TOOK THE ROAD TOWARDS THE NORTHEAST TO ESCAPE OUT OF THE LAND OF HIS FATHERS. Manifold dangers threatened him in his flight, from the keepers of the roads, and from foreign tribes, who, leading an unsettled nomad life on the eastern frontiers of the kingdom, caused the wanderer much care and disquietude. THERE IN THE EAST THE OBSTRUCTION OF THE GREAT "WALL" BARRED THE OPEN ROAD. What the Egyptians called ANBU, i.e. "wall," was called in other languages better known to us, SHUR (Hebrew, "wall") or GERRHON (Greek, "enclosure," "bounds"), both designating the fortress at the entrance of the narrow causeway between the Egyptian (Mediterranean) Sea and the Lake Sirbonis, through which the OLD HIGH ROAD LED FROM THE LAND OF KEMI [EGYPT] TO THE CITIES OF THE RUTEN. Sineh escapes the vigilance of the watchmen on the "Wall," and enters the barren, desolate wilderness. -- A History of Egypt Under the Pharaohs, pps.146-147.

Sinuhe's own account, coming from the reign of Sesonchosis the successor of Amen-emhat I, reads as follows: "I came up to the WALL OF THE RULER, made to oppose the Asiatics and crush the Sand-Crossers [Is-raelites?]. I took a crouching position in a bush for fear lest WATCHMEN UPON THE WALL where their day's [duty] was might see me." (The Exodus Enigma, by Ian Wilson. Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London. 1985. P.83).

### **Both A Wall and a Canal**

Over the years, Egyptologists have noticed the plethora of nautical titles in the Sinai inscriptions; and many have come to the conclusion that water transportation played a big role in the expeditions to the mines of Sinai. According to the inscriptions, it would seem that there were two possibilities: Either the expeditions crossed to Sinai

from some point on the Red Sea coast, probably Kosser, or else THERE WAS A THROUGH WATERWAY FROM EGYPT TO THE GULF OF SUEZ!

This last possibility was RECENTLY emphasized by an exciting discovery:

When aerial photography and on-the-spot surveying discovered the COURSE OF THE OLD PELUSIAC, or easternmost branch of the Nile, they also REVEALED A DISTINCT BUT ARTIFICIAL-LOOKING WATERWAY running northwards from Lake Timsah, disappearing into Lake Ballah, which the Egyptians appear to have known as the 'Papyrus Swamp,' and taking a dog-leg course east and then northwards to join up with the Pelusiac mouth of the Nile. The discovery began to make sense of several previously puzzling early references to the 'WALL OF THE RULER' which ...served to check Asiatic incursions in the wake of the troubles of the First Intermediate Period [of Egyptian history]. -- Ibid, P. 83.

At the town of Karnak in Upper Egypt (the site of ancient Thebes) a relief of Seti I., the father of Ramesses the Great, portrays the pharaoh returning from a military expedition to Canaan, and being separated from the welcoming Egyptian populace by a CROCODILE-INFESTED CANAL WHICH CAN BE SEEN TO FLOW INTO THE SEA.

It is evident, therefore, that this frontier barrier consisted of BOTH a canal and a wall. According to Ian Wilson: "When all this evidence is put together, the only reasonable deduction is that CANAL AND WALL must have been created in one and the same operation, the latter, all trace of which has disappeared, having simply been MADE FROM THE MUD REMOVED TO FORM THE CANAL."(Ibid, p.85).

Not only a wall was constructed, but also a CANAL OR MOAT to further impede the progress of anyone trying to leave Egypt without authorization!

A number of Egyptologists believe that the wall portion of the barrier may even have extended as far southwest as the city of Heliopolis! The book of Exodus tends to support this, as we shall see later.

### **Gulf Further North?**

During the time of the 12th Dynasty, the Gulf of Suez extended much farther north than it does today; and the HEAD OF THE GULF was located somewhere near Ismailiya. The fortified canal, then, CONNECTED THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA TO THE RED SEA!

Evidence of this northern extension of the gulf was noted by early Egyptologists and geologists:

...we must admit that formerly, under the dominion of the Romans, the Red Sea extended MUCH FARTHER NORTH than it does now; but that then the RETREAT OF THE SEA, and the changes in the surface of the soil had already begun to be felt.

Not only were the BITTER LAKES UNDER WATER, but I believe we are compelled to admit with Linant Bey, who derives his arguments from GEOLOGY, that Lake Timsah, and the valleys of Saba Biar and Abu Balah were, under the Pharaohs, PART OF THE SEA. Some traces of this may be seen on the map of the French engineers drawn at the end of last century [18th]. Contiguous to Lake Timsah there is a narrow extension towards the west which has the appearance of the HEAD OF A GULF. Thus the sea would have extended as far as the place now called Magfar....

It must have been at the head of the gulf...that the upheaval of the soil, and the RETREAT OF THE SEA were first felt. Gradually, the water sank, the communication with the gulf was partly cut off, and there remained SALT MARSHES such as are seen at present in several parts of the Delta, and which were called by Strabo and Pliny THE BITTER LAKES. -- The Store-City of Pithom and the Route of the Exodus, by Edouard Naville. Second edition. Messrs. Trubner and Co., London. 1885. P.21.

One does not have to travel very long in the Delta in order to realize that there has been a great deal of movement in the soil. In some areas the land has sunk considerably; as around Tanis or in Lake Menzaleh, where important ruins are several feet under water. In other areas, which were anciently under water, the land is now risen. Heights have been uplifted-like the banks of Chalouf -- and the BITTER LAKES AND LAKE TIMSAH HAVE BECOME ISOLATED. THE RED SEA HAS SHRUNK BACK AS FAR AS THE PRESENT-DAY TOWN OF SUEZ.

It is difficult not to admit that at the time of Rameses II the Red Sea, or rather the Arabian Gulf, EXTENDED MUCH FURTHER NORTH than at present, and comprehended not only the BITTER LAKES but also LAKE Timsah....

We may say, with M. Lepsius, that the ancients considered AS A GULF the two large inner basins now called the Bitter Lakes and Lake Timsah, when they had been united by means of a wide canal, such as the work of Philadelphos; but at the TIME OF THE EXODUS the natural communication must have existed.Ibid, p.7.

### **An Ulterior Motive?**

The reason for spending so much time and effort on this HUGE construction project that consisted of both wall and canal is explained by Egyptologist W.A. Ward:

This line of defense, once completed, would be a logical one, since it would guard the whole area FROM THE SOUTHEASTERN SHORE OF LAKE MANZALA TO LAKE TIMSAH. Its NORTHERN TERMINUS would be the LAND-ROUTE WHICH ENTERED EGYPT THROUGH WAY-OF-HORUS (WAT-HOR) and its southern terminus at the entrance to the Wadi Tumilat at Ismailia. Precisely this region was the main point of entry for nomads wishing to move out of the desert into the Delta. A FORTIFIED CANAL, HALF-FILLED WITH WATER [and stocked with crocodiles], would

be an ideal defensive position, easily manned by troops and mobile units on rafts or small boats patrolling the length of the canal.

Not only was this barrier "an ideal defensive position" to keep the Asiatics out, IT IS ALSO VERY OBVIOUS THAT IT COULD SERVE TO KEEP THE ISRAELITES IN, just as the Berlin Wall served to keep the East Germans within the Communist Block for so many years! It could be argued what the PRIME MOTIVE for building the wall and canal was: containment of the Israelites or prevention of foreign incursions.

### **An Earlier Idea**

The idea for such a frontier barrier at the eastern border of Egypt was evidently born in a time prior to the Twelfth Dynasty, when a pharaoh of unknown name produced a still extant set of instructions to his son Merikare, urging him to dig a canal from WAT-HOR to Lake Timsah: "Dig a canal until it is un(hindered); flood it half as far as Lake Timsah (Km-wr)."

According to Ian Wilson, "the pressure of historical circumstances seems to have prevented Merikare from carrying out his father's instructions, THE TASK SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN BROUGHT TO FRUITION IN THE REIGN OF THE TWELFTH-DYNASTY AMENEMHAT I..." (The Exodus Enigma, p.83).

### **Built Before the Exodus?**

Further evidence that this frontier barrier was in existence PRIOR to the Exodus is furnished by George Rawlinson in his book, History of Ancient Egypt:

...we find that, in one quarter at any rate, he [Amenemhat I of the 12th Dynasty] followed up his victories by BUILDING A WALL, or defensive work, upon his own frontiers, for the purpose of "keeping off the Sakti," or, in other words, of checking and repelling their incursions. THIS POST WAS PROBABLY A LITTLE TO THE EAST OF PELUSIUM, NEAR THE WESTERN EXTREMITY OF THE LAKE SERBONIS....(Dodd, Mead and Company, N.Y. 1882. P.148).

Greek tradition records that "a project for connecting by water the Mediterranean and the Red Sea" was completed in the reign of Sesostris -- a king of the 12th Dynasty. (The Inscriptions of Sinai, by Gardiner, Peet & Cerny. Part II. Egyptian Exploration Society, London. 1955. P.12).

Also, in recent years, a number of MIDDLE KINGDOM sites have been discovered along the route of this barrier, further substantiating its existence before the time of the Exodus.

There is extant, in the British Museum, a papyrus CONTEMPORARY with the time of the Israelite bondage in Egypt that PROVES BEYOND A SHADOW OF A DOUBT that the great eastern frontier barrier was in existence PRIOR to the Exodus:

A happy chance -- rather let us say, Divine Providence -- has preserved, in one of the papyri of the British Museum, the most precious memorial of the epoch CONTEMPORARY with the sojourn of the Israelites in Egypt. This is a simple letter, written more than thirty centuries before our time by the hand of an Egyptian scribe, to report his journey from the royal palace AT RAMSES, which was occasioned by the flight of two domestics.

Thus (he says) "I set out from the hall of the royal palace on the 9TH DAY of the 3rd month of summer towards evening, in pursuit of the two domestics. THEN I ARRIVED AT THE BARRIER OF SUKOT ON THE 10TH DAY OF THE SAME MONTH. I was informed that they (that is, the two fugitives) had decided to go by the southern route. On the 12th day I arrived at Khetam....(A History of Egypt Under the Pharaohs, p.389).

### **The Frontier Post of Sile**

Approximately half way along the eastern leg of the frontier barrier, at the northern end of Lake Ballah, was the frontier post of SILE. According to Ian Wilson, "THE SOLE ROUTE TRAVERSING THE CANAL [AND WALL] IS A BRIDGE COMMANDED BY THE KEY FORTRESS OF SILE, otherwise known, like the route it controlled, as WAT-HOR." (The Exodus Enigma).

The main caravan and military road from Egypt WAT-HOR, or the "way of the land of the Philistines" -- led from Memphis and followed the banks of the Pelusiac branch of the Nile to PI-RAMESSES or AVARIS. From here it passed through the frontier fortress of SILE and continued on to Pelusium, and thence to el-Arish and Gaza, running parallel to the Mediterranean coast. The fortress of Sile was, therefore, the quickest way out of Egypt from the Pi-Ramesses/Avaris area, and the quickest way to Canaan.

In the latter years of Tuthmosis III of the 18th Dynasty, the pharaoh added a wing to the Temple of Amon in Karnak, detailing the almost annual military campaigns he undertook from age 30 when he came to power. The first of these campaigns was an invasion of Canaan, in which Tuthmosis headed up a highly trained and organized army. The inscriptions in the Temple of Amon show Tuthmosis' departure point from Egypt to be the frontier fortress of Sile:

Tuthmosis' departure point from Egypt is specifically described as the frontier fortress of SILE - part of the barrier that would have PREVENTED THE ISRAELITES' ESCAPE. The land to the west of this, GOSHEN, and the environs...of AVARIS/PI-RAMESSES, would have been the most LOGICAL STATION for any army defending against eastern attack....The likelihood that this is so is quite evident from the...description of PI-RAMESSES from Merneptah'a reign: 'the marshalling place of your chariotry, the mustering place of your army, the mooring place of your ships'

troops.' No doubt before Tuthmosis III, when it was Avaris, the Hyksos favoured it FOR THE SAME REASON. (Ibid, pps. 142 & 145).

### **The Garrison Cities of Exodus 1:11**

At the SAME TIME the canal and wall were constructed on the eastern frontier, the so-called "store cities" of RAMESSES and PITHOM along with -- according to the Septuagint version of the Bible -- the city of ON or HELIOPOLIS, were built!

The actual Hebrew words used to describe Pithom and Ramesses in the book of Exodus are ' (ham) misk not, which although usually rendered "store [or supply] cities" in Exodus 1:11, are rendered -- in the JERUSALEM BIBLE -- as "GARRISON CITIES" when they occur in an obvious military context in I Kings 9:19, II Chronicles 8:6 and II Chronicles 17:12. Furthermore, in the Septuagint version of the Bible, Ramesses, Pithom and On are called "STRONG CITIES" in all the above-mentioned verses -- INCLUDING Exodus 1:11!

The conclusion must be, then, that these cities were "store cities" in the sense of the storage of MILITARY EQUIPMENT! These cities were an INTEGRAL PART of Egypt's eastern defenses and were probably the home-bases of the troops that manned the wall and patrolled the canal.

Not only did the Israelites construct the "STRONG" cities of Ramesses, Pithom and On, they ALSO constructed the wall and canal that kept them (the Israelites) within the confines of Goshen!

In discussing the eastern defenses and the frontier fortress of Sile, author Ian Wilson comments that "such is the nature of the Delta terrain that today we can only guess at the [amount] of work that might have been done and who might have done it, but it DOES NOT NEED MUCH IMAGINATION TO RECONSTRUCT A SITUATION STRIKINGLY SIMILAR TO THAT OF THE ISRAELITES' 'HARD LABOUR' DESCRIBED IN THE OPENING CHAPTER OF THE BOOK OF EXODUS." (Ibid, p.81).

### **Dating the Eastern Defenses**

The correct dating for the construction of the garrison cities of Exodus 1:11 and the Wall of the Ruler, along with its associated canal, is important for placing the oppression of the Israelites in the correct time-frame. The excavations of Pi-Ramesses (or Avaris) by Dr. Manfred Bietak and a team of archaeologists from Austria, clearly show that Ramesses was built by Amenemhat I of the Twelfth Dynasty. This places the city in the SAME REIGN as the construction of Wall of the Ruler and the canal!

Some five hundred years before the time of Ramesses II this [Pi-Ramesses/Avaris] had been a carefully laid-out city of some importance DURING THE TIME OF EGYPT'S MIDDLE KINGDOM, a century or so PRIOR TO EGYPT'S TAKEOVER BY THE HYKSOS. Readily discernible were the foundations of an

imposing 450-foot-long palace, with a huge court lined by columns, that had probably served as a ROYAL SUMMER RESIDENCE....Records show that order was re-established by strong government on the part of the kings of Egypt's Middle Kingdom, and it is to these that can be attributed the COLUMNED PALACE of the Tell el-Dab'a mound, as well as a variety of other buildings and monuments that seem to have surrounded the Birka lake. One of these, A TEMPLE OF THE EGYPTIAN KING AMENEMHET I, was found to contain a tablet specifically referring to the 'Temple of Amenemhet in [at] the water of the town' -- independent corroboration of the town's abundance of water. -- Ibid, pps. 48-49.

The "new king" who arose over Egypt in Exodus 1:8 was Amenemhet I., a man who was vizier and Commander-in-Chief under the last Mentuhotep of the Eleventh Dynasty. Josephus, the 1st-century Jewish historian, says of this event that "the crown being come now into ANOTHER FAMILY, they [the Egyptians] became very abusive to the Israelites....(Antiquities of the Jews, bk.ii, chap.ix, section 1).

This new ruler was not of royal blood and knew nothing of Joseph and the blessings he brought to Egypt! Amenemhet immediately set about oppressing the Israelites, forcing them to construct the cities and walls of the eastern boundary -- as well as other grandiose projects.

### **It's Very Plain to See!**

It is now very easy to see WHY the Israelites were unable to escape their bonds of slavery -- with the possible exception of a few individuals like Sinuhe and the two domestics, who were able to make it past the eastern barriers and into the desert. These were probably the ones the Egyptians derisively called the "sand crossers."

With an ironic twist of circumstances, the children of Israel were made to build the very barriers and garrison cities that were to keep them confined within the borders of Egypt for all of the Twelfth Dynasty.

This also explains why Moses had to ask the Pharaoh for permission to leave the land of Egypt; for without his blessing, the Israelites would never have made it past the wall and canal to Succoth, where they were to offer up offerings and burnt sacrifices to God.