Rehoboam Year 5 = Ramesses Year 8: Is it a Good Fit?

The revised chronologies of Peter James and David Rohl need to be tested no less than the received chronology. In attempting to do this for the New Kingdom, the author finds that the best fit with the data lies midway between their schemes.

STEVEN J. ROBINSON

Rehoboam’s Year 5 is the year in which, according to 1 Kings and II Chronicles, Shishak king of Egypt invaded the kingdom of Judah, captured its fortified cities and penetrated as far as Jerusalem. In return for her immediate surrender, Jerusalem suffered only the exaction of heavy tribute. Thereafter Judah was Egypt’s servant.

In the chronologies proposed by Peter James and David Rohl Shishak cannot be Shoshenq I, as is generally supposed; and both researchers have given much thought to the question of who, in that case, Shishak might be. As long ago as 1983 they suggested that he was Ramesses II, explaining the biblical name as a variant of ‘Sesi’, an attested nickname of Ramesses. Subsequently James and his colleagues concluded that the received chronology of Egypt could not be contracted this much and proposed that the king who invaded Judah was Ramesses III, most probably in his Year 12. Rohl, on the other hand, still holds to the original thesis, citing in support a block from the First Pylon of the Ramesseum with the words: ‘The town which his Majesty conquered in Year 8 – Shalem’. This Shalem, he has argued, can only be Jerusalem – Urušalima, with ūrū being simply the Akkadian for ‘foundation’ – the same Salem as is mentioned in Genesis 14:18 and Psalm 76:2. If correct, this synchronism is of cardinal importance, for it sets a very restrictive boundary for the chronology of Egypt’s dynasties from the New Kingdom right through to the Third Intermediate Period.

In order to test this synchronism we should consider at least four questions. Must Salem be equated with Jerusalem? Is Ramesses’ campaign of Year 7/8 reflected in Shishak’s despoliation of Judah’s cities? Is the proposed identification consistent with other connections which a revised chronology might make with Egyptian history? And is it consistent with Israel’s archaeological record? We shall take these questions in turn.

Salem

Psalm 76:2 declares that the abode of God ‘has been established in Salem, his dwelling place in Zion’. Since the parallelism shows that Jerusalem, the city of Zion, is signified, Genesis 14:18 may indeed also be referring to this city. However, Joshua 18:28 states that the old name of Jerusalem was ‘ Jebus’, not Salem, and according to a writer in the 4th century AD named Epiphanius, the Samaritans located the Salem of Genesis 14:18 near Nablus. The identity of the city in Genesis is therefore not certain.

Rohl states incorrectly that Jerusalem is the only Salem to be handed down to us from the pre-Christian era. As Edward Campbell has pointed out, both the Septuagint and the Book of Jubilees indicate that there was a Salem near Shechem, a possibility strengthened by the existence of a modern village called Salim in the area. It should also be noted that Papyrus Anastasi III mentions a fort of Merenptah near a place called Sar-ram, which Aharoni identifies with Shalem (S-r-m). In the chronology proposed by Rohl the fort is unlikely to have been near the capital of Judah. The New Testament mentions a Salim in John 3:23, probably near the river Jordan.

The campaign recorded on the Ramesseum pylon associates the name Shalem with the names of towns which were all located in Upper Galilee – the only exception being Dapur, further north. Thus, while it is possible (all other things being equal) that the Salem in Ramesses’ inscription refers to Jerusalem, the identification cannot be said to be likely.
Ramesses’ Year 7/8 campaign

The traditional identification of Shishak with Shoshenk I of the 22nd Dynasty has been criticised on the grounds that Shishak’s campaign was focused on the fortified cities of Judah, whereas the alleged parallel of Shoshenk’s campaign, described on the Bubastite Portal, was focused on the northern kingdom of Israel. Much the same objection may be raised in relation to Ramesses’ campaign — insofar as it is possible to reconstruct his route from the damaged remains of the campaign list. According to Kenneth Kitchen’s reconstruction, which is conjectural at this point, Ramesses followed precisely the same route that Shoshenk was to take until he reached the Jordan valley. (See the maps in JACF 3, pp 49 and 62.)

Then, instead of turning north along the valley and into northern Israel, he crossed the Jordan and drove south into Moab. So far as can be determined, the Egyptians avoided the fortified cities of Judah, which Shishak is said to have captured, and there is no more reason to suppose that Ramesses captured Jerusalem on this occasion than that Shoshenk captured it. Shishak’s conquest of Judah appears to have been a totally different campaign from either Shoshenk’s or Ramesses’.

If Ramesses did cross Judah in that year, the objective would have been not to conquer the cities of Judah but to reach Moab and Seir (Edom). Given such a destination, he could have reached them from the Way of the Sea by one of three routes: via the hill-country of Judah, as Kitchen suggested, by approaching from the south via the Negev, or by approaching from the north down the Jordan valley. So far as the inscriptions are concerned, he could have taken any of these routes.

However, there are two reasons why Ramesses is unlikely to have crossed Judah in Year 7/8. The first is that Ramesses would not have had to contend with the possibly hostile forces that controlled Judah! If the objective was to conquer the cities of Dibon and Butartu, this would have been a pointless distraction. The second is that the principal objective of Ramesses’ campaign was not, in fact, to subdue either the cities of Moab or Seir in the province of Upe, the cities of Dibon and Butartu, and the entire kingdom of Judah all in one season. Moreover, according to Kitchen, the campaign year in which Ramesses subdued Galilee and therefore also the city of Shalem was Year 8/9. Kitchen’s reconstruction of Ramesses’ Year 7/8 campaign therefore has no bearing on where Shalem is to be located.

Other synchronisms

Bernard Newgrosh and Peter van der Veen have, with Rohl, made a persuasive case for linking the Canaanite rulers mentioned in the El-Amarna Letters with the time of Saul and the early reign of David. According to their interpretation, the Amarna period of Amenhotep III, Akhenaten and Tutankhamun should be dated to the 11th century BC, not the 14th. While this is not the place to dissent from certain of their ancillary arguments, one rather questionable idea – the suggestion that Ishbaal did not immediately succeed Saul but became king after David had already reigned 5 years in Hebron has a direct bearing on their conclusion that Akhenaten’s Year 13 should be synchronised in 1010 BC with David’s Year 1.

Firstly, we should recognise that, if Solomon came to the throne in 971, as is generally accepted, David’s Year 1 is likely to have commenced in 1008 (rather than 1010), since his son reigned with him as co-regent. The length of the co-regency was approximately 3 years, from 971 to 968 BC, for only after his father’s death was Solomon at liberty to build the Temple (for which his father had laid all the plans and assembled all the materials), and he commenced work on the Temple in his 4th year (1 Chron 28:2f, I Ki 6:1). Secondly, David’s title to the throne after Saul’s death was disputed. At first he was anointed king only over the tribe of Judah, while the other tribes of Israel chose Ishbaal. But after a reign of 2 years, Ishbaal was killed, and David became king at Hebron over all Israel. At some point between his 3rd and 8th years David captured Jerusalem, and from his 8th year he made that city his capital.

Newgrosh et al. cite in support of the idea that Ishbaal did not become king until David’s 6th year several authorities who have supposed a chronological discrepancy at this juncture, but the reasons for favouring these authorities are not explained. As II Samuel relates the sequence of events clearly enough, the postulate of a different sequence of events whereby Israel began as a united monarchy under David, then split and then re-united, seems arbitrary and implausible. If Saul died in 1008 BC, it is more natural to understand that Ishbaal reigned from 1008 to 1006.

Apart from this point, the other factors which affect the precision with which we can synchronise the
Amarna kings are (1) the Ugarit eclipse which Wayne Mitchell dated to 1012 BC,11 (2) Tutankhamun’s abandonment of El-Amarna as the royal capital in his 3rd year, (3) letters which mention the death of Labayu (= Saul) and letters which were written by Mutaal (= Ishbaal) after he had succeeded Labayu.

The Ugarit eclipse is believed to have taken place in the reign of Ugarit’s Nikmed II, who was king during the second half of the reign of Akhenaten; the eclipse cannot be dated more specifically in Egypt’s history. As Tutankhamun left El-Amarna in his 3rd year, that would appear to be the last year in which El-Amarna could have been in receipt of the letters preserved in its archive. Hence, no letter is likely to have been written after his 3rd year, and if Mutaal’s letters are among the latest in the archive, Tutankhamun’s 3rd year cannot be later than c.1006 BC. Thus, in dating that year to 1001 BC, Newgrosch et al. may already be several years adrift.

But how well do the reigns of Tutankhamun and his successors down to Ramesses II fit into the period down to 927/6 BC (the 5th year of Rehoboam)? Not well at all! Tutankhamun died in 995 BC, and if we assign Ay 5 years and Seti 15, we must then ascribe over 40 years to Haremheb — the only king whose length of reign is, perhaps, uncertain by a margin of more than one or two years.

As Wolfgang Helck has pointed out in this volume, the highest certainly attested regnal year of Haremheb is Year 13, or possibly Year 14. Since all but one of the earlier years are also attested in documents, the possibility that he reigned much longer than 14 years is remote, and the Mes Inscription cannot be taken as evidence that Haremheb reigned, not merely a few, but up to 50 years longer.

The whole sequence of the reigns of the 18th-Dynasty kings from Ahmose to Amenhotep III can be determined within a few years on the basis of the very precise information given by Josephus,12 coupled with the highest recorded years from extant inscriptions. As Helck points out, such inscriptions are sufficiently abundant in the New Kingdom for the highest recorded year to be a good guide to the highest actual year. Taking Ahmose’s reign to have commenced in 1188 BC, as I argue elsewhere in this volume, the 18th Dynasty may be tentatively dated as in Table 1.

Hatsepsut became co-regent with Thutmose III in the latter’s second year and celebrated her 30-year jubilee in her Year 16, probably on the basis that her reign should be reckoned from Year 1 of her revered father Thutmose I. The accession year of Thutmose III is fixed astronomically by two lunar dates.14 The existence of the other coregencies, which follow from a reconciliation of Josephus and the highest recorded years, is also independently attested.15 It is supposed that the 36 years which Josephus assigns to Akhenaten (“Orus”) are a corruption of 16 years.

After Akhenaten the length of reign may be computed, mostly on the basis of recorded years, as follows:

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KING</th>
<th>TOTAL REIGN</th>
<th>RECONCILIATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Smenkhkare</td>
<td>1012-1009</td>
<td>1011-1009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tutankhamun</td>
<td>1009-1000</td>
<td>1009-997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ay</td>
<td>1006-996</td>
<td>1000-997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haremheb</td>
<td>997-990</td>
<td>997-995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ramesses I</td>
<td>991-990</td>
<td>991-991</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seti I</td>
<td>990-979</td>
<td>990-979</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Much of the data for Ay to Seti I is summarised in Helck’s article. Tutankhamun’s 3rd years ends not later than 1006 BC, as required. Ramesses II succeeded in 979 BC, so that he became ‘lord of jubilees’ no later than 947/6 BC — in accordance with the terminus ante quem of c.920 BC suggested by the 400-Year Stela.16

The only reign length which can be said to be controversial is that ascribed to Haremheb. In this instance there appears to be a substantial discrepancy between the Manethonian tradition and the inscriptions, for whereas Josephus ascribes 4 years 1 month to ‘Harmai’ (rounded up by Africanus and Eusebius to 5 years), the highest recorded date is his 13th or 14th year, or even a 27th or a 59th. However, according to Manetho, Harmais, although ‘invested with all the royal prerogatives’, initially ruled Egypt on behalf of his brother Sethos, who with a fleet and a large force of cavalry had left the country to wage war against Cyprus and Phoenicia, and later against the Assyrians and the Medes. After a time Harmais made himself absolute monarch, and when Sethos heard of this, he returned to Egypt and took back the throne, while his brother fled to Greece. It is therefore possible that
some Egyptians refused to recognise Seti and continued to number years by the reign of Haremheb after he was exiled.

Far from being a legendary concoction (as has perhaps too readily been supposed), this tradition agrees with what we otherwise know about the period. Haremheb’s parentage being unknown, the possibility that he was a brother of Seti’s cannot be ruled out. The paucity of extant monuments from his reign suggests that his reign was short, and the last dated action to show that he was still on the throne is from Year 8, when a graffito says he renewed the burial of Thutmose IV. At some point he took Ramesses I as his co-regent, who reigned only 1 year 4 months, and since in his second year Ramesses adopted Seti as his co-regent, Seti must have succeeded Haremheb without any appreciable interval.

After the 9 years attributed to ‘Rathotis’ (Tutankhamun), the tradition of Manetho is undoubtly corrupt. As given by Josephus it reads:

... then his son Akencheres for 12 years 5 months, his son Akencheres for 12 years 3 months, his son Harmas for 4 years 1 month ...

Akencheres – the name of the king who led the Hyksos invasion of Egypt – appears to be a stop-gap for names that were lost from the tradition. Now, Aldred has argued that Haremheb was initially associated with Ay as his co-regent. If he is right, and if in each instance of Akencheres the pharaoh’s reign was inflated by the addition of 10 years (as almost certainly happened in the case of the woman-like Smenkhkare, who seems to have been the first Akencheres), we may repair the tradition to understand that Ay reigned for 2 years 5 months alone and for 2 years 3 months with Haremheb, consistently with Ay’s highest recorded date of Year 4. Likewise, Haremheb would have reigned in total for just over 7 years 4 months, consistently with his latest recorded action in Year 8.

Determined to re-establish the hegemony in the Levant which Egypt had lost during the Amarna period, Seti was campaigning through western Palestine as early as Year 1 (the date on the stela from Beth Shean and Seti’s reliefs in the Hypostyle Hall at Karnak) and almost certainly captured the Phoenician cities of Acco and Tyre in that year. In his mortuary temple at Qurna he also claimed to have conquered Khatti (the land of the Hittites), Naharim (the land of the Mitanni east of the Euphrates) and Alashiya (Cyprus). The Hypostyle Hall likewise shows him fighting the Hittites. It has generally been overlooked that these details are wholly in accord with what Manetho says about Sethos.

On some inscriptions Seti appended after Years 1 and 2 the phrase ‘Repetition of Births’. In the light of Manetho’s history this can be explained as alluding to the renewal of his reign when he returned to Egypt. Thus Seti would have reigned 4 years 1 month with Haremheb, 1 year 4 months as co-regent with his father Ramesses I, and a further 10–11 years after his father’s death, a total of 15–16 years. In that case a third explanation of the inscription on the Munich statue of Bekenkons (discussed by Helck) becomes possible. Reckoned from 995 BC, the problematical 11 + 70 years fall within the reigns of Seti and Ramesses II without having to postulate that the school to which the high priest was admitted changed its name.

What, then, are we to make of the Mes inscription, in which Haremheb appears to be given 59 years? The text of the inscription is summarised by Gardiner in his Egypt of the Pharaohs. In essence, it recounts a series of legal actions to establish the true ownership of a parcel of land in the neighbourhood of Memphis. Mes is related to the main actors in the story as follows:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Takharu} & \quad \text{Urnero (f)} \\
\text{Huy} & \quad \text{Nubnofret (f)} \\
\text{Mes} &
\end{align*}
\]

The first lawsuit took place some time in the reign of Haremheb, when Urnero, Mes’s grandmother, was appointed to cultivate the land. The third lawsuit, when Urnero and her son Huy successfully appealed against the decision in the second lawsuit to divide the estate, is undated. Huy then died, and his widow Nubnofret was ejected from the estate by a man named Khi. The fourth lawsuit, which Nubnofret brought unsuccessfully against Khi, is dated to Year 18 of Ramesses II. And the final lawsuit, in which Mes succeeded in establishing his right to the land beyond dispute, is likewise undated but was obviously after Ramesses’ Year 18.

The history of these actions appears on the north wall of Mes’s tomb, except that the wall does not record the result of the final lawsuit. The testimonies which helped to secure victory for his family appear on the south wall, those laid on their behalf in the unsuccessful second and fourth actions being understandably omitted. The passage referring to Year 59 of Haremheb is the last extant portion on the south wall, after which the damaged text breaks off. Since it is preceded by testimonies from the action brought by Huy and Urnero, i.e. the third lawsuit, it would seem to relate to the fifth lawsuit. In its pristine state it was presumably followed by a record of the verdict, deferred from the north wall and climaxing the whole story.

‘Year 59’ is therefore most naturally understood as falling in the reign of Ramesses II, and as signifying the date not when a copy was made of Aniy’s survey of the disputed estate but when the lawsuit was heard which brought Mes final victory (although that was probably not long after the copy was made).
The prevailing interpretation of ‘Year 59’ is that it should be reckoned from the beginning of the reign of the heretic king Akhenaten. Since Haremheb was the first king unrelated to the hated Amarna dynasty and he appears to have re-established the rule of law after a period of considerable disorder, it is supposed that the years from Akhenaten to Ay were retrospectively and posthumously ascribed to him. Helck, however, rejects this interpretation on the grounds that it would entail giving Haremheb 24 years or more, when other inscriptions give him no more than 13. In the chronology advocated here it is possible to reconcile the two arguments. Reckoning from the beginning of Akhenaten’s sole rule in 1017 BC, Year 59 of Haremheb would fall in Ramesses II’s 21st year, 3 years after the fourth legal action in year 18, and would simply be an extension of the Haremheb era, a kind of absolute year in a context where one needed to reckon all the years from ‘the time of the enemy from Akhetaten’ to the present day.

The extremely long reign of Ramesses II – 66 years – constitutes a further problem in Rohl’s scheme, because it swallows up time that even a minimalist interpretation of the TIP’s chronological data cannot afford. Rohl suggests that at some point Ramesses may have reckoned his reign from when he became co-ruler with his father, probably in Seti’s 8th year. This is a difficult concept, since he certainly began reckoning his reign from his father’s death and there is no evidence whatsoever of such a confusing alteration. Porter has suggested that this might have happened in Ramesses’ second decade on the throne, alleging that there are no certain royal attestations for this decade except retrospective ones and no private attestations at all. I am not sure that this is true – there is a Beth Shean stela which might be dated to Year 18, for instance, and an Apis burial dated to Year 16. In any case, if Seti reigned for 11 years, Ramesses would still have reigned for 63 years, and an extremely long reign is well attested by other evidence such as the Apis burials, the Memphite Genealogy and the Bekenkhons inscription. Rohl’s date of 867 BC for the end of Ramesses’ reign is also, I suspect, difficult to reconcile with the New Kingdom lunar dates and impossible to reconcile with Palestine’s archaeological evidence.

The new-moon date mentioned in Papyrus Leiden I 350 verso III 6 is associated with Year 52 of Ramesses II. Since the lunar cycle repeated itself every 25 years, Year 52 is likely to have fallen, so far as the chronology proposed here is concerned, in 928 BC (in the received chronology 1228 BC). Accordingly Ramesses’ last year, Year 67, may be dated to 913, in precise accord with the evidence which puts the beginning of his reign c.979 BC. Rohl’s scheme, putting Ramesses’ 52nd year around 882 BC, takes no account of the astronomical data.

**Table 3. Rohl’s synchronisms for the archaeology of Megiddo as given in JACF 5 and A Test of Time.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BC</th>
<th>1992</th>
<th>1995</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>990</td>
<td>LB IIA</td>
<td>LB IIA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Haremheb)</td>
<td>(Haremheb)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>976</td>
<td>SAUL &amp; DAVID Megiddo VIII</td>
<td>SOLOMON Megiddo VIII</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>950</td>
<td>LB IIB-IA 1A (Ramesses II)</td>
<td>MB &amp; SOLOMON</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>930</td>
<td>TO OMRI</td>
<td>TO OMRI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>910</td>
<td>Megiddo VII-B-A</td>
<td>Megiddo VII-B-A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>890</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>870</td>
<td>IA IIA/B Megiddo VI</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Israel’s archaeological record

In his article ‘A test of time’, Rohl implies that the archaeological record is sufficiently flexible, or indeterminate, to permit confirmation of both his Ramesses Year 8 synchronism and an alternative, unexplained synchronism around Year 42. This is not the case. The archaeological record can serve to ‘test’ such synchronisms.

In II Chron 11:5ff the fortified cities captured by Shishak are listed by name, one of them being Lachish. Extensive excavations of the tell have not shown that Lachish was ever fortified in the LB A. On the other hand, since houses and other structures were built on the slopes of the disused Middle Bronze rampart and even in the ditch at its base, any remains of an LB fortification are likely to lie outside the MB perimeter and the focus of recent excavations.

The El-Amarna period down to the early 19th Dynasty is represented by Stratum VII, which ended in destruction in LB IIB. In the New Chronology it therefore corresponds with the city destroyed by Shishak. The later city of Stratum VI, which seems to have been under Egyptian control, just as Rehoboam’s Judah was (II Chron 12:8), did not suffer destruction until the end of Iron Age IA. As Bryant Wood has shown, the end of Iron Age IA synchronises with the end of Ramesses III’s reign (or slightly later). Wood also makes a strong case for linking the end of LB IIB1 with the end of Ramesses II’s reign and the end of LB IIB2 with Year 8 of Ramesses III. While one may have reservations about pottery chronologies which assume strictly unilinear development, there is no reason to doubt the sound validity of Wood’s conclusions. These indicate that the transition from
LB IIA to LB IIB, and thus Rehoboam's Year 5, occurred in the latter half of Ramesses II's reign.

Samaria is another key site, because this city was built from new by Omri. According to Lawrence Stager, the oldest pottery sealed beneath the courtyard of Omri's citadel is Iron Age I, typical of the 12th and 11th centuries. However, the very oldest Iron Age pottery is likely to have originated from the large estate which was on the hill before Omri built his capital, since it is certain that the Early Bronze pottery from this base level predated the construction. Thus, using Wood's terminology, the city could have been built in Iron IA2 but is unlikely to have been built much earlier. Rohl cites Stager in support of his argument that 'Samaria was founded in the very earliest phase of the Iron Age' without mentioning Stager's quite different analysis, that the pre-existing estate of Shemer - a large centre for wine and oil production - went back to that time. On the other hand, if the estate was only a few years old before Omri bought it, the pottery could have been part of the appurtenances which Omri acquired with the estate and therefore still be contemporary with the foundation of the city. Since no Late Bronze ware was found in the construction levels, this is a distinct possibility.

In Rohl's chronology, Samaria is founded before the death of Ramesses II, whose reign (as also Merenptah's) is firmly linked with LB pottery. Why, then, was no LB pottery unearthed from the tell? Jericho offers another important synchronism. After its destruction by Joshua it was rebuilt in the reign of Ahab, c.860 BC. Archaeologically, this was at the beginning of Iron Age II (Iron IIA).

We should also consider the enigmatic Zerah the Ethiopian, who invaded Judah with (if the number is correct) an army of one million men (II Chron 14:9ff). How could any large foreign army have reached Judah from Ethiopia, except via Egypt? And how likely is it that such an army would have been allowed to pass through Egypt while Ramesses II was on the throne? If we are looking for synchronisms between Egyptian and Israelite history, the only plausible time when this could have happened during the 19th Dynasty is right at the end, when the country had no ruler and was in disorder.

Rohl discusses the evidence of Megiddo. Here the relevant stratigraphy is:

- Stratum VIII - LB IIA
- Stratum VIIIB - LB IIB
- Stratum VIIIA - Iron I

These strata have yielded substantial remains of large buildings which utilised ashlars stonework, and also hoards of gold, jewellery and ivory, so prima facie the strata fit with the reigns of David and Solomon, c.1010-930 BC. Rohl argues that Solomon's great temple at Jerusalem was modelled on the Stratum VIII temple of Megiddo and that Stratum VIII is therefore pre-Solomonic, but this is rather like supposing that St. Paul's cathedral was modelled on a church in the English provinces. In any event it contradicts the tradition that the design of the Temple was handed down to Solomon by David (I Chron 28:11) and by implication was a new design. In fact, such resemblance as there is between the Megiddo temple and Solomon's is slight, since the interior of the former - a midgol temple - consisted of a single hall, whereas the latter comprised three main chambers. As James et al. observe, Solomon's temple more closely resembles the design of Hazor's (in Area H), but here too the similarity is not close enough to suggest that one was the model for the other. Perhaps the most significant feature is the addition of two pillars in front of the forecourts long after the basic structures of the Megiddo and Hazor temples had been laid, since they are reminiscent of the pillars designed by Hiram of Tyre which stood in front of Solomon's temple in Jerusalem (I Ki 7:13ff). However, in Hazor's case, the pillars were added during LB IIA, whereas in Megiddo's case they were added during LB IIB. Thus, while the pillars may have issued from the same architectural inspiration, and Hazor Stratum IB is unlikely to be far removed from the reign of Solomon, it would be unwise to draw precise correlations.

Of more value for chronological purposes is the fact that the cities of Megiddo and Hazor were both rebuilt in the second half of Solomon's reign (I Ki 9:15). In the case of Megiddo this rebuilding must have taken place after the destruction at the end of Stratum VIII (the end of Stratum VIIIA is certainly too late); in the case of Hazor, the corresponding destruction occurred at the end of Stratum IB (Lower City). In both cases, the old city belonged to LB IIA and the new city to LB IIB. Rohl, by contrast, places the transition from LB IIA to LB IIB in the early part of David's reign.

The cache of ivory carvings found in Megiddo VIIIA and described as 'the largest and richest collection of Canaanite carved ivory yet discovered' belongs most comfortably to the reign of Ahab, who reigned from 874/3 to 853/2 immediately after Omri (cp. I Ki 22:39). The possession of costly ivories cannot be regarded as an exclusively Solomonic feature when Israel's nobility were decorating their houses with ivory as late as Jeroboam II (Amos 3:15). Among the Megiddo ivories was a pen-case datable to the reign of Ramesses III - one of the factors which enabled Wood to fix the end of Stratum VIIIA to the end of Iron IA1.
Solomon, we are told, made an alliance with Egypt by marrying the pharaoh’s daughter. This would have been early in his reign—before Year 11, or 961/60 BC (I Ki 3:1, 6:38). If Rohl is right in identifying the building which Gabriel Barkay discovered north of Jerusalem’s Temple Mount with the house which Solomon built for his Egyptian wife, the evidence would tend to indicate that Solomon came to the throne early in the 19th Dynasty—not, as in Rohl’s scheme, the late 18th Dynasty. The design of the capital, for example, (illustrated previous page) comes closest to an example dated to the 19th Dynasty from Soleb.

The stone- and earth-filled terraces which Kenyon identified, despite the chronological incongruence, with Jerusalem’s Millo have been interpreted as forming the substructure of a stronghold or castle. Kenyon dated their construction to ‘about the 13th century’, i.e. LB II, but as a result of re-analysing the pottery Franken and Steiner have found it necessary to adopt the slightly later date of the ‘late thirteenth or the twelfth century’, i.e. LB IIIB or Iron Age. Both these dates are too low for Rohl to be able to claim that he has a synchronism with the early monarchy (Table 3). Note that the biblical record attributes the Millo to the latter half of Solomon’s reign (I Ki 9:15, 24), not to David’s. When Samuel 5:9 states that ‘David built the city round about from the Millo inward’, it is simply designating the starting-point by reference to a feature familiar (and presumably visible) to the writer’s contemporaries. The location of David’s city is problematic, since there are absolutely no indications that the town on the Ophel ridge was occupied between the 17th and the end of the 13th centuries BC.

There are also the Philistines to consider. Since they were subject to Judah in the reign of Jehoshaphat, c. 865 BC, they cannot have been subject to Egypt (II Chron 17:11). Whether they were tributary to any power before Jehoshaphat is not known, but there is reason to think that the ‘Sea Peoples’ who failed to penetrate Egypt itself in Ramesses III’s Year 8 succeeded in wresting the coastland of Palestine from Egypt. In that case, from Ramesses III’s Year 8 until the reign of Jehoshaphat the Philistines enjoyed independence. The events of II Chron 21:16f in 843 BC ensued when the Philistines revolted from the control of Judah, not (as Rohl argues) from Egypt.

The archaeological evidence, therefore, points to no less than nine synchronisms:

Post c.950 BC Megiddo VIIIB – LB IIB
927 BC end of Lachish VII – LB IIB
end of Ramesses II’s reign – end of LB IIB1
end of Ramesses III’s invasion – end of 19th Dynasty
Ramesses III Year 8 – end of LB IIB2
end of Ramesses III’s reign – end of Iron Age IA
880 BC foundation of Samaria – Iron Age IB
860 BC rebuilding of Jericho – beginning of Iron Age II

In the nature of ceramic dating such synchronisms can, to varying degrees, be only approximate. Taken together, however, they yield a consistent picture and suggest a much better alignment of the biblical record with Egyptian history and Palestinian archaeology than the one proposed by Rohl. Accordingly, Ramesses’ Year 8 campaign would have taken place in 972 BC. It was Ramesses who captured Gezer and gave it as a dowry to his daughter when she married Solomon—probably in Year 18 (allowing time for Ramesses to have had a marriageable daughter). Rehoboam’s Year 5, when Shishak invaded Judah, would correspond with Ramesses’ Year 53.

These synchronisms impose tight constraints on the chronology of the end of the 19th Dynasty, since only about 50 years separate the end of Ramesses II’s reign from the end of Ramesses III’s. Whether the relative chronology of this period can be condensed is a matter requiring further research.

Rohl is surely right in believing that Shishak’s defeat of Judah was memorialised on the walls of the Cour de la Cachette at Karnak. The scenes on the west wall seem to correspond with the final strophe of the Israel Stela, in which Merenptah boasts that “Ashkelon is carried off” and “Israel’s seed is not”, and according to Frank Yuroco, the original cartouches on the wall were those of Merenptah. On the other hand, Donald Redford has demonstrated that the pharaoh who took Ashkelon must have been Ramesses II. Ramesses was also the pharaoh who pacified Yanoam and Gezer and made a treaty with the Hittites, achievements which are likewise credited to Merenptah on the stela. Perhaps the easiest explanation of the discrepancy is that Merenptah claimed the glory because he took part in the memorialised campaigns alongside his father; indeed by Year 53 of Ramesses he is likely to have taken the commanding role.

Notes and references


continued on p. 96.

JACF VOL 7

91