

The letters 'JTLL' are rendered in a large, bold, green, sans-serif font. The 'J' is a simple hook. The 'T' has a thick vertical stem and a horizontal top bar. The 'L' has a thick vertical stem and a horizontal bottom bar. The 'L' is repeated twice.

JTLL
JOURNAL OF TRANSFORMATIVE
LEARNING AND LEADERSHIP

Journal of Transformative Learning and Leadership (JTLL)
Volume 1, Number 2, Spring 2024
Digital Edition

An Agathon University Publication in partnership with

Exegetica Publishing

2024

Journal of Transformative Learning and Leadership (JTLL)
Digital Edition
ISSN 2836-1539

Volume 1, Number 2, Spring 2024 – Digital Edition
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The JTLL serves as a scholarly forum for the refinement and dissemination of research pertaining to interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary implications of transformative learning and its applications for leadership in diverse contexts.

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The JTLL espouses the essential idea that learning that transforms is best understood through Biblical descriptions and processes. The JTLL is thus committed to refinement and dissemination of research and applications from the platform of the Biblical worldview in every discipline engaged. The JTLL also is rooted in the idea that those engaging in transformative learning ought also to be well equipped and active in transformative leadership – the application of transformative learning principles in the processes of assisting and guiding other individuals and communities in their own transformative growth.

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ERASURE: EGYPTOLOGICAL CONSIDERATION
IN THE PRESENTATION OF ANCIENT HISTORY
FOR TRANSFORMATIVE EDUCATORS

C.R. Twombly

ABSTRACT

This is a paper applying critical secondary considerations to the historiography of the Egyptian golden age and the events of the exodus as related in the Jewish Torah. This paper considers how the issue of historiographical erasure in Egyptological sources reframes prioritization in the presentation of events related to Hebraic-Egyptian interaction. It also assesses the comparative qualities of the Jewish Torah account, beyond its Divine authorization, to illustrate its credibility for construction of an accurate presentation of the events in question. The goal of this paper is to consider the relationship between the Egyptological resources and the Jewish resources in order to inform transformative educators concerning reliable bases for constructing accurate presentations of history to their learners.

ERASURE

In historical education there is a persistent problem when presenting ancient history between the detailed accounts of the Jewish Torah concerning the exodus and the silence of Egyptological records. The exodus event itself is gargantuan in proportions, shifting the ancient geopolitical landscape of the

levant. And while few would be so bold as to claim that no such event could have occurred, due to the cultural insensitivity such a statement would imply in an age which rightly recognizes and fears the horrors of antisemitism, the silence of accounts in Egyptian records has been cause for concern among historians about the veracity of the Jewish account. In response, transformative educators have frequently attempted to integrate the Jewish accounts into the known Egyptological record in order to provide a synthesized history.¹ These attempts do little to resolve the issue of divergence between the accounts and frequently learners encounter considerable inconsistency between individual educators, even within the same institutions. However, based on a more critical secondary consideration, there is a plain rationale for the silence of the Egyptian record, which lends far greater credence to the Jewish account in its sufficiency to provide an accurate history despite Egyptological silence.

Firstly, we must acknowledge, as a matter of principle, that the Jewish account of the exodus event as it appears in the Torah is beyond the scope of secondary considerations. The human author of the text claims the account comes from divine origin and inspiration, a claim verified by the Divine Son.²

¹ Bietak, Manfred. "The Exodus: Fact or Fiction." Biblical Archeology Society. [Biblicalarchaeology.org](https://www.biblicalarchaeology.org), Oct 27, 2023.

<https://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/biblical-topics/exodus/exodus-fact-or-fiction/>

This article, provided by the Biblical Archeological Society, provides an illustration for the manner in which historians treat the exodus narrative, looking to Egyptian documents and archeology to confirm the events in question, and leaving those issues which the Egyptian resources cannot confirm as unable to be proven. This is often the case in both historiographical and theological fields.

² Luke 24:27

Therefore, the Jewish account lies firmly outside applications of secondary consideration used to determine veracity.³ However, should one choose to subject it to such an examination, it is notable that the Jewish accounts, when compared with the Egyptological accounts, garner greater trust from a reader based on certain features uncommon for the era. The issue of erasure as a feature of ancient historiography in particular, and its seeming absence from the Jewish account, cements this trust in the researcher.

Damnatio Memoriae is a term adopted by some historians to describe the erasure of historical figures and events from historical accounts of their era. The term derives from ancient Roman practice in which a shameful individual was stricken from public records by the Senate.⁴ The term is somewhat unbecoming of other cultures of the ancient world in that while the Romans maintained some record of these individuals stricken otherwise, other ancient cultures practiced holistic erasure of historical figures and events. The Egyptians notably practiced erasure in their histories, a matter known by

³ Lewis Gaddis, John. "The Landscape of History." Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002. Print. 45-48.

According to historian John Lewis Gaddis, the process historians undergo with regard to documents is an intuitive one which begins at interpretation, moves to secondary consideration for verification, then to composition of an account, then to peer review and critique. The second step, verification of the account as communicating an accurate summation of a series of events, is what is referred to here as "secondary consideration." Divine writings do not require such a step being that their veracity has been attested to by a truthful witness - namely, God.

⁴ Davis, Mati and Sara Chopra. "Damnatio Memoriae: On Facing, Not Forgetting, Our Past." sas.upenn.edu. Descentes, Aug 21, 2022. <https://web.sas.upenn.edu/discentes/2020/08/21/damnatio-memoriae-on-facing-not-forgetting-our-past/>

Egyptologists and other ancient histories, but frequently overlooked or softened.⁵

The subject of Egyptian erasure practices seemed implied in the discovery of Tutankhamun, who is absent in the Egyptian list of Kings.⁶ Being a previously unknown ruler of the Egyptians, historians were left to wonder why records did not seem to confirm his existence despite the discoveries made at his tomb. The discovery of Hatshepsut, Egypt's 15th century female ruler, cemented the fact that the Egyptians practiced erasure in their histories regarding figures they did not prefer to remember as more and more evidence of the act of erasure became available.⁷ But it is the discovery of Akhenaten, the only known monotheistic ruler of Egypt, that reveals the great extent of Egyptian erasure. In the case of Akhenaten, his entire dynastic

⁵ Mark, Joshua J. "Amarna Period of Egypt." World History Encyclopedia. World History Publishing, Aug 03, 2017. https://www.worldhistory.org/Amarna_Period_of_Egypt

Some Egyptologists believe they have compensated for these erasures, often treating them as isolated incidents. The extent and repetition of significant erasures however, speaks to a larger cultural practice of erasure that goes beyond isolated usages. For example, see: Richard Wilkinson, "Damnatio Memoriae in the Valley of the Kings," in the Oxford Handbook of the Valley of the Kings; Carney, Elizabeth D. and Sabine Muller. "The Routledge Companion to Women and Monarchy in the Ancient Mediterranean World." Taylor Francis, 2022. Ebook. 44.

⁶ Dinh, Jason P. "We Celebrate King Tut, But He Was Once Erased from Ancient Egyptian History." . Discover Magazine. [discovermagazine.com](https://www.discovermagazine.com/planet-earth/why-are-we-so-obsessed-with-king-tut), Nov 04, 2022. <https://www.discovermagazine.com/planet-earth/why-are-we-so-obsessed-with-king-tut>

⁷ "Hatshepsut - Facts and Information." National Geographic.

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https://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ancient/egyptians/hatshepsut_01.shtml

line was erased from Egyptian histories, which included the figure Tutankhamun, with repeated and extensive erasures surrounding the whole dynastic period.⁸ Further erasures have since been found and documented such that it has become clear to historians that the Egyptians not only erased individuals who were disfavored, but based on the example of Akhenaten may have erased entire dynastic epochs based on their shame regarding specific individuals or events.

Public presentations of Egyptology frequently do not touch on these events. Transformative educators, in their inspection of issues related to the exodus account, such as the date and dynastic placement of these events, have often similarly overlooked the issue of Egyptian erasure entirely.⁹ This is odd considering the clear and present implications of significant erasure obscuring the timeline and dynastic orders of Egyptian historiography would have on all subjects concerned in this field. Being that the Egyptians erased individuals, dynastic successions, and the events thereto related, it is plausible, if not likely, that the account of the exodus and its details could be absent due to erasure.

Taking these two prominent examples of erasure, Akhenaten and Hatshepsut, and assuming for the sake of the argument that these erasures, while significant, are isolated to their time periods, the problem of erasure and the exodus only become more significant. Hatshepsut's reign ended a mere 12

⁸ Carney, 44. Carney and Muller note that Ramses I, Ramses II, and their successors, participated in extensive erasure of the historical records of the dynastic period in question, in addition to the more well known erasures under Horemheb.

⁹ Kaiser, Walt C. "The Pharaoh of Exodus." *Archaeological Study Bible*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012. Print. 98.

years prior to the theoretical early date of the exodus event.¹⁰ Akhenaten's reign happened only sixty years prior to its latest estimated dating and one hundred years following the earliest estimated date.¹¹ The line of his succession which was erased extends to the estimated late date of the exodus. This means that all of our most notable and extensive examples of the erasure practices in Egypt and subjects of their erasure center on the same time estimated period as the exodus event. Therefore, while one may argue erasure was isolated and occurred during a particular moment within Egyptian culture, the period in which significant erasures were practiced is the exodus period. While an argument for undiscovered erasure would be assumptive, the existence and prevalence of erasure in Egyptian record keeping concerning this period of history, along with the existing rationale being the *Damnatio Memoriae* of disfavorable people and events, the issue of erasure provides adequate rationale for viewing the Egyptian records surrounding the period of the exodus with a secondary consideration of greater skepticism.

By contrast, the Jewish record exemplifies characteristics that lend credence to a more generous, good faith reading in its relation of facts. While some historians have attempted to claim that the Exodus account is laden with features of polemic, the far more notable and applicable characteristics are those which cast an unfavorable (even degrading) light on the author and the Jewish people in general. An account more laden with polemic

¹⁰ Tyldesley, Joyce. "Hatshepsut." Encyclopedia Britannica. Britannica.com, Feb 02, 2024.

<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Hatshepsut>

¹¹ Dorman, Peter F. "Akhenaten." Encyclopedia Britannica. Britannica.com, Feb 09, 2024.

<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Akhenaten>

and bias would see Moses and the Israelites jubilant, submissive, and eagerly compliant to their electing deity; and yet that is not what one finds in the Jewish account. Moses is not only hesitant to obey God's commission, but outright refuses it.¹² Moses himself is shown to be a coward,¹³ not a heroic folk figure. Moses's lack of compliance even reaches the point where God conspires to kill Moses.¹⁴ Similarly, the Jewish people do not shout for joy when God comes to remove them from Egypt, but disbelieve God based on Pharaoh's pursuit.¹⁵ Even following the plagues of Egypt, the Israelites show little faith.¹⁶ And their own lack of compliance leads to a declaration by God that He will destroy the Israelites, in similar fashion to the threat to Moses.¹⁷ The Israelites of the Book of Exodus are idolaters, complainers, and God's election seems to be in spite of the people's character. These features lend greater credence to the veracity of the account, especially during its time period and cultural context. One would have expected Moses and the Israelites, acculturated in Egypt, to have practiced the same erasure regarding shameful occurrences. And yet, the text unabashedly records events to the shame of the people and their leadership. One would have similarly assumed that an author whose purpose was to record God's divine election of Israel would have cast the elect in a favorable light, and yet the account's details seem to actively play against its theological purpose. For this reason, it seems far more appropriate to lend greater credence to the Jewish account

¹² Exodus 3:11

¹³ Exodus 4:10-17

¹⁴ Exodus 4:24

¹⁵ Exodus 5:21

¹⁶ Exodus 32

¹⁷ Exodus 32:9-10

over the silence of other heavily redacted and manicured accounts of the period.

John Lewis Gaddis explains that the task of the historian is one which is practiced with intuition. Knowing what sources to trust, when to trust them, and which resources hold higher authority is honed through increased familiarity with the history, culture, and authors involved.¹⁸ As we continue to understand the practices of historiographers in the Egyptian golden age, our abilities to discern when the account can be trusted and when to hold other accounts in precedent sharpens. In the present, based upon the available evidence surrounding the redactive practices of that era in regard to unfavorable characters and events, our view of the Egyptian accounts requires a higher degree of skepticism. This will need to be reflected in transformative education as it applies to presentations of the history of this period and the significant events hereto related. By contrast, the Jewish account, when placed under the scrutiny of secondary criticality, contains features which lend to greater credibility than the alternative.

In application of these considerations, transformative educators may consider presenting the history of the early Egyptian golden age, the exodus, and the establishment of the people of Israel in the levant, with a greater reliance on the Jewish text, fitting Egyptological details within its frame as they overlap, rather than the opposite. Transformative educators may also find it necessary to explicitly discuss the issue of Egyptological erasures to provide learners with transparency regarding the available material and the rationale for greater reliance on the Jewish accounts. Thirdly, transformative

¹⁸ Lewis Gaddis, 45-48.

educators may consider using the example of the exodus account and Egyptological erasure as a case study to introduce learners to the specific complexities related to the cultures of the ancient world and our attempt to recreate the ancient past. Within each application of these considerations, one can assure their learners that the Divinely Authorized account is reliable, having been verified by the Witness who is incapable of assenting to falsehoods; and that when the Divinely Authorized account is subjected to the same scrutiny as the human account its content shows evidence of its credibility.

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