

## The “Alternate Facts” of Passover

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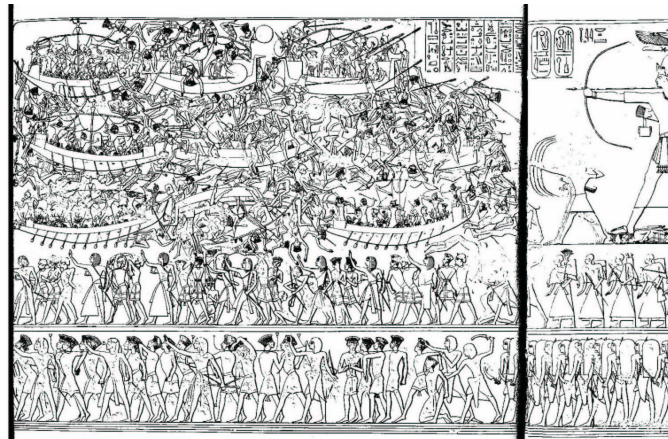
The story of Passover is the singular event which unites Judaism as to its values of empathy, kindness, relationships, community, and education. (Those values are also known as Tikkun Olam – bettering the world.) Those values emphasize the unique Jewish values of dietary sanitation (such as hand washing prior to eating), universal education (such as the literacy of adults and children) and turns those processes into sacred rituals. Passover encourages the positive cultural bonding of young and old and ensures the continuation of those Jewish values.

However, to claim that the Exodus story and the origins of Judaism are anything but metaphorical is delusional. A version of **The Exodus**, according to Richard Elliott Friedman, is that the ONLY “Jews” who left Egypt were the Levites who all had Egyptian names. Those Levites went north from Egypt along the eastern side of the Sinai Peninsula and eventually conquered the innocent shepherds and farmers in the land of Canaan who were already there and already recognized as Israelites by the Egyptians.

Rabbi David S. Sperling carries the cynicism even further in the book **Biblical Origins** in which he uses archeological and cultural evidence to state that not only did the Israelites **NOT** emigrate from Egypt but that Moses was a fabrication of the northern group of Canaanites, who were primarily herdsmen, to justify their control of their neighboring Canaanite farmers. (This concept was commemorated by Jewish composers Rogers and Hammerstein with their song “The Farmer and the Cowman Can’t Be Friends” from **Oklahoma**.)

The unresolved questions (now) are not “where did those Levites come from?” but where did the Levite/Canaanites get the idea of the Exodus, and why is there NO physical documentation for that Exodus? Anything as spectacular as the Ten Plagues and the Exodus from Egypt (especially by a people such as the Egyptians obsessed with recording their own history) should have physical evidence other than the repeatedly redacted/embellished oral history of Judaism. If that many people (600,000 people, or more likely 6,000 people) suddenly left Egypt, surely someone would have noticed. OR was the story of the Exodus a meme plagiarized by the Israelites much as the story of Gilgamesh became Noah, or the story of Sargon of Akkad whose mother was a priestess of Ishtar. She gave birth to Sargon in secret and then set him adrift on the Euphrates River. That meme became the story of Moses.

More likely, the Pharaoh of the Exodus did not remember the contribution to Egyptian wealth by Joseph because it did not happen. Instead, on the wall at the temple at Medinet Habu the Egyptians documented “what really happened” and the Egyptian origin of the Jewish myth.



The Exodus as Jews (and Christians) imagine it. The Exodus as the Egyptians documented it (from the drawings at Medinet Habu).

In 1208 BCE a sea faring army from the Mediterranean called the Sea People (i.e., the “Pirates of the Mediterranean”) attacked Egypt and were defeated. The Sea People were a conglomerate navy from Libya (Carthage), Mediterranean islands such as Crete and Cyprus, and the Philistines. They were probably motivated to abandon their island homes as sea faring traders in the Mediterranean due to repeated earthquakes and volcanic activity.

In 1177 BCE the Sea People attacked again and were again defeated. The details are in Eric Cline’s book “**1177 BC, The Year Civilization Collapsed.**” That second Egyptian victory in 1177 BCE is commemorated on the wall of the temple in Medinet Habu constructed by Rameses III. That mural (about 40 feet high and 60 feet wide) shows the various Sea People (in a multitude of garb) dying on their ships, falling into the sea, and being taken away into slavery by the Egyptians. Rameses III can be seen in the upper right-hand corner of the mural.

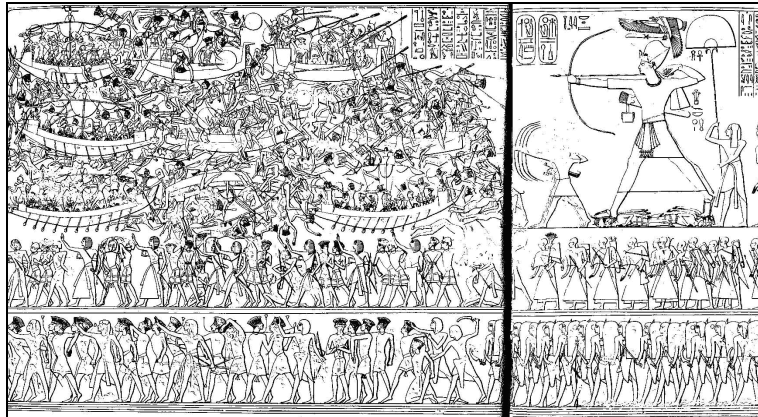
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sea\\_Peoples](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sea_Peoples)

<https://www.somuchmoretosee.com/2015/03/medinet-habu.html>

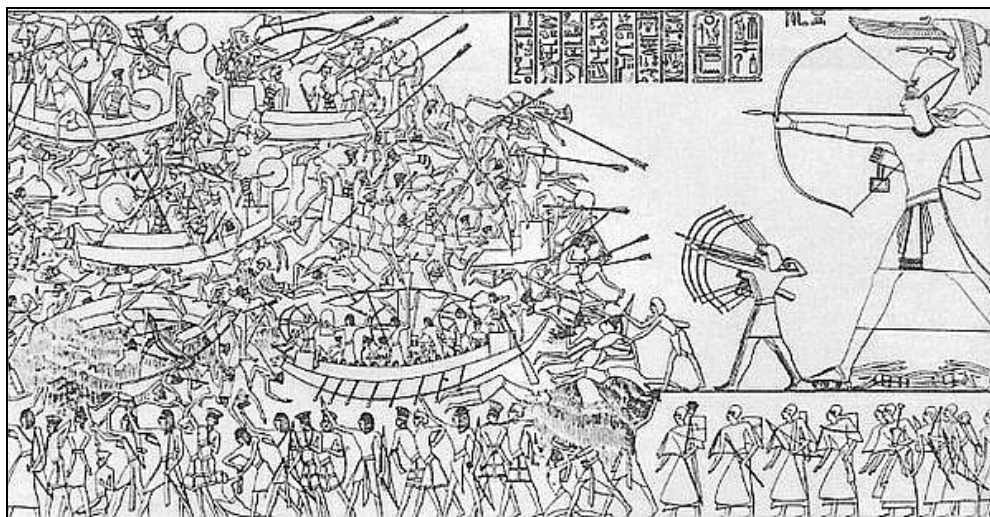
**That Medinet Habu mural is written Egyptian history rather than oral Jewish history.** The timing is strangely coincidental in that it is about the same time that the Israelites claim they began their journey up the Eastern Sinai Peninsula.

My theory is that the Israelites who conquered the Land of Canaan were actually either the defeated survivors of the 1177 BCE Sea People battle, or followers of Akhenaten who fled Egypt to avoid the revival of the Egyptian belief in a multitude of gods after Akhenaten died. Either way, as they were leaving Egypt they stole some gold and went up the nearly deserted eastern side of Sinai to avoid the Egyptian navy and army which controlled the western side. When they reached the innocent farmers and shepherds of the Land of Canaan they used their military skills to conquer them and used the metaphor of the 1177 BCE battle of the Red Sea as their Origin Story as to how and why they “left Egypt.”

It doesn't change the 21<sup>st</sup> century values of Judaism. It just makes the evolution of those values even more amazing.



**1177 BCE – Mural of the Battle of the Egyptians and the Sea People from Medinet-Habu**



**Detail of the mural depicting the battles with the Sea Peoples**



**Close up of an Egyptian ship (on the left) battling with a Philistine ship (on the right).**