



“I Shall Make a Great Nation Out of You”

In this eight-part series, “Awake!” will discuss an outstanding feature of the Bible—its prophecies, or predictions. The articles will help you to answer these questions: Are Bible prophecies merely the work of clever humans? Do these predictions bear the hallmark of divine inspiration? We invite you to weigh the evidence.

DOUBT and skepticism—these attitudes mark our times and reflect the view that some people have of the Bible. Sadly, many have never taken the time to make an honest examination of it. They base their opinion largely on hearsay. We hope you feel differently. If so, please join us on a journey back through time that will help to shed light on facts that testify to the Bible’s authenticity.

Our journey begins with a man who is still honored by Christians, Jews, and Muslims. He was a Hebrew and lived from 2188 to 1843 B.C.E.* His name was Abraham.#

Abraham was the focus of some of the earliest prophecies recorded in the Bible—prophecies that even involve us today. (See the box “A Blessing for ‘All Nations.’”) According to the Bible book of Genesis, these predictions include the following: **(1)** Abraham’s

offspring would become a mighty nation. **(2)** In the process of becoming such, they would be enslaved in a foreign land. **(3)** They would be delivered and would take possession of the land of Canaan. Let us now consider these statements in more detail.

Three Outstanding Prophecies

Prophecy 1: “I shall make a great nation out of you [Abraham].”—Genesis 12:2.

Fulfillment: Abraham’s descendants through Isaac and Jacob (also called Israel) became the ancient nation of Israel—a sovereign state with its own kings.

What history reveals:

● The Bible sets out in some detail Abraham’s family tree, including his descendants through Isaac, Jacob, and Jacob’s 12 sons. The genealogy also includes the

* “B.C.E.” means “Before the Common Era.”

Abraham was first named Abram.

many kings who ruled in Israel or Judah. Of those rulers, 17 are mentioned in independent, non-Biblical sources, harmonizing with the Bible record of how Abraham's descendants through Isaac and Jacob became a nation.*

Prophecy 2: *"Your [Abraham's] seed will become an alien resident in a land not theirs, and they will have to serve them . . . But in the fourth generation they will return here."*
—Genesis 15:13, 16.

Fulfillment: Because of a famine in Canaan, four generations of Abraham's descendants lived in Egypt, first as aliens but later as slaves assigned to make bricks out of clay and

* See 1 Chronicles 1:27-34; 2:1-15; 3:1-24. During the reign of Rehoboam, son of King Solomon, the nation of Israel split into a northern kingdom and a southern kingdom. Thereafter, two kings ruled in Israel simultaneously.—1 Kings 12:1-24.

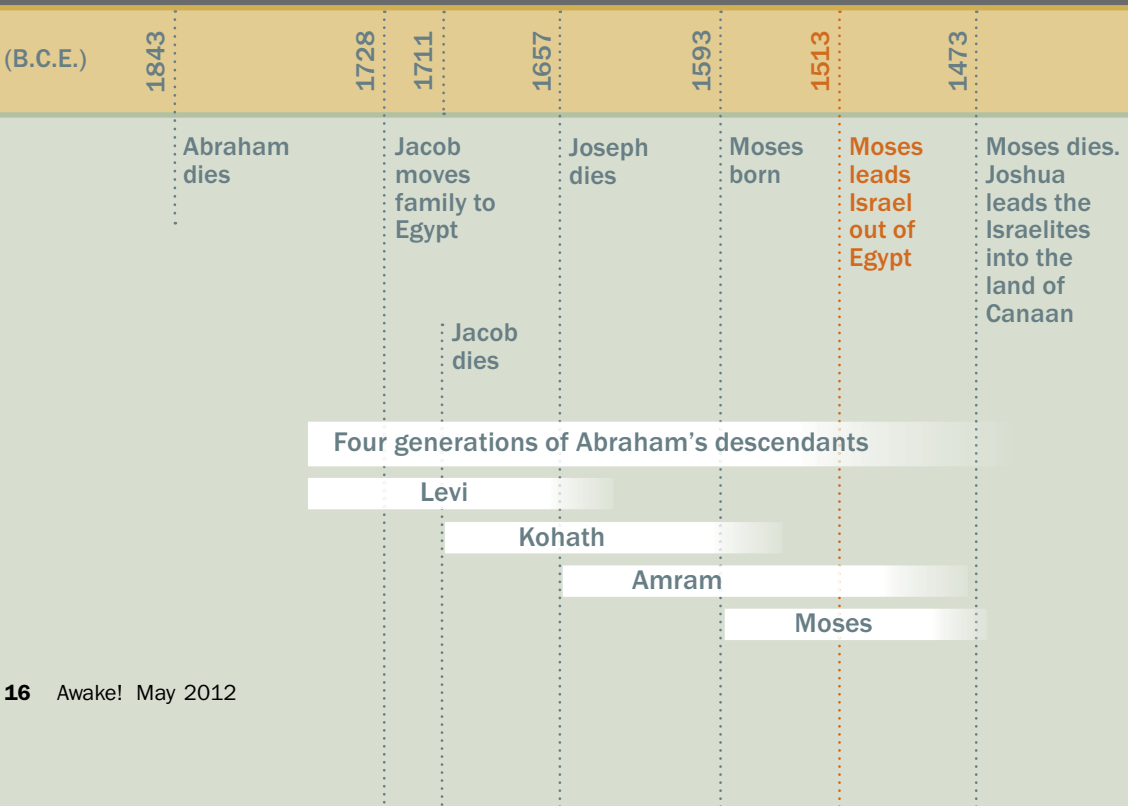
straw. Taking into account just one family line—that of Abraham's great-grandson Levi, who moved to Egypt with his aged father—the four generations are (1) Levi, (2) his son Kohath, (3) his grandson Amram, and (4) his great-grandson Moses. (Exodus 6:16, 18, 20) In the year 1513 B.C.E., Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt.—See the time line below and the box "Precise Timekeeping."

What history reveals:

● According to James K. Hoffmeier, professor of Old Testament and Near Eastern Archaeology, both Egyptian writings and archaeological evidence indicate that Semites (such as the ancient Hebrews) were allowed to enter Egypt with their herds during times of famine. But did the Israelites become slaves there, assigned to make bricks?

● Although Egyptian records do not specifically mention the Israelites, Egyptian

TIME LINE OF ABRAHAM'S SEED



tomb paintings and scrolls confirm that the Egyptians used foreigners to make bricks out of mud and straw. In harmony with the Bible, Egyptian records also show that taskmasters kept written quotas for brick production. (Exodus 5:14, 19) “Egyptian sources,” says Hoffmeier, “confirm that forced labor was imposed on foreigners . . . during the general period when the oppression of the Israelites occurred. In sum, the entry of the ancient Hebrews into Egypt . . . during famine and their subsequent enslavement seems authentic.”

Prophecy 3: *“I will give to . . . your seed . . . the entire land of Canaan.”—Genesis 17:8.*

Fulfillment: Although Moses led the fledgling nation of Israel out of Egypt, Joshua, the son of Nun, led the people into the land of Canaan in 1473 B.C.E.

A BLESSING FOR “ALL NATIONS”

God promised that people of “all nations” would bless themselves by means of Abraham’s seed. (Genesis 22:18) The primary reason God formed Abraham’s offspring into a nation was to produce the Messiah, who would give his life for all mankind.* Therefore, God’s promise to Abraham involves you! John 3:16 says: “God loved the world so much that he gave his only-begotten Son, in order that everyone exercising faith in him might not be destroyed but have everlasting life.”

* Prophecies specifically relating to the identity of the Messiah will be considered in Parts 3 and 4 of this series.

AND ISRAEL’S EXODUS

Time of Judges	1117	1107	1070	1034
		Samuel anoints Saul as Israel’s first king		Solomon begins temple construction
		David born		David becomes king of Israel



This victory stela, with the inscription “House of David,” is one of the sources that mention kings who descended from Abraham and ruled in Israel or Judah

PRECISE TIMEKEEPING

An example of the value of the Bible’s precise timekeeping is demonstrated at 1 Kings 6:1, which points to the time when King Solomon commenced work on the temple in Jerusalem. We read: *“It came about in the four hundred and eightieth year [479 full years] after the sons of Israel came out from the land of*

Egypt, in the fourth year [of Solomon’s reign], in the month of Ziv, that is, the second month, after Solomon became king over Israel, that he proceeded to build the house to Jehovah.”

Bible chronology places the fourth year of Solomon’s reign at 1034 B.C.E. Counting back from that date 479 full years brings us to 1513 B.C.E. as the year of Israel’s Exodus.

What history reveals:

- While archaeologists may differ on dates, “we should speak of an Israelite entry into Canaan, and settlement,” writes K. A. Kitchen, professor emeritus of Egyptology.

- The Bible states that Joshua “burned [the Canaanite city of] Hazor in the fire.” (Joshua 11:10, 11) In the ruins of the city, archaeologists excavated three Canaanite temples that had been completely destroyed. They also found evidence that the city was burned in the 1400’s B.C.E. These facts harmonize with the Bible.

- Another Canaanite city of interest is Gibeon, located about six miles (9.6 km) from Jerusalem. Archaeologists identified the city when they discovered about 30 jar handles engraved with the city’s name. The ancient Gibeonites, unlike the inhabitants of Hazor, made peace with Joshua. He, in turn, put them to work as “drawers of water.” (Joshua 9:3-7, 23) Why this assignment? The descriptions found at 2 Samuel 2:13 and Jer-

emiah 41:12 show that Gibeon was blessed with plenty of water. Thus, in harmony with the Bible account, *Archaeological Study Bible, New International Version* states: “The most conspicuous feature of Gibeon is in fact its abundant water supply: one major and seven minor springs.”

- Literally dozens of people mentioned in the Bible have been corroborated by independent sources. This list, as stated earlier, includes the names of 17 kings who descended from Abraham and ruled in Israel or Judah. Among them are Ahab, Ahaz, David, Hezekiah, Manasseh, and Uzziah. Clearly, the presence of royal dynasties argues powerfully that a nation called Israel both entered the land of Canaan and occupied it.

- In 1896, researchers found the Merneptah Stele in Thebes, Egypt. This relief boasts of Pharaoh Merneptah’s military campaign into Canaan about 1210 B.C.E. The relief provides the first known non-Biblical reference to Israel, further supporting the existence of this nation.

The Advantage of Specifics

As we have seen, the Bible is rich in specific details about people, places, and events. Those specifics enable us to cross-check the Bible against non-Biblical sources, thus helping us to confirm the fulfillment of Bible prophecies. In regard to Abraham and his seed, the facts show us that God’s promises were fulfilled—Abraham’s seed did become a nation, they were enslaved in Egypt, and they later occupied the land of Canaan. All this calls to mind the words of the Bible writer Peter, who humbly acknowledged: “Prophecy was at no time brought by man’s will, but men spoke from God as they were borne along by holy spirit.”—2 Peter 1:21.

In the centuries that followed Israel’s occupation of Canaan, the nation’s history took a drastic turn, leading to tragic consequences. These consequences too were foretold by Bible writers, as our next issue will show.

ABRAHAM—A HISTORICAL PERSON

- Clay tablets from the early second millennium B.C.E. list cities that match the names of Abraham’s relatives. These cities include Peleg, Serug, Nahor, Terah, and Haran.—Genesis 11:17-32.

- At Genesis 11:31, we read that Abraham and his family emigrated from “Ur of the Chaldeans.” The ruins of this city were discovered in southeastern Iraq. The Bible also states that Abraham’s father, Terah, died in the city of Haran, which probably now lies in Turkey, and that Abraham’s wife, Sarah, died in Hebron, one of the oldest still-inhabited cities of the Middle East.—Genesis 11:32; 23:2.