The article seeks to explain the contrast between the central place of the Exodus in Israelite memory and the marginality of the event in history by shifting the focus of discussion from the historical question to the role the Exodus tradition played in shaping the self-portrait and consciousness of early Israelite society. It first examines the oppressive nature of Egyptian rule in Canaan at the time of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Dynasties. It then examines the story of the Exodus in the context of Egypt under the Ramesside and Saitic Dynasties. It suggests that the bondage and the delivery from slavery as related in the biblical story actually took place in Canaan and that the memories were later transferred from Canaan to Egypt. The transfer of memory explains the omission of the memory of the long Egyptian occupation of Canaan in Egypt.
memories of bondage were replaced by the ‘memory’ of the conquest, which reflects the way early Israelite society subjugation, the suffering and the delivery were experienced by all tribal groups that lived at the time in Canaan, hence the centrality of the Exodus tradition within the Israelite society. The article seeks to explain the contrast between the central place of the Exodus in Israelite memory and the marginality of the event in history by shifting the focus of discussion from the historical question to the role the Exodus tradition played in shaping the self-portrait and consciousness of early Israelite society. It first examines the oppressive nature of Egyptian rule in Canaan at the time of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Dynasties. It then examines the story of the Exodus in the context of Egypt under the Ramesside and Saitic Dynasties. It suggests that the bondage and the delivery from slavery as related in the biblical story actually took place in Canaan and that memories were later transferred from Canaan to Egypt. The transfer of memory explains the omission of the memories of the long Egyptian occupation of Canaan in the Bible. The displaced memories of bondage were replaced by the ‘memory’ of the conquest, which reflects the way early Israelite society sought to present its past. The subjugation, the suffering and the delivery were experienced by all tribal groups that lived at the time in Canaan, hence the centrality of the Exodus tradition within the Israelite society.

**Affiliations:** 1: Department of Jewish History, Tel Aviv University, Tel AvivIsraelnaaman.tau@gmail.com

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