

Pithom

Pithom is one of two treasure cities, the second being Raamses, mentioned in Exodus as being built by the Israelites during their slavery in Egypt.¹ It is clear that the Egyptian name *Pithom* existed at least by the Egyptian 22nd Dynasty (c. 945-730 B.C.E.) although some scholars argue that it is found in Egyptian monuments as early as the 19th Dynasty (c. 1306-1223 B.C.E.).² Despite the disagreement over the timing of the creation of Pithom, there is no debate over the meaning of the name *Pithom* – it is “house of Atum” (i.e. – the sun god of Heliopolis).³ It is therefore logical to assume that the city was centered around a temple dedicated to the sun god Atum.

It is believed that the ancient site was discovered by Edouard Naville in 1880, although there is still considerable debate over whether this is truly the site.⁴ The fact that Naville discovered a ruined temple at the site lends support to this conclusion. However, it must be remembered that many Egyptian cities contained temples, and there is no specific evidence that this temple was dedicated to Atum.

Supposing that Naville was correct, it is of interest to note that the large store chambers he uncovered had been built with three kinds of brick, some made of straw, some of reeds or stubble, and some with Nile mud alone. In addition, the bricks bear the cartouche or oval of Ramses II suggesting that he was the Pharaoh of the oppression.⁵ Not only does this give us an idea of who the Pharaoh may have been at the time of the first Passover and subsequent Exodus, but it also gives us an idea of what types of brick the Israelites were forced to make. It also means that some of the actual bricks they made while in slavery may still exist today.

¹ Exodus 1:11

² *Encyclopedia Judaica*

³ Isidore Singer, ed. *The Jewish Encyclopedia* (London: Funk & Wagnalls Co., 1901-06)

⁴ Ibid. ---

⁵ “Bible Dictionary.” *The Holy Bible* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1979) 752