

~ZOAN (234)
(Zo'an)

- An ancient Egyptian city, built seven years after Hebron, hence already in existence around the time of Abraham's entry into Canaan **1943 B.C.E.**
- When they went up into the Negeb, they then came to Hebron. Now Ahiman, Sheshai and Talmai, those born of Anak, were there. Incidentally, Hebron had been built seven years before **Zoan** of Egypt. (**Numbers 13:22**)
- So Abram took Sarai his wife and Lot the son of his brother and all the goods that they had accumulated and the souls whom they had acquired in Haran, and they got on their way out to go to the land of Canaan. Finally they came to the land of Canaan. (**Genesis 12:5**)
- So Abram continued to live in tents. Later on he came and dwelt among the big trees of Mamre, which are in Hebron, and there he proceeded to build an altar to Yehowah. (**Genesis 13:18**)
- The Bible name **Zoan** corresponds to the Egyptian name *d`n-t* of a town located in the northeastern part of the Delta region, about 56 kilometers (35 miles) Southwest of Port Said.
- Better known by its Greek name, **Tanis**, near present-day **San el-Hagar**, it was situated on the branch of the Nile called the Tanitic branch.
- In front of their forefathers he had done marvelously in the land of Egypt, the field of **Zoan**. (**Psalms 78:12**)
- How he put his signs in Egypt itself and his miracles in the field of Zo'an. (**Psalms 78:43**)
- The field of **Zoan** is used parallel **to the land of Egypt** in recounting Yehowah's miraculous acts on behalf of Israel leading up to the Exodus. This has caused some scholars to hold that Moses meetings with Pharaoh took place at **Zoan**.

- Similarly, it has led to the effort to link **Zoan**, **Tanis**, with the city of Rameses, as well as with the city of Avaris, referred to by Manetho in his account about the so-called Hyksos kings.

- Thus, many modern reference works say that Zoan's name changed to Avaris under the Hyksos, then changed to Rameses under the Ramesside dynasty, and finally reverted to Zoan, in the Greek form Tanis.

- It may be noted, however, that the Bible uses the name Zoan consistently as applying before the Exodus, back to Abraham's time, at the time of the Exodus, and as late as the **Eighth, Seventh, and Sixth Centuries B.C.E.**, in the time of the prophets Isaiah and Ezekiel.

- If **Zoan** were the site of Moses' interviews with Pharaoh, this would certainly give some indication as to the starting point of the Exodus route. However, several factors place this view in doubt.

- For Zoan to refer to such a site, the expression, **the field of Zoan**, would have to be viewed, not as simply **paralleling, the land of Egypt**, but as a much more **specific** expression, designating the precise location where the miracles occurred.

- Such a limiting or restrictive sense would not actually fit the case, for the Ten Plagues did not occur in just one part of Egypt, such as a portion of the Delta, but throughout the entire land. This would seem to support the view that **the field of Zoan** is used as a parallel of **the land of Egypt**.

- Those modern scholars who endeavor to present **Zoan**, or, according to their attempted connection, Avaris or Rameses, as Pharaoh's residence at the time of the Exodus also face a lack of Biblical support and agreement in several respects. The Bible shows that Moses' first encounter took place at the edge of the Nile River.

- Then Yehowah said to Moses; Pharaoh's heart is unresponsive. He has refused to send the people away. (**Exodus 7:14**)

- Go to Pharaoh in the morning. Look! He is going out to the water! And you must put yourself in position to meet him by the edge of the Nile River, and the rod that turned into a serpent you are to take in your hand. (**Exodus 7:15**)

- **Zoan, Tanis**, is not on the actual river but at the terminus of one of the ancient branches forking off from the main stream. In attempting to locate the city of Rameses at the same place as **Zoan**, or **Tanis**, they also pass over the fact that **Zoan** was already a city in Abraham's time, whereas the Biblical Raamses, Rameses, [NW], began to be built by the Israelites in Egypt about 400 years later, unless by **building** the Bible means, **building up**, or strengthening.
- So they set over them chiefs of forced labor for the purpose of oppressing them in their burden-bearing, and they went **building** cities as storage places for Pharaoh, namely, Pithom and Raamses. (**Exodus 1:11**)
- These scholars would make **Zoan, Avaris-Rameses**, as they identify it, the Egyptian capital at the time of the Exodus, whereas the Bible identifies **Rameses** as merely a **storage place**.
- And, in holding that Ramses II was the Pharaoh of the Exodus because of his claim that he was the builder of the city of Rameses, or, more accurately, a place called Per-Ramses, they ignore the fact that the building of the Biblical Rameses began 80 years or more before the Exodus, before the birth of Moses.
- So they set over them chiefs of forced labor for the purpose of oppressing them in their burden-bearing, and they went building cities as storage places for Pharaoh, namely, Pithom and Raamses. (**Exodus 1:11**)
- And the child grew up. Then she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, so that he became a son to her, and she proceeded to call his name Moses and to say; It is because I have drawn him out of the water. (**Exodus 2:10**)
- Whereas historians credit Ramses II with a rule of only about 66 years.

See Also RAAMSES, RAMESES

- The question remains, then, why **the field of Zoan** is apparently used to parallel **the land of Egypt** with regard to Yehowah's performance of miraculous acts.
- While a possible connection with Pharaoh's court cannot be completely discounted, it is also entirely possible that the great age of

the city caused the psalmist to use **Zoan** in such a way, it apparently being one of the earliest cities founded in Egypt.

- Its use, if this was the case, might be similar to the use of **Plymouth Rock**, as representing the early colonizing of the United States.
- Or it may be due to its prominence and its location at the entrance to Egypt for those coming from Palestine, perhaps being the first major city Jacob's family encountered when coming into Egypt.
- Those who are setting out to go down to Egypt and who have not inquired of my own mouth, to take shelter in the stronghold of Pharaoh and to take refuge in the shadow of Egypt! (**Isaiah 30:2**)
- And the stronghold of Pharaoh must become even for you men a reason for shame, and the refuge in the shadow of Egypt a cause for humiliation. (**Isaiah 30:3**)
- For his princes have come to be in **Zoan** itself, and his own envoys reach even Hanes. (**Isaiah 30:4**)
- Lying as it does near the northern extremity of Egypt, its **field** might even figuratively refer to all the Nile Valley stretching to the South thereof, as far as the southern boundary of Egypt.

See Also HANES

- There is no doubt as to the importance of the city of **Zoan** or **Tanis**, particularly with respect to commercial trade and religious structures.
- There is evidence of much royal building there from the time of the early **dynasties** of Egyptian kings onward. A great temple was constructed, measuring about 305 meters (1,000 feet) long.
- Pharaoh Ramses II set up an immense monolithic statue of himself at Tanis measuring some 28 meters (92 feet) in height and weighing over 800 metric tons.
- Assyrian Kings Esar-haddon and Ashurbanipal refer to **Zoan**, called *Sa'nu* or *Si'nu* in the cuneiform inscriptions, as a royal city under a prince.

- Before them, the prophet Isaiah, in the divine pronouncement against Egypt, had referred to **the princes of Zoan**, and classed them with those of Noph or Memphis, thereby pointing up also the political importance of **Zoan**.
- The pronouncement against Egypt; Look! Yehowah is riding on a swift cloud and coming into Egypt. And the valueless gods of Egypt will certainly quiver because of him, and the very heart of Egypt will melt in the midst of it. (**Isaiah 19:1**)
- The princes of **Zoan** are indeed foolish. As regards the wise ones of Pharaoh's counselors, their counsel is something unreasonable. How will you men say to Pharaoh; I am the son of wise ones, the son of kings of ancient time? (**Isaiah 19:11**)
- Where, then, are they, the wise men of yours, that they may now tell you and that they may know what Yehowah of armies has counseled concerning Egypt? (**Isaiah 19:12**)
- The princes of **Zoan** have acted foolishly, the princes of Noph have been deceived, the keymen of her tribes have caused Egypt to wander about. (**Isaiah 19:13**)
- Tirhakah, the Ethiopian ruler over Egypt and a contemporary of Isaiah, is said to have used **Zoan** or **Tanis**, as an administrative base for northern Egypt.
- The Assyrian conquest of Egypt by Esar-haddon and Ashurbanipal proved the foolishness of the counselors from **Zoan**.
- The princes of **Zoan** have acted foolishly, the princes of Noph have been deceived, the keymen of her tribes have caused Egypt to wander about. (**Isaiah 19:13**)
- Then, in about **591 B.C.E**, the prophet Ezekiel warned of another conquest by Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar, with a **fire being set in Zoan**.
- Now it came about in the twenty-seventh year, in the first month, on the first day of the month, that the word of Yehowah occurred to me, saying; (**Ezekiel 29:17**)
- And the word of Yehowah continued to occur to me, saying; (**Ezekiel 30:1**)

- This is what the Sovereign Lord Yehowah has said; I will also cause the crowd of Egypt to cease by the hand of Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon. (**Ezekiel 30:10**)
- And I will bring Pathros to desolation and **set a fire in Zoan** and execute acts of judgment in No. (**Ezekiel 30:14**)
- **Zoan** or **Tanis**, evidently recovered, however, and continued to be the major Delta city of Egypt until the time of Alexander the Great. Thereafter the new city of Alexandria robbed **Zoan, Tanis**, of its commercial importance, and it steadily declined.