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Killing Pharaohs in Exodus: The Anonymity of the Egyptian Kings, the Deconstruction of Their Individuality, and the Egyptian Practice of *Damnatio Memoriae*

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Abstract: Scholars have understood the anonymity of the Egyptian kings in Exodus in various ways. Some argue that the Israelite author intentionally anonymized the foreign kings for possible rhetorical effects. Others believe that the anonymity was a simple case of inadvertent forgetting. Although these approaches have merit in contributing to a more robust understanding of the anonymity of Pharaohs, a different approach may also have something to offer in grasping a fuller understanding of the absence of the Pharaonic names. In this regard, this article seeks to examine the anonymity in conversation with the Egyptian practice of *damnatio memoriae* (i.e., damnation of memory). According to this method, the proto-Israelite transmitters of the Exodus traditions deliberately obliterated the names of the Egyptian kings for the purpose of terminating their existence and memory from the proto-Israelite community.

Keywords: anonymity; Exodus; *damnatio memoriae*; Pharaoh



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1. Introduction

There are three dominant characters in the book of Exodus: the Hebrew God (YHWH), the Israelite leader (Moses), and the Egyptian kings (Pharaohs) (Duvall and Hays 2021, p. 24). However, as many scholars correctly point out, Exodus reveals a bias toward and against these characters in terms of their proper names. That is, the Hebrew God and the Israel leader are not only mentioned by their names but also receive specific onomastic explanations (Exod. 2:10; 3:14–15), whereas the Egyptian kings remain completely nameless throughout the book.¹ Given that the Hebrew Bible “does not always shy away from identifying foreign kings, and in later biblical books names of several Pharaohs (Shishak and Neco) appear” (Meyers 2005, p. 34),² the Pharaonic anonymity in Exodus offends this general observation. This issue becomes even more puzzling when one considers that two relatively unimportant characters—the midwives (Shiphrah and Puah; Exod. 1:15)—are named (Palmer 2000, p. 236; Bailey 2007, p. 69; Duvall and Hays 2021, p. 25; Gnuse 2011, pp. 48–49).³ The oddity can be further depicted if one takes the view that these midwives are Egyptian in nationality (Muchiki 1999, p. 221; Hoffmeier 2005, p. 226; Houtman 1993, pp. 251–52; Bills 2021, pp. 89–90).⁴

In addition, when one takes a holistic approach to Exodus, the use of the simple generic title “Pharaoh” to refer to the two distinct Egyptian anonymous kings obscures their distinctions as individuals. In fact, Exodus seems to virtually merge their identities into a single figure (Duvall and Hays 2021, p. 24; Janzen 2000, p. 3).⁵ In this respect, Stefan Kürle (2013, p. 61, n. 142) remarks, “The Pharaohs of the book of Exodus are interchangeable, for none of them carries a name. They are nothing but typical characters, important only in their hardheaded opposition to Yhwh.” Such a deconstruction of the boundaries of two individuals, in addition to their anonymity, further hides their identity from readers. Why does Exodus do this?

Several answers have been put forth. First, some scholars view that the Pharaonic namelessness was simply a case of inadvertent forgetting (Enns 2021, p. 11; cf. Hendel 2001, p. 604; Noth 1962, p. 26; Hyatt 1971, p. 58). Yet, the convention of naming the two (Egyptian?) midwives in Exodus 1:15 suggests that a different approach is possible, and that the anonymity of Pharaoh is intentional. Second, others focus on the rhetorical functions of anonymity in Exodus. According to this approach, the Israelite author intentionally anonymized the Egyptian kings in order to deliver the rhetorical affects (e.g., unimportance, profession, and paradigmatic role). However, while this approach sheds some lights on the namelessness of Pharaohs it still fails to account for the deconstruction of the respective individualities of the two Pharaohs in Exodus. Third, a more plausible explanation comes from James K. Hoffmeier (1997, p. 111), who suggests—without developing the argument further—that the Pharaonic anonymity is probably related to the New Kingdom practice of *damnatio memoriae* (“damnation of memory”), which was an Egyptian pejorative rite symbolically equivalent to the eternal annihilation of the name holder. According to this approach, the anonymity of Pharaohs in Exodus was the result of deliberate forgetting on the part of the Israelite author. Hoffmeier’s suggestion is worth developing further because it not only fits the context of Exodus but also accounts for both the anonymity of the Pharaohs and the deconstruction of their identity.

Therefore, the purpose of this article is to pursue this enquiry. I will first deal with a few methodological considerations. Second, I will interact with some of the rhetorical functions of anonymity in literature that some scholars have relied on to deal with the Pharaonic namelessness in Exodus. Doing so will show that such a literary approach cannot fully account for the issues raised in this article, thereby demanding an additional piece of information. Third, I will introduce the Egyptian practice of *damnatio memoriae*, thereby laying the groundwork for the following section. Fourth, I will examine the anonymity of Pharaohs and the deconstruction of their individuality through the lens of the rite of *damnatio memoriae*. Fifth and finally, I will conclude that the Egyptian practice provides an additional piece of information to the question concerning the anonymity and identity deconstruction of the Pharaohs in Exodus.

2. Methodological Considerations

In this section, I will deal with three methodological concerns related to my approach: (1) the composition of Exodus; (2) ancient Israel as a text-supported memory-based oral performing community; and (3) the synchronic approach to Exodus. Since each mentioned topic has been a matter of a debate, a full treatment of these issues is outside the scope of this article. Hence, I will briefly lay out the methodological approach that I follow in this article.

2.1. The Composition of Exodus

As for the date of the composition of Exodus, I view that the composition of the Pentateuch, however multilayered, gradually took place between the Monarchic period and the Persian period.⁶ Recently, Matthieu Richelle (2016, pp. 556–94) has challenged the oft-postulated view that Israelites in the 10th and 9th c. BCE were unable to produce significant textual output—an argument that arose from two bases: (1) a lack of Hebrew inscriptions from the mentioned periods; and (2) a lack of necessary socio-economic resources until the 8th c. BCE. Drawing evidence from current research on the archaeology and epigraphy of the southern Levant, Richelle convincingly presents evidence that the conditions for the production of lengthy texts were already present in the 10th and 9th c. BCE. Based on this finding, he concludes (2021, p. 38), “In sum, from an epigraphical point of view, the existence of a Hebrew literature in Iron Age IIA is *possible*; from an historical point of view, grounded in analogies, it is *plausible*.” That Israelites in the Monarchic period were able to produce significant textual output allows us to stretch the compositional window of Exodus from the Monarchic period to the Persian period.

2.2. Ancient Israel as a Text-Supported Memory-Based Oral Performing Community

Recently, a growing number of scholars have recognized that the traditional dichotomy between orality and literacy is an incorrect division in understanding ancient scribalism (Jason 1990, p. 55).⁷ Elsie Stern (2015, p. 241) avers, “[I]t is now clear that in societies with low rates of literacy, . . . the primary mode of cultural production is not exclusively oral or written but is a hybrid oral-literary mode.” According to this view, the advent of writing and the increasing use of writing did not replace orality with literacy in ancient Israel. Rather, orality and literacy co-existed alongside each other as complementary means of transmitting ideas and thoughts. As Miller (2011, pp. 20–21; cf. Campbell and O’Brien 2000, pp. 6–7; 2005, pp. xiii–xiv, 6–7) opines, “Not only should oral tradition and written literature not be considered unrelated phenomena, but writing often supports oral tradition and vice versa.”

In his groundbreaking study, David M. Carr (2005, pp. 36, 229–30, 241–44, 268–69) has further demonstrated that memory played a significant role in this hybrid oral-literary mode of communication in relation to text production and oral transmission. Carr convincingly argues that scribes in antiquity frequently relied on memory as the source of the productions of the texts and the transmissions of the oral messages (2005, pp. 159–62; 2011, pp. 17–33; cf. Teeter 2014, pp. 7–33). In this mechanism, the texts functioned to support scribes’ memory (mnemonic aids) and oral performance (reference points) (Carr 2005, pp. 159–61; 2011, pp. 3–9). In this regard, hearing (aurality), speaking (orality), and remembering (memory) functioned together in ancient scribalism. John Screnock (2017, pp. 80–81) succinctly remarks how such a mechanism would have worked:

The words of the text had an existence in the minds of scribes transmitting manuscripts in two potential ways: smaller segments of the text were held in short term memory between reading the *Vorlage* and writing the words on the new copy, and the entire text accounting to an oral reading tradition was sometimes held in long term memory. It was on the basis of these mental versions of the text that the new copy was made.

In this regard, ancient scribes did not merely copy texts. Rather, they were “more like performers than bots—autonomous programs (on the Internet) designed to flawlessly repeat specific tasks—because *they integrate[d] their personal memory of both the spoken word and the written text*” (Miller 2019, p. 32; italics added). Of course, Carr (2011, p. 34) emphasizes that ancient scribes did not memorize every text they wrote. Instead, the writing-supported memorization most often occurred in texts “that [were] deemed by a certain group to be a heritage to be transmitted from one generation to another by performance and memory” (2011, pp. 5, 34–35). In this light, the Pentateuch, which was highly valued by the ancient Israelite community, is a good example of such literature.⁸ In sum, according to this mechanism: (1) the primary means of transmitting culturally significant material was oral communication; (2) the primary repository of the messages was memory; and (3) the primary mnemonic aid was text. Thus, the three parts of the triad—speaking (orality), hearing (aurality), and remembering (memory)—were inseparably interconnected to one another vis-à-vis text production and oral transmission.

Taking this factor into account, I view that the Exodus traditions before the early Monarchic period were circulated and transmitted largely via *memory-based oral performance*—though I do not deny the possibility that some of the traditions might have been briefly written down as mnemonic aids. Once the major portion of the Pentateuch was composed, the means of its circulation and transmission likely turned into *text-supported memory-based oral performance*.

2.3. The Synchronic Approach

As for the methodological approach to Exodus, I choose the holistic (synchronic) approach. While scholars have dominantly taken diachronic approaches to the Pentateuch over the last hundred years,⁹ such approaches have been supplemented by synchronic

analysis for the following reasons: advocates of the former approach (1) “find too many overly speculative and unsupported hypotheses in diachronic analysis” and (2) deny that “diachronic concerns should eclipse synchronic analysis” (Smith 1997, p. 176). Hence, a number of scholars are skeptical of the Documentary Hypothesis, supposing that it is not a safe starting point for the exegesis of the Pentateuch (Schmid 2014, p. 33).

The book of Exodus also benefits from the synchronic approach. Since the mentioned text, however multilayered, already recontextualizes several distinct strands of tradition into a new story, a considerable number of scholars have begun to utilize synchronic methodologies with respect to the redacted text, focusing on the interpretation of the theological messages that the final editor embedded in the text.¹⁰ In this article, without denying the value of diachronic methodology, I will undertake a holistic reading of the Exodus narrative, interacting with the received form of the text (i.e., the Masoretic Text as set out in *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*).

Having addressed the methodological considerations relevant to this study, I will now engage with the rhetorical functions of anonymity in literature and Exodus. This task will show that such a literary approach cannot fully account for the issues raised in this article.

3. The Rhetorical Functions of Anonymity in Literature and Exodus

Thomas Docherty (1983, p. 48) points out that one approach to characterization in narrative views proper names as expressing something of the essence of the one nominated. According to this view, the names convey “the entire significance or existence of a character in a self-integrated whole” (Burt 2020, p. 30). David R. Beck (1997, p. 10) lists the functions of the names in narrative as follows:

The name of a character in a narrative has a greater significance than merely to collect all the data the text previously provided into a neatly bound and labeled package. Naming a character is an act of distinction that sets that character apart from the surrounding narrative environment, other characters, and the reader. The previous traits, actions, feelings, and conversations of the character are gathered and contained in the proper name. According to this realist or essentialist understanding of nomination, the name is the unchanging identifying mark of a character that collects the attributes and characteristics the text reveals.

Adele Reinhartz (1998, p. 8) recognizes that this “realist or essentialist” approach generally aligns with the biblical narrative in that the narrative utilizes the proper name to define a character. Namely, the proper name “ascribes unity and a full identity to the character and gives the reader a convenient way of referring to the figure and distinguishing it from others.” According to this view, the name is equivalent to the name holder.

Significantly, Reinhartz emphasizes that “[t]he centrality of the proper name to the perception and construction of identity implies the *converse*: that the absence of the proper name contributes to the effacement, absence, veiling, or suppression of identity” (1998, p. 9; italics added). With this view in mind, one can juxtapose the textual absence of Pharaohs’ names in Exodus with the effacement of their identities. If so, then this observation raises a serious question: Why does Exodus anonymize Pharaohs? From a literary point of view, anonymity can serve many functions in a narrative. Given that Exodus is (ancient) literature, examining the namelessness of Pharaohs through the lens of narrative theory may shed light on the issue of our interest. For this reason, many scholars attempt to understand the anonymity of Pharaohs in conversation with the rhetorical functions of anonymity. In this section, I will engage with three major functions of anonymity and raise some of questions related to this approach.

3.1. Indicating an Unimportance of the Unnamed

Anonymity could function as a rhetorical technique that signals the unimportant and passive role of the unnamed (Option 1). In his influential work, Ernest J. Revell confines himself primarily to three biblical books (i.e., Judges, Samuel, and Kings) and analyzes “the way individual characters are referred to or addressed in the biblical narratives” (1996,

p. 10). As a part of his research he investigates the rhetorical functions of anonymity. According to Revell (1996, p. 51), “an individual who was not named was not sufficiently prominent in the narrative, or in the history of the community to warrant specific identification.” Reinhartz (1998, p. 19) similarly remarks, “The majority of unnamed biblical characters are obscure, incidental figures, who make only fleeting appearances in the narrative.” According to this view, anonymous figures in biblical narratives were considered to be unimportant and passive individuals whose major role was simply to divert readers’ focus from the anonymous characters to the named characters (Beck 1993, p. 147; 1997, pp. 11, 22; Reinhartz 1993, pp. 120–21, 127). Following this line of reasoning, Duane A. Garrett (2014, p. 166; cf. Gnuse 2011, pp. 48–49) notes that the anonymity of the other players in Exodus makes the named prominent. James K. Hoffmeier (2021, p. 104) also avers, “The narrative demonstrates throughout that YHWH is the God of the exodus; the crucial matter is not the identity of Pharaoh(s), and the omission of the king’s name helps make that point.”

However, the Pharaonic anonymity in Exodus does not seem to fall into this category (Option 1) because Pharaohs are ubiquitous, prominent, and the primary actants in Exodus (Palmer 2000, p. 236). Stated differently, the anonymous Pharaohs take up a significant amount of textual space and have a sizable narrative function. Commenting on the second Pharaoh in Exodus, William A. Ford (2007, p. 45) notes, “[T]he new Pharaoh is introduced last in 5:1–18. He is not given any description by the narrator, and is as nameless as his predecessor. Nevertheless, he introduces himself quite well in his initial words and actions in response to YHWH’s demand, made to him here for the first time.” In fact, both Pharaohs are one of the “major actors in long series of pericopes” along with YHWH and Moses (Reinhartz 1998, p. 139). That these Pharaohs are “the main antagonist[s] to YHWH” who propel the narrative forward sets them apart from most of the other anonymous characters in Exodus who are unimportant and passive (Schmid 2014, p. 42 n. 51). Hence, Option 1 is not the best explanation for the anonymity of Pharaohs and the deconstruction of their individuality.

3.2. *Depicting the Professional Role of the Unnamed*

Anonymity could also direct readers to focus on the professional role of the unnamed (Option 2). Reinhartz (1998, p. 14) points out that anonymous characters are sometimes defined in terms of their professions, such as “priest,” “prophet,” or “Pharaoh.” In this case, the anonymous characters’ individuality is substituted or “compromised by the generic nature of the role designations themselves” (1998, p. 12). Accordingly, anonymity “directs us to their role designations and the ways in which their behavior fulfills or . . . fails to measure up to the demands inherent in their professional designations” (1993, p. 132; 1998, p. 81).

Following this line of reasoning, Douglas K. Stuart (2006, pp. 23–24) understands the anonymity of Pharaohs in Exodus as “a literary device on Moses’ part, a way of reducing the greatest man in the greatest national power of the day to a mere office via a somewhat generic title.” Similarly, Melissa A. Jackson (2012, p. 68; cf. Siebert-Hommes 1994, p. 66) opines that the namelessness of Pharaoh is a literary device “reducing his identity to (1) his job title and (2) his words/actions.” Godfrey Ashby (1998, p. 9) goes further, suggesting that the use of the generic designation “Pharaoh” to refer to the Egyptian kings draws attention to their divine role vis-à-vis YHWH. It is a well-known Egyptian conception that Pharaoh was divine in that he was considered to be “the incarnation of Egypt’s chief god” (Luft 2001, pp. 143–45; Dunand and Zivie 2004, p. 100; Batto 2015, p. 194).¹¹ As such, Pharaoh was responsible for maintaining cosmic order by driving out threats that arose against Egypt (Kemp 2018, p. 24; Teeter 2011, p. 4; Hornung 1982, p. 214). Based on this cultural belief, Ashby (1998, p. 9; cf. Reinhartz 1998, p. 140) suggests that the anonymity of the Egyptian kings in Exodus is a literary device signaling that “a contest between the divinity of Pharaoh and that of the God of the Hebrews is about to take place.” If this is the case, then as the subsequent narrative unfolds readers soon find out that YHWH

overpowers Pharaoh, revealing his lack of success in fulfilling the terms and requirements of his professional role.

I find this view to be appealing but still insufficient for two reasons. First, this approach only works well with the second Pharaoh in Exodus. As mentioned earlier, there are at least two distinct Pharaohs in Exodus: the Pharaoh of the oppression narrative (Exod. 1–2) and the Pharaoh of the exodus narrative (Exod. 3–15). While the exodus narrative clearly depicts the latter as waging a divine match against YHWH, the oppression narrative does not portray the former as such. The anonymity of the former Egyptian king directs readers neither to his religious role as the sun-god incarnate nor to the contest between him and YHWH. Second, this approach also fails to explain why Exodus blurs and even merges the two distinct kings by addressing them by their title alone.

3.3. Highlighting the Paradigmatic Role of the Unnamed

Finally, anonymity could function as a paradigmatic device that allows the unnamed to appear as a representative not only of a specific figure but also of all such figures (Option 3). Reinhardt (1998, p. 188) avers, “The generic nature of role designations lends a paradigmatic quality to the unnamed characters, even when personal identity is very much apparent.” With this view in mind, one can argue that the anonymity of Pharaohs marks them out as a negative *type* of every oppressor of Israel (Pharaoh 1) and challenger of YHWH (Pharaoh 2).

Many scholars seem to accept this approach, understanding the anonymous Pharaohs as such paradigmatic or symbolic figures (Creach 2013, p. 81; Janzen 2000, p. 37; Fretheim 1991, p. 26; Stargel 2018, p. 133; Bills 2021, p. 83). For example, Ford (2007, p. 120) notes, “Pharaoh is portrayed as the oppressor of Israel, whose name is never given. Whatever the reason for this anonymity, one effect of it is to make him an almost symbolic figure of oppression, indeed evil to the reader.” Carol Meyers (2005, p. 34) similarly suggests that the unnamed Pharaohs who subjugated “the Israelites can represent all such oppressors.” Ronald Hendel (2001, pp. 604–5), who views that the early Israel community consisted of two different groups of people (one who escaped from slavery in Egypt and the other who did not immigrate from Egypt), argues, “[F]or the exodus story to take root in early Israel it was necessary for it to pertain to the remembered past of settlers who did not immigrate from Egypt. By leaving the name of Pharaoh a blank, the memory of Egyptian oppression could extend to all who had felt the oppression of Pharaoh at any time in the remembered past.” In sum, according to this view, the namelessness of Pharaohs allows readers to apply the message of Exodus to their own experience (Hendel 2001, p. 608).

While this view accounts for the anonymity of each Pharaoh, it is not without problems. First, as Reinhardt (1998, p. 189) admits, even “named characters may also be paradigmatic for the reader,” although “the presence of the proper name ascribes definitive character so that paradigmatic quality and permeability are secondary to the uniqueness of the individual instead of in tension with them as with anonymous characters.” In other words, Pharaohs in Exodus do not need to be anonymous in order to exhibit a paradigmatic or symbolic quality. Second, Option 3 fails to explain why the two distinct Pharaohs were merged into one. Given that the narrational focus on the first Pharaoh falls on his negative actions against Israel, whereas the narrational focus on the second Pharaoh falls on his inadequate attitudes against YHWH, it might have been beneficial for readers to discern some distinctions between these two kings.

3.4. Summary

In this section, I have interacted with three most common functions of anonymity in literature and their possible connections to Exodus. As observed, the author of literary works uses anonymity to depict the following characteristic of the unnamed: (1) unimportance; (2) profession; and (3) paradigmatic role.

According to my judgment, Option 1 does not shed light on the issues raised in this article, whereas Options 2 and 3 are *partially* helpful in that they provide some explanations

that could account for the anonymity of the Pharaohs. According to Option 2, the anonymity of the second Pharaoh directs readers to his religious role as the sun-god incarnate. In doing so, the epic battle between the god of Egypt (i.e., Pharaoh) and the god of the Hebrews (i.e., YHWH) is highlighted. However, this approach only works well with the second Pharaoh in Exodus because the religious role of the first Pharaoh is not portrayed in the same manner as in the case of the second. According to Option 3, the namelessness of Pharaohs depicts them as paradigmatic figures, allowing readers to apply the message of Exodus to their own experience. However, given that named characters may also function in paradigmatic roles, the value of viewing Option 3 as the ultimate reason for anonymity diminishes. Most significantly, Options 2 and 3 fail to account for the deconstruction of the boundaries between the respective individualities of the two Pharaohs in Exodus.

Taking these factors into account, then, one might consider that there must be an *additional* reason that can address the issues raised in this article. And in fact, as I will show in the next section, the Egyptian practice of *damnatio memoriae* provides an additional explanation for the mentioned issues. To be clear, I am not arguing that the theories of other scholars dealt with above are necessarily the opposite of what I am proposing. Rather, I am arguing that the Egyptian practice of *damnatio memoriae* provides an additional piece of information, filling the gap that other theories cannot account for. Hence, according to my approach, the anonymity of Pharaohs in Exodus and the deconstruction of the boundaries between their respective individualities show that Pharaohs are unimportant, paradigmatic, reducible, and also subjected to erasure (i.e., *damnatio memoriae*).

4. The Egyptian Concept of Names and the Rite of *Damnatio Memoriae*

4.1. The Egyptian Conception of Names and the Quest for Immortality

The ancient Egyptians considered name (*rn*) to be one of the vital components of an individual, along with body (*ḥwt*), double (*k3*), “soul” (*b3*), and shadow (*šwt*) (Doxey 2001, p. 490; Assmann 2005, pp. 14, 87–88, 112). For this reason, the ritual texts of the Osiris chapels at Dendra mention these components in the following manner:

I bring you the capitals of the nomes: they are your body,
They are your *ka*, which is with you.
I bring you your name, your *ba*, your shadow,
Your form (*qj*), and your image: the capitals of the nomes.

Since this belief was central to Egyptian culture, all strata of people, whether royal or not, held that these parts were essential to the human being (Isler and Arnold 2001, p. 60). Although it might be beneficial to deal with all of these components individually, I will confine myself to the most relevant element of our study: the proper name.

The ancient Egyptians thought that a name possessed special importance because it expressed or revealed “the deepest sense” or “true nature” of the person (Pinch 1994, p. 58; Ikram 2007, p. 342; Bell 1997, p. 130; Budge 2004, p. 334). This view often extended to the idea that the proper name was equivalent to the person who bore it. The Egyptian deities, animals, and even inanimate objects were not exceptions to this general belief (Ruiz 2001, p. 104; Pinch 1994, p. 58; Ikram 2007, p. 342).¹² Interestingly, the Egyptians believed that their essences might survive death and that such survival “depended in part on having one’s name remembered and repeated” (Pinch 1994, p. 147; Doxey 2001, p. 490). Simply put, as long as the deceased’s name is circulated on earth, the essence of the name holder was believed to continue to exist. For example, Coffin Text (CT) 334 (IV, 180) contains the deceased’s hope that his name would continue to remain on earth with the living (Faulkner 1973, p. 2:258). A spell found in the tomb of Nefersekheru also contains the same wish (Assmann 2005, p. 256). The author of CT 316 (IV, 109) expressed his wish that his name would not be wiped out after his death (Faulkner 1973, p. 2:239). CT 307 (IV, 63) also contains a similar hope that the deceased’s name “will not perish” (Faulkner 1973, p. 2:226). The kings of Egypt—Pharaohs—boldly expressed their wish for immortality in a more elaborate way. For instance, in a memorial chapel that Seti I built, an inscription says that

Seti kept the name of his father (i.e., Ramesses I) alive after his death (Assmann 2005, p. 48). In his dedicatory inscription, Ramesses II also mentions that he kept the name of his father (i.e., Seti I) alive after his death (Assmann 2005, p. 51).¹³ Ronald J. Leprohon (2013, p. 6) aptly avers, “In the end, it was a family’s duty to keep the memory of a deceased relative alive, as the ubiquitous phrase ‘to cause the name to live’ (*sꜥnh rn*) was applied to one’s father, mother, or grandfather. We even encounter a brother causing his sibling’s name to live.”

As observed, the ancient Egyptians viewed that one’s proper name was a crucial element for the very existence of the person who bore it, *both* in this life *and* in the afterlife (Pinch 1994, p. 58; Ikram 2007, p. 342). As long as their names were “remembered and repeated” by the living, their essences were believed to continue to live. But a question thus arises: How can one cause a deceased person’s name to be remembered and repeated? The best way to accomplish this task, according to the Egyptians’ belief, was to *pronounce* or *invoke* the deceased’s name.

4.2. Pronouncing the Name of the Deceased

The Egyptian concept of names prompted the ancient Egyptians to desire for their names to be pronounced even after death. This phenomenon was due to their belief that they would continue to live on as long as their names were invoked by the living (Assmann 2005, p. 54; Tompsett 2018, p. 8). For this reason, CT 38 (I, 163) mentions a son’s perpetuating his deceased father’s name “upon earth in the mouths of the living.”¹⁴ A text preserved in the tombs of Huya and Pentu also exhibits the deceased’s hope for his name to be invoked by others (Assmann 2005, p. 218).

The mechanism for the relationship between one’s survival after death and the invocation of one’s name can be explained in two different—but not mutually exclusive—ways. First, when the living read aloud the deceased’s names, their names were “filled with breath or spirit, and to that extent [they] ‘lived’ again” (Holland 2009, p. 58). Second, the act of calling the deceased’s names could “make them live again, by keeping their memory and spirit alive” (Ruiz 2001, p. 104). Whatever the case may be, the most crucial factor was to invoke the deceased’s name. In the words of Jan Assmann (2005, p. 53), one “endowed” the deceased “with life by pronouncing his name”.

For this reason, the Egyptians put tremendous effort into preserving their names on the various funerary equipment so that the living could see those names and thus pronounce them (Pinch 1994, p. 81; Budge 2004, p. 334; Tompsett 2018, p. 8). A vast amount of evidence shows that the names of the deceased were written in their funerary texts and were inscribed on tomb walls (Ruiz 2001, p. 104; Tompsett 2018, p. 8). Their names appeared on multiple burial items as well (Ruiz 2001, p. 104). The ubiquitous presence of their names certainly increased the chances for them to be pronounced by the living. For Egyptians to ensure that their names would be pronounced, some inscriptions carved on tombs and other funerary texts implored visitors to pronounce them (Traunecker 2001, p. 21; Doxey 2001, p. 490). Since this rite was important for the deceased and their family, people who pronounced the names credited themselves with causing their names to live (Doxey 2001, p. 490). In this regard, as Salima Ikram aptly points out, “a tomb was not only a place for the eternal protection of the body, but was a vehicle for the survival of the name and reputation of the deceased” (Ikram 2007, p. 348).

During the New Kingdom period, pronouncing the name of the deceased took on another level in the funerary context. “In the texts of the post-Amarna and the Ramesside Periods,” writes Assmann, “there took shape a canon of major festivals in which the deceased wished to participate after their death” (2005, p. 230). As expected, the means by which one could invite the “soul” (*bꜥ*) of the deceased was to invoke his or her name. A stela text at Theban Tomb 106 contains the deceased’s wish that his *bꜥ* would visit the festival to see his people when his name is called (Assmann 2005, p. 231). Concerning this religious belief, Assmann avers,

A typical motif in this topic of participation in festivals is the calling out of the name and its “being found” (in a list). We may imagine that at this time, it was the custom, during the major festivals of the necropolis, to bring a list of prominent tomb owners and to call out their names, evidently in connection with visits to their tombs. In this way, the deceased were involved in festival events that the living celebrated together with the dead.

In his recent study of ancient Egyptian titulary, Leprohon well documents the Egyptians’ attitude toward names, aptly encapsulating our study in Sections 4.1 and 4.2:

- Pharaohs wished their names to “remain” (*mn*) and be “enduring” (*w3h*).¹⁵
- Pharaohs “cause[d] to live” (*s3nh*) the names of former monarchs.¹⁶
- Individuals wished their own names to “remain” (*mn*) or “be permanent” (*rwd*) in people’s mouths.¹⁷
- Individuals wished for posterity to “pronounce” (*dm*), “invoke” (*nis*), “remember” (*sh*), or “not forget” (*n smh*) their names.¹⁸
- Individuals desired for the names to continue “existing” (*wn*) or to “not perish” (*n sk*).¹⁹
- Individuals wished for their names to be “known” (*rh*) by their kings.²⁰
- Individuals desired to be “greeted by name” (*nd-hr*) by their ruler.²¹

As seen, the ancient Egyptians, whether royal or not, had a special concern for their names being preserved and invoked because in their minds, names hold the key for their eternity. In what follows, I will introduce the Egyptian pejorative practice that is related to the conception of their names and immortality: *damnatio memoriae*.

4.3. *Damnatio Memoriae*

4.3.1. Erasing Names

Given that one’s proper name was equivalent to the man who bore it, the removal of his name from the funerary artifacts was thought to be “tantamount not only to effacing his memory in this world but also to depriving him of subsistence in the next one” (Traunecker 2001, p. 21; cf. Pinch 1994, pp. 81, 93–94; Ruiz 2001, p. 104; Doxey 2001, p. 490; Isler and Arnold 2001, p. 60). It is significant to realize that the effacement of the deceased’s name from a text, statue, or monument would result in the inability to pronounce it. According to ancient Egyptian belief, such an eradication of a personal name, which caused one’s name to be unpronounceable, “was considered equivalent to the complete destruction of that person’s memory and existence” (Isler and Arnold 2001, p. 60).

This cultural norm gave the Egyptians an opportunity to obliterate their enemies’ names from physical artifacts, causing their names to remain unspoken, be forgotten, and thus be eternally annihilated (Isler and Arnold 2001, p. 60; cf. Doxey 2001, p. 490; Pinch 1994, pp. 93–94). One of the new features practiced in the New Kingdom was the so-called *damnatio memoriae*—the ritualistic annihilation of a person by the removal of his or her name (Koch 2014, p. 397; Azaryahu 2021, p. 163).²² The goal of this defamation was not only to purge the memory of the person who bore the name from the current population’s mind and from history; it was also practiced for reasons of damnation (Koch 2014, p. 397). Pharaohs and royal family were also subjected to this relentless cultural rite. Disgraced or controversial Pharaohs “suffered the deliberate defacement of their monuments or the omission of their names from king lists” (Doxey 2001, p. 490). The most famous victim of this pejorative practice was Akhenaten, the heretic Pharaoh (18th Dynasty). His introduction of the cult of Aten—the religious revolution raised against the traditional Egyptian cult—to Egypt angered various people, and in response to this controversial behavior, people obliterated his name from his statues, monuments, and coffin after his death (Bryan 1996, pp. 369–73). Such effacement of his name, according to Geraldine Pinch, was an attempt to thwart his existence in the afterlife (Balk 2009, p. 399). Another clear example in a royal tomb in the Valley of the Kings appears in KV23 (i.e., the

tomb of Ay) (Wilkinson 2016, pp. 336–37). Ay's names and those of his queen, Tiy, were deliberately deleted throughout the burial chamber. A coffin found in KV55 also exhibits the removal of the inlaid cartouches that once identified the coffin's owner, "leaving its final inhabitant faceless and nameless, a deliberate act of *damnatio memoriae*" (Reeves 1990, p. 44; Hawass and Saleem 2016, p. 84).

4.3.2. Damaging Images

Importantly, the Egyptians destroyed not only names but also images of infamous individuals in order to securely execute *damnatio memoriae*. Some scholars, such as Alan Schulman (Schulman 1969–1970, p. 37), maintain that this phenomenon—the erasure of both names and images—distinguishes *damnatio memoriae* from usurpation. In other words, while usurpation entailed the erasure of names, *damnatio memoriae* entailed the effacement of names and images. Janet Balk (2009, p. 399) elaborates, "In instances when it was thought an individual had betrayed the interests of Egypt, that individual's name was physically destroyed by eliminating appropriate writings and inscriptions, along with the destruction of that person's physical body and images thereof." In his thorough analysis of the damaged areas of plaster in KV23, Richard H. Wilkinson (2016, p. 340) reveals that when images were damaged due to the practice of *damnatio memoriae*, an important pattern emerged:

Differentiation between the two types of plaster damage (fallen/cut) in the tomb of Ay showed that in most cases the face (though often not the whole head) of the king was hacked away, as was at least a good section of the shoulders and upper torso, along with the lower arms. The lower torso was often untouched, though a section of the lower abdomen through the upper thighs was invariably attacked. The lower legs were often undamaged. Damage to these three areas of the representations of Ay varied to only a small extent (as discussed later) and was unmistakably clear in terms of the specific areas of focused destruction.

Based on these observations, Wilkinson (2016, p. 340) suggests that the damage pattern clearly reflects a threefold desire:

1. To delete the nose (and hence the breath of life), a focused point of destruction known from usurped private tombs—though in the case of royal images there was probably also a desire to remove the personal appearance of the individual;
2. To delete the heart (as this was viewed by the Egyptians as the receptacle of the spirit); and
3. To remove the genital area (and hence, symbolically, the power of procreation).

In sum, the Egyptians erased the names of infamous individuals and damaged three major areas of their images as a practice of *damnatio memoriae*. Those whose names had become unpronounceable by this pejorative rite were believed to be annihilated eternally. In addition, those whose images were damaged in the area of the nose, heart, and genitals were believed to lose the ability to breathe, house the spirit, and procreate. In this regard, *damnatio memoriae* was an expression of hatred toward infamous individuals resulting in the ritualistic annihilation of the name, memory, essence, and soul of the hated.

4.4. Summary

The ancient Egyptians believed that the personal name was equivalent to the person who bore it, for the name was a vital part of the individual's essence. Importantly, the Egyptians viewed that they could survive death when their names were remembered and repeated via pronouncement (or invocation). For this reason, they put great effort into preserving their names on various objects. However, such a practice did not always work as it was intended. In fact, the names engraved on multiple objects gave enemies an opportunity to obliterate them. This pejorative rite (i.e., *damnatio memoriae*), which was executed along with damaging the images of infamous individuals, was believed to terminate the existence of the deceased. In this regard, for the Egyptians, *damnatio memoriae* was the worst punishment possible that could ever happen. In what follows, I will examine

the anonymity of Pharaohs and the deconstruction of their individuality through the lens of the rite of *damnatio memoriae* established in this section.

5. Killing Pharaohs

In this section, I will demonstrate that the Egyptian concept of *damnatio memoriae* might have caused the anonymity of Pharaohs in Exodus and the deconstruction of the boundaries between their respective individualities. Given that the mentioned practice entailed obliterating the deceased's name and damaging three areas of the deceased's image, I will deal first with the namelessness of Pharaohs and then with their negative image.

5.1. Forgetting the Name of Pharaoh

As mentioned previously, the Egyptian kings in Exodus remain anonymously throughout the book. They are simply addressed by the generic designation "Pharaoh" without a specific differentiation. Such an absence of names not only obliterates their identity but also merges their respective individualities. I contend that the Egyptian practice of *damnatio memoriae* adequately accounts for these phenomena, especially considering that the proto-Israelites and the ancient Israelites were largely an oral-centric community, where speaking (orality), hearing (aurality), and remembering (memory) were integrally intertwined. As briefly dealt with in Section 2.2 above, the Exodus traditions before the early Monarchic period were probably transmitted via *memory-based oral performance*. If one allows that some of the Exodus traditions could have been written down in simplistic forms as mnemonic aids, then the means of transmission might have been *text-supported memory-based oral performance*. This information provides a logical and systematic reason for the absence of Pharaohs' names in Exodus.

For the sake of an argument, let us momentarily imagine that the Exodus traditions *did* contain the Pharaohs' names. Given that the major means for the circulation and transmission of religious messages was text-supported memory-based oral performance, the reciters of the traditions would have been in a situation where they would have pronounced the Pharaonic names.²³ In turn, the audience would have constantly heard those names being invoked. Notice that this hypothetical interaction between the reciters and the audience would have entailed: (1) remembering Pharaohs' names (memory); (2) speaking Pharaohs' names (orality); and (3) hearing Pharaohs' names (aurality). These phenomena are exactly oppositional to the Egyptian practice of *damnatio memoriae*. To reiterate, such a memorizing–invoking–hearing mechanism practiced in a community, according to the Egyptian trope, would have been equivalent to resurrecting Pharaohs and continuing their existences within the community. Based on an assumption that the ancient Israelites were familiar with the Egyptian concept of names and the rite of *damnatio memoriae*, it is fair to say that none of them—reciters and audience—would have wanted this mechanism to occur. This line of reasoning not only helps us understand why the Pharaohs in Exodus are anonymous, but it also allows us to reconstruct a possible scenario that may have taken place pertaining to the anonymity of Pharaohs.

If the historical exodus event took place in the 13th c. BCE,²⁴ then the proto-Israelite transmitters of the Exodus traditions—between the Exodus event and the Monarchic period of Israel—would have not wanted to preserve the names of Pharaohs in any given situation, neither in their memory, nor on their lips, nor in their ears, nor in their texts. Hence, it is highly likely that the first group of transmitters of the Exodus traditions obliterated the Pharaonic names in the first place as they circulated and passed on the Exodus traditions to the subsequent generation. According to this view, the original transmitters, who escaped from Egypt and thus were familiar with the Egyptian concept of names, adopted the Egyptian rite of *damnatio memoriae* in their Exodus traditions. If this is the case, then the proto-Israelite transmitters already made the names of Pharaohs disappear, thereby terminating their existence from the memory of their community. Accordingly, when the Israelite author of Exodus in the Monarchic period collected the Exodus traditions

to compose the Pentateuch, the names of Pharaohs would have already been missing from all forms of the traditions. In this light, the anonymity of Pharaohs in Exodus was neither a literary device nor the result of inadvertent forgetting. Rather, such anonymity was the result of *intentional* and *deliberate* forgetting. Consequently, the deconstruction of boundaries between the respective individualities of the two Pharaohs was the inevitable result of such deliberate forgetting.

5.2. Damaging the Image of Pharaoh

Recall that the practice of *damnatio memoriae* also included damaging the images of the deceased. As observed, the specific areas of focused destruction were the nose, the heart, and the genitals. Wilkinson provides a reasonable explanation as to why these areas were targeted: (1) the attack on the nose symbolizes the prevention of inhaling the breath of life; (2) the attack on the heart symbolizes the deletion of the receptacle of the spirit; and (3) the attack on the genital area symbolizes the removal of the power of procreation. As I will show below, Exodus arguably contains literary attacks on these three areas of the second Pharaoh. I will briefly demonstrate this point in reverse order: the genital area, the heart, and the nose.

First, the tenth plague in the Exodus narrative is the eradication of the firstborn sons of the Egyptians. Exodus 12:29 reads, “In the middle of the night the LORD struck down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sat on the throne to the firstborn of the captive who was in the dungeon, and all the firstborn of the cattle” (JPS). Although the text does not mention the genitals of Pharaoh, his firstborn son can be understood in relation to Pharaoh’s power of procreation. Hence, the slaughter of Pharaoh’s firstborn son can be juxtaposed with the attack on Pharaoh’s genital area and thus progeny. Second, one of the major topics in the Exodus narrative is the hardening of Pharaoh’s heart.²⁵ Although the ancient Egyptians viewed the heaviness of one’s heart as a positive value, Exodus assigns a negative value to it, exposing the inadequacy of Pharaoh as the ruler of Egypt (Shupak 1985, pp. 206–7; 2004, pp. 389–404; Propp 1999–2006, p. 1:323; Davies 2020, p. 485; Trimm 2014, pp. 203–206; Lee 2023 [forthcoming]). Hence, it can be argued that the hardening motif in Exodus is equivalent to the attack on Pharaoh’s heart. Third, the means of the death of Pharaoh’s army is also telling: drowning. I have elsewhere argued that although the text does not mention the drowning of Pharaoh, his drowning is most likely assumed when one considers how the author of Exodus has unfolded the narrative up to the point of the Reed Sea miracle (Lee 2023 [forthcoming]). If this is the case, then the drowning, which resulted in the taking away of Pharaoh’s breath of life, would be equivalent to the attack on the nose of Pharaoh.

However, this approach creates a problem. Namely, the Pharaoh of the exodus (Exod. 3–15) is the only target who receives the attacks on the three mentioned areas. The Pharaoh of the oppression (Exod. 1–2) does not receive the attacks on the three areas. This discrepancy, however, can be resolved in two different ways. First, Exodus unmistakably renders a negative portrayal of both Pharaohs. Nathan Bills correctly avers, “By their actions the Egyptian rulers of Exodus set Egypt on a path in opposition to God’s life-giving purposes for Israel and God’s larger world. Thus, in the story world of Exodus, Pharaoh represents a ‘symbol for the antirational forces of death.’”²⁶ Concerning the first Pharaoh, his anonymity allows readers to identify him by his narrative portrayals. For example, Exodus depicts him as lacking the knowledge of Joseph (Exod. 1:8), oppressing God’s people (1:11–14), attempting to murder Israelite male children at birth (1:15–16, 22), and ordering to kill the protagonist of Exodus, Moses. (2:15). Given that the anonymity of the first Pharaoh is consistently combined with indications of a negative portrayal of the character, it is possible that the Egyptian practice of *damnatio memoriae* was at work in attacking the *whole image* of Pharaoh instead of the three selective parts. Second, given that the use of the simple generic title “Pharaoh” to refer to the two distinct unnamed kings deconstructs their individuality and merges them into a single entity, it is also possible that the attack on the three parts of

the second Pharaoh encompasses that of the former. If so, then the literary images of *both* Pharaohs are subjected to the rite of *damnatio memoriae*.

5.3. Summary

In this section, I have proposed that the anonymity of Pharaohs and the deconstruction of their individuality in Exodus can be understood in relation to the Egyptian practice of *damnatio memoriae*. According to this view, the proto-Israelite transmitters of the Exodus traditions who escaped from Egypt adopted the Egyptian rite of *damnatio memoriae* in their traditions. By obliterating the proper names of the Egyptian kings, the transmitters rendered the Pharaonic names unpronounceable, thereby erasing their identification, terminating their essences, and deconstructing their individuality. In doing so, the transmitters ultimately prevented the Egyptian kings from “resurrecting” and “living” in the memory of the proto-Israelite community. In accordance with the practice of *damnatio memoriae*, the transmitters also rendered literary attacks on the image of two Pharaohs. As for the first Pharaoh, his whole image was attacked by a series of negative narrational portrayals about him. As for the second Pharaoh, in addition to his whole image, three specific areas of his body—genitals, heart, and nose—arguably received attacks. Based on these observations, I have contended that the Egyptian practice of *damnatio memoriae* can account for the anonymity of Pharaohs in Exodus and the deconstruction of the boundaries of their respective individualities. In the end, the proto-Israelite transmitters of the Exodus traditions successfully turned the two historical Egyptian persons into an ahistorical figure, effectively damning them and eradicating them from the memory of subsequent Israelite generations.

6. Conclusions

Scholars have understood the anonymity of Pharaohs in Exodus in various ways. Some argue that the namelessness was a rhetorical device that allowed readers to focus on the named (i.e., YHWH, Moses), the title of the unnamed (i.e., Pharaoh as the sun-god incarnate), or the paradigmatic role of the unnamed (i.e., Pharaoh as a representative of all of the oppressors of Israel). Others believe that such anonymity was a simple case of inadvertent forgetting. However, these approaches, according to my judgment, are not sufficient to account for the anonymity of Pharaohs and the deconstruction of their individuality according to a synchronic approach to the book of Exodus.

Therefore, I have argued that the Egyptian practice of *damnatio memoriae* (“damnation of memory”) provides an additional explanation for the issues raised in this article. According to this approach, the proto-Israelite transmitters of the Exodus traditions deliberately obliterated the names of Egyptian kings from their text-supported memory-based oral tradition. In doing so, they prevented the Pharaonic names from being remembered (memory), spoken (orality), and heard (aurality) within their community. As a result, the individuality and distinctiveness of two distinct figures were annihilated. In Egyptian terms, the proto-Israelite transmitters successfully damned the existence of Pharaohs from the mouths, ears, and memories of their community. As a result, the anonymity of Pharaohs in Exodus and the deconstruction of the boundaries between their respective individualities show that Pharaohs are unimportant, paradigmatic, reducible, *and* also subjected to erasure (i.e., *damnatio memoriae*).

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Notes

- ¹ Both the Pharaoh of the oppression (Exod 1–2) and the Pharaoh of the exodus (Exod 3–15) are simply designated by the title “Pharaoh” despite their ubiquity and prominence. [Leuchter and Lamb \(2016, p. 296\)](#) note, “Genesis and Exodus together mention the Pharaoh of Egypt 178 times (e.g., Gen 12:15, 17, 18; Exod 1:11, 19, 22), but never give him a name”.
- ² See also [Reinhartz \(1998, p. 139\)](#); [Duvall and Hays \(2021, pp. 24–25\)](#).
- ³ Commenting on Exodus 1, [Roth \(2017, p. 79\)](#) avers, “Taken as a whole, the chapter ebbs and flows between specified naming (Israelite family, 1:1–5), to generic title for the Egyptian monarch (1:8, 11, 15), to a second specified naming of the midwives (1:15), and back to unspecified terms for the monarch (1:17, 18)”.
- ⁴ [Bills \(2021, p. 90\)](#) notes, “The context seems . . . to favor a non- Israelite if not an Egyptian identity [of the midwives]. It is hard to believe that Pharaoh would employ ethnically Hebrew midwives for the task of killing Hebrew newborns, much less accept their excuses (v. 19) if they were indeed Hebrew. Furthermore, the midwives are knowledgeable of Egyptian birthing practices”.
- ⁵ [Zucker \(2005, p. 108, n. 1\)](#) makes an interesting point: “It is no small irony that in Hebrew the name for the Book of Exodus is *Sh’mot*, literally, ‘names.’ Technically these names refer to the children of Jacob who descended to Egypt at the time of Joseph. While we have their names, many other important names are missing. In Exodus 1 we learn that a new king arose over Egypt, but aside from referring to him as Pharaoh, no specific identification is offered in the Torah”.
- ⁶ For example, [Davies \(2020, p. 106\)](#) notes that Exodus is composed of four main elements: two non-P narratives, the P narrative, and the Song of Moses.
- ⁷ Concerning this dichotomy, [Stern \(2015, p. 241\)](#) avers, “Before the integration of insights from orality studies, it was assumed that orality and literacy were chronologically sequential modalities and that at some point in the history of literate cultures, writing replaced speaking as the primary mode of cultural production and transmission and reading replaced hearing as the primary mode of reception. According to this model, it was assumed that engagement with written texts of scripture replaced oral engagement and transmission at some point in early Judaism”.
- ⁸ [Stern \(2015, p. 242\)](#) notes, “In such an economy, torah is produced and transmitted through text-supported oral performance. In these performances, texts of torah serve as resources and authorizers for the articulations of torah performed by the text-brokers”.
- ⁹ For helpful surveys on the present state of scholarship, see [Utzschneider \(1994, pp. 97–223\)](#); [Vervenne \(1996, pp. 21–55\)](#); [Smith \(1997, pp. 144–79\)](#); [Fischer \(2003, pp. 608–16\)](#); [Römer 2004, pp. 289–307](#); [Römer 2013, pp. 2–24](#).
- ¹⁰ The following represent some notable synchronic works on the book of Exodus: [Moberly \(1983\)](#); [Brichto \(1992, pp. 88–121\)](#); [Davies \(2004\)](#); [Ford \(2007\)](#); [Olson \(2010, pp. 13–54\)](#); [Trimm \(2014\)](#); [Bills \(2021\)](#).
- ¹¹ [Rendsburg \(2006, pp. 201–2\)](#) succinctly remarks, “Unlike other cultures in the ancient Near East, where kings were considered human (serving as human agents of the gods, but human nevertheless), in Egypt the Pharaoh was considered divine.” Thus, Pharaoh was often equated with the sun god (i.e., *r* [Ra] and *h*r [Horus]). See also [Currid \(1997, p. 102\)](#); [Schweizer \(2010, pp. 6–7\)](#).
- ¹² Concerning the naming of the inanimate objects, [Leprohon \(2013, pp. 6–7\)](#) remarks, “Additionally, because ancient Egyptians believed that everything was animated with *ba*-power, an energy believed to be divine intervention into the affairs of humans, everyday objects were given names. The list of such named items runs from a well dug under the aegis of a king, or the latter’s chariot and battleship. Army divisions were named, and even a besieging wall could be given an appellation compounded with the king’s name. Buildings were of course given names, whether they were temples or fortresses on Egypt’s frontiers. Within those structures, the pylons, gateways and doors, and statues were named”.
- ¹³ [Budge \(2004, p. 335\)](#) notes, “Pepi prayed that his name might ‘grow’ or ‘flourish’ and endure as long as the names of the gods endured”.
- ¹⁴ For the text, see [Faulkner \(1973, p. 1:30–31\)](#).
- ¹⁵ [Leprohon \(2013, p. 5\)](#) citing *Urk. IV* (p. 366:15).
- ¹⁶ [Leprohon \(2013, p. 5\)](#) citing *Urk. IV* (p. 1283:3 [Khufu and Khafre] and p. 1295:7–8 [Thutmose III]).
- ¹⁷ [Leprohon \(2013, p. 6\)](#) citing *Urk. IV* (p. 1785:14, p. 1875:18 [*mn*] and p. 1806:4 [*rwd*]).
- ¹⁸ [Leprohon \(2013, p. 6\)](#) citing *Urk. IV* (p. 1626:15 and p. 1845:20 [*dm*]; p. 1835:9 and p. 1846:15 [*nis*]; p. 1537:2 [*sh*]; p. 1601:2 [*n smh*]).
- ¹⁹ [Leprohon \(2013, p. 6\)](#) citing *Urk. IV* (p. 1805:4 [*wn*]).
- ²⁰ [Leprohon \(2013, p. 6\)](#) citing [Doxey \(1998, pp. 332, 393\)](#).
- ²¹ [Leprohon \(2013, p. 6\)](#) citing [Doxey \(1998, p. 374\)](#).
- ²² One must be aware of an important distinction between usurpation and *damnatio memoriae*. Egyptologists make a careful distinction between these phenomena, although they are frequently related. ([Wilkinson 2011, pp. 129–47](#); [Koch 2014, p. 402](#); [Hoffmeier 2015, p. 200](#).) In the case of the former, the current Pharaoh would erase the name of an earlier monarch in order for his name to replace his predecessor’s. In doing so, the current Pharaoh identified himself with the earlier monarch, thereby taking credit for the other’s work. (See the following sources for examples: [Otto 1964–1966, p. 162](#); [Wildung 1969, p. 230](#).) According to [Koch \(2014, p. 402\)](#), “Rewriting names and [the] appropriation of an already erected building by a successor was a widespread phenomenon, and in the majority of cases this practice was far from being an expression of hatred. It was rather a matter of

Sichidentifizieren, of Neubelebung, and usurpation was an appropriate method of fulfilling the king's obligation of building temples for the gods." Unlike usurpation, the latter—*damnatio memoriae*—was practiced with the intention of eradicating the memory and essence of an infamous individual. Thus, *damnatio memoriae* conveyed a strong expression of hatred toward the name holder.

23 For the role of an ancient scribe as a text copyist and an oral performer, see Niditch (1996, pp. 74–75).

24 As for the date of the exodus event, I align with the scholars who hold to a historical exodus and who date the event to the 13th c. BCE (the reign of Ramesses II). See Sarna (1986, pp. 68–80; 1991, p. xiv); Kitchen (2003, p. 310); Hoffmeier (2021, pp. 135–60). In addition, I accept the probability that there could have been multiple exodoi from Egypt—some people leaving earlier and others leaving later, some exodoi involving more people and others involving less people. See Malamat (1997, p. 16); Rendsburg (2021, p. 184).

25 Grossman (2014, p. 605) aptly remarks, "Pharaoh's heart is hardened in all the plagues, whether or not by his own choice, and the heart is therefore one of the major motifs of the narrative".

26 Bills (2021, p. 84) citing Fretheim (1991, p. 27 [italics original]).

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