

Regarding Petrovich's *The World's Oldest Alphabet*. Source, including author, unknown.

3500 years ago slaves toiling in the harsh mines of the Sinai scribbled some graffiti on the desert rocks. One of them wrote: "Moses then provoked astonishment." That, plus a lot of other inscriptions, deserve more than a passing glance.

Most of us know about the Exodus and Moses courtesy of Cecil B. DeMille and Charlton Heston. But archaeological evidence of those events has been slow to come by. Now in a new book, [*The World's Oldest Alphabet*](#), Douglas Petrovich has deciphered the Sinai inscriptions, and for the first time outside the Bible we can read how the slaves looked at things:

"He sought occasion to cut away to barrenness our great number, our swelling without measure." (Sinai 349)

"Our bond servitude had lingered. Moses then provoked astonishment. It is a year of astonishment." (Sinai 361)

Anyone familiar with the book of Exodus will immediately spot parallels with the account of Pharaoh's attempt to reduce the number of newborn Israelites; and the subsequent actions of Moses. (Many of the Sinai inscriptions can be viewed with a simple Google search.)

So much then for the dismissive arguments that the Israelites could never have numbered enough to be considered a threat to Egypt. Or that there never was an Exodus. Or that Moses never existed.

So much then for the JEPD theory of the Pentateuch (written, according to the theory, by a variety of late authors with varying concepts about the nature of God). So much for the idea that the Israelites never lived in Egypt at all, or were just a group of wandering tribes who made up most of their history centuries later. All washed away like Pharaoh's chariots.

All this should be headlines, but it isn't. Petrovich also demonstrates how the first alphabet was likely not created by Paleo-Canaanites or Phoenicians, but by the Hebrews, who developed it by adapting Egyptian picture images for their own use during their 400-year stay in Egypt. This, in fact, was probably the world's first truly phonetic alphabet. History, which usually credits that to the merchants in the Levant, may have to be revised on this score, also.

The book is not an easy read. It is a scholarly work, laden to overflowing with citations, notes, references, and cross-checking. It is a philologist's delight. It is not written for a popular audience. (The author intends to follow it up with another volume on the Israelites in Egypt.)