

The background of the story of Joseph contains many passages that can be vividly illustrated by Egyptian circumstances at this general period. Thus we find in Egyptian records that the position that Potiphar gave Joseph when he put him over his household was one that existed in the houses of great Egyptian nobles of the time; that the king of Egypt was called "pharaoh," the term used in the Bible; that "chief of the butlers" and "chief of the bakers" were titles given to important officers in Pharaoh's court; that the signet ring, the "vestures of fine linen" and the "gold chain about his neck" were just what an Egyptian king would be apt to give to one whom he was placing in authority over the whole country; and that the mummification of Jacob and of Joseph was in accordance with Egyptian custom. These and other elements of the general background can be abundantly verified from ancient Egyptian records. All this is general corroboration. Special corroboration would mean the finding of the particular name of Joseph or of some specific act that he performed. Instances of special corroboration from this early period are extremely few.

Exodus pictures Egypt not only as a fertile and prosperous nation, but also as a land of great cruelty. Egyptian monuments show the pharaoh (pictured large), holding several men in his hand and dashing them to pieces, or shooting his arrows into great multitudes of enemies. One Egyptian king had a doorstep fashioned to look like the prostrate figure of a certain Asiatic king, so that every time he entered or left his palace he stepped on the back of the figure of his enemy. Egyptian remains from this period vividly illustrate the Biblical picture of cruelty and oppression.

During the latter part of Israelite history Egyptian power was much weaker than at earlier periods. Eventually Mesopotamian armies overran Egypt, proving the correctness of the prophetic warnings.