

So much for the general background and local color of the events of Joseph's life in Egypt.

A specific point in this case is the description of how the Egyptians came to Joseph year after year, giving anything that they had in order to secure the corn which he had saved in the storehouses. After they ran out of everything else, the Bible tells us that they gave their land for corn and that Joseph bought all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh for the Egyptians sold every man his field and the land became Pharaoh's. (Gen. 47:18-26) All the land of the Egyptians thus became the property of Pharaoh except the land of the priests and we are told that Joseph made a law that Pharaoh should receive the fifth part of all the products of the land as his rent for the use of the land.

It is very interesting to observe that while we have no Egyptian record telling of this transaction, we do have evidence that the land during the Middle Kingdom belonged to the great nobles, while during the Empire Period these great feudal land holders have disappeared and the land is vested in the hands of the king. There is evidence that during the subsequent periods of Egyptian history all the land was considered as belonging to Pharaoh except the land of the priests and it was rented out for 20% of their produce. This change then which is described in the Bible did actually take place at about the time of Joseph.

It would seem most probable that Joseph was in Egypt during the Hyksos period. This makes it a little easier to understand why Pharaoh was so ready to receive the Israelites in such a friendly fashion and to give them one of the best parts of the land of Egypt. They, like himself were Asiatics and he felt a certain bond with them. It also makes it easy to understand the fact that the Book of Genesis ends with the Israelites in great favor with Pharaoh, while the Book of Exodus begins with the words (1:8) "Now there arose up a new king