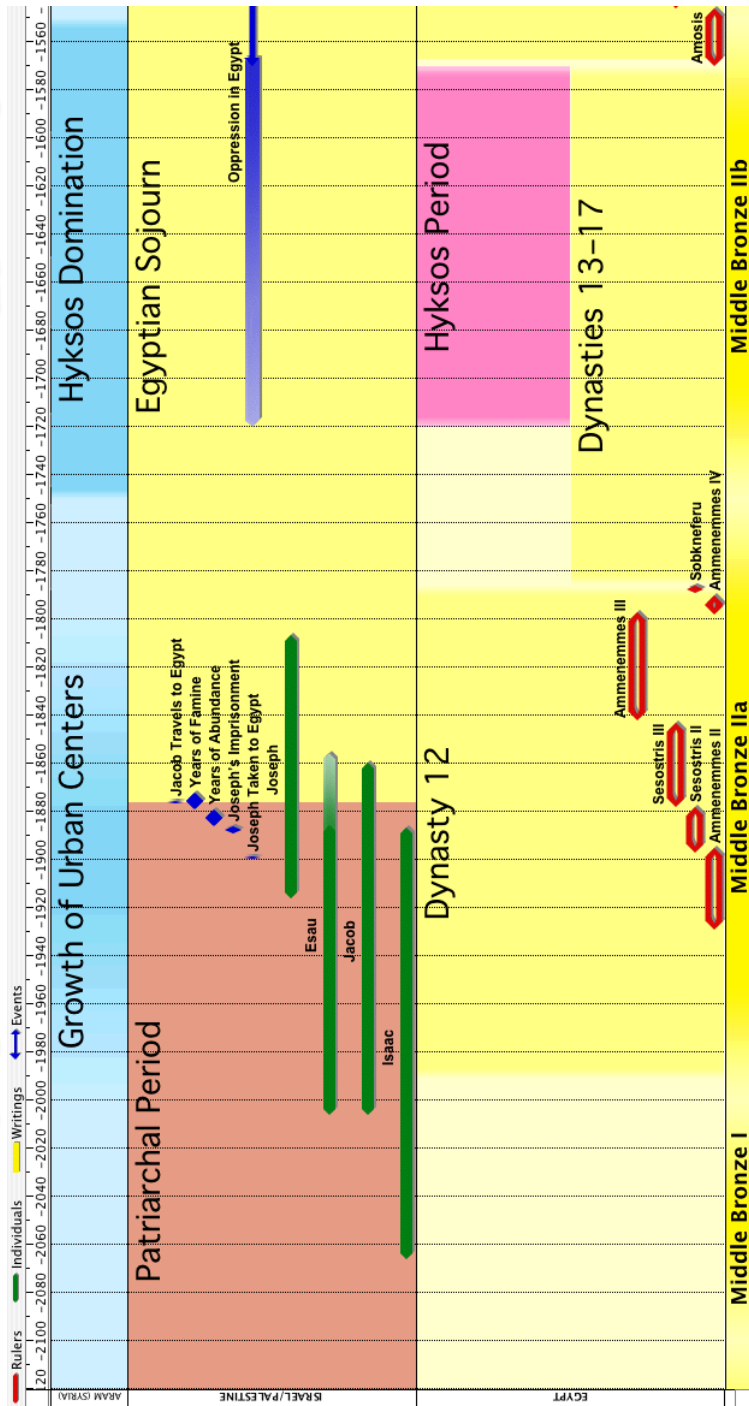


# Timeline Of The Joseph Narrative Set Within The Later Middle Egyptian Kingdom



# Penthouse To Prison

Long Beach Alliance Church • October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2006 • Pastor Chris Lankford

**THE LORD WAS WITH JOSEPH, SO HE BECAME A SUCCESSFUL MAN. AND HE WAS IN THE HOUSE OF HIS MASTER, THE EGYPTIAN. BUT THE LORD WAS WITH JOSEPH AND EXTENDED KINDNESS TO HIM, AND GAVE HIM FAVOR IN THE SIGHT OF THE CHIEF JAILER.**

**~GENESIS 39:2 & 21 (NASB)**

## 1) Alone In A Foreign Land?

- A) The story of Joseph continues from Genesis 37:36, where Joseph's brothers, full of jealousy over their father's preferential treatment of their little brother (cf. Acts 7:9), sell him into slavery (Genesis 37:25-28).
- B) Joseph is sold by the Ishmaelite traders to Potiphar, the captain of Pharaoh's bodyguard (like the United States Secret Service), where he becomes a very successful "house servant\*" in charge of all of Potiphar's home (39:1-4).

\* Dating the Joseph narrative is an important and complex issue which I will treat more thoroughly in a later note. For our purposes at this juncture of the narrative, it is notable that later Middle Kingdom papyri records indicate that it was common for large groups of Asiatics (including a Semite such as Joseph) to enter Egypt in servitude. Further, it was common for them to serve as a "house servant," a role which Joseph filled in Potiphar's home (Genesis 39:1-6a). This kind of extra-biblical papyri source is an excellent example of local records supporting biblical data (*A Papyrus of The Late Middle Kingdom In the Brooklyn Museum [Papyrus Brooklyn 35.1446]*. By William C. Hayes, 1955, pages 92-109).

- C) Despite complete “aloneness” (a slave, in a foreign land†, without family, far away from home), God is with Joseph in a unique and powerful manner (39:3-6a).

## 2) A Human Solution For Joseph’s Aloneness

- A) Potiphar’s wife, observing that Joseph is an exceptionally good looking young man (a hottie, cf. 39:6b), invites Joseph to sleep with her (39:7-8).
- B) Joseph refuses her advances, asking “how could I... sin against God?” (39:9). Despite her constant lust-filled advances, he refuses to sin against God (39:10)
- C) Consumed by her own lust (cf. James 1:14-15), Potiphar’s wife demands Joseph sleep with her (Genesis 39:12). She tears his cloak away from his body, and then uses the situation to falsely accuse Joseph of rape (39:13-15).

† As a result of the similarity in Semitic ethnicity and the assumption of Asiatic deference between Joseph and the Hyksos, many scholars have dated the Joseph narrative (Genesis 37, 39-50) within the Second Intermediate Period of Hyksos rulership. This view assumes a later date for the Exodus of Moses (within the reign of Rameses II), around the period of the 19<sup>th</sup> Dynasty (c.a. 1250 B.C.). As support, some scholars note that the specificity of Potiphar as “an Egyptian” (Genesis 39:1) as indication of Hyksos rulership and geography (probably Avaris), otherwise there would be no need to indicate Potiphar’s ethnicity. Placing the Joseph narrative within the Hyksos period requires one to disregard a literal dating of 1<sup>st</sup> Kings 6:1, which details that the Exodus occurred 480 years before the fourth year of King Solomon’s reign (c.a. 966 B.C.). This is justified (in part) because of the use of “the land of Rameses” in Genesis 47:11, and the use of the city-name “Raameses” in Exodus 1:11, which would not have been in use in either Joseph or Moses’ time period. A strictly conservative chronology of 1 Kings 6:1 and Exodus 12:40 presents the Joseph narrative happening prior to Hyksos rulership, with Jacob’s family migrating to Egypt around 1876 B.C. (966 B.C. (Solomon’s 4<sup>th</sup> Year) – 480 (Exodus = 1446 B.C.) – 430 (Captivity) = c.a. 1876 B.C.). This would place Joseph in service to two Pharaoh’s, Sesostris II (1897-1878 B.C.) & Sesostris III (1878-1843 B.C.). I am in support of this conservative view which supports a late Middle Kingdom Joseph narrative chronology. First, as already mentioned in the first footnote, we know that groups from Canaan were sold into slavery in Egypt, a strong parallel with Joseph’s circumstances. Second, Potiphar was an Egyptian leader of the royal bodyguard, which would have been an oddity within a Hyksos setting. Third, given knowledge of the hostilities of inter-city warfare and political divisions which existed between Canaanite groups, it is increasingly doubtful that the Hyksos would have automatically been friendly to Joseph, a Hebrew. In fact, given their hostility and

## 3) From The Penthouse To The Prison

- A) Potiphar, upon hearing his wife’s accusation (39:16-18), becomes very angry (with who?), and places Joseph in prison (39:19-20).

## 4) The God Of The Penthouse And The Prison

- A) God is actively at work in Joseph’s life, and shows kindness to Joseph by giving him favor with the chief jailer (the warden -- 39:21).
- B) Joseph’s success in jail (another indication that Potiphar “got rid” of Joseph, but did not feel he was guilty) is astounding! Joseph, a prisoner, is put in charge of the entire prison (39:22).
- C) Joseph’s blessing from God is so complete that “whatever he (Joseph) did, the LORD made [it] to prosper” (39:23)!

propensity for violence, the Hyksos are the most reasonable group to have enslaved the Hebrews as security against “those who hate us” (Exodus 1:10) and initiated the building of Pithom and Raameses in Exodus 1:11. Fourth, Joseph is described several times as the ruler over all the land of Egypt (Genesis 41:41, 42:6, 30, 45:26), a much more feasible possibility in the Late Middle Kingdom than in the Hyksos period (where the rulership of all of Egypt was limited to the 15<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, c.a. 1663-1555 B.C.). Fifth, the presentation of Potiphara (Genesis 41:45), who was a priestess of On/Heliopolis is much more likely an Egyptian ruler’s reward than a Hyksos ruler’s reward, because the cult-god Seth was venerated by the Hyksos, instead of a solar (Heliopolis) deity, very common amongst native Egyptians. Sixth, the Genesis 46:34 reference to “all shepherds are abhorrent to Egyptians” doesn’t fit the ethnic background of a Hyksos rulership. Rather, this would indicate a native Egyptian perspective. Finally, it is notable that upon the expulsion of the Hyksos from Egypt by Pharaoh Ahmose (Amosis) (c.a. 1545 B.C.), the Hebrews were not expelled from the land, which would be expected if they were “friends” of the Hyksos rulers. It is my view that the Joseph narrative fits best, both biblically and pragmatically, into a late Middle Kingdom setting. As is illustrated on the timeline (back of outline), this presents Joseph serving Pharaoh Sesostris II & III, as his family immigrated to Egypt around 1876 B.C. Since Joseph would have been around 40 years old (cf. Genesis 41:46 & 45:11) at this time, he would have died around c.a. 1806 B.C. (cf. Genesis 50:22, 26). Interestingly, this is the exact time period of which the Hyksos would have begun to come into significance. The Hyksos, Asiatic immigrants themselves, functioned as “taskmasters” (Exodus 1:11), enslaving the Hebrews and compelling them to build both Pithom and Raameses, anachronistic location references for the benefit of later readers of the Pentateuch. (Collected from various journal, commentary and historical sources).