

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

PayPal

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *The Expositor* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expositor-series-1.php

THE PENTATEUCH—EGYPTICITY AND
AUTHENTICITY.

II.

JOSEPH exalted.

Genesis xli. 40. "According unto thy word shall all my people be ruled." The margin of the Revised Version contains the two alternative readings "or *order themselves*, or do homage." Either of the three paraphrases is better than the literal verbal translation which Gesenius, and others, would have us adopt—"upon thy mouth shall all my people kiss"; though they understand it of "obedience and homage"; we would say of obedience alone, with the idea of *willing* obedience. Any one who has seen an Egyptian menial standing before a high official and listening attentively to his orders, and then before starting off to execute them raising his hand to his mouth and giving an audible smack upon its back or at it, would understand the expression as given in the Hebrew text. This is the kiss of obedience. The kiss of reverence or homage is upon the back of the hand of the person revered: and the person claiming reverence holds out his hand, with the palm downwards, to be taken hold of and kissed. This is the kiss which is given by the people to their priests and civil rulers. It is the one which Absalom is said (2 Sam. xv. 5) to have received, not given, when he stole the hearts of the people. I cannot think Absalom kissed the man who came nigh to do obedience to him. He extended his hand to him, and allowed him to take it לִי הִחַיִּיק (Hiph'il), and thus it was kissed as described above. I would thus understand נִשָּׂק as passive, and the expression to be, *it was kissed to him*. Were it active, it would be יִשָּׂק, and then we would say that the feminine gender, which is usual in the word יָר, is neglected in the pronoun of לוֹ, as it is in בּוֹ, Ezek. ii. 19. It

is certain that **לָחַץ לוֹ** cannot be translated “took hold of him,” or it would be **בִּי** with **יָרִי** the Accusative understood; and it is incredible that Absalom, wishing to secure the allegiance of the people to himself as king, when they came to him to bow at his feet as one of the king’s sons, would so bring himself down to their level as to lay hold of them and kiss them, as if they were equals.

Ver. 42. **שֵׁשׁ** (fine linen). This, as is said in the *Speaker’s Commentary*, is a “well-ascertained” Egyptian word. The Coptic *shens* and one of the ancient forms *shens* (Pierret, 747) contain a medial “n.” Two facts are noteworthy concerning it: 1st, that the word, though still in common use in Egypt, is not now applied to cloth of Egyptian manufacture, but to the fine gauze-like white calico which comes from Manchester: 2nd, that the word **بوص** (*bus*) with which the Arabic translators of the Bible (the American missionaries in Syria) have rendered it (Heb. **בִּרְצִי** “byssus”) is not known in Egypt, except as the name of the long canes which grow beside the water-courses.

We have a similar example in the word **גֶרֶן** (threshing-floor), Gen. 1. 10. The Coptic *jér* and **جرن** (*jern*) is still the word for threshing-floor in universal use *in Egypt*. In Palestine and Syria it is only used for the small stone mortar employed in the kitchen, and **بيدر** (*beider*) is used for a threshing-floor, which word the Egyptians do not know, except the few who have learned it from the Syrian translation of the Scriptures. I need not call attention to the importance of such facts (and we will find many of them as we proceed) in the question of the Egyptian origin of the Pentateuch.

Ver. 43. **אֲבָרָךְ**. Canon Cook seems to be conscious of failure in explaining this word. He begins, “This word, which Gesenius calls ‘*vox perdubia*,’ has never had a satisfactory explanation.” He adds, “It is admitted to be Egyptian,” and then proceeds to add several to the numer-

ous conjectures already existing as to its Egyptian derivation. After all, is it not a Hebrew word? The fact of its existing in the cognate Semitic dialects, Arabic, Ethiopic, and Syriac, would be a presumption in favour of this. And has not Canon Cook been misled into still seeking an Egyptian derivation by what is now held by the most eminent Egyptologists to be his capital mistake in his otherwise most valuable essay, which is also found in his commentary, on *The Bearings of Egyptian History upon the Pentateuch*. This mistake is that Joseph's residence in Egypt was previous to the invasion and rule of the Hyksos, or shepherd kings. The point has been made so clear by Dr. Brugsch in his *Egypt under the Pharaohs*, and by others, that I do not think it necessary, as I do not feel competent, to enter into it. Taking it for established, it is a most important fact, and one which must leave its marks upon our narrative. To the Hyksos Joseph was a brother Semite, and would be received with favour by the reigning Pharaoh whether he was, according to concurrent tradition, Apophis, or any other of the Hyksos rulers. How, otherwise, can we explain the fact that Joseph, on his interpretation of the king's dream, was so readily believed and accepted, and was raised to so high a dignity in the nation? This was too much to expect on the single testimony of the chief butler, and it would have been quite contrary to what we know of the Egyptian jealousy of foreigners in ancient times and unto this day.

Dr. Brugsch says, in his *Egypt under the Pharaohs*, (vol. i., p. 270), "The present state of Egyptian research concerning the history of the Hyksos has enabled us to supply answers to a number of questions which stand in close connexion with these events, and embrace the following facts":

The facts he gives under seven heads. At present we will only quote the third. "The foreigners had adopted

not only the customs and manners of the Egyptians, but also their official language and writing. The whole order of their court was arranged on Egyptian models." Many other dynasties of foreigners have in this found it politic to follow the example of the Hyksos. Napoleon the Great, at the beginning of this century, donned the white turban, the badge of Islam, and professed to the Ulema of the Azhar that there was no deity but God, and Muhammed was His prophet; and even the English to-day are striving to consolidate the government and thus *facilitate* (their jealous French neighbours say indefinitely *procrastinate*) their departure by truckling to native prejudices.

We must insist on the third fact of Dr. Brugsch because of its importance in throwing light upon much that we find in the Biblical narrative. As to the point at present under consideration let us go back a little. If, as we have admitted, the Egyptian historians have proved the Pharaoh of Joseph was a Hyksos, then of all the officers and servants about him, the chief butler and baker were doubtless of his own nationality, Semites. Taste in food would suggest this; but if the Hyksos were as unpopular as the Egyptian records lead us to conclude, no Egyptian could be trusted to have to do with the food of the Pharaohs. This might seem to militate against what I have said on xxxix. 1 in support of the LXX. translation of the phrase שר הטבחים. But in the first place there is something remarkable, after the mention of his Egyptian name, and that he was an officer of Pharaoh, in adding that he was "*an Egyptian*"; and secondly, as I have remarked in accordance with the third fact of Dr. Brugsch, all foreign dynasties, down to the present English one, have always shown themselves most anxious to conciliate native prejudices, and there is no better way to do this than by retaining natives in certain high offices which are for the most part sinecures. The head or sheikh of the cooks would have

nothing to do with the preparation of food, but only with the regulation of those appointed to the office; and Pharaoh would see to it that those appointed for his service were trusty men of his own nation. Since there were also a chief baker and butler, with their staffs of workmen, they would be responsible for the safe and appetising composition of the royal viands. It is a fact that the most of the governmental departments have now Egyptian heads, but there are under them English subordinates who see to it that all things are rightly done. The record has hints confirming the presumption that the two were Semitic. When they told Joseph, their brother Semite, that they had had dreams, and there was no interpreter, he answered, "Do not interpretations belong to God?" In this, Joseph not only shows his piety, but he mentions the name of Elohim, a God who had no place in the Egyptian pantheon; and they manifest a favourable knowledge of the God of Abraham by immediately telling him their dreams. His request to be made mention of unto Pharaoh shows that he expected from him a favourable consideration of his case, which a *foreign* imprisoned slave could hardly have expected from an *Egyptian*. Then when it is said, "Yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph, but forgot him," his failure to mention him to Pharaoh is not attributed to race antipathy, but to pure forgetfulness. I am not sure that those dwelling in other lands would quite justify these my inferences, but am quite sure that they are in accordance with the feelings of Egyptians and Syrians toward each other for more than thirty years past, and that, even when they are or should be bound together by the bonds of a common faith, and it the Christian faith.

When now we turn to his intercourse with Pharaoh, we find that, when they made Joseph run to the palace, only giving him time to shave and change his clothes, it is not said that *they* took him in to introduce him, or act as inter-

preters, but that he entered alone into Pharaoh's presence, and the business in hand was at once opened. "I have dreamed a dream, and there is none to interpret it." How beautiful, modest, faithful to God, and sympathetic with Pharaoh was the answer, "It is not in me; Elohim shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace"! Then three times in the midst of his interpretation he refers it to God. And Joseph was not mistaken in his presumption that the Pharaoh would not resent his ignoring the Egyptian pantheon, by bringing so prominently forward the Semitic God. On the contrary, when Joseph not only interpreted, but presumed to give advice, Pharaoh at once appealed to his council of state, saying, "Can we find such an one as this is, a man in whom the *spirit of God* is?" and added, addressing Joseph, "Forasmuch as God hath showed thee all this," and immediately set him over all the land of Egypt, reserving to himself only the throne, put his signet ring upon his hand, arrayed him in vestures of fine linen and a gold chain, and made him ride in the second chariot which he had. Is not this glimpse into the constitution and manners of the court sufficient to lead us to expect that, when Joseph rode out, there would be numerous Semites around who would cry out before him, to every one, in true Semitic phrase, "Abrek" (bow the knee).

We have already seen sufficient reason for Pharaoh's giving Joseph an Egyptian name, "Zaphnath-paaneah"; and the same line of policy would lead him to give him an Egyptian wife, daughter of a high Egyptian official. I do not believe he was a priest. On, the holy city, doubtless had many priests, and we have evidence that the word כהן (kohen), originally apparently meaning simply an old man, and retaining traces of this meaning in the Arabic, was used much in the sense of sheikh, or old man, and used to designate a civil ruler as well as, in the patriarchal times, the priest of the family, and so came in the course of time

to be made more definitely official: *i.e.* "kohen," for the religious, and "sheikh," for the civil official. We have an example of the old use of the word in 2 Sam. viii. 18. It may be safely presumed that Joseph had a choice in the matter, and that he would not ally himself to the family of a man who must have been so pledged to the national idolatrous faith as a priest of On. It is certain that Joseph retained his piety, which has been so manifest in the preceding narrative. This immediately appears in the story, in the Hebrew names which he gave his two children, Manasseh and Ephraim, and the devout sentiments which the names expressed,—“God hath made me forget all my toil and all my father’s house,” and “God hath caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction.”

On (Coptic Ōn) is the city which was afterwards called Heliopolis, near Cairo, now called Matarieh. To the northeast, several miles distant, is Tel El-Yehudieh (the Mound of the Jewess), where, by permission of Ptolemy Philometer, Onias undertook to build a Jewish temple for the Egyptian Jews who had fled to Egypt, taking Jeremiah with them against his own protest, when Nebuchadnezzar invaded Palestine. We need not enter into the controversy concerning the name given to the city in the prophecy of Isaiah (xix. 18).

The words Zaphnath-paaneah, Asenath, Poti-pherah, we recognise as Egyptian as easily as we do a German word in an English text. This fact is sufficient for our purpose of showing the Egyptian character of the record, and we need not enter into the various conjectures which have been made as to their exact Egyptian meaning. Joseph’s surname has especially been made the subject of long linguistic discussions, with very conflicting results. We have the transliteration of the LXX., “Psonthomphanek,” which is rendered by the Vulgate “saviour of the world,” and by the Arabic, and other oriental versions, “revealer of secrets.”

Then we have Osborn's translation, "he who flees adultery," and Canon Cook's, "the food of life" or "of the living," and Dr. Brugsch's, "the governor of the district of the dwelling-place of the living one." We do not think it possible that the title given by Pharaoh to Joseph should designate him as the governor of the district or city of Pithom; for in the verse preceding he had given him absolute authority "in all the land of Egypt," and in the verse following it is said that "Joseph went throughout all the land of Egypt." At the same time, what Dr. Brugsch writes is well worth quoting, as connecting the name with "the Living One," as well as for its bearing on the recent discovery of Pithom. He says, vol. ii., p. 376, "Although the lists of the names, as well as the Egyptian texts, expressly designate the sun-god Tom—the same who had splendid temples at On or Heliopolis—as the tutelary deity of Sukot, they nevertheless add that the god Tom represents solely the Egyptian type corresponding to the divinity of Pitom, who is called by the name of ānkh, and surnamed 'the great god.' The word ānkh, which is of Egyptian origin, signifies 'life' or 'he who lives,' 'the Living One.' This is the only case, in the Egyptian texts, of the occurrence of such a name for a god as seems to exclude the notion of idolatry. And in fact, if we take into consideration the presence of families of the Semitic race, who have resided in Egypt in all periods of her history—including the nation of the Hebrews—we cannot refuse to recognise in this Divine name the trace of an old religious notion which has been preserved even in the monumental records of the Egyptians. I will not venture to decide the question whether the god 'He who lives,' of the Egyptian text, is identical with the Jehovah of the Hebrews; but, at all events, everything tends to this belief when we remember that the name of Jehovah contains the same meaning as the Egyptian word ānkh, 'He who lives.' According to the

monuments, this god, in whose honour a great feast was celebrated on the 13th day of the second month of summer, was served, not by priests, like the other divinities of the Egyptian pantheon, but by two young girls, sisters, who bore the sacred title of Ur-ti, that is, 'the two queens.' "

Again, on the name of Joseph, p. 378, he says: "According to the indications of the monuments, the town of Pitom, the chief place of the district of Sukot, had an appellation which it owed to the presence and existence of its god ānkh, 'He who lives,' or 'the Living One,' and which, in the terms of the Egyptian language, was pronounced p-āa-ānkh, 'the habitation or the dwelling-place of the god ānkh.' In conformity with this name, the district of Sukot was otherwise called p-u-nt-pāa-ānkh, 'the district of the dwelling-place of the Living One.' Add to this monumental name the Egyptian word 'za,' the well-known designation of the governor of a city or a district, and you will have the title Za-p-u-nt-p-āa-ānkh, 'the governor of the district of the dwelling-place of the Living One,' which a Greek of the time of the Ptolemies would have rendered by the translation 'the monarch of the Sethroite nome.' And now turn to Holy Scripture: it will inform you that the Pharaoh of Joseph honoured his vizier with the long title of Zaphnatpāneakh, which, letter for letter, answers exactly to the long Egyptian word the analysis of which I have just laid before you."

All this opens a wide door for future investigation. We can at least now say that we regret that Canon Cook, in his rendering, did not use the capital letters of Dr. Brugsch, and say "the Living One," instead of "the living." When we revert to the Hebrew transliteration of Joseph's name, its second part, פֶּעִנַח, stripped of its Massoretic vowels (which all will admit are of no authority) is simply Pa-ankh—Pa, the Egyptian definite article, and ankh—"the living one."

Ver. 47. "Handfuls." In Egypt wheat is reaped either by pulling it up by the roots, or grasping it with the left hand and cutting with the sickle. In either case the word handful implies that each kernel produced sufficient of the branching-eared twigs which I have described (verse 5) to fill the hand. The one containing forty-three stems I could not pull up with my right hand.

Ver. 48. "All the food of the seven years." As Joseph, ver. 34, had advised Pharaoh to take up the fifth part of the land of Egypt, the כָּל here is doubtless to be understood distributively, as *every kind* of food.

"The food of the field which was round about every city." Each city in Egypt is surrounded by only one field, the only demarcation of the farms of different proprietors being small stone landmarks. So also the farmers live in cities or villages; so that "the food of the field which was round about every city" would be "laid up in the same."

Ver. 56. "Store-houses." There is no word in the Hebrew answering to this. The Hebrew expression is, "Joseph opened all that had in them." The difficulty seems to have been the want of a Hebrew word to describe the Egyptian shunes or storehouses. See my description of them, *Monthly Interpreter*, Nov., 1885; or *Evangelical Repository*, Vol. lxii., No. 11.

Ver. 57. שֶׁבֶר. The derivations of this word, as given by Gesenius from the meaning "to break," are very curious. His own changing the שׁ to ט (tha) and the כּ to מ (meem), is not less curious. He says a vestige of the same (meaning) remains also in Arabic ثَبْرَة; but the Arabic lexicons explain this word as another form of صَبْرَة, which we have already seen, ver. 35, means a "heap of grain." Lane, in his Arabic Lexicon, explains the word under شَبْر (shabar), which is the exact transliteration of the Hebrew word. He says, "He measured by the شَبْر (or span) a garment, or a piece of cloth, or a thing." Then under the verbal nouns

he says, ⁶⁰شبر “the measure, by the span, of a garment or piece of cloth”; and under هشبر “certain notches in the cubit” by which buying and selling are transacted. Of them is the notch of the span and the notch of the half-span and of the quarter thereof; every notch of these, small or great, is termed هشبر Have we not this meaning in Job xxxviii. 10?—“When I measured for it my decree,” or “boundary,” as we have in margin of R.V. See also Job xxvi. 10; and Gesenius under חק No. 2. Thus the verb means to buy and sell in the sense of measuring out. In Arabic it has come to be used only of “long measure.” The explanation of the word by Gesenius does not at all square with such expressions as לשבר בר, xlii. 3, and לשבר אנל, ver. 10. They are Pi’els, and the English translation is the only reasonable one, to buy corn, to buy food. If Gesenius were right, it should be, to heap up corn or food. When used as a noun, as in xlii. 1, we would say that a more literal translation would be, “When Jacob saw that there was merchandise in Egypt.”

G. LANSING, D.D.