

We take up the thread of the narrative at the time when Joseph was sold to Potiphar, the captain of Pharaoh's guard. On the first point—the selling of Joseph—we have the testimony of Herodotus, that the purchase of slaves was common in Egypt. The same author informs us that the kings of Egypt had a guard, who in addition to the regular income of the soldier, received separate pay. In the paintings of marches and battles on the monuments they are represented as employed in protecting the person of the king, and are distinguished by a peculiar dress and weapons. In Genesis xxxix. 4, 5, we are informed that Potiphar placed Joseph over his house and substance. We must not regard this as a sample of the way in which the Egyptians usually treated their slaves. In this case a special reason is assigned for Joseph's exaltation, "The Lord was with him." The appointment of a head servant, or steward, illustrates a peculiar feature in Egyptian life. Among the operations of husbandry and tillage portrayed in the Egyptian tombs we often see a steward, who takes account and makes a registry of the harvest before it is deposited in the store-house.

The kindness of Potiphar to Joseph continued for nearly ten years, when a disastrous change occurred, and Joseph was cast into prison. During his imprisonment two of Pharaoh's servants, the chief butler and the chief baker, incurred their master's displeasure, and were put in guard, and placed by the keeper of the prison in Joseph's charge. On a certain night the two men dreamed each a dream, which, on the following day, they related to Joseph. First, the chief butler tells how, in his dream, he stood before Pharaoh, and pressed the juice of the grape into the wine-cup, and gave it to Pharaoh to drink. Here we have an illustration of Egyptian life. It has been said by objectors that the vine was not cultivated in Egypt at the time here referred to, and hence the statement ascribed to the chief butler is manifestly inaccurate. But what say the monuments? In the tombs of Beni-Hassan are to be found representations of the culture of the vine, the vintage, the bearing away and stripping off the grapes—in short, the whole process of wine manufacture. And these pictures are to be found not only in the monuments of later dynasties, but in those of the earliest Pharaohs. Besides this there are pictures of feasts, in which the guests are represented as overcome with wine.