**Is the story of Joseph in the Bible a true story?**

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| http://www.christiananswers.net/0.gif | http://www.christiananswers.net/0.gif | The events narrated in the [Joseph](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/joseph.html) Story, [Genesis 37-50](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/gen37.html), have long been a favorite topic of investigation for both Biblical scholars and those Egyptologists with an interest in the Old Testament.[[1]](http://www.christiananswers.net/q-abr/abr-a016.html#ref1) No reference to Joseph has turned up in [Egyptian](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/egypt.html) sources, but given the relative paucity of information about Egyptian officials before the New Kingdom and the lack of consensus regarding [Joseph's](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/joseph.html) Egyptian name, this should not surprise us.  Mushroom Hairstyle. Photo copyrighted.  Mushroom hairstyle of the statue of an Asiatic found at Tell el-Daba, Egypt.  Any specific reference to Joseph in any recognizable form will probably not be discovered any time soon. But, if we believe in the historicity of Joseph and the accuracy of the events recorded in [Genesis](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/gen1.html) about his life and career, we can ask two questions with some hope of receiving an answer from the written and [archeological](http://www.christiananswers.net/archaeology/home.html) sources: what is the best date for [Joseph](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/joseph.html), and, once that has been posited, do the Biblical events fit in that period of Egyptian history?  In answer to our first question, two major positions exist regarding the date of Joseph among serious students of the Joseph Story who accept its historicity. The majority of such modern scholars date Joseph to the Second Intermediate Period of Egyptian history, ca. 1786-1570 BC (Vergote 1959; Kitchen 1962; Stigers 1976), a time when an Asiatic group called the Hyksos[[2]](http://www.christiananswers.net/q-abr/abr-a016.html" \l "ref2) ruled the delta of the [Nile](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/nile.html).  This view is based primarily on two assumptions: first, that the so-called Late Date of the [Exodus](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/exodus.html) (during the reign of [Ramses](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/rameses.html) II) is correct, and second, that the rise to power of an Asiatic can best be placed during a period of Egyptian history when his fellow Asiatics, the Hyksos, controlled the government. Let us briefly examine these two arguments.  If the [Exodus](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/exodus.html) occurred in the 13th century BC, and the Sojourn lasted approximately 400 years (430, according to [Exodus 12:40](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/exo12.html#40)), [Joseph](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/joseph.html) would belong in the 17th century BC. But if the Exodus took place in the 15th century BC, Joseph's career would be shifted back to the 19th century BC, during the days of the 12th Dynasty of the Middle Kingdom.  If the Biblical numbers are taken literally and at face value, the probable [kings](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/king.html) during the [enslavement](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/slave.html) and subsequent rise to power of Joseph would have been Sesostris II (1897-1878 BC) and Sesostris III (1878-1843 BC).[[3]](http://www.christiananswers.net/q-abr/abr-a016.html#ref3) This argument then rests on how one interprets [1 Kings 6:1](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/1ki6.html#1), a verse which dates the [Exodus](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/exodus.html) 480 years before the fourth year of [Solomon](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/solomon.html), ca. 966 BC.  There seem to be three commonly held ways to regard this verse. One may accept it at face value, thus dating the Exodus to the 15th century BC;[[4]](http://www.christiananswers.net/q-abr/abr-a016.html#ref4) one may totally disregard the verse's historical accuracy, which allows one to date the Exodus to any period one chooses, or indeed to deny it altogether;[[5]](http://www.christiananswers.net/q-abr/abr-a016.html#ref5) or one may interpret the numbers given in it to mean something less than a literal 480 years, thus invoking support from the verse for a late [Exodus](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/exodus.html).[[6]](http://www.christiananswers.net/q-abr/abr-a016.html#ref6) It is not our purpose here to argue these positions, although I personally hold to an early Exodus. My only point is that one's view on the date of the Exodus is a determiner of one's date for Joseph.  The second idea, that Joseph should best be thought of as serving when fellow [Syro](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/syria.html)-[Palestinians](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/palestine.html) ruled part of [Egypt](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/egypt.html) seems to be unsound. It assumes that Syro-Palestinians, regardless of specific nationality, would favor one another. Our emerging knowledge of [Canaan](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/canaan.html), with its political division and inter-city warfare, and indeed the rivalries between groups visible in the Biblical narrative, casts great doubt in my mind that a [Canaanite](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/canaanites.html) group such as the Hyksos would be automatically friendly to a [Hebrew](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/hebrew.html).  It has long ago been observed that certain features of the Joseph Story fit well in the 12 Dynasty. A survey of some of these might be helpful.[[7]](http://www.christiananswers.net/q-abr/abr-a016.html#ref7)  Statue of Sesostris III. Photo copyrighted.Supporters of a 12th Dynasty date for the Joseph Story begin their arguments with a strict literal acceptance of the Biblical [chronology](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/chronology.html) of the Exodus and Sojourn. [1 Kings 6:1](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/1ki6.html#1) is seen as dating the Exodus to ca. 1446 BC, and [Exodus 12:40](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/exo12.html#40) is seen as placing the entrance of [Jacob](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/jacob.html) and his family into an [Egypt](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/egypt.html) where Joseph holds high office under the reign of Sesostris III, ca. 1876 BC. Joseph's career as an Egyptian [governmental](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/governments.html) official would thus begin under Sesostris II and would continue into the reign of Sesostris III. *(RIGHT: Sesostris III)*  Specific elements of the Joseph Story are normally cited in support of such a Middle Kingdom date. A few examples will illustrate.  [Potiphar](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/potiphar.html), the official who first bought [Joseph](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/joseph.html), is called an [Egyptian](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/egypt.html) and commander of the king's guard in [Genesis 39:1](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/gen39.html#1). It is argued that if the king were a Hyksos ruler, it would not make sense for a native Egyptian to have been commander of the royal bodyguard. Further, Joseph is described several times (Gen [41](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/gen41.html), [42](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/gen41.html), and [45](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/gen41.html)) as ruler over all the land of Egypt. The Hyksos controlled only the northern part of Egypt, but the 12th Dynasty ruled the entire nation. And when the king wanted to reward Joseph, he gave him the daughter of a priest of On, or Heliopolis, to be his wife. The argument there is that a Hyksos king would more probably give Joseph the daughter of the priest of another god, such as Seth, who was a more important deity to the Hyksos than were the solar deities venerated by the native Egyptians.  It should be observed, however, that the Hyksos did not in any way suppress the worship of Re, the sun god of On. Also, proponents of a 12th Dynasty date for Joseph argue that when Joseph is called from [prison](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/prison.html) to meet [Pharaoh](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/pharaoh.html) in [Genesis 41:14](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/gen41.html#14), he has to [shave](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/hair.html) and put on clean clothing. This would reflect native Egyptian customs rather than those of the Syro-Palestinian Hyksos.  An argument that has been used to date Joseph to the Hyksos period is the mention of [chariots](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/chariot.html) in the account of Joseph's promotion and rewarding by Pharaoh. It is often pointed out that since the war chariot was probably introduced into Egypt by the Hyksos, Pharaoh's gift to Joseph would best fit in the Second Intermediate Period and not in the earlier Middle Kingdom.[[8]](http://www.christiananswers.net/q-abr/abr-a016.html#ref8)  But need we connect this vehicle used for transportation by a high official of government with [war](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/war.html) [chariots](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/chariot.html)? Nothing is said in the Joseph Story about chariots being used in battle, and in fact the chariot given to Joseph is called the second chariot of [Pharaoh](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/pharaoh.html), thus leaving the impression that there were not many of them. When a horse was found by the excavators of the fortress of Buhen, from a period well before the Egyptians began to use chariots for war, the conclusion of the [archeologists](http://www.christiananswers.net/archaeology/home.html) was that "It is likely that, at least in the early periods, horses were owned by the most top-ranking members of society and that they were only used for drawing chariots on state occasions" (Emery, Smith and Millard 1979: 194; cf. B. Wood 1993).  Lastly, mention ought to be made of a [papyrus](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/paper.html) in the Brooklyn Museum and published by William C. Hayes (1955). This late Middle Kingdom document is of great importance for study of the Joseph Story, and can only be summarized here. It contains information on Asiatic [slaves](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/slave.html) in [Egypt](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/egypt.html) during the late Middle Kingdom, only a few generations after [Joseph](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/joseph.html), assuming a 12th Dynasty date for him. The most striking thing about these Asiatic slaves is that one of the most common jobs they were assigned was household servant, just like Joseph (Hayes 1955:103). Joseph's servitude thus fits the pattern for the Middle Kingdom period of Egyptian history.  Our purpose here, assuming a 12th Dynasty date for Joseph to be most in accord with the [Scriptural](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/scripture.html) [chronology](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/chronology.html), is to examine what new evidence there may be that would both support and further illustrate a career for Joseph in the Middle Kingdom. But first let us note an area for further research, involving the seven years of plenty followed by the seven years of [famine](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/famine.html) so important to the Joseph Story.  About 20 years ago Barbara Bell studied the 12th Dynasty Egyptian records of [Nile](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/nile.html) levels at the Middle Kingdom Nubian forts (1975). Collating this information with an analysis of statuary, and with the well-known literary work entitled *The Complaint of Khahkeperre-Seneb*,[9] Bell concludes that the mid-12th Dynasty suffered erratic [Nile](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/nile.html) levels which caused crop failure and the resultant social disruption mirrored in the Complaint.  One might ask why an unusually high [Nile](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/nile.html) would hurt crops; Bell's answer is that under such conditions it would take longer for the water to drain off the fields, and would thus impede the year's planting. As more information comes to light and as our knowledge of Nile fluctuations becomes more complete, we may be better able to consider Joseph's famine in a 12th Dynasty context.  In recent years our archeological knowledge of the Nile delta has increased significantly. Much of this advance is due to the work of the Austrians under Manfred Bietak at Tell el Daba Khatana-Qantir. This region is now the accepted location of the Biblical [city](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/city.html) of [Ramses](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/rameses.html) and the earlier Hyksos capital of Avaris. Our knowledge of the northeast delta and Asiatic influence in the region is much greater than it was 20 years ago. One discovery, made by Bietak's team between 1984 and 1987 and pointed out recently by John J. Bimson, is of extreme significance for the 12th Dynasty historicity of the Joseph Story (Bietak 1990).  A [palace](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/palace.html) and accompanying garden dating to the 12th Dynasty were found. There is no evidence that the palace was any kind of royal residence; Bietak hypothesizes on the basis of inscriptional material that it was the headquarters of an official who supervised trade and [mining](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/mine.html) expeditions across the northeastern border (Bietak 1990: 69).  But what is most interesting about this find is the [cemetery](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/burial.html) located in the palace garden, and particularly one of the [tombs](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/tombs.html) in it. All of the other [graves](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/grave.html) (there are approximately 12 altogether) seem to date to a slightly later period, perhaps the early years of Dynasty 13, and were on the basis of their orientation, definitely not part of the original palace-garden complex. But the largest and most impressive tomb of the lot, consisting of a single [brick](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/bricks.html) chamber with a small chapel in front of it, was oriented to the structures of stratum E (early-to-middle 12th Dynasty) (Bietak 1990: 61).  While the [tomb](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/tombs.html) had been robbed and badly damaged, a most interesting find was discovered in the robbers' tunnel between the tomb chamber and the chapel. A statue, almost certainly of one of the officials who lived in the palace in the late years of the 12th Dynasty, had been removed (probably from the tomb chapel) and had been smashed to pieces. All that remain are a few fragments of the head; the facial features have been very deliberately destroyed. The statue was approximately 1½ times life size, and exhibits no characteristics of a royal personage. But the most interesting thing is that this official was clearly an Asiatic. This is demonstrated by the yellow coloration of the skin, which was, as Bietak observes, typical for the depiction of male Asiatics, and by another Asiatic feature, the so-called Mushroom hairstyle which the statue had (Bietak 1990: 61-64).  The significance of this find for a 12th Dynasty setting of the Joseph Story is obvious. As John Bimson has observed,[10] there is not enough evidence to claim with any degree of certainty that the [tomb](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/tombs.html) of [Joseph](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/joseph.html) has been found, or that a statue of the famed Biblical character has been found. But it is clear that this man, without doubt a [Canaanite](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/canaanite.html) of some kind, became a very important official in the [Egyptian](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/egypt.html) [government](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/governments.html). He was important enough to have lived in a major palace complex and to have equipped a tomb for himself in its garden, and to have commissioned a more than life-sized statue of himself for his tomb chapel.  This demonstrates that an Asiatic could indeed rise to a position of prominence in an earlier period than the days of Hyksos rule, and allows us to accept the possibility, which I believe to be the case, that Joseph served a king of the Middle Kingdom at almost exactly the same time as did this Canaanite.  The next issues to be addressed are Joseph's titles after his rise to importance in the Egyptian court. What office or offices did he hold? And is there room for him among the known holders of these offices in Dynasty 12?  [Genesis 45:8](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/gen45.html#8) is a key reference. I believe, as I have pointed out elsewhere (Aling 1981:47-48), that three distinct titles and/or epithets are mentioned in this verse.  "Father to [Pharaoh](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/pharaoh.html)" should be associated with the Egyptian title “God's Father,” where the term “God” refers to the king. This title evidently had several usages, some of which can be quickly eliminated in the case of Joseph. He was not a priest, nor did a daughter of his enter the [harim](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/harim.html) of the Pharaoh. These are meanings of this title, but neither fits Joseph. The best explanation is to view him as having been honored with this title as a sort of Elder Statesman, a common use of the title “God's Father” in the Middle and New Kingdoms.  A second title in [Genesis 45:8](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/gen45.html#8) is "Lord of All His (the king's) Household." There is some disagreement among scholars as to the Egyptian equivalent of this phrase. Some would interpret it as some sort of palace overseer or court [chamberlain](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/chamberlain.html). The closest Egyptian title however seems to be *[imy-r pr wr*, Chief Steward of the King, or more literally the Chief Overseer of the House, with the term “house” referring to the personal estates of the king.  The Egyptian title usually translated [Chamberlain](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/chamberlain.html), *[imy-r 'hnwty n pr- nsw*, translates Overseer of the Interior of the King's House and does not seem to fit either the Biblical phrase or the context of the Joseph Story. Joseph had, after his interpretation of the king's [dream](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/dream.html), advised Pharaoh regarding [agricultural](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/agriculture.html) matters relating to the future years of plenty and the following [famine](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/famine.html). It seems most natural, in light of the king's response, for Joseph to be given a post that was connected with [agriculture](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/agriculture.html), as that of Chief Steward of the King certainly was.  The chamberlain had no such function. The title "Chief Steward of the King" is common in the Middle Kingdom. William Ward, in his *Index of Egyptian Administrative and Religious Titles of the Middle Kingdom*, cites over 20 examples of the title in various publications, without attempting to enumerate all the occurrences in the major museums of the world (1982: 22, n. 141).  Franke, in his *Personendaten Aus Dem Mittleren Reich*, presents dossiers of 19 Chief Stewards (1984: 17). Allan Gardiner said that the office was second in importance only to that of Vizier (1947:45\*-46\*). The duties of the Chief Steward are known from New Kingdom texts and from the 11th Dynasty biographical text of the chief Steward Henunu preserved in his tomb at Deir el Bahri (Hayes 1949). This official was administrator of the royal estates, supervisor of royal granaries, and overseer of royal flocks and herds. Henunu was also involved in [taxation](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/taxing.html), supplying certain parts of Upper Egypt with provisions, construction of the royal tomb, collection of tribute from Beduin tribes, and procuring [cedar](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/cedar.html) wood from [Syria](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/syria.html).  Joseph would have been very qualified to perform most of these tasks; the ones connected with [agriculture](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/agriculture.html) and taxation would certainly fit the context of the Biblical story. It is therefore best to agree with Vergote (1959: 98ff) and Ward (1960:146-47) that Joseph was Chief Steward of the King.  The greatest debate concerning Joseph's titles centers around that of Vizier. William Ward has argued against the idea that Joseph was ever Vizier of Egypt (1960:148-50; 1957). He views several of the descriptive phrases used about Joseph in the Old Testament as [Hebrew](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/hebrewlanguage.html) equivalents of general Egyptian platitudes that could be applied to any middle level official. The problem with this is that direct equation does not appear strong. An example is the phrase in [Genesis 41:40](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/gen41.html#40), "Only in the [throne](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/throne.html) will I be greater than you." Ward equates this with the Egyptian epithet "Favorite of the Lord of the Two Lands" (1960: 148). To me such an equation is weak.  I find a number of phrases describing Joseph and the duties performed by Joseph that would fit only the Vizier, who was in the Middle Kingdom the single most powerful man in the kingdom aside from the sovereign himself. Let us note these and a few other points:   1. [Genesis 41:40](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/gen41.html#40), "Only in the [throne](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/throne.html) will I be greater than you." This was true of only one person, the Vizier. 2. [Genesis 41:41](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/gen41.html#41), "I have set you over all the land of [Egypt](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/egypt.html)." 3. When Joseph's brothers came to Egypt for food during the famine, Joseph was the official they met. At least in the New Kingdom, a period about which we are far better informed, the Vizier was the official who met foreign delegations (Hayes 1966: 46). It may have been the same in the Middle Kingdom. 4. In [Genesis 47:20](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/gen47.html#20) ff., we have the curious story of the purchase of the land of the nobility of Egypt by the king. Joseph is the supervisor of the process. It seems most natural to view him as a powerful Vizier during this episode and not as some lower official, since ultimate responsibility over lesser governmental officials rested with the Vizier. This incident is most probably the Biblical version of the weakening of the provincial Nomarchs, which took place in about the middle of the reign of Sesostris III.   Egyptian Granary. Photo copyrighted.  Model of an Egyptian granary from the Middle Kingdom being filled. Joseph supervised the filling of granaries such as this during the seven years of plenty.  After about 1860 BC, we hear no more of them. G.P.F. van den Boorn has in his book, *The Duties of the Vizier*, discussed the Vizier's responsibilities during the New Kingdom as presented in Rekhmire's tomb dating to Dynasty 18 (1988). From van den Boorn's study we get the impression that the Vizier was indeed second only to the Pharaoh as ruler of Egypt.  In summary, we find that the Vizier was managing director of the king's palace complex, head of the civil administration, and the general deputy of the king. These kinds of duties fit well with the concept of Joseph as second in command of the realm, even allowing for the fact that van den Boorn's text is New Kingdom rather than Middle Kingdom.  If we accept as probable that Joseph was Vizier, we next have to ask if there is room for him in the list of Viziers of the Middle Kingdom, and if there is any evidence of his holding that post. Let it be said at the outset that we do not have all the information we would like to have regarding the Vizierate, or regarding any non-royal title, from the Middle Kingdom. Great gaps in our knowledge exist.  The most recent attempt to list all the known Viziers of Dynasty 12 was made by Detlef Franke in 1984; his list includes 13 names for the roughly 200 years the dynasty was in power. Some of the individuals in Franke's list may not have actually served; their titles may have been honorary. Furthermore, there are a number of Viziers who probably belong in the 12th Dynasty but cannot be placed with any certainty.  One final general observation should be made. It seems certain, thanks to the work of William Kelly Simpson, that Middle Kingdom Viziers could serve under more than one king (1957: 29). They were not automatically removed when the throne changed hands.  We cannot at this time discuss the Viziers of the entire 12th Dynasty, but will only examine the reigns of Sesostris II and III, 1897-1843 BC. The earliest complete study of the institution of the Vizierate in ancient Egypt was that of Arthur Weil, published in 1908. This monumental work is to a marked degree out of date today, but still remains useful. Although Weil has a number of undatable Viziers, his 12th Dynasty list has no one beyond Year 8 of Amenemhat II, ca. 1920 BC. No Vizier was known from the reigns of either Sesostris II or his son and successor Sesostris III.  In 1957, William Kelly Simpson called attention to the existence of two viziers of Sesostris III, both of whom had tombs near the pyramid of that king at Dahshur. The first, a masataba called number 17, was said by its excavator De Morgan to be the tomb of a high official of the king's court. The location of the tomb makes it certain that that king was Sesostris III.  De Morgan did not find the name or titles of the tomb owner, but fragments did exist. Simpson cites an offering table which has part of a name, *[Sbk m...* Another fragment preserves the last portion of the name, *...[m-h3t* (1957: 26). The official was thus Sebekemhat.  Simpson also discovered that the man's titles were those of a serving Vizier, including Vizier and Overseer of the City, meaning the capital. This last is a common title for Viziers on into the New Kingdom. This Vizier of Sesostris III was totally unknown to Weil.  Simpson also cites another masataba near the pyramid of Sesostris III, number 2 (1957: 27). It is located to the northwest of tomb 17, and was also the tomb of an important official. The name is preserved; it is Khnumhotep. Weil knew of him, and knew that he was a Vizier, but wrongly dated him (with a question mark) to one of the Amenemhats. The location of Khnumhotep's tomb shows that he, like Sebekemhat, in all probability served under Sesostris III. Simpson in his paper on these two officials also states that neither was a nomarch, and that their service seems to have been actual; they did not hold the title only honorarily.  The next study of the Middle Kingdom Vizierate was that of Michel Valloggia in 1974. He lists the same two Viziers as Simpson for the reign of Sesostris III. There is another Vizier who may fit in this period, since his name is Senwosret-ankh, or “Sesostris Lives,” thus incorporating the name of a 12th Dynasty king into his name. He is known from a statue found at Ugarit and now in the Louvre, and from a stele in Florence.  Could he have served in our period? It is not likely for two reasons. Valloggia (1974: 131-32; 132, n. 4), citing Vandier, states that artistically the statue fits best in the late 12th Dynasty and not the middle. Further, names are of course given at birth, so a man named after either Sesostris II or III would probably serve later than those reigns or at least later than the transition between them. It is best to date him to the later years of the dynasty.  Franke in 1984 published a compilation of dossiers of Middle Kingdom officials (Bietak 1990: 61). This has been and will continue to be a useful tool for Middle Kingdom prosopography for years to come. In his introduction Franke discusses key offices such as that of Vizier, and lists all those known to him. This is the most recent listing that has been compiled. He acknowledges Sebekemhat and Knumhotep for the reign of Sesostris III, but, of course, we still do not know the order in which they served.  Interestingly, he adds, with a question mark, Ameny the son of Smy-ib for the late years of Sesostris II and the early years of Sesostris III (Franke 1984:18). This is the first attempt of which I am aware to place any known Vizier in the reign of Sesostris II. Franke gives no reason, other than the existence of a gap here, for this dating, and he admits that the statue of Ameny may be from a later time. At this point there is not enough evidence to place Ameny during the transition from Sesostris II to Sesostris III with any degree of certainty.  For the 50-odd years of the reigns of Sesostris II and III we therefore have two Viziers, Sebekemhat and Khnumhotep, both of whom should be dated to the reign of the later Sesostris. We have a possible Vizier, Ameny, for the earlier part of this period, but we cannot date him here with any certainty. There is, therefore, plenty of room for Joseph to have served in the 12th Dynasty.  His long life span does not make his service unlikely; he need not have continued to hold this high office until his death. Before we proceed further, let me state that there is no reason to conclude that either Sebekemhat or Khnumhotep was Joseph. There appears to be no similarity between their names and the Hebrew version of Joseph's Egyptian name given in the [book of Genesis](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/genesis.html). But there is one interesting thing about the titles held by one of these two Middle Kingdom Viziers.  Khnumhotep held both the titles Vizier and Chief Steward of the King (Weil 1908: 44, no. 11). He is, to my knowledge, the only person in the Middle Kingdom to have done so. Nor was this done in other periods of Egyptian history. As stated above, I do not argue that this personage was Joseph; but it seems possible that the idea of one person holding both these posts could be patterned after Joseph.  Perhaps, if Joseph was Vizier and Chief Steward in the last years of Sesostris II and the early years of Sesostris III, it is conceivable that after Joseph's retirement, Khnumhotep could have also have been granted both of these high court positions. We at the very least see that the combination is a possibility in the Middle Kingdom.  In conclusion, we have attempted to make the case that Joseph's career fits quite well in Dynasty 12 both Biblically and historically, and that there is no good reason to try to place him in the later Second Intermediate Period. He did, I believe, make a significant impact on Egyptian history, an impact which is reflected in events such as the breaking of the power of the Nomarchs and the combining of the offices of Vizier and Chief Steward of the King. As our knowledge of the Middle Kingdom increases, and as new archeological information from the delta is discovered and published, we can expect to understand both the Middle Kingdom and the Second Intermediate Period better, and we can expect to expand our knowledge of the Egyptian background of the Story of Joseph.  **NOTES**   1. For some representative examples, see Archer 1974: 215-219; Aling 1981: 25-52; Vergote 1959; and Redford 1970. 2. On the Hyksos period in general see Van Seters 1966. 3. On the reigns of these kings see the *Cambridge Ancient History*; Gardiner 1961, Chapter 6; and, most recently, Grimal 1992, Chapter 7. 4. This is the position held by Aling, Archer, L. Wood, and, with slight modifications, by Bimson. While a literal reading of [1 Kings 6:1](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/1ki6.html#1) is the major Scriptural support for a 15th century Exodus, it is not the only one. See for example [1 Chronicles 6:33](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/1chr6.html#33) ff., where a geneaology of a musician is presented. Between Moses and Solomon there are 19 generations. If a generation is taken to be ca. 25 years, simple multiplication yields 475 years between Solomon and the Exodus, a figure nearly identical with the 480 years of 1 Kings 6:1. 5. For a presentation of this view with references, see Redford 1992: 263 ff. 6. See Kitchen 1966: 72 ff., and, for a full discussion of such explanations, Bimson 1978: 81 ff. 7. For arguments along these lines and others, see Aling, L. Wood, Archer, and Battenfield 1972: 77-85. 8. So, for example, Kitchen 1962: 658. 9. For a translation see Lichtheim 1975: 145 ff. 10. This was presented in a public lecture given on a recent tour of the United States, and in personal correspondence with the author.   **REFERENCES**   * Aling, C.F. 1981 *Egypt and Bible History*. 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