

**BY-PATHS OF BIBLE
KNOWLEDGE, XVII; THE LIFE
AND TIMES OF JOSEPH IN THE
LIGHT OF EGYPTIAN LORE**

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By-Paths of Bible Knowledge, XVII; The Life and Times of Joseph in the Light of Egyptian Lore
by H. G. Tomkins

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H. G. TOMKINS

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XVII

THE
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IN THE LIGHT OF EGYPTIAN LORE

BY THE

REV. H. G. TOMKINS

LATE VICAR OF BRANSCOMBE

AUTHOR OF 'STUDIES ON THE TIMES OF ABRAHAM,' ETC.

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PREFACE.

IN this little book the reader will find himself out of the high-road of Biblical exposition, and (in conformity with the general title of this Series of Handbooks) in By-paths of Bible Knowledge.

With questions of textual criticism I have not been concerned. The date and origin and authorship of those documents which may have been used in the writing, or subsequent redaction, of the Book of Genesis, are not the matters which lay in my way. But, quite apart from all such studies, it is surely a very interesting and instructive thing to lay the narrative as it stands side by side with the daily increasing information which comes to the student of Egyptian lore, and of other branches of Biblical archaeology.

This I had done in concise form with regard to the Life of Joseph in a paper which may be found in the *Transactions of the Victoria Institute* for 1880¹; and I have since studied, as far as I am aware, all that has been written by Egyptologists bearing on the subject.

The references in the following pages, and a few

¹ Vol. XV, pp. 83 *et seqq.*

notes by way of Appendix, will guide the reader to the more important sources of information. The very able work of Dr. de Cara, of Rome, on the Hyksôs¹, has added the latest digest of information with regard to this obscure but most attractive period of history; and I would also draw special attention to the fine Memoir on Bubastis by M. Naville, as well as his volume on Goshen, both of them published by the Egypt Exploration Committee.

The narrative of the life of Joseph in the Book of Genesis has been treated in the most thoughtful, learned, and devout manner by the venerable Franz Delitzsch in his *New Commentary on Genesis*, of which an English translation (with 'numerous improvements and additions' by the author) is available for those who do not read German².

For an able and candid exposition of the conservative views of the Biblical text, I would refer to *The Foundations of the Bible*, by my friend Canon R. H. Girdlestone³, and especially, as bearing on my own subject, to p. 46, and the close of the work, and the valuable chapter on Hebrew Spelling. And for a more popular view of the same general subject it is very well to read the same author's small and handy tract, *The Age and Trustworthiness of the Old Testament Scriptures*.

For my own part I think it right to reiterate the belief that what have been called 'precritical' studies

¹ *Gli Hyksôs, &c.*, del P. Cesare A. de Cara, Roma, 1889.

² Clark, Edinburgh, 1889.

³ Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1890.

in the way of collation of the Scripture narrative as it stands, with all that becomes known from monumental sources (as they are now generally called), are of a very high rank of importance and value; and provide us, indeed, with most valuable material (as, for instance, with palaeographic data, and other kindred details) bearing on the more mature decisions of what is exclusively called 'criticism.'

A very striking instance of an attempt to disprove the early date of the Egyptian narratives of the Book of Genesis is given in an Appendix at the end of this volume, and previously in a letter by myself in the *Academy* for Jan. 31, 1891, to which no reply has been sent. In this case the structure of such names as Potiphar and Potiphera is alleged to prove a late date, no earlier than the ninth century B.C. But the allegation itself is an unaccountable error.

So much it has seemed right to say. For some one might easily object to anything written with regard to Joseph which does not first disprove the floating objections to the narrative of Holy Scripture.

With regard to the spelling of proper names, I have tried to indicate the difference between the mere aspirate and the guttural sound indicated by *Kh*, as in Haran and Kharran, for instance; and between the Hebrew letters *Kaph* and *Kheth*, as in Shekem instead of Shechem. But I could not venture on Khebron for Hebron, and the like, for reasons which may easily be supplied.