

The Questor

Bible history....

....Egypt

Egypt played a significant part in Bible history.

The lifeblood of Egypt has always been the river Nile. Most of its inhabitants lived along the banks of the river or in the area of its delta where it enters the Mediterranean Sea, an area well suited to pasturing cattle. The rest of the country is dry, arid desert.

The prosperity of Egypt depended upon the river. In the spring, the rains in Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda caused the river to flood along its length. This irrigated the land on either side and deposited alluvial silt on the land, making it very fertile. A 'good Nile' meant prosperity; but a 'low Nile' meant starvation.

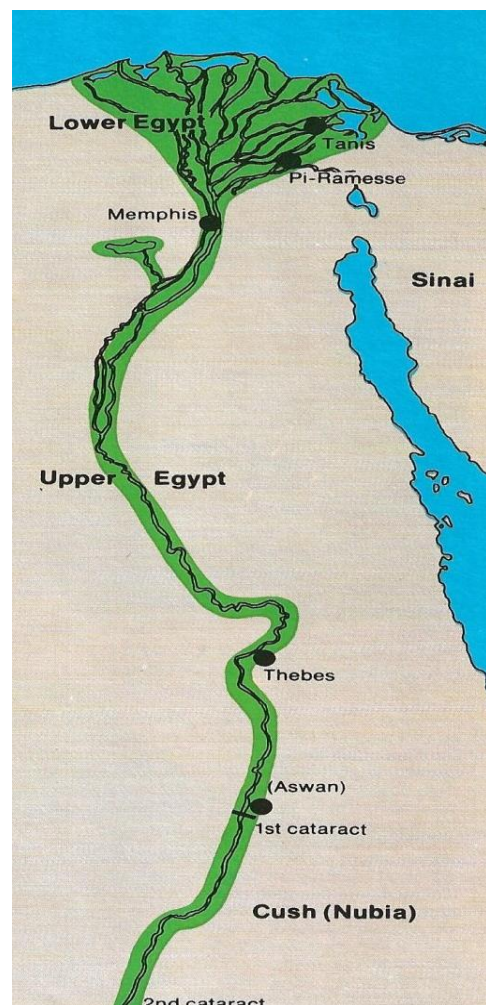
The countries north of Egypt, including Palestine, depended for their prosperity on the rains from the Mediterranean. So it was unusual for both Egypt and those countries to experience drought at the same time. That is why people like Abraham and Jacob sought refuge in Egypt when there was a drought in Palestine - taking advantage of the major trade route through northern Sinai.

Egypt was a major regional power from 3000BC, when the river valley and the delta were united as one kingdom; to 300BC when the country declined in significance and the Persian Empire and subsequently Rome were in the ascendancy. During that time it developed a very sophisticated culture and national life. Much is known about that from all the archaeological work that has taken place. Society was headed up by a succession of kings known as Pharaohs who ruled for much of the time in Memphis at the junction of the river valley and the delta.

The secular side of the pharaohs' rule was shared with high officers of state: grand viziers for south and north, chief treasurers,

superintendants of granaries, even chief taxation masters! These departments were supported by a bureaucracy of scribes in the capital and the provinces. They kept detailed registers of land holdings and of the harvest for tax purposes.

Education was based on scribal training in civil administration and on temple schools. The great temples maintained the official daily ritual of offerings to the gods to which only pharaoh, the priests and dignitaries had access.



It seems foreigners were welcomed into Egypt and many of them found employment there at various levels: from slaves to high stewards. All of which is very relevant to the next period of Old Testament history – the story of Joseph.