

Study 12: Joseph, Part 3 Genesis 39-43

Gen 39: 1 Now Joseph had been taken down to Egypt. Potiphar, an Egyptian who was one of Pharaoh's officials, the captain of the guard, bought him from the Ishmaelites who had taken him there.

2 The Lord was with Joseph so that he prospered, and he lived in the house of his Egyptian master. 3 When his master saw that the Lord was with him and that the Lord gave him success in everything he did, 4 Joseph found favor in his eyes and became his attendant. Potiphar put him in charge of his household, and he entrusted to his care everything he owned. 5 From the time he put him in charge of his household and of all that he owned, the Lord blessed the household of the Egyptian because of Joseph. The blessing of the Lord was on everything Potiphar had, both in the house and in the field. 6 So Potiphar left everything he had in Joseph's care; with Joseph in charge, he did not concern himself with anything except the food he ate.

Now Joseph was well-built and handsome, 7 and after a while his master's wife took notice of Joseph and said, "Come to bed with me!"

Of course, Joseph refuses, but Potiphar's wife is extremely persistent. Verse 11 One day he went into the house to attend to his duties, and none of the household servants was inside. 12 She caught him by his cloak and said, "Come to bed with me!" But he left his cloak in her hand and ran out of the house.

Skipping to verse 16 She kept his cloak beside her until his master came home. 17 Then she told him this story: "That Hebrew slave you brought us came to me to make sport of me. 18 But as soon as I screamed for help, he left his cloak beside me and ran out of the house."

19 When his master heard the story his wife told him, saying, "This is how your slave treated me," he burned with anger. 20 Joseph's master took him and put him in prison, the place where the king's prisoners were confined.

But while Joseph was there in the prison, 21 the Lord was with him; he showed him kindness and granted him favor in the eyes of the prison warden. 22 So the warden put Joseph in charge of all those held in the prison, and he was made responsible for all that was done there. 23 The warden paid no attention to anything under Joseph's care, because the Lord was with Joseph and gave him success in whatever he did.

Gen 40 1 Some time later, the cupbearer and the baker of the king of Egypt offended their master, the king of Egypt. 2 Pharaoh was angry with his two officials, the chief cupbearer and the chief baker, 3 and put them in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, in the same prison where Joseph was confined. 4 The captain of the guard assigned them to Joseph, and he attended them.

After they had been in custody for some time, 5 each of the two men...had a dream the same night.... [Long and short of it, Joseph correctly interprets their dreams – the baker is executed, and the cupbearer gets his job back, so Joseph asks him to mention him to the Pharaoh]. 23 The chief cupbearer, however, did not remember Joseph; he forgot him.

Gen 41 1 When two full years had passed, Pharaoh had a dream: [7 fat cows, eaten up by 7 skinny cows]. 5 He fell asleep again and had a second dream: [7 good heads of grain, swallowed up by 7 thin heads of grain. None of Pharaoh's magicians could interpret them. The cupbearer *finally* remembers Joseph and recommends him as an advisor to Pharaoh. He sends for Joseph and tells him his dreams. Joseph says they both have the same meaning, that Pharaoh dreamed twice because it was God's way of saying this would certainly come to pass. There were going to be 7 years of wonderfully abundant harvests, followed by 7 years of terrible famine. Joseph suggests that Pharaoh find a wise man and put him in charge of managing the grain during these 14 years to come].

33 "And now let Pharaoh look for a discerning and wise man and put him in charge of the land of Egypt. 34 Let Pharaoh appoint commissioners over the land to take a fifth of the harvest of Egypt during the seven years of abundance. 35 They should collect all the food of these good years that are coming and store up the grain under the authority of Pharaoh, to be kept in the cities for food. 36 This food should be held in reserve for the country, to be used during the seven years of famine that will come upon Egypt, so that the country may not be ruined by the famine."

37 The plan seemed good to Pharaoh and to all his officials. 38 So Pharaoh asked them, “Can we find anyone like this man, one in whom is the spirit of God [or *the spirit of the gods*]?”

39 Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Since God has made all this known to you, there is no one so discerning and wise as you. 40 You shall be in charge of my palace, and all my people are to submit to your orders. Only with respect to the throne will I be greater than you.”

44 Then Pharaoh [Senusret II?] said to Joseph, “I am Pharaoh, but without your word no one will lift hand or foot in all Egypt.” 45 Pharaoh gave Joseph the name Zaphenath-Paneah [Imhotep?] and gave him Asenath daughter of Potiphra, priest of On to be his wife. And Joseph went throughout the land of Egypt. [The city of On was renamed *Heliopolis* by the Greeks in recognition of the fact that the sun god Ra (*Helios* in Greek) presided there]

46 Joseph was thirty years old when he entered the service of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

48 Joseph collected all the food produced in those seven years of abundance in Egypt and stored it in the cities. In each city he put the food grown in the fields surrounding it. 49 Joseph stored up huge quantities of grain, like the sand of the sea; it was so much that he stopped keeping records because it was beyond measure.

50 Before the years of famine came, two sons were born to Joseph by Asenath daughter of Potiphra, priest of On. 51 Joseph named his firstborn Manasseh [sounds like the Hebrew for *forget*] and said, “It is because God has made me forget all my trouble and all my father’s household.” 52 The second son he named Ephraim [sounds like the Hebrew for *twice fruitful*] and said, “It is because God has made me fruitful in the land of my suffering.”

53 The seven years of abundance in Egypt came to an end, 54 and the seven years of famine began, just as Joseph had said. There was famine in all the other lands, but in the whole land of Egypt there was food. 55 When all Egypt began to feel the famine, the people cried to Pharaoh for food. Then Pharaoh told all the Egyptians, “Go to Joseph and do what he tells you.”

56 When the famine had spread over [all the face of the earth (NKJV, NASB) Hebrew: *ha eretz*], Joseph opened all the storehouses and sold grain to the Egyptians, for the famine was severe throughout Egypt. 57 And all the world [*eretz*] came to Egypt to buy grain from Joseph, because the famine was severe everywhere.

Gen 42 1 When Jacob learned that there was grain in Egypt, he said to his sons, “Why do you just keep looking at each other?” 2 He continued, “I have heard that there is grain in Egypt. Go down there and buy some for us, so that we may live and not die.”

3 Then ten of Joseph’s brothers went down to buy grain from Egypt. 4 But Jacob did not send Benjamin, Joseph’s brother, with the others, because he was afraid that harm might come to him. 5 So Israel’s sons were among those who went to buy grain, for there was famine in the land of Canaan also.

6 Now Joseph was the governor of the land, the person who sold grain to all its people. So when Joseph’s brothers arrived, they bowed down to him with their faces to the ground. 7 As soon as Joseph saw his brothers, he recognized them, but he pretended to be a stranger and spoke harshly to them. “Where do you come from?” he asked.

“From the land of Canaan,” they replied, “to buy food.”

8 Although Joseph recognized his brothers, they did not recognize him. 9 Then he remembered his dreams about them and said to them, “You are spies! You have come to see where our land is unprotected.”

10 “No, my lord,” they answered. “Your servants have come to buy food. 11 We are all the sons of one man. Your servants are honest men, not spies.”

12 “No!” he said to them. “You have come to see where our land is unprotected.”

13 But they replied, “Your servants were twelve brothers, the sons of one man, who lives in the land of Canaan. The youngest is now with our father, and one is no more.”

14 Joseph said to them, “It is just as I told you: You are spies! 15 And this is how you will be tested: As surely as Pharaoh lives, you will not leave this place unless your youngest brother comes here. 16 Send one of your number to get your brother; the rest of you will be kept in prison, so that your words may be tested to see if you are telling the truth. If you are not, then as surely as Pharaoh lives, you are spies!” 17 And he put them all in custody for three days.

18 On the third day, Joseph said to them, “Do this and you will live, for I fear God: 19 If you are honest men, let one of your brothers stay here in prison, while the rest of you go and take grain back for your starving households. 20 But you must bring your youngest brother to me, so that your words may be verified and that you may not die.” This they proceeded to do.

21 They said to one another, “Surely we are being punished because of our brother. We saw how distressed he was when he pleaded with us for his life, but we would not listen; that’s why this distress has come on us.”

22 Reuben replied, “Didn’t I tell you not to sin against the boy? But you wouldn’t listen! Now we must give an accounting for his blood.” 23 They did not realize that Joseph could understand them, since he was using an interpreter.

24 He turned away from them and began to weep, but then came back and spoke to them again. He had Simeon taken from them and bound before their eyes.

25 Joseph gave orders to fill their bags with grain, to put each man’s silver back in his sack, and to give them provisions for their journey. After this was done for them, 26 they loaded their grain on their donkeys and left.

[On their way home, they stop for the night, and when one of them opens his sack to feed his donkey and finds his money.] Verse 27Their hearts sank and they turned to each other trembling and said, “What is this that God has done to us?” [Guilty consciences! When they get back to Canaan, they begin to open the rest of the sacks, and find all their money. Now they’re really scared. Is this a setup? A simple mistake? They tell their father, Jacob, about the conversation with the lord of the land and that he demanded they bring their younger brother back with them. If they didn’t, Simeon would remain in prison, and they wouldn’t be able to get more grain.

36 Their father Jacob said to them, “You have deprived me of my children. Joseph is no more and Simeon is no more, and now you want to take Benjamin. Everything is against me!”

37 Then Reuben said to his father, “You may put both of my sons to death if I do not bring him back to you. Entrust him to my care, and I will bring him back.” [This is hardly a comfort to Jacob, who is afraid he will have no progeny left. Reuben’s suggestion would make there even *less*!]

38 But Jacob said, “My son will not go down there with you; his brother is dead and he is the only one left. If harm comes to him on the journey you are taking, you will bring my gray head down to the grave in sorrow.”

Gen 43 1 Now the famine was still severe in the land. 2 So when they had eaten all the grain they had brought from Egypt, their father said to them, “Go back and buy us a little more food.”

[Judah reminds his father that they cannot go back without Benjamin. When Jacob still balks at the idea, Judah says to send the boy with him, and if anything happens to him, Judah himself will take full responsibility.

11 Then their father Israel said to them, “If it must be, then do this: Put some of the best products of the land in your bags and take them down to the man as a gift—a little balm and a little honey, some spices and myrrh, some pistachio nuts and almonds. 12 Take double the amount of silver with you, for you must return the silver that was put back into the mouths of your sacks. Perhaps it was a mistake. 13 Take your brother also and go back to the man at once. 14 And may God Almighty grant you mercy before the man so that he will let your other brother and Benjamin come back with you. As for me, if I am bereaved, I am bereaved.”

[Just as Abraham had to offer up his son, Isaac, Jacob must now offer up what he thinks is “his only son” (the only one he believes is left of Rachel’s sons) to God as a sacrifice.]