

Genesis Part II (Chapters 25-50)

Lesson 7: Joseph – From Prisoner to Prime Minister

Reading: Genesis 40:1-41:57

In chapter 37, Jacob demonstrates his favoritism of Joseph with a multi-colored coat that causes his brothers to hate him. Joseph adds to their hatred by relating dreams which indicate they will one day be subject to him. The hatred of Joseph's brothers turns into a desire for murder. It is Reuben who rescues Joseph out of their hand with the intent of returning him to his father. However, before he can do so, Joseph's brothers sell him to Ishmaelites. The Ishmaelites carry Joseph to Egypt and sell him to Potiphar, the captain of Pharaoh's guard. God is with Joseph, and he excels such that the management of Potiphar's house is put in Joseph's care. Potiphar's wife attempts to seduce Joseph and his rejection of her results in him being thrown into prison. Even in prison, God is with Joseph, and he excels such that the keeper of the prison delegates the operations of the prison to him. In the middle of this account, chapter 38 tells of Judah's family as he marries a Canaanite woman. He has 3 sons: Er, Onan, and Shelah. Judah finds a wife his son Er, whose name is Tamar. Er is so wicked that God kills him. Onan refuses to carry out his duty to Tamar as Er's brother, so God kills him also. Judah agrees to give Shelah to Tamar after he is grown. After some time passes, Tamar disguises herself as a harlot, and Judah has relations with her leaving his signet ring, cord, and staff with her as a pledge. When he learns that Tamar is pregnant by harlotry, he demands that she be burned. However, when she produces his ring, cord, and staff to show the father's identity, he is humbled and acknowledges that she is more righteous than he, since he had not kept his promise regarding Shelah. From that relationship are born two sons, one of which (Perez) is in the lineage of Jesus Christ.

The Dreams of the Chief Butler and Chief Baker (40:1-23)

1. What was the importance of dreams in the Egyptian culture, and what is significant about Joseph's response to the chief butler and chief baker given the culture (40:8)?
2. What was the dream of the chief butler, what was its interpretation, and what special request does Joseph make of the chief butler (40:9-15)?
3. What was the dream of the chief baker, what was its interpretation, and how did Joseph demonstrate his integrity (40:16-19)?

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Pharaoh's Dreams (41:1-57)

4. What two dreams did Pharaoh have, and what was his reaction (41:1-8)?
5. How does Pharaoh describe Joseph's reputation, and how does Joseph answer Pharaoh's characterization of him (41:15-16)?
6. What interpretation does Joseph give of Pharaoh's two dreams (41:25-32)?
7. Upon what basis does Pharaoh decide to make Joseph ruler over the land, and what is the extent of Joseph's authority (41:38-44)?
8. How does the naming of Joseph's two sons demonstrate a connection to his homeland (41:50-52)?
9. What lessons can we derive today from Joseph's rise to power (39:1-41:57)?