

## JOSEPH (*Son of Jacob*)

Key Passages: Gen 30:23-24, 37-50; Psa 105:16-22; Acts 7:8-16; Heb 11:22

Last month we learned about Hagar and the birth of her son, Ishmael with Abraham. We now fast forward past the birth of Abraham's other son Isaac, and Isaac's son Jacob. Jacob was tricked by Laban into marrying his eldest daughter Leah and then finally to marry Rachel (who he was interested in the first place). The rivalry between the 2 sisters gave Jacob 12 sons. Jacob's 11<sup>th</sup> son, and the first that was actually born of Rachel was Joseph. (she had given Jacob other sons prior, but they were by her surrogates) Nearly 1/3 of the book of Genesis deals with the story of Joseph.

**Gen 30:23-24** "And she conceived and bore a son, and said, "God has taken away my reproach." So she called his name Joseph, and said, "The LORD shall add to me another son."

God had given Jacob a new name, Israel. His two names are used interchangeably throughout the remainder of Genesis.

**Gen 37:3-4** "Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age. Also he made him a tunic of many colors. But when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him and could not speak peaceably to him."

Well, THIS is going to be a recipe for disaster. The baby of the family naturally gets more attention but Jacob explicitly shows his favoritism...and the brothers didn't like it. Joseph was also Jacob's favorite because he was the first-born of his first love, Rachel.

**Gen 37:5** "Now Joseph had a dream, and he told it to his brothers; and they hated him even more"

He goes on to describe the dream symbolizing the 11 brothers bowing down to Joseph. As if being the Dad's favorite wasn't enough, he now has to get dreams of being superior to his older brothers. Reading the account you can just feel them getting torqued up about it.

Later on, Jacob sends Joseph to check out what his brothers are doing. They see him approach and plot to kill him. The oldest brother Reuben convinces them NOT to kill him at that moment, but to first put him in a pit to “stick it” to Joseph about his dreams of superiority. Reuben takes off. Midianite traders travel through where the brothers are tending their flock, so Judah gets the bright idea to at least get some money for Joseph rather than straight out killing him. Joseph is sold into slavery and the brothers hatch a plot to cover up their actions.

**Gen 37:31-32** “So they took Joseph’s tunic, killed a kid of the goats, and dipped the tunic in the blood. [32] Then they sent the tunic of many colors, and they brought it to their father and said, “We have found this. Do you know whether it is your son’s tunic or not?””

The brothers were playing dumb and for some reason Jacob didn’t catch on. Of course it was Joseph’s! This was a one-of-a-kind tunic. It’s not like there were racks full of this tunic design at the local WalMart. The brothers said very little and it was Jacob himself that drew his own conclusion of what happened... that Joseph was attacked and killed by a wild beast.

**Gen 39:1** “Now Joseph had been taken down to Egypt. And Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him from the Ishmaelites who had taken him down there”

Potiphar soon saw that the LORD was with Joseph and that even in his circumstances, he was successful. Potiphar then made Joseph overseer of his entire household. So much so that after a while Potiphar didn’t even know all the things he owned. That’s how much trust he had in Joseph. God blessed Potiphar’s household because Joseph was in charge of it and wanted Joseph to be viewed by others in a positive light.

**Gen 39:7-9** “Now Joseph was handsome in form and appearance. And it came to pass after these things that his master’s wife cast longing eyes on Joseph, and she said, “Lie with me.” [8] But he refused and said to his master’s wife, “Look, my master does not know what is with me in the house, and he has committed all that he has to my hand. [9] There is no one greater in this house than I, nor has he kept back anything from me but you, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?””

Potiphar's wife has the "hots" for Joseph and tries to get him to sleep with her. It is interesting to note that Joseph declines her many advances even though (A) he himself is NOT married and (B) there was no explicit prohibition against adultery at this point. Remember, God had not given His people the 10 commandments yet.

The wife wasn't one to take no for an answer so she orchestrates a scenario where she is alone in the house with Joseph, and when he refuses her one last time, Joseph flees as she rips his garment off him. She runs to her husband accuses Joseph of trying to rape her and shows him the garment as proof. Potiphar believes his wife and throws Joseph in prison. This is the 2<sup>nd</sup> time that a garment of Joseph was used to worsen his situation.

**Gen 39:21-22** "But the LORD was with Joseph and showed him mercy, and He gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison. [22] And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners who were in the prison; whatever they did there, it was his doing."

While in prison, Joseph encounters Pharaoh's baker and butler who were also in prison. He interprets their dreams that one will be set free in 3 days and the other will be executed. And it actually happens. 2 years later, Pharaoh has a dream and the butler then remembers that Joseph was able to correctly interpret his dream so he tells Pharaoh about him. Pharaoh sends for Joseph and he is about to interpret the dream.

**Gen 41:15-16** "And Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I have had a dream, and there is no one who can interpret it. But I have heard it said of you that you can understand a dream, to interpret it." [16] So Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, "It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh an answer of peace."

Pharaoh's dream was about 7 years of bountiful harvests followed by 7 years of drought and famine. Joseph suggested that Pharaoh prepare for it by saving up ahead of time. He agrees and since Joseph was the only one to able to interpret his dream and offer a suggested course of action, Pharaoh appoints Joseph to be overseer of all Egypt.

**Gen 41:42** "Then Pharaoh took his signet ring off his hand and put it on Joseph's hand; and he clothed him in garments of fine linen and put a gold chain around his neck."

The signet ring was physical representation of Pharaoh's power and authority. And it was given to Joseph. And whereas previously garments played a detrimental role for Joseph, now this fine linen garment represented his ascension to power. It was during this 7 years of bounty that Joseph put abundance aside for safekeeping. And Pharaoh gave Joseph a wife. It seems like this is a turning point for Joseph's life. His wife then gave him 2 sons.

**Gen 41:51-52** "Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh: "For God has made me forget all my toil and all my father's house." [52] And the name of the second he called Ephraim: "For God has caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction.'"

These 2 verses really ministered to me. I can see these principles working in my own life...and demonstrates God's omnipotence and omniscience.

The 7 years of bounty come to an end and the drought and famine begin. Because of Joseph's faithful stewardship, Egypt is in a great position to handle the famine. Back in Canaan, Jacob and his sons are dealing with the drought. He sends the 10 oldest brothers to Egypt to buy food.

They appear before Joseph and don't recognize him. But he recognizes them. He doesn't reveal himself to his brothers. Unbeknownst to them, he sets up a test for them to see the nature of their hearts. We too are instructed to do similarly, as written in 1 John 4:1 "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God;" After passing these tests, Joseph can't hold back any longer.

**Gen 45:1-2** "Then Joseph could not restrain himself before all those who stood by him, and he cried out, "Make everyone go out from me!" So no one stood with him while Joseph made himself known to his brothers. [2] And he wept aloud, and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard it."

Now that Joseph has been revealed to his brothers, the whole purpose of Joseph's ordeals is now revealed.

**Gen 45:7-8** "And God sent me before you to preserve a posterity for you in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. [8] So now it was not you who sent me

here, but God; and He has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt.”

Joseph was sent ahead to Egypt to prepare for the famine and drought so that Jacob’s household would not only survive, but also prosper during this time. Jacob learns that Joseph is still alive and comes to Egypt with the rest of his household. Jacob is reunited with Joseph and is introduced to Joseph’s two sons.

**Gen 48:10-11** “Now the eyes of Israel were dim with age, so that he could not see. Then Joseph brought them near him, and he kissed them and embraced them. [11] And Israel said to Joseph, “I had not thought to see your face; but in fact, God has also shown me your offspring!” “

What a touching example of God blessing us beyond what we hoped for. Jacob would’ve been overjoyed to see Joseph again, but to see Joseph and HIS sons was just something that Jacob never imagined. Before Jacob died, he made Joseph promise him to bury him with his fathers. Joseph continued to be faithful and obedient.

**Gen 50:7** “So Joseph went up to bury his father; and with him went up all the servants of Pharaoh, the elders of his house, and all the elders of the land of Egypt,”

Joseph made a reassuring peace with his brothers, showing them that he had indeed forgiven them.

The story of Joseph is retold in Reader’s Digest form in Psa 105:16-22 and again in Acts 7:8-16; The fact that this story is repeated is an indication to its importance.

Key Character Traits:

- **Stewardship**  
(Managed Potiphar’s household. Managed all of Egypt)
- **Humble**  
(Never lost sight that it was God who gave him what he had)
- **Obedient**  
(Went about the tasks at hand...never complaining)

- **Faithful**  
(Trusted in God completely)
- **Merciful**  
(Didn't avenge himself over what his brothers did to him)
- **Grace-filled**  
(Gave his brothers what they didn't deserve and took care of them)

## **MEANING OF HIS NAME**

The name Joseph means "may God add". Rachel gave him this name because she hoped that giving birth to him was a sign that God would be blessing her with more children. But the meaning of his name extended to Potiphar, Pharaoh, and Jacob's entire extended household.

## **EXPERIENCE**

- **Joseph was the 11<sup>th</sup> son of Jacob (first born of Rachel)**  
Gen 30:23-24
- **He was Jacob's favorite son**  
Gen 37:3-4
- **He was sold by his brothers into slavery at the age of 17**  
Gen 37:28
- **Pharaoh made him overseer of Egypt at the age of 30**  
Gen 41:46
- **He lived to be 110 years old**  
Gen 50:26

## **SPIRITUAL LIFE**

- **Righteous** – Joseph always chose to do the right thing...things that were pleasing to God. Even though there was no technical prohibition against his sleeping with Potiphar’s wife, he was given a sense of discernment about what was right before God.
- **Humble** – Joseph knew that God was in control of his life. There isn’t anywhere in the Bible that says he complained about the injustices that he suffered. When Pharaoh believed that Joseph could interpret his dream Joseph corrected him to acknowledge that it was God who would do it (through Joseph).

## **SHORTCOMINGS**

It’s quite possible that Joseph was a bit conceited when he was a child. He was the favorite, the baby of the family, and he was having all of these visions of him being superior to his brothers. It’s pretty clear that he wasn’t too humble about it either.

## **ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

Through Joseph’s management, Potiphar’s household grew and Pharaoh’s kingdom grew in wealth and power. Exceedingly and abundantly so much so that Jacob’s extended household was able to survive and thrive through the famine.

## **GLORY TO GOD**

Through Joseph’s life, God gave humanity a glimpse... a foreshadowing of the coming Messiah. Just as God sent Joseph to Egypt to prepare for Jacob’s arrival, God sent Jesus to prepare for our arrival in Heaven. Jesus suffered and died so that we wouldn’t have to pay that price...that we would be GREATER because of the sacrificial work of Jesus. Joseph was a slave and managed Egypt’s wealth so that Jacob would

not have to suffer the ravages of the drought and famine. Jacob's household became GREATER because of the work of Joseph.

## **E**SSENTIAL TRUTH

**Being faithful to God makes you a target for the enemy.** Joseph was faithful and obedient, being a good steward over Potiphar's household. He had Potiphar's complete trust. Potiphar's wife tempted him numerous times to stray from his calling. But Joseph resisted. Joseph was faithful in his management of Egypt. When approached by his brothers, he was tempted to exact revenge and exercise the power he had for selfish reasons. But he remained humble and obedient.

**Be faithful with the small things and God will add to it.** Joseph proved to be faithful and diligent with a single Egyptian household and as a result, he was given all of Egypt to manage. Even his name, Joseph, "may God add", tells us this.

**Acting within God's Will and blessings has pleasant future consequences.** (This is in contrast to last month's study where we saw how acting OUTSIDE of God's will has UNPLEASANT future consequences) Joseph remained faithful and obedient throughout his trials and injustices. He didn't wallow in self-pity, but set his mind and heart to do God's will. Having faithfully come through those hardships, the Lord lifted Joseph up, restored him, and blessed him exceedingly and abundantly. Far greater than Joseph ever imagined.

**God provides for all of our needs, even before we know we have a need.** No one but God knew of the drought and famine to come. Through a series of circumstances He brought Joseph to Egypt and set him up to prepare for this event. Jacob and his sons were completely unaware of what was to come until it arrived.

## **LIFE APPLICATION**

**We should put on the full armor of God.** To strengthen our Christian walk and fend off the attacks of the enemy we should do what we are exhorted to in Eph 6:11-17. The

Lord won't use us if we aren't properly equipped. He loves us and cares for us way too much to put us in situations we aren't equipped to handle. As Christians we should be all suited up and eagerly calling to the Lord to “Put me in coach, I'm ready to play!”... for HIS glory, and HIS honor!

**We should be good stewards over what the Lord has given us.** The Most High God, *El Elyon*, possessor of Heaven and Earth has given us stewardship over things in this world. We need to be ever mindful of that fact and treat those things accordingly. In the parable of the talents, Jesus said in Mat 25:21, “His lord said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.’” Let's be thankful for what we currently have, knowing that God will be faithful to add to it.

**Having received the knowledge of God's will for our lives, we need... TO DO IT!**

God loves us! He wants the best for us! We need to do whatever He wants us to do... to be obedient, patient, faithful, loving... whatever it takes. We WILL be blessed. Guaranteed. We won't always know the reasoning behind things, but we must be faithful. Joseph was single for the first 30 years of his life. But it was only after he endured trials and put his faithfulness and stewardship into practice did God (through Pharaoh) give Joseph a wife. Let's be thankful that we love and serve a God that loves us so much and is so faithful as to prepare us for what lies ahead.

**We should search deep in our hearts to acknowledge all of the needs our Lord has provided for... and THANK HIM!!!**

If we look, we'll see that there have been times in our lives where we didn't have a need because the Lord had already taken care of it. It is easy to overlook those things. How appropriate is it that as we celebrate Thanksgiving that we should be mindful to thank the Lord?

**LEADING LESSON** - *What do you think is the leading lesson of this man's life?*

**IMPACT ON YOUR LIFE** - *How does the leading lesson impact your life? What specific changes do you need to make to become a person of like character?*

**FUTURE PLANS** - *What specific action do you plan to take to grow in the proper character traits?*

**EXPRESS OBEDIENCE** - *Pray to God your desire to be obedient in this area of your life*