

THE LIFE OF

# JOSEPH



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**OZARKS BAPTIST ENCAMPMENT**

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

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INTRODUCTION .....	5
<i>Joseph's Place in World History</i>	
<i>Joseph's Place in His Family</i>	
<i>Importance of Studying the Lives of Great Men</i>	
<i>Brief Overview of Joseph's Life</i>	
PART ONE: TRANSITIONAL AND FORMATIVE YEARS (30:24 – 37:1)	
I. Joseph's Dysfunctional Family .....	11
A. Joseph's Dysfunctional Father	
<i>Jacob's Family Tree with Many Branches</i>	
<i>Jacob's Character Traits</i>	
B. Joseph's Dysfunctional Siblings	
<i>Dinah's Tragedy and Her Brothers' Response</i>	
<i>Trilogy of Tragedies along the Journey to Canaan</i>	
PART TWO: UNFAIR AND UNJUST YEARS (37:2 – 41:46)	
II. Joseph, the Favored Son	
Favored Son, Hated Brother (37:2-35).....	
<i>Obvious Favoritism</i>	
<i>Ostentatious Dreams</i>	
<i>Opportunistic Plan</i>	
<i>Overt Deception</i>	
III. Joseph, the Faithful Steward	
Resisting Temptation (37:36; 39:1-20) .....	
<i>God Brought about Success in Joseph's Life</i>	
<i>Success Brought about Temptation in Joseph's Life</i>	
<i>Temptations Brought about Injustice in Joseph's Life</i>	
IV. Joseph, the Forgotten Slave	
Imprisoned and Forgotten (39:21 – 40:23) .....	
<i>Joseph's Mistreatment</i>	
<i>Joseph's Imprisonment</i>	
<i>Joseph's Cellmates</i>	
<i>Joseph's Disappointment</i>	

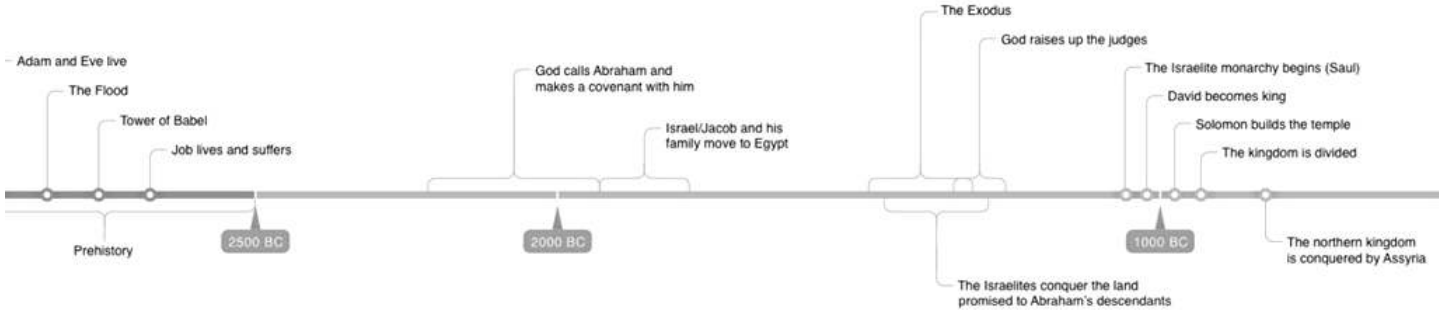


# INTRODUCTION

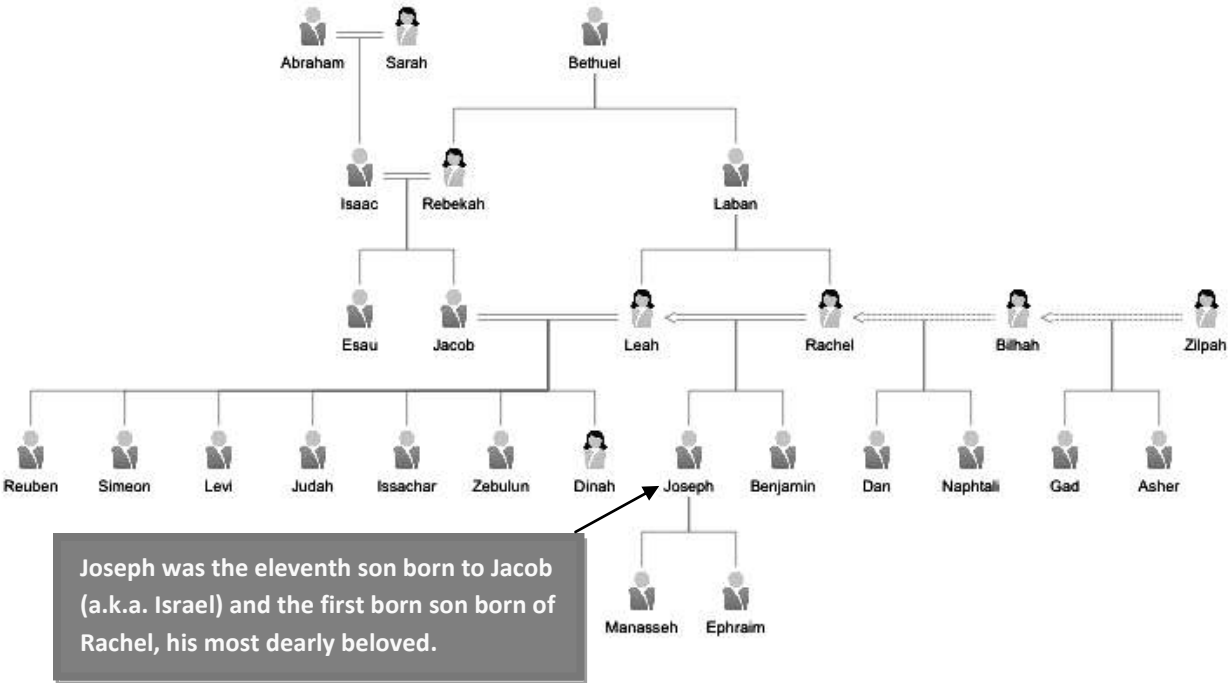
## Joseph’s Place in World History

The story of Joseph is found primarily in the Book of Genesis. Joseph is born in Genesis 30, but the writer of Genesis (Moses) does not begin to focus on his life until Genesis 37. Notice the timeframe of other major events of the Bible in relationship to Joseph’s life.

## Joseph’s Place in His Family



## Family Tree: Jacob



### *What do we know about Joseph's great-grandfather—Abraham?*

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- God promised Abraham that his family would be God's chosen people (Genesis 12:1-3).  
"Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. <sup>2</sup> And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. <sup>3</sup> I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."
  - God renews that covenant with him in Genesis 15: 5-6:  
"<sup>5</sup> And he brought him outside and said, "Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be." <sup>6</sup> And he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness."
  - Abraham was reconciled/redeemed to God because of his faith in Him.
- Abraham's life was characterized by **deceitfulness** (Genesis 12:10-20; 20:1-18).
  - He claimed that Sarah (his wife) was his sister on two occasions.
  - This was a 'half-truth' because Sarah was his 'half-sister.'
- He showed tremendous faith in God when he was instructed to sacrifice his only son (Genesis 22:1-19)

### *What do we know about Joseph's grandfather—Isaac?*

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- Isaac was the 'child of promise' born to Abraham and Sarah in their old age.
- Abraham's test of faith was when God asked him to be willing to sacrifice his only son—Isaac (Genesis 22:1-19).
- Just as his father had done, Isaac **deceived** Abimelech, king of the Philistines, by telling him that Sarah was his sister, not his wife (Genesis 26:1-11)
- Isaac showed favoritism toward his son, Esau; however, Jacob **deceived** Esau out of his inheritance (Genesis 25:29-34) and Isaac out of the blessing intended for Esau (Genesis 27).

Genesis 27:36, "Esau said, 'Is he not rightly named Jacob? For he has cheated me these two times. He took away my birthright, and behold, now he has taken away my blessing.'"

### *What do we know about Joseph's great-uncle—Laban?*

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- Laban is the brother of Joseph's grandmother, Rebekah. Laban gives us a glimpse into the moral character of the other side of the family.
- When Jacob wanted to marry Rachel, Laban's daughter, Laban agreed to the marriage only if Jacob was willing to work for him for 7 years as payment. When the seven years was over, Laban tricked Jacob by giving his older, less attractive daughter Leah to him in marriage instead of Rachel. Once Jacob discovered the **deception**, Laban renegotiated their deal for another 7 years of work to be given the hand of Rachel in marriage.
- In Genesis 30:25-31:16, the Bible relates a story of reciprocal **deception** between Jacob and Laban regarding their herds of sheep/goats.

### *What character or pattern of behavior do we see in each of these men's lives?*

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- **DECEPTION** – to cause someone to believe something that is not true, typically to gain some personal advantage.
  - The root issue of deception is selfishness—manipulating situations for personal gain.
  - In many ways, this type of behavior could be described as idolatrous. He is the god that he is worshiping. He is putting his desires before and in place of God's desires.
- This type of character/behavior affects generation after generation. Exodus 20:4-6 says, <sup>4</sup>“You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. <sup>5</sup>You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, <sup>6</sup>but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.

### *What do we know about Joseph's father—Jacob?*

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- His name literally means “one who grasps the heel,” which was a euphemism for someone who cheats or supplants. This was exactly what he did when he tricked his twin brother Esau out of his birthright as the firstborn son.

- He was the father of twelve sons who essentially became the twelve tribes of Israel.
  - The tribe of Levi was the ‘priestly’ tribe and therefore had no land inheritance.
  - Joseph had two sons—Ephraim and Manasseh—each of whose descendants became tribes of Israel.

## Importance of Studying the Lives of Great Men

### *Why is it important to study the lives of great men and women in the Bible?*

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- Chuck Swindoll addresses this issue. He wrote, “God constantly uses the lives of Bible characters to teach us, to encourage us, to warn us. Who can forget the impact of the truths lived out in the lives of David and Esther, of Moses and Jonah, of Peter and Paul? It’s impossible to leave truth in the theoretical realm when you see it revealed in the lives of real-life men and women. This is what these divinely inspired biographies do; they distill truth and weave it into the fabric of everyday living.”<sup>1</sup>
- The events of their lives give us **instruction** and **hope**.
  - Romans 15:4 says, “<sup>4</sup> For whatever was written in *former days* [OT] was written for our **instruction**, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have **hope**.”
  - 1 Corinthians 10:6, 11 says, “<sup>6</sup> Now these things took place as **examples** for us, that we might not desire evil as they did... <sup>11</sup> Now these things happened to them as an **example**, but they were written down for our **instruction**, on whom the end of the ages has come.”
- “... God has given us Old Testament truths to instruct us, to give us hope, and to warn us about how we are to live day by day, so that we might not crave the evil things some of our spiritual ancestors craved.”<sup>2</sup>

### *What can we learn from studying the life of Joseph?*

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- Joseph was a man of absolutely impeccable moral character!
- “Regardless of how he was treated, in spite of unfair and erroneous accusations, even though he was rejected, abandoned, abused, maligned, and forgotten, he refused to become resentful or bear a grudge or succumb to bitterness.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Swindoll, Charles. *Joseph: A Man of Integrity and Forgiveness*. (Word Publishing: Nashville, TN, 1998), 2-3.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid 3.



## Brief Overview of Joseph's Life

As we mentioned earlier, the bulk of Joseph's life story begins in Genesis 37, but there is much to be learned about Joseph's early, developmental years from earlier portions of Genesis. Joseph's life can easily be divided into three distinct segments: birth to seventeen years old, seventeen to thirty years old, and thirty years old to death (approximately 80 years).

- **Transitional & Formative Years** (0-17 years old)
  - Genesis 30:24 - 37:2
  - “During this time Joseph's family was in transition—everyone was unsettled, on the move. A low-level antagonism was brewing as his family clashed and argued in jealousy and hatred.”<sup>4</sup>
- **Unfair & Unjust Years** (17-30 years old)
  - Genesis 37:2 - 41:46
  - “This second segment occurs as Joseph reaches young manhood. It seems as though his life becomes out of control. Enslavement, unfair accusation, and imprisonment assault him.”<sup>5</sup>
- **Years of Blessing & Forgiveness** (30-110 years old)
  - Genesis 41:46 - 50:26
  - “Joseph's last eighty years are years of prosperity and reward under God's blessing. He had the classic opportunity to get even with his brothers, to ruin them forever, but he refused. Instead he blessed, protected, and forgave.”<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Swindoll 2.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid 4.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.



# PART ONE: TRANSITIONAL AND FORMATIVE YEARS

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## *Quotes about Dysfunctional Families*

“Your perspective on life comes from the cage you were held captive in.”

“Sometimes you have to burn a few bridges to keep the crazies from following you.”

“HAPPINESS is having a large, loving, caring, close-knit family in another city.”

“People who come from dysfunctional families are not destined for a dysfunctional life.”

“Refuse to inherit dysfunction. Learn new ways of living instead of repeating what you lived through.”

## **I. Joseph’s Dysfunctional Family**

Joseph’s family was extremely dysfunctional, even by today’s standards. Notice these insights about family dysfunction based on information from the Kansas State University Counseling Services:<sup>1</sup>

- “Family dysfunction can be any condition that interferes with healthy family functioning.”
- “Negative patterns of parental behavior tend to be dominant in their children's lives.”
- “Deficient parents hurt their children more by omission than by commission.”
- “Regardless of the source of dysfunction, you have survived. You have likely developed a number of valuable skills to get you through tough circumstances.

“Consequently, it is important to first stop and take stock. You may find that much of what you learned in your family is valuable.

“Many of the survival behaviors you developed are your best assets. For example, people who grow up in dysfunctional families often have finely tuned empathy for others; they are often very achievement-oriented and highly successful in some areas of their lives; they are often resilient to stress and adaptive to change. In examining changes you may want to make in yourself, it is important not to lose sight of your good qualities.”

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<sup>1</sup> Source: <https://www.k-state.edu/counseling/topics/relationships/dysfunc.html> accessed Sept 17, 2017.

## A. Joseph's Dysfunctional Father

### Jacob's Family Tree with Many Branches

#### *What were the circumstances surrounding Jacob's marriage?*

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- Jacob was tricked into marrying sisters.
  - “When Jacob was a young man, he fell in love with Rachel, the beautiful daughter of a man named Laban... on Jacob's wedding day [after working seven years for his future father-in-law], Laban pulled a switch; he tricked Jacob. He deceived the deceiver, some might say, and Jacob ended up married to Leah, Rachel's older and less attractive sister.”<sup>2</sup>
  - Wife #1 – Leah, the daughter of Laban
  - Jacob's response is a bit puzzling—he struck a deal with Laban to work seven more years to be allowed to marry Rachel, but in the meantime he lived with Leah as husband and wife.
  - Finally, after seven more years, Jacob and Rachel were married.
  - Wife #2 – Rachel, Leah's sister

#### *What was this polygamous marriage like for the sisters?*

#### *Were there problems?*

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- Genesis 29:30-31 sheds some light on this issue:
  - <sup>30</sup> So Jacob went in to Rachel also, and he loved Rachel more than Leah, and served Laban for another seven years.
  - <sup>31</sup> When the Lord saw that Leah was hated, he opened her womb, but Rachel was barren.
- There was MUCH strife and envy between the sisters because of Rachel's infertility.
- Briscoe states, “The unfortunate situation in which the sisters found themselves lent itself to all kinds of tensions which in turn gave every opportunity for the **dark side** of the women's lives to be revealed.”<sup>3</sup>
- Swindoll notes, “Obviously, this family was not off to a good start! Within the next few years, Leah bore Jacob seven children—six sons and one daughter. As a result of Leah and Rachel's competition for his affection and for motherhood, he also bore four sons by his wives' handmaidens.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Swindoll 6.

<sup>3</sup> Briscoe, D. Stuart. *The Communicator's Commentary: Genesis*. (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1987)257.

<sup>4</sup> Swindoll 6.

### *How did it come about that Jacob had children from four different women?*

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- Rachel was unable to become pregnant in their early years of marriage which was a disgrace to her; and since Leah was having so many children for Jacob, Rachel cried out to Jacob:
  - Genesis 30:1 – “When Rachel saw that she bore Jacob no children, she envied her sister. She said to Jacob, “Give me children, or I shall die!”
  - Jacob’s response “shows something about his frustration with God as well as his intolerance of his wife’s hurt and complaint.”<sup>5</sup>  
Genesis 30:2 – “Jacob's anger was kindled against Rachel, and he said, “Am I in the place of God, who has withheld from you the fruit of the womb?”
- The result of this encounter was Rachel’s decision to provide Jacob with an heir another way.
  - Genesis 30:3-5 – “Then she said, “Here is my servant Bilhah; go in to her, so that she may give birth on my behalf, that even I may have children through her.” <sup>4</sup> So she gave him her servant Bilhah as a wife, and Jacob went in to her. <sup>5</sup> And Bilhah conceived and bore Jacob a son.”
  - Not to be outdone, Leah responded in kind.
  - Genesis 30:9-10 – “<sup>9</sup> When Leah saw that she had ceased bearing children, she took her servant Zilpah and gave her to Jacob as a wife. <sup>10</sup> Then Leah's servant Zilpah bore Jacob a son.”
- “If their relationship to each other showed their capacity for envy and resentment their attitude to their mutual husband was no better. Their calculating how to get him into bed needs no elucidation on our part. These women were clearly capable of less than honorable activities when it suited their own purposes. One can only guess about the feelings of the slave girls Bilhah and Zilpah when they were coolly and calmly handed over to Jacob by Rachel and Leah respectively simply to function as baby makers.”<sup>6</sup>

### **Jacob’s Character Traits**

Jacob is “a classic illustration of a man who was too busy for his family, too preoccupied and unconcerned, which meant he was too passive to deal with what was occurring in the lives of any of his children.”<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Briscoe 255.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid 257.

<sup>7</sup> Swindoll 5.

## B. Jacob's Dysfunctional Siblings

### Dinah's Tragedy and Her Brothers' Response

*What tragedy occurred in Joseph's family after they left his grandfather Laban's house to go to Canaan?*

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- Tragically, Dinah was raped by a Hivite prince.
- Genesis 34:1-2 – “Now Dinah the daughter of Leah, whom she had borne to Jacob, went out to see the women of the land. <sup>2</sup> And when Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, the prince of the land, saw her, he seized her and lay with her and humiliated her.

*What is the response to this brutal violation?*

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- The sons of Leah—her brothers—“devised a plan, deceived the Hivites into falling into their trap, and slaughtered the men of the city.”<sup>8</sup>
  - Genesis 34:18-19, 25 – tricked them into getting circumcised and then slaughtered them.
  - “Whatever may be said about the righteous indignation of Dinah's brothers when they heard about her rape, nothing good can be said of their violent action both in the violation of truth and trust and in the more heinous violation of the sanctity of life.”<sup>9</sup>
- Even more tragically, Jacob's response was focused only upon himself!
  - “Jacob's response to the violence of his family was total noninvolvement with a willingness to overlook it and use the situation to his own advantage.”<sup>10</sup>
  - Genesis 34:30 – <sup>30</sup> Then Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, “You have brought trouble on me by making me stink to the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites and the Perizzites. My numbers are few, and if they gather themselves against me and attack me, I shall be destroyed, both I and my household.”
  - “His concerns were understandable and legitimate but his apparent lack of concern for the nature and significance of his son's action was most disconcerting. He was more concerned about saving his own skin than he was in dealing with sons who had done such a dreadful thing”<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Swindoll 7.

<sup>9</sup> Briscoe 287.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid 288.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

## Trilogy of Tragedies along the Journey to Canaan

*In Genesis 35:1, where did God tell Jacob to go and what was he to do?  
What is significant about that place?*

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- God called Jacob to return to Bethel to make an altar and worship God in that place.
- This was the place where God appeared to him in Genesis 27 as he was fleeing from his brother—Esau—after stealing his brother’s blessing.

*What tragedies occurred during their journey to the Promised Land?*

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- #1 – God answered Rachel’s prayer for another son, but she died after difficult childbirth.
- #2 – Reuben, Jacob’s oldest son, had sexual relations with Bilhah, his father’s concubine.
- #3 – Jacob’s father—Isaac—died.

*What happened to Rachel during the birth of her second child?*

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- She had very difficult labor. Shortly after the baby was born, she died as a result.
  - Genesis 35:16-19 – “<sup>16</sup>Then they journeyed from Bethel. When they were still some distance from Ephrath, Rachel went into labor, and she had hard labor. <sup>17</sup>And when her labor was at its hardest, the midwife said to her, “Do not fear, for you have another son.” <sup>18</sup>And as her soul was departing (for she was dying), she called his name Ben-oni; but his father called him Benjamin. <sup>19</sup>So Rachel died, and she was buried on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem)”
- Jacob mourned the loss of his beloved wife.

*As Jacob/Israel was mourning the loss of his beloved wife, what did his firstborn son do that brought shame to the family?*

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- Reuben had sexual relations with Bilhah, his father’s concubine.
  - Genesis 35:21-22 – “<sup>21</sup>Israel journeyed on and pitched his tent beyond the tower of Eder. <sup>22</sup>While Israel lived in that land, Reuben went and lay with Bilhah his father's concubine. And **Israel heard of it.**” (Emphasis added)

- “Concubine (noun) 1. a woman who cohabits with a man to whom she is not legally married, especially one regarded as socially or sexually subservient; mistress. 2. (among polygamous peoples) a secondary wife, usually of inferior rank.”<sup>12</sup>
- “A concubine could not marry her master because of her slave status... Sometimes concubines were used to bear children for men whose wives were barren. Concubines in Israel possessed many of the same rights as legitimate wives, without the same respect.”<sup>13</sup>
- For all intents and purposes, this was considered an incestuous relationship.
  - “Jacob was such a passive father that when he heard what his son had done, he did absolutely nothing about it... When he heard about the rape of his daughter, he did nothing; and when he learned that his own son had committed incest with Bilhah, again he did nothing.”<sup>14</sup>
- Some may argue that this wasn’t passivity, but an unawareness of what occurred.
  - Consider what Jacob said to Reuben as he lay on his deathbed (Genesis 49:3-4 NLT):
    - <sup>3</sup>“Reuben, you are my firstborn, my strength,  
the child of my vigorous youth.  
You are first in rank and first in power.
    - <sup>4</sup>But you are as unruly as a flood,  
and you will be first no longer.  
For you went to bed with my wife;  
you defiled my marriage couch.
  - Jacob knew—he just either didn’t care or didn’t know how to be an effective father.

*What can we learn from this overview of Joseph’s family history?*

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- It is important to see where someone is from to understand who they are and why.
- The goal of looking back was “to see and understand the deception, the intrigue, the anger, the rebellion, the rivalry, and out-of-control jealousy that were rampant within the ranks of Jacob’s boys—all characteristics that had been displayed by their father.”<sup>15</sup>
- This should be a challenge to each one of us in leading our families to honor God. Exodus 20:5b NLT – “I lay the sins of the parents upon their children; the entire family is affected—even children in the third and fourth generations of those who reject me.

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<sup>12</sup> Source: <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/concubine> accessed on September 23, 2017.

<sup>13</sup> Source: <https://www.gotquestions.org/concubine-concubines.html> accessed on September 23, 2017.

<sup>14</sup> Swindoll 8.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid 9.



# PART TWO: UNFAIR AND UNJUST YEARS

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Now that we have examined the formative years of Joseph's life, let's turn our attention to the next period of his life—the unfair and unjust years. This section of his life began when he was 17 and lasted until he was 30 years old. ““This second segment occurs as Joseph reaches young manhood. It seems as though his life becomes out of control. Enslavement, unfair accusation, and imprisonment assault him.”<sup>1</sup> But this section started with Joseph receiving privilege and preferential treatment as Jacob's favorite son.

## II. Joseph, the Favored Son (37:2-36)

We must not forget that Joseph was the firstborn son of Jacob's most beloved wife, Rachel. So from the time he was born, Joseph was his father's favorite. Besides being the son of his old age, Joseph demonstrated a more noble character and attitude than his older brothers. The problems arose when Jacob foolishly and publicly showed his favoritism toward Joseph.

### A. Favored Son, Hated Brother

#### Obvious Favoritism

*Genesis 37:2-4*

#### *How did Jacob demonstrate favoritism toward Joseph?*

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- Verse 3 – He gave Joseph a robe of many colors.
- This may not seem to be that big of an issue, but this was “a richly ornamented robe, probably a multicolored tunic. This seems to signify that Jacob... [had] the intent of granting him all or a larger portion of the inheritance.”<sup>2</sup>
- “One reliable Old Testament commentator, H. C. Leupold, says this regarding the style of Joseph's garment: ‘This tunic was sleeved and extended to the ankles.’ He draws this

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> Walvoord & Zuck. *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*. (Victor Books: USA, 1985) 87.

conclusion from the Hebrew word... which means 'wrists' or 'ankles.' You can't work very well in a garment that has sleeves and extends all the way down to your ankles, especially if it's a costly, richly ornamented robe... In Joseph's day, the working garb was a short, sleeveless tunic. This left arms and legs free so that workers could easily maneuver and move about... by giving Joseph this elaborate full-length coat, which was also a sign of nobility in that day, his father was boldly implying, 'You can wear this beautiful garment because you don't have to work like those brothers of yours.'"<sup>3</sup>

### *Why did Jacob show preference toward Joseph?*

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- He was the son of his old age.
- He was born to his most beloved wife, Rachel.
- Another possible reason, in light of the character of his other sons, Joseph was the easiest one to raise. "Passive fathers tend to favor the child who is easiest to raise. It's difficult to deal with a child who's hard to raise... So a passive father will tend to favor the one who isn't difficult."<sup>4</sup>

### *How did Jacob's other sons react to this obvious display of favoritism?*

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- Verse 2 explains that Joseph (as a 17 year old) gave a disparaging report of his brothers' work in the fields with the flocks. I'm sure that this contributed to their disdain for him.
- Verse 4 makes it clear that his other sons were very aware of the favoritism.
  - "But when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him and could not speak peacefully to him."
  - "Don't miss the closing comment. Joseph's brothers had come to despise their younger brother so severely that they could not even speak a kind word to him."<sup>5</sup>
- Jacob should have remembered what destructive results favoritism can have in a family unit because he was favored by his mother and Esau was favored by his father.
  - This brought about unintended repercussions that continue even today.

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<sup>3</sup> Swindoll 10-11.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid 10.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid 11.

○ Arab-Israeli Conflict

“In dealing with the root of the Arab conflict, we are concerned with two key individuals in Genesis, Ishmael and Esau...”

“The Arab states of today are all descendants of either Esau or Ishmael, and the root of the present-day conflict begins here with these two individuals...”

“The hatred and animosities of Ishmael and Esau toward the Jews was instilled in their descendants. There has been a continuous, perpetual hatred of the descendants of Esau and Ishmael against the Jews characterized especially by the Ishmaelites, descendants of Ishmael and the Edomites, descendants of Esau.”<sup>6</sup>

### Ostentatious Dreams

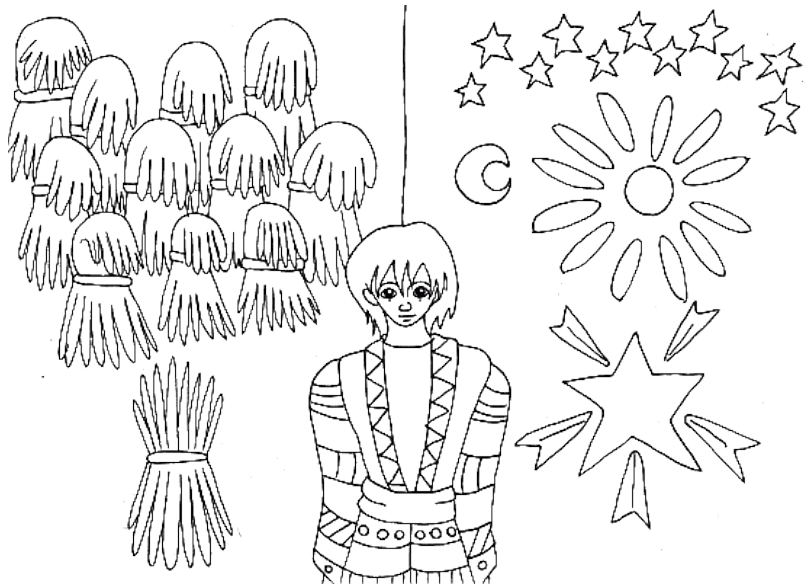
*Genesis 37:5-11*

Chuck Swindoll writes, “Adding insult to injury, Joseph was a dreamer. For whatever reason, he told his brothers about a couple of his dreams. If he hadn’t had strained relations before, believe me, the dreams alone would have done the trick.”<sup>7</sup>

#### *What was the first dream that Joseph shared with his brothers?*

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- Genesis 37:5-8 records this dream and his brothers’ reaction to it.
- There seems to be no doubt in the minds of his brothers as to the meaning of this dream. They said, “Are you indeed to reign over us? Or are you indeed to rule over us?”
- This caused his brothers to hate him even more than they did before!



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<sup>6</sup> Source <https://focusonjerusalem.com/TheRootsoftheIsraeli-ArabConflict.htm> accessed on October 1, 2017.

<sup>7</sup> Swindoll 11.

### *What was different about the second dream that he shared with his family?*

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- Genesis 37:9-11 records this dream and his family's reaction to it.
- In the first dream, there were 12 sheaves in the field, and 11 bowed down to the one that was standing.
- In the second dream, there were eleven stars, the sun and the moon that bowed down to Joseph. This seemed to go too far, because Jacob rebuked him when he told him the dream (Genesis 37:10).
- This was only more fuel for the fire of his brothers' jealousy and hatred for Joseph.
- "Sensing that Joseph was to be elevated to prominence over them, the envy and hatred of his brothers is understandable. However, their reaction in contrast with Joseph's honesty and faithfulness demonstrated why Jacob's choosing him was proper. God's sovereign choice of a leader often brings out the jealousy of those who must submit. Rather than recognize God's choice, his brothers set on a course to destroy him. Their actions, though prompted by the belief that they should lead, shows why they should not have led."<sup>8</sup>

### **Opportunistic Plan**

*Genesis 37:12-28*

"Sometime after this, Joseph's 'brothers went to pasture their father's flocks,' but Joseph didn't go with them, possibly because Jacob wanted to keep him by his side."<sup>9</sup>

### *Where did sons of Jacob go to pasture the flock? Why did this concern Jacob?*

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- They took the flocks to pasture near Shechem. Shechem is significant because that was the area they were in when their sister, Dinah, was raped by the Hivite prince. This was the place where the brothers deceived all the men to be circumcised and then slaughtered them while they lay helpless recovering from the procedure.
- Jacob may be concerned about them simply because of where they chose to go.

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<sup>8</sup> Walvoord & Zuck 87.

<sup>9</sup> Swindoll 13.

### *Who did Jacob send to check on them? Where did he eventually find them?*

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- Jacob sent Joseph to go check on his brothers and bring back word about how they were doing. Remember, the last time we find Joseph reporting on his brothers' work, he gave them a derogatory report.
- Joseph went to Shechem to look for them, but did not find them. (Genesis 37:14-17)
- He eventually found his brothers at Dothan.

### *Upon seeing their little brother, how did the sons of Jacob react?*

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- Plan A: Kill him and say that a wild animal attacked and killed him.
- Plan B: (*"The Compromise"*) Throw him in a pit and leave him there to die.
  - Reuben suggested this alternate plan to the brothers because he planned to rescue Joseph at a later time and take him back to their father.
  - Why would Reuben intervene on Joseph's behalf? Some possible reasons...
    - He is the oldest son, so maybe he felt some responsibility to do the right thing—or at least not the really, really wrong thing.
    - Maybe he was trying to become a better man than he had been. Remember, Reuben was the son that had slept with his father's concubine.
    - Or maybe, he saw this as an opportunity to get back on his father's good side after the incident with Bilhah. If he rescued the favored son, maybe there would be some sort of reward for him.
    - We will never know, because Reuben never got the chance! His brothers ended up changing the plans while he was gone.
  - "Obviously the brothers must have [initially] agreed with Reuben's plan. But notice the first thing they did when Joseph arrived: 'They stripped Joseph of his tunic.' That hated robe of special favoritism was the first thing to go... Then they threw him into the pit. After that they sat down and had lunch! All their anger has made them ravenous. Amazing, isn't it? No guilty conscience here!"<sup>10</sup>
- Plan C: Sell him to the Ishmaelite slave traders and make a little money.

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<sup>10</sup> Swindoll 14-15.

- Who are the Ishmaelites?
  - These were descendants of Ishmael, Isaac’s half brother, the son of Abraham.
  - As we mentioned earlier, these are the ancestors of the modern Arab states that have been at war with the Jews for thousands of years.
  - Some commentators have posited that “the term Ishmaelites became a general designation for desert tribes, so that Midianite traders were also known as Ishmaelites.”<sup>11</sup>
- Either way, the key is that the brothers sold Joseph to these slave traders for 20 shekels of silver (approximately 8 ounces of silver), “which is what they would have paid for a handicapped slave in those days.”<sup>12</sup>

## Overt Deception

*Genesis 37:5-11*

### *What did the sons of Jacob do to deceive their father about Joseph’s situation?*

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- Genesis 37:29-32
- They made him think that his son had been killed by dipping Joseph’s tunic into the blood of a freshly slaughtered goat.

### *How did Jacob respond to this news?*

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- Genesis 37:33-35
- Jacob ‘filled in the blanks’ regarding the outcome of his son Joseph—presuming that Joseph had been killed by a wild animal.
- Jacob mourns bitterly. He never really got over the ‘death’ of his beloved son.

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<sup>11</sup> Walvoord & Zuck 88.

<sup>12</sup> Swindoll 15.

## B. Confirmation of God's Choice

As we have noted before, the story of the life of Joseph spans from Genesis 37-50. We barely get introduced to Joseph before Genesis interrupts the story to convey a heartbreaking tale about one of Joseph's brothers—Judah. "At first sight this interruption might appear unfortunate and arbitrary, but reflection shows that it is carefully placed in the record both to show Joseph's life in stark contrast to what was normative and also to show the ways in which the Lord was continuing to work toward His stated purpose."<sup>13</sup>

### *What was God's overriding purpose that was being carried out?*

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- The first visible phase of His overriding purpose is seen just after the fall of man.
  - Genesis 3:15  
"I will put enmity between you and the woman,  
and between your offspring and her offspring;  
he shall bruise your head,  
and you shall bruise his heel."
  - God promises that one of Adam and Eve's offspring would bruise the serpent's head—ultimately culminating with the final victory of the Messiah.
  - This is known as the Adamic Covenant.
- Another clearly visible phase of God's overriding purpose is seen in what is known as the Abrahamic Covenant, which shows up several times in the book of Genesis.
  - Genesis 12:1-3  
Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. <sup>2</sup> And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. <sup>3</sup> I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."
  - "Abraham became a major link in the chain of the Lord's activity. As we have seen the next link was Isaac, not Ishmael, followed by Jacob, not Esau. It would be natural to assume that either Reuben, the firstborn son of Jacob, or Joseph, his outstanding son, would be the next link in the chain of divine succession. But that was not to be the case. Judah was the Lord's choice and like some of His other choices it was surprising to say the least!"<sup>14</sup>
- So to clarify, God's overriding purpose that is being carried out is to provide the human race with a Savior—Jesus Christ the Messiah. This was being accomplished through Abraham's descendants. The Messiah would be the Savior for every tribe and tongue.
- God chose to use Judah for that purpose.

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<sup>13</sup> Briscoe 312.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid 313.





### III. Joseph, the Faithful Steward (37:36; 39:1-20)

Every person who has ever walked the face of the earth—including Jesus—has experienced temptation. And every person who has ever walked the face of the earth—except Jesus—has fallen into temptations' traps. The Book of James clarifies the nature of temptation—chapter 1 verses 13 and 14 say, “Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by God,” for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire.” Temptations rise up out of our natural affinity toward sin. “Temptation is an inevitable part of our fallen world. We cannot escape it!”<sup>1</sup>

#### Resisting Temptation

Temptations may come in many shapes and sizes. There are material temptations, personal temptations, and sensual temptation—each of which has its own characteristic:

**Material Temptation** refers to a lust for things.

**Personal Temptation** is “the lust for fame, for authority, for power, or control over others.”<sup>2</sup>

**Sensual Temptation** is to lust for another person in a sexual way.

John addressed these issues in 1 John 2:15-17 when he wrote, “Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.”

Joseph was one who exhibited this kind of character—one who “does the will of God”—and as a result Joseph experienced a great amount of success in his life. This third type of temptation is the primary temptation that Joseph faces in Genesis 39, but I am certain that he struggled with all three types of temptation in his day-to-day life.

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<sup>1</sup> Swindoll 22.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

## God Brought about Success in Joseph's Life

*Genesis 37:36; 39:1-6a*

### *What happened to Joseph once he arrived in Egypt?*

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- Joseph was sold to Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the guard. (37:36)
- “This group was an elite, courageous band of rugged men. The Jewish historian Alfred Edersheim describes that group by telling us that Potiphar was the ‘chief of the executioners.’ No matter what title you give him, Potiphar was nobody to fool around with; he was a man of seasoned military experience with power over life and death.”<sup>3</sup>

### *What challenges do you think he may have faced while living in a foreign land?*

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- Culture Shock – “Joseph found himself in a country and culture he didn’t know, surrounded by a language he didn’t understand.”<sup>4</sup>
- Socio-economic Shock – Joseph was the favored son of Jacob, a wealthy man, and “had been sold as a common slave, and forced into a situation that seemed even worse than the pit into which his brothers had initially thrown him.”<sup>5</sup>
- Loneliness – Joseph no longer had the love and support of his family.

*In spite of these challenges, Joseph flourished in his role as a slave. In Genesis 39:2, there is an important phrase that described Joseph’s life. What does it say? What were the consequences of this?*

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- It says, “The Lord was with Joseph.”
- He gave him the ability to learn the Egyptian language.
- He gave him favor in the eyes of Potiphar. (Note that it doesn’t say that he asked for favors from Potiphar, but that he “found favor in his sight.”)

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid 24.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid 23.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

- According to verse 3, Potiphar could see for himself that the hand of God was upon Joseph’s life—everything he did prospered.
- “The temptations that accompany prosperity are far greater (and far more subtle) than those that accompany adversity.”<sup>6</sup>
- Read Genesis 39:4-6. “Here was a slave who had earned the right to be respected and trusted. As a result Potiphar turned everything over to him. I take this to mean that Joseph determined his own schedule, that he organized all of Potiphar’s estate and administered all his finances. Potiphar placed everything in Joseph’s hands.”<sup>7</sup>

### **Success Brought about Temptation in Joseph’s Life**

*Genesis 39:6b-10*

#### ***How long had Joseph been serving as a slave in Potiphar’s house?***

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- We have no idea how long he had been there because the Scripture is silent.
- There is a total of 13 years that transpire from the time Joseph was sold as a slave until his exaltation to the position of Prime Minister over all Egypt. Some of this time was spent as a slave and the rest was spent in prison.

#### ***Why was Joseph maybe more susceptible to temptation than others?***

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- The *NLT* says that “Joseph was a very handsome and well-built young man.”
- “... there is nothing wrong with being physically well-built or handsome. But with these attributes come unique temptations.”

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid 26.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

*It was on these physical attributes that the enemy concentrated his appeal.  
How did Potiphar's wife approach Joseph? How did she proposition him?*

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- She took a very direct approach (39:7).
- “Let’s return to an earlier comment. Greater success leads to greater times of vulnerability. It is there that the temptress lies in wait! Beware! The writer of Genesis states, “And it came about after these event,” refereeing to the previous verses telling of Joseph’s success. Joseph was ripe for this attack from the enemy; therefore, the attack struck with laserlike accuracy.”<sup>8</sup>
- Most men would have been caught off guard by her boldness. Chuck Swindoll wrote, “Potiphar’s wife was brazenly and shamelessly aggressive: ‘Come to bed with me. Let’s have sex.’ Most others then and now would have been caught off guard and at least momentarily felt flattered by such a seductive statement. Not Joseph. Nor even for a moment. Without hesitation and being absolutely secure in himself and his God, he responded with equal boldness.”<sup>9</sup> (Read Genesis 39:8-9)
- This was not a onetime event, according to verse 10—she propositioned him day after day.

*What were some of the factors that enabled Joseph to resist temptation?*

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- He was convinced that sexual activity with another man’s wife was not only wrong, but it was a sin against God.
- He was vocal about his commitment to purity when speaking with Potiphar’s wife.
- He rejected the proposition without hesitation or uncertainty.
- He avoided compromising situations as much as was possible.
- When all else failed, he ran! (2 Timothy 2:22 – “So flee youthful passions...”)
- Adapted from Stuart Briscoe’s *The Communicator’s Commentary: Genesis*.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid 27.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Briscoe 320-1.

## Temptations Brought about Injustice in Joseph's Life

*Genesis 39:11-20*

*In verses 11-12, what was different about that day compared to others?*

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- No one else was in the house when he went in to do his work.
- Potiphar's wife was much more forceful than at other times. Each time before, she tried to use conversation to persuade him to have sex with her. This time, she grabbed hold of him in an effort to change his mind.

*How did Joseph react to the advances of Potiphar's wife?*

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- Verse 12b-13 – “But he left his garment in her hand and fled and got out of the house. And as soon as she saw that he had left his garment in her hand and had fled out of the house...”
- Swindoll describes the scene: “... she was alone with Joseph in the house, and she again made her move. Only this time she would not take no for an answer. She went beyond verbal advances and physically grabbed hold of Joseph. She held on so tightly that when he jerked away from her and dashed out into the street, he left his outer robe in her hands.”<sup>11</sup>

*What can we learn from Joseph's reaction?*

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- He explains, “Whenever the New Testament lingers on the subject of sensual temptation, it gives us one command: RUN! The Bible does not tell us to reason with it. It does not tell us to think about it and claim verses. It tells us to FLEE!” Swindoll continues, “I have discovered you cannot yield to sensuality if you're running away from it. So? Run for your life! Get out of there! If you try to reason with lust or play around with sensual thoughts, you will finally yield. You can't fight it. That's why the Spirit of God forcefully commands, 'Run!'”<sup>12</sup>
- We have all heard the phrase, “Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned.” This is an amended version of a line by playwright William Congreve, who flourished around the turn of the eighteenth century. The actual comment is “Heaven has no rage like love to hatred turned / Nor hell a fury like a woman scorned.”

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<sup>11</sup> Swindoll 30.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

*When Joseph decisively rejected her sensual solicitation, how did she react?*

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- All her lust for Joseph has now turned to rage. The result was that she made a false accusation against Joseph for attempted rape.
- “Now, this scorned woman wanted only revenge. To accomplish this, she built a false case against Joseph, using a piece of circumstantial evidence—his robe.”<sup>13</sup>

*What was the ultimate result of this injustice toward Joseph?*

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- When Potiphar returned home and heard his wife’s fabricated story, he became angry and then Joseph was taken to prison.
- Stuart Briscoe concludes, “It is unfortunate that a young man of Joseph’s caliber should have been at the mercy of such an unscrupulous and unprincipled person. But it has always been so and it will continue to be so, because God has not excused His people from living in a sinful world. But neither has He deserted them in their struggles, as Joseph soon discovered.”<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid 31.

<sup>14</sup> Briscoe 321.

#### IV. Joseph, the Forgotten Slave (39:21 – 40:23)

When bad things happen to good people, many will question where God might be and why these things are happening. We have all had experiences that we believe are unfair or unjust for one reason or another. When these things happen, our natural response is to want to fight back, defend ourselves, or get revenge. Chuck Swindoll points out that “when things happen, the greatest test of that experience is the test of attitude.”<sup>1</sup>

Attitude is everything!

The Apostle Peter had much to say about our attitudes in 1 Peter 2:20. He wrote, “For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God.” Enduring the consequences of sin is just part of life. Enduring trials and tribulations because of the good you have done is pleasing to God! Jesus addressed this issue in His *Sermon on the Mount*. He said:

<sup>10</sup> “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

<sup>11</sup> “Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. <sup>12</sup> Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

(Matthew 5:10-12)

That just doesn’t make sense, does it? We are blessed when we are persecuted? Having people falsely accuse us makes us happy? We should like it when people are verbally abusing us? Is that really what the Bible is saying here?

“When we read statements like that along with verses like Isaiah 55:8-9, we start to wonder how these things square with the truth that God is good. Remember those words from Isaiah’s pen as he repeats God’s message?

‘For My thoughts are not your thoughts,  
Neither are your ways My ways,’ declares the LORD.  
For as the heavens are higher than the earth,  
So are My ways higher than your ways,  
And My thoughts than your thoughts’ ...

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<sup>1</sup> Swindoll 38.

Our human ways are based on what seems fair. We firmly believe that when someone does what is right, rewards and blessings result. When someone does what is wrong, there are serious consequences, even punishment. But that's our way, not necessarily God's way. At least not immediately, He's been known to allow unfair treatment to occur in the lives of some absolutely innocent folks—for reasons far more profound and deep than they or we could have imagined. How slowly He steps in!"<sup>2</sup>

## Joseph's Mistreatment

*Genesis 37 and 39*

*In what ways has Joseph been mistreated so far in our studies?*

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- He was mistreated by his brothers—placed in a pit to die and then sold to slave traders.
- He was mistreated by being trafficked as a slave.  
“One minute he was a seventeen-year-old boy with his whole life before him, and the next he was totally at the mercy of—actually the property of—some stranger.”<sup>3</sup>
- He was mistreated by being falsely accused. Potiphar's wife accused him of attempted rape when in reality she was the one who was making sexual advances.
- “As a result of her lies, *he was unjustly put in prison and abandoned.*”<sup>4</sup>

## Joseph's Imprisonment

*Genesis 39:20-23*

*Where was Joseph kept in the prison initially?*

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- In Genesis 40:15, Joseph refers to his prison cell as “the pit” or a dungeon. “Apparently the ‘*dungeon*’ (v. 15) in which he was confined was adjacent to Potiphar's house and that in itself would be a constant reminder of how far he had fallen.”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid 39.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid 40.

<sup>5</sup> Briscoe 325.



- “Some scholars question whether he was actually imprisoned, but the text appears to state clearly that he was not only treated unfairly but he was also placed in an environment which was most unpleasant.”<sup>6</sup>

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*As Joseph is dealing with all this unfair treatment, where is God?*

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- Genesis 39:21 tells us where God was—He was with Joseph!
- Swindoll says, “He was right there. He never left. He *never* left. He was *with* Joseph. Not only that, he did for Joseph what he had done before. He gave him favor in the eyes of others.”
- Read Genesis 39:21-23.

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*What evidence do we have that “the LORD was with Joseph” in prison?*

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- Joseph was put in charge of all the prisoners.
- “In what could have been the direst of positions, the dreariest of places, Joseph prospered.”<sup>7</sup>
- “Make no mistake about it, Joseph didn’t deserve jail, but he responded to it beautifully.”<sup>8</sup>

### Joseph’s Cellmates

*Genesis 40:1-22*

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*Who were the new inmates that caused Joseph’s situation to change?*

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- The king’s cupbearer and baker were thrown into prison because of an offense committed against the king. Pharaoh put them in the custody of the “captain of the guard.”
- We need to remember who the captain of the guard is—Potiphar!

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Swindoll 40.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid 41.

- In verse 4, Potiphar appointed Joseph to take care of these two prisoners—yet another demotion for he had been supervising all the prisoners. Now he was to look after the needs of these two ‘prestigious’ prisoners.

#### *What were the roles of the king’s cupbearer and baker?*

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- “A cupbearer was the person who tasted the wine and food of the king before he ate or drank... He also would not allow poorly prepared food to be served to the pharaoh since he was responsible for watching the monarch’s diet. This led to a very close relationship, a relationship of trust between the two men... In many ways the cupbearer was the most trusted man of the court.”<sup>9</sup>
- The king’s baker had a similar, yet less significant role in the king’s court.

#### *Read 40:7. Why did Joseph ask these men this question?*

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- Stuart Briscoe pointed out, “Apparently it had not occurred to him that some people find being in prison an adequate reason for sadness!”<sup>10</sup>
- Swindoll noted that “if anybody ought to have had a sad face, it should have been Joseph. His plight was much worse than theirs... But in spite of his own circumstance, he noticed the plight of these two men.”<sup>11</sup>

#### *What can we learn from Joseph’s example here?*

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- Your attitude determines your altitude! When you have a good attitude, your circumstances don’t seem to drag you down like they do when you’re pessimistic.
- “When your heart is right, even though the bottom may have dropped out of your life, it is remarkable how sensitive you can be to somebody else in need... [This] shows Joseph’s ability to think beyond his own immediate cares and needs in order to minister mercy to others.”<sup>12</sup>
- “It is obvious that Joseph also handled his own discouragements by immersing himself in the affairs of others who were also unfortunate. His care for the prisoners around him and

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid 42.

<sup>10</sup> Briscoe 326.

<sup>11</sup> Swindoll 44.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

his particular concern for the well-being of the butler and the baker are evidence enough of his commitment to help in the alleviation of suffering rather than to concentrate on the nature of his own pain.”<sup>13</sup>

*When we are discouraged, what are some resources that will help us?*

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- Romans 15:4 – the encouragement of Scriptures
- Hebrews 10:24-25 – the fellowship of believers
- Matthew 11:28-30 – the promise of our Savior
- Joseph did not have most of these things at his disposal and yet did not become discouraged.

*What was the reason these men were saddened? How did Joseph help them?*

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- Read Genesis 40:5-8.
- “They were worried about a dream they’d each had and could not interpret. Little did they know that they had the dreamer of all dreamers sitting in their midst.”<sup>14</sup>
- So Joseph helped them by interpreting each of their dreams.

*What was the interpretation/meaning of the first dream?*

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- Read Genesis 40:9-13.
- “With God’s help he was able to communicate the interpretation which, as he rightly said, belonged to God.”<sup>15</sup>
- Explanation:  
3 branches = 3 days  
In three days, Pharaoh will restore you to your previous position as cupbearer.

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<sup>13</sup> Briscoe 327.

<sup>14</sup> Swindoll 45.

<sup>15</sup> Briscoe 326.

*What did Joseph ask of the cupbearer after interpreting his dream?  
What can we learn about Joseph from this exchange?*

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- Read Genesis 40:14-15.
- Joseph asks the cupbearer to remember him once he was again a trusted official in Pharaoh's service.
- "He knew that sometimes an inmate got out of prison by knowing the right person... [Joseph hoped that] when the cupbearer returned to Pharaoh's presence and had his ear again, he would say, 'Master, there's a man you should look kindly toward.'"<sup>16</sup>
- Up to this point, Joseph has seemed almost super-human—favored son that was sold into slavery but made the most of his situation, not giving into temptation and being falsely accused as a result, we never see any emotion or distress.
- "Here was Joseph's humanity emerging. I love this, because it shows us that Joseph was a real person, not some plaster saint."<sup>17</sup>

*What was the interpretation/meaning of the second dream?*

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- Read Genesis 40:16-19.
- Explanation:  
3 cake baskets = 3 days  
In three days, Pharaoh will hang him on a tree and the birds will eat his flesh.
- Stuart Briscoe noted, "when the chief baker saw that his friend received good news he decided to share his own dream. But Joseph had only bad news for him. He did not hide anything from his fellow-prisoner but predicted accurately that according to the dream the baker would be a dead man in three days."<sup>18</sup>
- "You have to respect Joseph's integrity. He knew the dream meant that the guy was going to be killed... But Joseph was a man who told the truth. He was not winning friends; he was representing God."<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Swindoll 47.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Briscoe 326.

<sup>19</sup> Swindoll 47.

### *What can we learn from Joseph based on this exchange with the baker?*

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- Even when the truth will hurt the listener, we must always speak truth.
- Chuck Swindoll explained it this way. He said, “I want you to understand that having a contagious, positive attitude toward God does not mean living unrealistically where you tell everybody nice, upbeat things all the time, whether they are true or not.” He went on to say, “I believe in thinking positively, because I believe that’s the only way Christians really think aright, as we see things through Christ’s eyes. But that’s not the same as thinking unrealistically or living in a dream world or saying something to someone just to make them feel good.”<sup>20</sup>
- How many times do we choose to ‘tell a little, white lie’ just to keep from hurting someone’s feelings. How does God feel about that?
  - **Proverbs 6:16-19** – “There are six things that the Lord hates, seven that are an abomination to him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that make haste to run to evil, a false witness who breathes out lies, and one who sows discord among brothers.”
  - **Proverbs 12:22** – “Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord, but those who act faithfully are his delight.”

### *Is lying really a big deal? Isn’t lying just a part of daily life?*

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- Read Acts 5:1-11.
- Ananias and Sapphira lied to the church leadership in Jerusalem about a monetary gift they had given. But the Scripture makes it clear that they were not only lying to the church—they were lying to the Holy Spirit (verses 3-4 & 9).
- Peter explained in verse 4 that it was their prerogative to give whatever they wanted to give. The issue is not the amount of the gift—the problem is the condition of their hearts.
- They wanted glory for themselves and were willing to lie to get it.
- They paid for that lie with their lives. **Truth produces life—lies cause death.**
- James 1:14-15 – <sup>14</sup>“But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. <sup>15</sup>Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.”

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid 48.

*What happened to the cupbearer and the baker? Was Joseph correct?*

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- Read Genesis 40:20-22.
- Everything transpired exactly as Joseph had predicted.
- The cupbearer was restored to his position serving Pharaoh, but the baker was hanged.

**Joseph's Disappointment**

*Genesis 40:23*

*Did the cupbearer remember to speak to Pharaoh on Joseph's behalf?*

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- Read Genesis 40:23.
- Swindoll explained, "Though he had done no wrong, though he had told only the truth, though he had specifically requested to be remembered—only silence prevailed. Joseph's long-awaited hopes were dashed."<sup>21</sup>
- In Genesis 41:1, the Bible reveals that "two full years" passed by before anything happened.

*What do you think Joseph was thinking during that intermediate time?*

*What would most people be thinking?*

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- Natural Human Tendencies – complain, self-pity, blame God, compromise character ("if I can't beat 'em, join 'em"), harbor bitterness, become discouraged, etc.
- "Joseph was unshaken in his conviction that the Lord was sovereign... and His plans will ultimately triumph. This conviction has consistently helped the oppressed to rise above their sorrows and dismay when it seemed that they were about to be engulfed in the flood of circumstances."<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid 49.

<sup>22</sup> Briscoe 327.

*What are some of the ways that we—like Joseph—receive unfair treatment?*

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- Undeserved Treatment from Family
- Unexpected Restriction of Circumstances
- Untrue Accusations
- Unfair Abandonment

*How should we respond to these times of unfair treatment?*

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- “We have two choices: We can become disillusioned and embittered, or we can use that difficulty as a platform for putting our hope and trust in the living God.”
- “Disillusionment is a dangerous, slippery slope. First we become disillusioned about our fellow man. Then we move on to cynicism. Before long, we trust no one, not even God.”
- “The *cause* of disillusionment is *putting one’s complete hope and trust in people*.”<sup>23</sup>
- “What’s the cure? *Putting our complete hope and trust in the Living Lord*.”<sup>24</sup>
- “We cannot respond to times of unfair treatment with thoughts of bitterness or revenge. We must have a heart that cries out to God like this:

“Lord, God, help me now. Right at this moment. Deliver me from my own prison. Help me to see beyond the darkness, to see Your hand. As I am being crushed, remold me. Help me to see You in this abandonment, this rejection.”<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Swindoll 52.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid 53.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid 53-54.