

The Plan from the Beginning
Daily Bible Reading Plan
Class Notes for Week 9: Genesis Chapters 37, 39-41

A couple of lessons can be learned from our study:

1. Joseph behaves immaturely at the beginning of his story. He seems much different by chapter 41. In the past thirteen years, how much have we spiritually matured?
2. We can absolutely trust in God even in the worst of times and when people fail us (Joseph's brothers, Potiphar's lying wife, the cupbearer). The trials of Joseph have made him more mature **BECAUSE** he trusted in God and did not fall captive to arrogance and sin. James 1:2-4 speaks to Christians about this.

I. Genesis 37: An immature Joseph?

- Let's see some things about Joseph at this time:
 - 17 years old
 - Informant about activities of brothers
 - Favorite son (loved by father), in contrast to:
 - Hated by brothers (could not even speak peace to him; Hebrew in v. 4 is "shalom")
 - Dreamer (visions from God?)
- Joseph given the gift of a long sleeved tunic from his father (Hebrew "pas kuttoneth" means coat extending to palms and soles of feet).
- The two dreams:
 - Brothers sheaves bowing down to Joseph's. Tells brothers and makes them hate him more.
 - Sun, moon and 11 stars bowing down to Joseph. Tells brothers and father. He is rebuked by his father. Very brazen, since the moon represents his deceased mother
- Why did Joseph tell them about the dreams? Is the young Joseph a little arrogant?
- The informant is dispatched at a later date to check on his brothers "welfare" (shalom, again).
- The plots:
 1. Kill him outright and throw the body into a pit
 2. Just throw him into a pit and let nature take its course (Reuben's merciful idea)
 3. Sell him into slavery. Judah's logic in verses 26 & 27 is disturbing. It does not seem that Reuben is told of this plot (v. 29, 30)
- They carry out plot 2, then, with great callousness, eat a meal. During the meal, plot three is hatched and executed.
- The tunic given by his father is soaked in the blood of a goat (an irony that Jacob used goat skin to deceive Isaac).
- Joseph is sold to Potiphar in Egypt by the Midianite traders.

II. Genesis 39: In Potiphar's house

- Joseph, we are told, is successful because the Lord is with him.
- He rises through the ranks of Potiphar's servants to become in charge of all the matters of the estate.
- Potiphar's house was blessed because of Joseph (similar to Laban while Jacob was working for him).
- Joseph is a good looking guy. The language in verse 6 is similar to that in I Samuel 9:2 (Saul) and I Samuel 16:12 (David). He is desired sexually by Potiphar's wife. She makes aggressive passes at him even after Joseph explains why he cannot be with her (out of respect for his earthly AND heavenly masters).
- He is falsely accused of trying to force himself on her and his garment is used as false evidence against him (like tunic was used as false evidence to Jacob). Joseph is imprisoned.
- The Lord continues to be with Joseph and he once again rises to a position of authority in the prison.

III. Genesis 40: Interpreting dreams

- God has blessed the dreamer with the ability to interpret dreams (v. 8).
- Perhaps interpreting other people's dreams is more profitable to him than dreaming himself!!!

- The baker and cupbearer of Pharaoh make their king angry and they are imprisoned with Joseph. Joseph is assigned to take care of them (wise politics by jailer).
- The two men have individual dreams, each related to their work. Joseph interprets these dreams. In three days, both men will experience a change. The baker will be killed and the cup bearer restored to the king's service. But it was a long 3 days for the baker...
- Joseph's interpretations come true, but the cupbearer neglects Joseph's request to tell Pharaoh about his abilities.

IV. **Genesis 41: The dreams of a king**

- Two years pass and Pharaoh has two dreams about cows and ears of grain. They are powerful enough to trouble the leader (v. 8). None of the magicians or wise men of Egypt can figure out what these dreams represent.
- The cupbearer remembers Joseph and informs Pharaoh. Joseph is summoned and after being cleaned up, brought before the king.
- Joseph informs Pharaoh that God (El-ohim) will interpret the meaning. The ruler tells Joseph the details of the two dreams and they are deciphered:
 - The seven fat cows and seven healthy ears of grain represent seven years of plenty and excess. The seven lean cows and seven thin ears of grain represent seven years of terrible famine.
 - The message is from God. It is told two times because it is imminent.
- Joseph (with shrewdness, no doubt) suggests that Pharaoh appoint a wise leader over an effort to stockpile during the years of plenty. This will allow Egypt to be in a position of not only feeding itself, but also having a leg up on its enemies and neighbors that they will have to buy from Egypt to survive.
- Pharaoh does in fact appoint Joseph second in command over all of Egypt and the project manager for the grain stockpiling effort. The name he bestows on Joseph is "Zaphenath-paneah", meaning "says the god, he will live". Some say it means "he who reveals the hidden".
- Joseph marries Asenath, daughter of Potiphara, a priest in the city of On (future Heliopolis). This city's business was centered on worship of the sun god, Ra. This marriage was most likely strategic, combining a powerful member of the monarchy with a high ranking member of the priesthood.
- Two sons come from this marriage: Manasseh ("causing to forget") and Ephraim ("doubly fruitful").
- Joseph's plan works (stockpile is beyond measure, v. 49) and the interpretations prove accurate. After 13 years (he is said to be thirty at this time in v. 46) of slavery and imprisonment, the Lord has elevated the much matured Joseph to be the second most powerful and influential leader in the mighty nation of Egypt.