

Genesis 39

A Great Prototype

Read Genesis 39:1-18: We are going to leave Joseph's family behind for a while as the coming chapters develop the background and character of Joseph. Just like Jacob's trials and fears brought him to a greater faith; likewise, Joseph was used to humble and transform his family. There are a number of biblical personalities who offer a glimmer of Jesus. They include King David, Joseph, Melchizedek, Jonah, etc... all for differing reasons.

Comparisons between Jesus and Joseph:

- He saved the world: (from starvation.)
- He was sent down to Egypt, which symbolizes the world
- He was dealt with treacherously by his own people.
- He reappeared long after he was thought to be dead
- He judged his people, and they did bow to him
- Part of his life was as a refugee
 - *14 When he arose, he took the young Child and His mother by night and departed for Egypt, 15 and was there until the death of Herod, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, “Out of Egypt I called My Son.” (Matthew 2)*
- He forgave his people. They did not recognize him at first.
- They had divine guidance (visions, prayers, dreams, etc..)

The Challenges of Success

God blessed everything that Joseph touched. Many Jews are like that today. They are known to excel in many fields to this day. The Jews have relatively high literacy rates, and they have received many Nobel Peace prizes. The Jews have excelled in physics, chemistry, science, literature, film and theater, entrepreneurial endeavors and finance, politics, civil rights, information technology and startups, and research.

Like Joseph, their excellence has engendered envy and mischaracterization by others who are less successful. Like Joseph, the Jews were the object of envy. We focus on Rome killing Christians and Jews for their faith, but little is said about the

Roman persecution from envy of Jewish financial success. The Jews were so successful in Medieval Europe, that they were relegated to money laundering! That is very ironic. The Spanish inquisition was partially about their envy of Jewish successes. Nazi Germany blamed their collapsed economy on the successful Jews instead of the extremely costly tariffs associated with the Treaty of Versailles war reparations, and the crazy inflation that came from the German government trying to print more money to escape their debts. Not to mention their other poor fiscal national policies.

“I, the LORD, have called You in righteousness, And will hold Your hand; I will keep You and give You as a covenant to the people, As a light to the Gentiles, 7 To open blind eyes, (Isaiah 42)

You would think that Joseph was *home free* and *sitting pretty*. He did not have all of the family drama that he dealt with as a youth. He was *crushing it* with the ultimate job. There are other *Josephs* in this world, to one degree or another. Some people are gifted at running others business. I have found that I have done much better running aspects of other businesses than running my own. I keep wanting to branch out; but running other people's businesses always works out better for me. Joseph had an anointing and a gifting for a purpose. Joseph was purchased by the head of the Egyptian Secret Service. It is likely that he was built well physically to catch the eye of Potiphar. He was also handsome, which adds to his acceptance and popularity.

In one sense, it is easier to be an *average Joe* with a normal appearance. People who are successful, or wealthy or attractive have *groupies* and *yes men* and a whole entourage. Successful people have more difficulty truly knowing if they are loved or if they are being fleeced.

If Satan does not incapacitate you with intimidation he resorts to flattery and self-love. I have heard stories about how people with average success have judged the successful businessmen...until they became one. One particular farmer used to criticize the Wall Street successful titans and politicians who had fancy apartments in New York. This farmer became extremely successful and ended up obtaining such an apartment for himself with a mistress as well. In other words, there may be good reasons why we are not more successful than we are. There is a temptation that we would succumb to.

¹² *Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.* ¹³ *No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.* (1 Corinthians 10)

It is curious that the Egyptian wife of Potiphar was bold enough to repetitively solicit Joseph. Egyptian women did have a surprising amount of freedom of choice in those days. They could own property, initiate divorce, manage their own finances, and they held some familial and societal authority. The Egyptian women of that culture managed their own households and they oversaw domestic tasks. Women in the upper societal classes, like Potiphar's wife held considerable influence. Unlike the Israelites, the Egyptians did not consider adultery a capital crime. Joseph probably could not have told Potiphar that his wife was a *cougar*. It was probably almost impossible for Joseph to do his job without crossing her path. The resulting familial shame would probably hurt Joseph more than it would help him. As the head of Pharaoh's secret service he could not allow a breach in his own household security become public either.

He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, And as a sheep before its shearers is silent, So He opened not His mouth. ⁸He was taken from prison and from judgment, And who will declare His generation? (Isaiah 53)

I have often wondered why Potiphar did not kill Joseph. I suspect that he had *certain doubts* about his wife's re-telling of the story. As a member of the Secret Service he has probably seen some deceptive plots before. I have discovered that when a woman has a reputation that the men working around her end up finding out. It seems suspicious to just keep Joseph's garment laying in the same place, staged, all day, with Joseph's robe next to her...to paint this tawdry picture.

Read Genesis 39:19-23: God's favor keeps following Joseph wherever he goes. Now that he is in the white-collar jail, he receives all kinds of favor and freedom. Once again, he is well respected and trusted. It seems like Joseph's integrity may have been the very reason that his brothers hated him. He wanted nothing to do with their mischief, and he was not having it. It is amazing that Potiphar put everything in Joseph's hands, exactly like his father Jacob had done. Now we miraculously see the jailer extending the same level of trust to Joseph. Not only did Joseph have full freedom within the jail; but he was in charge of all of the prisoners and daily operations. When does that happen? The warden looked good because the prison ran like a top.

In the end, Joseph had some ugly things happen to him; but he could see God's hand on him at every step.