

## Genesis 39:1-23 and 40:1-15

Genesis 39:1 **"And Joseph was brought down to Egypt."**

Yes, he was brought down to Egypt in chains, with his hopes shattered, and his life in ruins.

What had become of his dreams of exultation, and indeed what would become of Joseph himself?

However, even though he had arrived on the bottom rung of Egyptian society, he couldn't help but wonder at the magnificence of the country.

Unlike his native Canaan, Egypt was already a highly developed civilization, and had been even in his grandfather's day. He had never seen anything like it!

Yes, Egypt was a highly organized country,  
but it was a pagan nation that  
worshipped many strange gods.

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So this bewildered 18-year old shepherd boy  
trudged along in chains, taking in the  
sights and sounds of this great  
country, little realizing that someday  
he would be the greatest success story  
that Egypt had ever known.

Yes, he had entered Egypt with iron chains  
on his wrists, but he would rule it  
with a chain of gold about his neck.

But it wouldn't be an easy road.

In fact, during those intervening years, his  
faith would be tested to the limit.

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But I must begin at the beginning.

V 1 "And Joseph was brought down to Egypt;  
and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh,  
captain of the guard, an Egyptian,  
bought him of the hands of the  
Ishmeelites, which had brought him down  
thither."

I don't know why Potiphar was down in the  
slave market that day, but he was quick  
to recognize a bargain when he saw it.  
As captain of the guard, he was a good judge  
of men, and this young fellow was worth  
having.

Not only did he look healthy, although  
somewhat worn out, but he wasn't your  
average dull-looking slave.

No, this young fellow had potential!

So, the bargain was struck.

The Ishmeelites pocketed their money, and Joseph was led away to provide free labour.

But the young slave didn't waste his time lamenting his ill treatment at the hands of his brothers.

No, he didn't eat himself up with remorse or revenge. Instead, he applied himself wholeheartedly to his job, whatever it was.

And whatever it was, Joseph was convinced that this was the task that the Lord had given him, and he would do it with all his heart.

Yes, he still believed in his dreams, and he still believed in God.

Joseph didn't have Romans 8:28 to assure him that **"--all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who**

are the called according to his purpose," for it hadn't been written yet, but he already had that truth written in his *heart*.

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V 2 "And the LORD was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian."

He didn't have Colossians 3:22-24 to guide him either, but he certainly fulfilled its precepts.

"Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God:  
23: And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men;  
24: Knowing that of the Lord ye shall

**receive the reward of the inheritance:  
for ye serve the Lord Christ."**

Yes, Joseph served Potiphar with all his heart, not because he was a slave and had to do it, or even to avoid punishment, but because he was the Lord's servant.

And just as that faithful servant in Jesus' parable was promoted with the words—  
**"Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things,"** so Joseph was moved up the ladder to a position of responsibility.

However, Joseph's success wasn't entirely due to his own efforts.

He was experiencing the same blessing that his father had experienced back in Padan-aram.

V 3-4 **"And his master saw that the LORD was with him, and that the LORD made all that he did to prosper in his hand. 4: And Joseph found grace in his sight, and he served him: and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he had he put into his hand."**

Potiphar was a smart man, and considering his background, he was a very open-minded man.

I'm sure he believed in his Egyptian gods, but it wasn't long before he was convinced that Joseph's God was very different.

Not only was Joseph honest himself, which was quite rare, in his experience, but

it was very obvious "---that the LORD made all that he did to prosper in his hand."

However, like his father before him, Joseph's blessing wasn't filling Joseph's pockets.

Because of his clever bargains, Jacob had managed to channel the Lord's blessings into his uncle's pockets.

But it was his brothers' evil bargain, not Joseph's, which had been filling Potiphar's storehouses.

V 5-6 "And it came to pass from the time that he had made him overseer in his house, and over all that he had, that the LORD blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; and the blessing of the LORD was upon all that he had in the house, and in the field.



6: And he left all that he had in Joseph's hand; and he knew not ought he had, save the bread which he did eat. And Joseph was a goodly person, and well favoured."

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V 3 says, "---his master saw that the LORD was with him, and that the LORD made all that he did to prosper in his hand."

I wonder how this pagan man figured out that it was *Jehovah*, not just Joseph, Who was making everything work to his advantage?

Maybe, by his hard work and honesty, Joseph had earned the right to witness to his master, and certainly the LORD had done great things for his family.

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And you know, the way we do our business,  
the honest and faithful way we serve  
our employer, can sometimes open up an  
opportunity to speak for our Saviour.  
So Joseph worked hard, and Potiphar reaped  
the benefits.

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But it wasn't only Potiphar that prospered  
by this arrangement.

Because of his promotion to leadership and  
the challenges offered him in such a  
large household, Joseph was developing  
his managerial skills, skills that he  
would sorely need in the future.

And he was learning patience, and the  
ability to walk the pathway of faith.

Yes, the Lord was maturing a young man who  
at one time might have been a little  
too big for his britches.

And he would need that kind of maturity also when he was finally and suddenly given the top job in Egypt.

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Yes, Joseph was still on track, and Satan would have to rethink his plans.

At one time, he was sure that he had gotten rid of him altogether, but God had raised him from the pit of death, and now he was a fair way along the path to realizing his dreams.

And not only had he been raised from the pit of death, but he had risen from the pit of despair and revenge.

No, Joseph had never wallowed in the slough of despond, nor was he lifted up with pride.

This would never do, but Satan wasn't beaten yet.

If the schemes of man could not destroy him,  
surely the schemes of a woman could.

And you will notice that V 6 says "--**Joseph  
was a goodly person, and well  
favoured.**"

In other words, he was a good-looking guy.  
Apparently he had his mother's good looks,  
for Genesis 29:17 says, "**Rachel was  
beautiful and well favoured.**"

And, of course, being about 19 years old,  
the opposite sex wouldn't look too ugly  
either.

Yes, Satan had a plan, and he knew just the  
right person to help him in his plan.

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No doubt Joseph saw it coming.

Potiphar's wife had that certain way of  
looking at him, and she was always  
doing him favours.

Joseph was polite, but reserved, and he was very careful to avoid any compromising situations.

Yes, in spite of the fact that his brothers hadn't been a very good example for him, Joseph had determined to keep himself pure.

And he had the same resources that each one of us has **"---God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."**

Joseph's way of escape was dependant entirely on his moral integrity, for, as a slave, he was trapped in Potiphar's house.

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V 7-9 "And it came to pass after these things, that his master's wife cast her eyes upon Joseph; and she said, Lie with me.

8: But he refused, and said unto his master's wife, Behold, my master wotteth not what is with me in the house, and he hath committed all that he hath to my hand;

9: There is none greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back any thing from me but thee, because thou art his wife: how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"

So with all due respect for his master's wife, Joseph tried to reason with her. First of all, he spoke of justice. Potiphar had complete faith in him, and he could not betray such a trust.

Secondly, he pointed out that he would be sinning against his Creator. **"How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"**

It was not so much a case of *I will not*, as it was *I cannot*.

For Joseph, it was a moral and spiritual impossibility.

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However, even though Satan had lost the first battle, he still had the advantage of daily repetition.

After all, Joseph had all the natural desires of any young man, and, eventually, he would wear him down.

V 10 **"And it came to pass, as she spake to Joseph day by day, that he hearkened not unto her, to lie by her, or to be with her."**

And Satan still uses this method with great success.

Movies, television, and the Internet have combined to bring down many who were steadfast at the beginning.

And think of the subtle persuasions Satan could whisper in Joseph's ear:

*It doesn't really matter what you do in Egypt. You're away from your home and your father's influence.*

*You're in Egypt, man. They don't have the same scruples about fidelity that you've been brought up with.*

*And you don't really have that good a reputation anyhow.*

*The servants just have to look at Potiphar's wife to figure out there's something going on, so stop being so pious.*



But Joseph's heart was fixed. He would not transgress against God.

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The best way to avoid temptation is to *remove yourself* from the source.

Keep away from bad books, bad television and Internet, and avoid wayward friends.

There's nothing cowardly about taking to your heels, but Joseph didn't have that opportunity.

With all the authority he had in Potiphar's house, he was still a slave that couldn't get away.

V 11-12 **"And it came to pass about this time, that Joseph went into the house to do his business; and there was none of the men of the house there within. 12: And she caught him by his garment, saying, Lie with me: and he left his**

**garment in her hand, and fled, and got  
him out."**

Joseph met action with action, and sometimes  
that's the only way.

He simply slipped out of his garment, and  
headed for the hills.

It wasn't very subtle, but it was safe, at  
least, safe for the moment.

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Potiphar's wife was furious, and her  
infatuation for him quickly turned to  
hatred.

*He's only a slave. How dare he reject me!*

Now, hatred and revenge are close cousins,  
and she soon thought of a way to get  
even.

And not only did she want revenge, but she  
desperately needed to escape her  
husband's wrath.

V 13-16 "And it came to pass, when she saw  
that he had left his garment in her  
hand, and was fled forth,  
14: That she called unto the men of her  
house, and spake unto them, saying,  
See, he hath brought in an Hebrew unto  
us to mock us; he came in unto me to  
lie with me, and I cried with a loud  
voice:  
15: And it came to pass, when he heard  
that I lifted up my voice and cried,  
that he left his garment with me, and  
fled, and got him out.  
16: And she laid up his garment by her,  
until his lord came home."

Poor Joseph. He had been sold as a slave  
because of "his coat of many colours."  
Now Potter's wife held the very garment

in her hands that would change his life  
in an instant!

Not only would he lose his exalted position,  
but he would lose the respect of the  
very man he had served so faithfully.

V 17-18 **"And she spake unto him according to**

**these words, saying, The Hebrew  
servant, which thou hast brought unto  
us, came in unto me to mock me:**

**18: And it came to pass, as I lifted up  
my voice and cried, that he left his  
garment with me, and fled out."**

Potiphar's wife was very good at blaming  
others.

Of course she blamed Joseph to cover her own  
tracks, but then she had the gall to  
accuse her own husband of folly before  
the servants: **"He hath brought in an  
Hebrew unto us to mock us."**

And finally she blamed Potiphar himself:

**"The Hebrew servant, which *thou* hast brought  
unto us, came in unto me to mock me."**

This is a very old tactic indeed.

In fact, it originated in the Garden of Eden, and it is always designed to shift the blame onto someone else: **"The woman whom *thou* gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat."** *Actually, Lord, this wouldn't have happened in the first place if You hadn't created Eve.*

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V 19-20 **"And it came to pass, when his master heard the words of his wife, which she spake unto him, saying, After this manner did thy servant to me; that his wrath was kindled.**

**20: And Joseph's master took him, and**

**put him into the prison, a place where  
the king's prisoners were bound: and he  
was there in the prison."**

Apparently Joseph was not even questioned.

Being falsely accused, and with no chance to  
defend himself, he was cast into prison  
as an ungrateful scoundrel.

Joseph had borne his brothers' ill treatment  
patiently and had come out on top, but  
what would his reaction be now?

This was so unfair!

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In 1 Peter 2:20-23, the apostle admonishes  
believers to endure unfairness  
patiently.

**"For what glory is it, if, when ye be  
buffeted for your faults, ye shall take  
it patiently? but if, when ye do well,  
and suffer for it, ye take it**

patiently, this is acceptable with God.

21: For even hereunto were ye called:  
because Christ also suffered for us,  
leaving us an example, that ye should  
follow his steps:

22: Who did no sin, neither was guile  
found in his mouth:

23: Who, when he was reviled, reviled  
not again; when he suffered, he  
threatened not; but committed himself  
to him that judgeth righteously."

Have you ever met a Christian who believed  
that his calling in life was to endure  
unfair treatment patiently?

No?

Well, I don't believe I have either, and yet  
V 21-22 tells us that this is the  
calling of every Christian.

Did you notice that?

V 21-22 "--but if, when ye do well, and  
suffer for it, ye take it patiently,  
this is acceptable with God.

**21: For even hereunto were ye called."**

No one has ever said that the world is fair,  
but God has assured us that He  
appreciates it when we endure ill  
treatment patiently.

And not only does He appreciate it, but we  
have been given the blessed opportunity  
of walking a little closer to His Son:  
**"because Christ also suffered for us,  
leaving us an example, that ye should  
follow his steps."**

And certainly Joseph had done well, and  
certainly he had suffered for it, and,  
as we will soon find out, he did take  
it patiently.

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And you know, Potiphar might not have been as convinced of Joseph's guilt as his actions indicated.

Oh, "**his wrath was kindled**" all right, and that's quite understandable, but he could have had him executed.

I'm sure any other slave under the same circumstances would have been executed. Instead, he put him in prison, and probably that was only to save face.

Yes, he knew his faithful servant well, and I'm sure he knew his fickle wife very well, so when he had cooled down a little, he only put him in prison.

And Joseph was not put into a prison for criminals. He was confined to the lockup for political offenders.

V 20 calls it "**a place where the king's prisoners were bound,**" and this

particular prison just happened to be directly under Potiphar's control.

Yes, Genesis 40:3 tells us that this prison was in **"the house of the captain of the guard."**

Of course that doesn't mean it was the Holiday Inn!

In fact, Psalm 105 gives quite a graphic description of Joseph's treatment.

Psalm 105:18: **"Whose feet they hurt with fetters: he was laid in iron:**

**19: Until the time that his word came: the word of the LORD tried him."**

Yes, **"the LORD tried him"** by adversity.

Man meant it for punishment, but God was preparing his man for greater things.

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Before we go on with this chapter and Joseph's experiences in prison, I would

like to pause for a moment and consider  
God's overall plan.

Yes, even in these adverse circumstances,  
God was preparing and shaping his  
servant for a very unique ministry.

In Psalm 105, we can see a very good  
synopsis of God's long-range plans.

Psalm 105:16-26 **"Moreover he called for a  
famine upon the land: he brake the  
whole staff of bread.**

**17: He sent a man before them, even  
Joseph, who was sold for a servant:**

**18: Whose feet they hurt with fetters:  
he was laid in iron:**

**19: Until the time that his word came:  
the word of the LORD tried him.**

**20: The king sent and loosed him; even  
the ruler of the people, and let him go  
free.**

21: He made him lord of his house, and ruler of all his substance:

22: To bind his princes at his pleasure; and teach his senators wisdom.

23: Israel also came into Egypt; and Jacob sojourned in the land of Ham.

24: And he increased his people greatly; and made them stronger than their enemies.

25: He turned their heart to hate his people, to deal subtilly with his servants.

26: He sent Moses his servant; and Aaron whom he had chosen."

As we look at this grand overview, we can clearly see that Joseph was the key component in God's plan to create and protect the nation of Israel.

And not only was Joseph the key component in God's plan to save Israel, but his life was to portray the life and ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And because Joseph was God's chosen vessel to carry out this dual mission, He carefully orchestrated every circumstance, every trial, and every triumph of his life.

Also, God's main objective in bringing about this grievous famine was to exalt the man who had been rejected by his brethren, and ultimately to produce in these very men genuine repentance for their sin against Joseph.

So you see, God was not only moulding Joseph, but He was moulding the men who would be the future fathers of His Chosen People.

How closely this portrays our Lord Jesus  
Christ's experience.

Rejected and crucified at His first coming,  
God raised him from the dead and  
exalted Him at His own right hand.

And after He receives His bride, He will be  
recognized by His brethren, and become  
*their* deliverer.

Zechariah 12:10 **"And I will pour upon the  
house of David, and upon the  
inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of  
grace and of supplications: and they  
shall look upon me whom they have  
pierced, and they shall mourn for him,  
as one mourneth for his only son, and  
shall be in bitterness for him, as one  
that is in bitterness for his  
firstborn."**

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Well, we better get back to our chapter.

Genesis 39:21-22 **"And Joseph's master took**

**him, and put him into the prison, a place where the king's prisoners were bound: and he was there in the prison.**

**21: But the LORD was with Joseph, and shewed him mercy, and gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison.**

**22: And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners that were in the prison; and whatsoever they did there, he was the doer of it."**

And in principle, that is the experience of every Christian.

Our circumstances may change, even change drastically, but the LORD is always the same.

In Joseph's case, this was the second time that God had given him favour in the eyes of his master.

The jailer trusted him completely, and committed everything into his hand just as Potiphar had done, and with the same results.

First it was his father that had shown confidence in him. Then it was the captain of the guard, and now it was the keeper of the prison.

All of them recognized his ability and honesty, and all of them had promoted him.

On the other hand, his brethren had refused to recognize him for what he was, and hated him for his abilities.



So it was with Christ, God's unspeakable  
Gift, who "**---came unto his own, and his  
own received him not.**"

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We don't really know how old Joseph was when  
the prison doors slammed shut behind  
him.

He was 18 when he arrived in Egypt, and he  
was 30 when he first appeared before  
Pharaoh. So if we assume that Joseph  
was in Potiphar's house for about two  
years, and that is only a guess, then  
he would have been in prison for 10  
long years.

It was bad enough when he first arrived, but  
as the years went by, he could see his  
youth slipping away, and with each  
passing year, the possibility of a  
happy married life became more remote.

These were the years of trial, but they were also the years when Joseph proved by his faithful and enthusiastic service that indeed he was the Lord's man.

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V 23 **"The keeper of the prison looked not to any thing that was under his hand; because the LORD was with him, and that which he did, the LORD made it to prosper."**

As it turned out, Potiphar's loss was the jailer's gain.

And not only had Joseph won the confidence of the keeper of the prison. I'm sure he had also won the respect of the other prisoners.

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Genesis 40:1-4 **"And it came to pass after these things, that the butler of the**

king of Egypt and his baker had  
offended their lord the king of Egypt.

2: And Pharaoh was wroth against two of  
his officers, against the chief of the  
butlers, and against the chief of the  
bakers.

3: And he put them in ward in the house  
of the captain of the guard, into the  
prison, the place where Joseph was  
bound.

4: And the captain of the guard charged  
Joseph with them, and he served them:  
and they continued a season in ward."

At last, after all these years of  
imprisonment, it really seemed that God  
was bringing it all together for  
Joseph.

Because he was in the right place at the  
right time, he had been brought into

close contact with someone who had the ear of Pharaoh.

However, one wonders why Joseph couldn't have spent those years happily running Potiphar's household, rather than cooling his heels and prison?

Couldn't he have made those important connections under better circumstances?

However, prison offered none of the temptations that existed in Potiphar's house, and, also, Joseph's prison experience had caused him to grow a great deal spiritually.

Of course Joseph couldn't figure this all out.

No, he couldn't understand what the Lord was doing, and certainly there must have been times of despondency, but for the

most part, Joseph didn't question God's ways.

And, like Joseph, we often find there is nothing we can do about our circumstances, but there is always something we can do about our *attitude*. And it does us no good to question God's methods.

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V 2 says "**---Pharaoh was wroth against two of his officers, against the chief of the butlers, and against the chief of the bakers.**"

We're never told what these two men had been accused of, but the fact that both of them were responsible for what ended up on Pharaoh's table might give us a clue.

And, no, the butler wasn't the man who answered the front door. He was the king's cup bearer.

His job was to ensure that Pharaoh enjoyed the very best wines, and he was personally responsible to test them before they ever reached his lips.

The baker's responsibility was similar.

He must ensure that the food placed on Pharaoh's table met the same standards of quality and safety that his wines did.

So even though we don't actually know what they had been charged with, it probably had something to do with Pharaoh's table.

Perhaps poison had been found in the palace, and these two men were being held in

custody until a full investigation could be made.

Of course that is only speculation, but it does fit the circumstances.

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V 5-6 **"And they dreamed a dream both of them, each man his dream in one night, each man according to the interpretation of his dream, the butler and the baker of the king of Egypt, which were bound in the prison.**

**6: And Joseph came in unto them in the morning, and looked upon them, and, behold, they were sad."**

We can immediately tell that Joseph had a genuine concern for the men's welfare:

**"Wherefore look ye so sadly to day?"**

No, Joseph wasn't caught up in his own troubles. He had a heart for others.

V 8 "And they said unto him, We have dreamed a dream, and there is no interpreter of it. And Joseph said unto them, Do not interpretations belong to God? tell me them, I pray you."

Normally they would have consulted the many wise men and magicians in Pharaoh's court, but under the circumstances, their situation seemed hopeless.

Yes, their circumstances had been quite altered, but then, so had Joseph's.

Gone was the teenager in his coat of many colours.

If that young man had been standing before them, he might have replied, *"Well, I seem to have a certain knack with dreams. Maybe I can figure it out."*



Instead, Joseph confidently replied, "Do not interpretations belong to God?" And then he offered to help them.

V 9-15 "And the chief butler told his dream to Joseph, and said to him, In my dream, behold, a vine was before me; 10: And in the vine were three branches: and it was as though it budded, and her blossoms shot forth; and the clusters thereof brought forth ripe grapes: 11: And Pharaoh's cup was in my hand: and I took the grapes, and pressed them into Pharaoh's cup, and I gave the cup into Pharaoh's hand. 12: And Joseph said unto him, This is the interpretation of it: The three branches are three days: 13: Yet within three days shall Pharaoh

lift up thine head, and restore thee unto thy place: and thou shalt deliver Pharaoh's cup into his hand, after the former manner when thou wast his butler.

14: But think on me when it shall be well with thee, and shew kindness, I pray thee, unto me, and make mention of me unto Pharaoh, and bring me out of this house:

15: For indeed I was stolen away out of the land of the Hebrews: and here also have I done nothing that they should put me into the dungeon."

It was a good try, but it didn't work.

His freedom didn't depend on man, nor did it come as quickly as he would have hoped. No, *graduation day* was not here yet.

Joseph must remain in God's school of higher learning for two more years, and continue to learn the lessons of faith and patience.

Hebrews 10:36 says, "**For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.**"

And we must wait until next week to see what happened next.

But whatever it was, I'm sure it would be God's *best* for Joseph, and for all concerned, well . . . unless you happen to be Pharaoh's baker.