

## XI. Joseph in Potiphar's house - Genesis 39.

- A. Joseph becomes the central figure in the rest of the story.
1. He becomes Potiphar's servant who in turn the chief courtier (captain of the guards).
  2. Though Joseph might not be thinking on this high level of the presence of God, the narrator invites his readers to realize that the young man is not by himself; God is with Joseph. It should not be the assumption of readers that God was not with Joseph when he was plotted against by his brothers, thrown into the pit and finally sold by his brothers to the Ishmaelites. Verse 2 of Genesis 39 is significant in that God's involvement is heightened in everything that will befall Joseph; "Yahweh will be with him (39:2, 3, 21, 23). One can assume that he/she has an uncertain future when he/she speaks from a human perspective. But with God standing with him, his future could not be any brighter.
  1. Potiphar soon find that out for himself that God is indeed with Joseph in that Yahweh brought success to Potiphar's house because of what Joseph did. Such an observation from Joseph's master caused him to promote Joseph.
    - a. Joseph becomes Potiphar's personal attendant.
    - b. Joseph becomes the head of Potiphar's household
    - c. Joseph is in charge of everything that Potiphar has.
  4. Yahweh **prosper**s Joseph while He **blesses** Potiphar and his household because of the good treatment of Joseph. There was a promise Yahweh made long ago in this regard.
    - a. The prospering of Joseph is that of God making His face to shine upon Joseph - the boy or young man is well favored (see Mary the mother of our Lord, and Elizabeth and Zachariah – Luke 1:5-9, 26-28).
    - b. Everybody is a recipient of divine blessings such as food, rain etc., but not everyone is a highly favored of God.
      - a. There was a promise made to Abraham earlier in Genesis 12 which says "I will bless those who bless you" (v.3).
      - b. Joseph was to Potiphar what Jacob was to Laban, a blessing. Or better yet, Yahweh blesses both Laban and Potiphar because of the presence of Jacob and Joseph.

(When a chosen of God finds himself in unlikely places, he changes the surroundings, not necessarily the people in the surrounding

        - (1). Laban had more sheep, goats, camels etc., but it did not make Laban a better person though he knew Yahweh was blessing him because of his nephew, Jacob.
        - (2). Potiphar's wife could only entertain sin in her heart despite the blessings that Joseph brought to her house.
        - (3). At our workplace or the place where God places us, we can be a Jacob or a Joseph. We are here to bring a blessing as oppose to a curse.

2. For every trap that the devil uses to defeat God's purpose, God brings good out of it.
  - a. Potiphar's wife made continuous advances at Joseph, but Joseph was determined to keep/hold fast his integrity. **One may see in this event why Genesis 38 is juxtaposed to 39 in that both brothers (Judah and Joseph) are face with sexual encounters and how each person handled/behaved in his given situation – Judah failed miserably while Joseph triumph over the temptation.**
    - (1). Joseph turned down Mrs. Potiphar's invitation because of the trust and confidence that his master had in him.
    - (2). Second, it is an offense against Potiphar
    - (3). Third, it is a sin against the God of heaven. There is a boundary that no man or woman should cross; it is that boundary that God has placed on sexual expression between a man and a woman. Such a sin among the people of God is a capital offence (Lev. 20:10; Deut. 22:22).
    - (4). On a more personal level, Joseph might have considered other reasons; he was being rational also.
      - (a). Adultery is self-destruction (Prov. 6:32).
      - (b). Adultery is wounds, loss of respect and public disgrace (Prov. 6:33; Gen. 38).
      - (c). The husband is bent on taking revenge (Prov. 6:34).
      - (d). It provides no way of buying oneself out of trouble (Prov. 6:35).
      - (e). And finally, adultery invites the death penalty (Prov. 7:23).
    - (4). The extent of Joseph's resolved is seen in verse 10; not only will he not sleep with Potiphar's wife, he will not even lie by her side.
    - (5). The determination of Mrs. Potiphar is equally strong.
      - (a). She will move from seduction to aggression.
        - i. She tried to take hold of Joseph but he fled leaving a piece of his clothe in her hand.
3. Joseph is accused of attempted rape (Gen. 39:13-18).
  - a. Since Joseph rejects her, there is nothing left of Potiphar's wife than to seek revenge. She cannot get Joseph, but she has his garment.
  - b. She kept Joseph's garment until Potiphar comes home and then she makes her accusation against Joseph and against her husband.
    - (1). The Hebrew you brought into our home made a mockery of me.
    - (2). You brought him into our lives hence you deserve some of the blame as well. The account reveals her desired effect; lock him up and throw away the key.
  - c. Potiphar is incensed and probably might have thought of a death penalty - a slave attempting to rape his master's wife - but Joseph

must have protested against the false charge and hence won the lighter sentence from his master - a prison sentence. Great lessons can be gleaned from Potiphar's approach in the whole matter.

- (1). Despite his burning anger, great caution is shown in his judgment; he might have seen through the lies of his wife.
  - (2). You can release an innocent person from incarceration, but you cannot resurrect him from death if you mistakenly sentence him to die.
  - (3). Since Potiphar saw that God was with Joseph - v.3 might he learned not to raise himself against the anointed of God?
- d. Paradoxes, paradoxes, and more paradoxes.
- (1). The Lord is with Joseph but He couldn't deliver him from the evils of men.
  - (2). Joseph, we learn shares a great destiny but it lands him in a pit at the hands of his brothers.
  - (3). From Egypt, the greatest kingdom of the world, Joseph will rule with almost absolute authority, but he got there as young man **being sold into slavery (sometimes it's not how you get to Egypt that counts, but what you do in Egypt after you get there)**.
  - (4). In Egypt, he is committed to being morally pure and what did he get for it? It landed him in jail.
- e. There is a great difference in all of these scenarios, God may and will allow his children to be touched by the evils of this world, but He won't allow us to be defeated by them. Indeed Joseph was consumed by evils on every side, but he was never consumed by those evils internally.
4. Joseph was not alone in prison - even there Yahweh stood with him. Remember, it was because of his faithfulness to his God that made him a prisoner in Egypt. That being the case, one should not be alarmed if God makes Himself a prisoner also for the protection of those who are true to Him. Yahweh would show favor to Joseph while he may be at the lowest point of his life - a favor so obvious that the keeper of the prison committed the prisoners to the care of Joseph.