



Genesis – 39:1-23
From the Pit, to Potiphar’s House, to the Prison
(Lesson #48)

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Joseph’s Timeline

Event	Joseph’s Age	Genesis
Joseph’s father moves family from Haran	6	31:17-21
Joseph is sold into slavery	17 / Jac 108	37:12-36
Joseph interprets the dreams of cupbearer and baker while in prison	28	41:1
Joseph’s grandfather Isaac dies	29 / Jac 120	35:28-29
Joseph interprets Pharaoh’s dreams and is released from prison	30	41:46
Seven years of plenty, Manasseh and Ephraim born during this time	30-37	41:47-52
Seven years of famine	37-44	41:47-52
Joseph and Jacob reunite (2 years into famine) and the family moves to Egypt	39 / Jac 130	45:6, 47:9, 28
Jacob dies	56 / Jac 147	47:28
Joseph dies	110	50:22-26

Outline for this week:

- I. Joseph is sold to Potiphar, an Egyptian officer (39:10)
- II. Yahweh is with Joseph and blesses Joseph (39:2-6)
- III. Joseph is placed in charge of Potiphar’s house (39:2-6)
- IV. Potiphar’s wife takes an interest in Joseph and desires to have sexual relations with him (39:7)
- V. Joseph refuses to sleep with Potiphar’s wife (39:8-9)
- VI. Potiphar’s wife continues to proposition Joseph culminating in Potiphar’s wife grabbing Joseph and trying to force herself on him (39:11-12a)
- VII. Joseph flees from Potiphar’s wife (39:12b)
- VIII. Potiphar’s wife claims that Joseph attacked her (39:1-18)
- IX. Potiphar places Joseph in prison (39:19-20)
- X. The Lord was with Joseph in prison (39:21)
- XI. The prison keeper put Joseph in charge of all his affairs (39:22-23)

39:1 *Now Joseph had been brought down to Egypt, and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the guard, an Egyptian, had bought him from the Ishmaelites who had brought him down there. ² The LORD was with Joseph, and he became a successful man, and he was in the house of his Egyptian master. ³ His master saw that the LORD was with him and that the LORD caused all that he did to succeed in his hands.*

39:1 Chapter 39, is picking up right where **chapter 37 left off**. So we pick back up with Joseph, at 17 years old, after his brothers have sold him into slavery, when he is brought down to Egypt.

He is purchased from the Ishmaelite traders by Potiphar, an officer of **Pharaoh’s court, he is the captain of the Guard**. Can you remember this for one week; that **Potiphar** is also called the **captain of the guard**?

He is an Egyptian in high standing in Pharaoh’s court. He was the **captain of the guard**.

But there is one other thing I want you to see: Notice that Potiphar is called an “**officer of Pharaoh**.” The Hebrew word is: **פריץ (cariyc)**. It often means a **Eunuch** or a **chamberlain**.

Dr. Henry Morris believes that Potiphar was a **eunuch**, he had been castrated. That is possible, although I am not sure it is required based on this Hebrew word.

He purchases Joseph, and Joseph will now serve as a household slave. **So much for his brothers bowing down to him**, he is a slave in a foreign land, in the land of Egypt.

THERE ARE SO MANY POINTS OF APPLICATION I want to make. I will pick the BIG one. **Does it look like Joseph's dreams are likely to ever come to pass?**

Can I tell a secret, God does not need, nor is He worried about your **current** of **past circumstances** or situations. Rather, will you trust him **here and now**. Will you **walk with him from here out**.

OK, one other point, we should never trust in anything but God. We can be fooled into trusting in our job, our wealth, our family, our whatever. God has brought Joseph here, to see if Joseph will trust Him, and do that in the direst of circumstances.

Vs 2 - Here in verse 2, **Yahweh's blessings on Joseph are described in three declarative statements:**

FIRST, as the source. Joseph may be a **household slave** in a foreign land, but **Yahweh is with Joseph**.

This statement is repeated four times here in chapter 39 (Vss. 2, 3, 21, 23).

No special **divine appearances**, no **dreams where God speaks with him**. But, **God is with him**.

If you are a believer, God the Holy Spirit is with you. The question is are we with God, or are we quenching him or grieving him?

SECOND, as to the result. Joseph was a prosperous man, he was a successful man.

Let's again look at those same four verses here in chapter 39 (Vss. 2, 3, 21, 23).

We do not typically **think of success** in such harsh conditions, but he was **successful**, he was **prosperous**, he found **favor**, all that he did he **succeeded at!**

New Testament Principle: Joseph was faithful with the little that he had been given, and God kept expanding the tent. We see this point articulated in Mat 25:19-21.

APPLICATION: Are we **faithful with what we have now**, for that sets us in the **position for God to give us more and to use us more**. If we cannot be trusted with the small amount, God is not likely to give us a greater amount.

Here is Joseph, a household slave in Potiphar's house, but he is faithful to God and faithful to discharge his duties to Potiphar.

THIRD, as to the location. He was blessed as a slave. God desired to use Joseph right where he was.

God can bless your life anywhere. The question is do we really believe that?

Vs 3 - Here two things are described, that Potiphar saw:

FIRST, the Lord was with him! What a testimony, this pagan Egyptian, saw that **Yahweh was with him**. Now he likely saw how everything went well under him.

APPLICATION: But this does beg a question. Do people around us, lost and saved, see a person who is **walking with the LORD?** That is what Potiphar saw in this young Hebrew slave.

SECOND, he also saw that **Yahweh caused all that he (Joseph) did to succeed**. Same Hebrew word, all that he did succeeded, all that he set his hands to prospered. **AND Potiphar recognized it!**

If he gave the assignment to Joseph, it **went well**, and things were done **as expected**. Potiphar saw Yahweh was with this teenager and it seemed like whatever he assigned to him went well!

You do not have to be a prophet to imagine what Potiphar is about to do!

⁴ So Joseph found favor in his sight and attended him, and he made him overseer of his house and put him in charge of all that he had. ⁵ From the time that he made him overseer in his house and over all that he had, the LORD blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; the blessing of the LORD was on all that he had, in house and field. ^{6a} So he left all that he had in Joseph's charge, and because of him he had no concern about anything but the food he ate.

Vs 4 - Because God was with him, Joseph found favor in his sight. The Hebrew word is **חן (chen)** it is normally translated **grace** or **favor**.

Because God was with Joseph, because Joseph was walking with God, **Joseph found grace in the eyes of his master.**

Joseph served his master. Although a young man, **wrongly imprisoned**, a man who had dreams where his family was bowing to him. Yet he severed God and served his master, for this was his **current situation**.

AND... Potiphar advanced him, **Potiphar made him overseer of his house**. It seems that Joseph was put in charge of all of the household slaves. Further we read that Potiphar put Joseph in charge of **all that he had**.

Do you see the principle, Joseph was faithful in a little, God (through Potiphar) gave him authority over **more and more**.

WHAT WE DO NOT SEE... Grumbling, complaining, or pointing out to God -I am bigger than this, or I am better than this.

INSTEAD. A faithful servant, over whatever and wherever God placed him. This is a recipe that God will bless.

THE MESSIAH: It is said of the Messiah in Heb 3:1-2.

You see once again, something in Joseph's life points to and reminds us of the Messiah, in this case **it is his faithfulness**.

BUT THERE IS ANOTHER QUESTION: Are we as faithful to our **heavenly father** as Joseph was to his **earthly master**?

Vs 5 - Then from the time Potiphar assigned **Joseph as the overseer** of his house. He placed Joseph in charge of all that he had. **From that point forward, Yahweh blessed Potiphar's house and He did so for Joseph's sake!**

Notice God's blessings covered all that Potiphar had from his house to his field all blessed by Yahweh, because of Joseph. I imagine Potiphar felt like he had struck gold! What an amazing servant! What a trustworthy servant, what a faithful servant.

NOW HOLD UP! WHY WOULD GOD BE BLESSING THIS PAGAN?

As you read verse 5 you should see this as the **outworking of the Abrahamic covenant** (gen 12:1-3).

Vs 6a - As we might imagine, Potiphar put Joseph in **charge of everything**. He **stopped worrying about anything**. **He had no concerns for anything** except what he planned to place in his mouth.

God was blessing Potiphar, because of Joseph, and Potiphar was enjoying the rich blessings of God, because of his treatment to Joseph!

Now, let's not move from reality. He is still a slave in the house of Potiphar. **His freedoms are only so much as Potiphar allows**. He is **not his own man!** **He is, after all, a slave.**

^{6b} Now Joseph was handsome in form and appearance. ⁷ And after a time his master's wife cast her eyes on Joseph and said, "Lie with me." ⁸ But he refused and said to his master's wife, "Behold, because of me my master has no concern about anything in the house, and he has put everything that he has in my charge. ⁹ He is not greater in this house than I am, nor has he kept back anything from me except you, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" ¹⁰ And as she spoke to Joseph day after day, he would not listen to her, to lie beside her or to be with her.

Vs 6b - Here Moses provides us with a **piece of information** that is important based on **what is about to happen**.

Joseph was not only a **godly young man**, Joseph was a faithful young man, but he was not just a faithful young man, Joseph was also a handsome man.

This exact **same Hebrew phrase** has been used **once before** in Genesis (29:17). The Hebrew phrase is also used to describe one other man (I Sam 16:11-12). Do not forget I Sam 16:7.

Vs 7 -After a time... As Joseph **works in and around Potiphar's house**, day in and day out, Potiphar's wife took an interest in him, she cast her eyes on him. She began to look at Joseph in a different way and she began to take a **sexual interest in this young man**.

Now before we advance, Potiphar was a **high official in the Pharaoh's court**. We are right to suspect that his wife was a **very beautiful woman (physically)**.

We are right to think that she was a very attractive woman, but now we learn that **Joseph has caught her eye and she lets him know in the most direct of ways**. She tells Joseph in no uncertain terms. **Have sex with me**. Lie with me, **let's steal away the night together**.

Here Satan has set one of the **most dangerous traps** a man can face, **sexual temptation**. Here this 17-year-old boy is about to be tempted to sin by this beautiful woman. To make it even **more dangerous**, the **woman involved is married**.

Joseph did not have the proverbs, but we do. Solomon explains to us how dangerous the situation (Pr 5:3-5; 6:32-33; 7:1-5; etc.).

This is a trap! God has allowed **Satan to set this trap** in the life of Joseph. We need to be able to quickly recognize when this trap is set in our lives.

APPLICATION: Satan came after Joseph when things were going well. He will often do the same in our lives!

Vs 8 - She propositioned, **BUT** he refused.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, we have all we need to resist the devil. Paul said it like this in I Cor 10:13.

First, Joseph said to her: I cannot do this, for to do this would be to **violate Potiphar's trust**, the one who **entrusted me** with all that he has.

Joseph sees the multilayered danger of the trap. **You are married to a man who has put me in charge of this entire household. My master has held back nothing from me.** I can have and can do anything I like in his house. He has treated me with **great kindness and respect** and he has **held back nothing except you.** Only you, his wife **is off limits to me.**

How can I do this to him after all the **good he has done for me?**

Second, and **most importantly**, **how under God's heaven**, could I do this **"great wickedness and sin against my God?"** You see, Joseph rightly understood to take **this evil step** was more than a **sin against Potiphar**, but like all sins, it was **ultimately against His God!**

APPLICATION: Do you remember David's sin with Bathsheba (Ps 51:1-4)?

Joseph did not have Psalm 51, but it appears that his father and his grandfather had taught him that **all sin is first and foremost against our creator.**

Have we learned this lesson?

Vs 10 - So, he resisted, he held fast to his **honor and integrity**, but **she did not give up!**

The **temptations, the solicitations continued on.** **Day by day**, she would **attempt to lure** Joseph; day by day she would **offer Joseph the opportunity to join her in the bedroom chamber.**

But he would not listen to her.

- To lie beside her
- To be with her.

Joseph held to his resolve he would not listen to her to lie with her or to be with her.

As you think about Joseph day-after-day **resisting temptation.** Again, Potiphar's wife was likely a very **beautiful woman**, she was likely the top tier as far as **Egyptian outward beauty goes.** **This was a real temptation.**

YET, day after day, this **17-27 year old boy** (depending on how much time has elapsed) resisted the urge to **sin with this woman.** He resisted the **temptation to sin against his God.**

As you consider this, for a second remember these verses from last week with Judah (Gen 38:14-16a). This is the **polar opposite of Judah**, who with only **one glance** was like a **cow to the slaughter.**

But this is just like Jesus (Heb 4:14-16):

APPLICATION FOR US: (I Pet 5:8-9; I Cor 10:13):

¹¹ But one day, when he went into the house to do his work and none of the men of the house was there in the house, ¹² she caught him by his garment, saying, "Lie with me." But he left his garment in her hand and fled and got out of the house. ¹³ And as soon as she saw that he had left his garment in her hand and had fled out of

the house, ¹⁴ she called to the men of her household and said to them, “See, he has brought among us a Hebrew to laugh at us. He came in to me to lie with me, and I cried out with a loud voice.

Vs 11-12 - He resisted, he resisted, he resisted... **But then one day**, Joseph went into **Potiphar’s house**, to do the work he normally did, that day the other men of the house (likely servants) were not in the house.

That day it was just Mrs. Potiphar and Joseph. That day, **Mrs. Potiphar took a new approach**, rather than just **alluring** him with words, **she grabbed him**, she **laid hold of him**, she **seized him by his garment**.

Satan was going to destroy this young man’s testimony!

She **grabbed him**, by his garment, **she grabbed him by his tunic**, in fact, she pulled his tunic off of him and demanded that **they have sex together. Lie with me right here and right now. Have sex with me now**, no one is home, this is our opportunity, no one will know. **No one will be hurt, it will be our secret.**

I can only imagine the Mrs. Potiphar might have already stripped off her own clothes, this was a full-on attack to sleep with Joseph and destroy his testimony.

But Joseph, left his tunic and fled the house. He **recognized the danger**, he **recognized what was in play and he RAN!**

Look at how **Proverbs explains events** like these in Pro 7:18-23).

APPLICATION: Brothers and sisters, this is a good word for you and I. When we are attacked like this, we need to do whatever it takes to get out of there. The Biblical prescription is to run (I Cor 6:18; II Tim 2:22).

Vs 13 - He ran, at this point Ms. Potiphar, **possibly humiliated** that this slave boy would not yield to such a beautiful woman as herself, maybe concerned that Joseph might say something to the other slaves and she might have to **fabricate a story for her husband**.

When she saw that this had not worked...

Vs 14 - She now takes a **new tact**. With the vigor she has been using to seduce Joseph, she now uses in an attempt to **destroy Joseph. She cries out for help**. She calls out for the male servants. She likely **begins screaming**.

As they arrive on the scene, notice what she says, she makes two points:

- 1) **Potiphar caused this, HE** brought this Hebrew slave to **“laugh at us.”** She makes the charge first, in an **indirect way**.
 - a. It seems, she has a **bit of bitterness** towards her husband.
 - b. Potiphar is blamed, by his wife, in front of his servants.
- 2) This was an attack on the **entire extended family**. This Hebrew slave came to **laugh at “us”**.
 - a. She is wanting the **servants to hate Joseph as well**.

See my husband, (she maligns Potiphar in front of the servants) has brought among us a Hebrew to laugh at us, to mock us.

¹⁵ And as soon as he heard that I lifted up my voice and cried out, he left his garment beside me and fled and got out of the house.” ¹⁶ Then she laid up his garment by her until his master came home, ¹⁷ and she told him the same story, saying, “The Hebrew servant, whom you have brought among us, came in to me to laugh at me. ¹⁸ But as soon as I lifted up my voice and cried, he left his garment beside me and fled out of the house.”

Vs 15 – She says, as soon as he heard me scream, (which is not at all what went down) as soon as he heard me cry out in a loud voice, he fled, he ran.

The **unstated point (the accusation)**, here is the **garment**, that he left behind because he **fled so quickly**.

Her point. This garment, **his tunic in my hand proves what I am saying is true**. This Hebrew tried to mock me, he tried to force himself upon me. **Here is the proof!**

Having told her story to the men of the house, we read:

Vs 16 - Mrs. Potiphar laid up his garment waiting for her husband to return from his journey. **Her story now secured**. He tried to rape me, I cried out and he fled, and the other men came and found the whole thing just as I had stated.

Vs 17-18 - Then Potiphar returned home, and she told him the **same story** she had told the men of the house.

But, she modified one point:

- 1) With the slaves the Hebrew came in to laugh at **US**, as she tells her husband, he came in to laugh at **ME!**
- 2) As soon as I lifted up my voice and cried, he left his garment beside me and fled out of the house.
 - a. He tried to rape me.
 - b. I cried out, he ran.
 - c. The other servants came.

I think we can all imagine what **might happen next**, but we would all agree it is not likely good for Joseph.

UNLESS Romans 8:28 is true. If Rom 8:28 is true, then what happens next will not be punishment or chastisement for sin. So we can rest assured it will be for another reason.

¹⁹ As soon as his master heard the words that his wife spoke to him, "This is the way your servant treated me," his anger was kindled. ²⁰ And Joseph's master took him and put him into the prison, the place where the king's prisoners were confined, and he was there in prison. ²¹ But the LORD was with Joseph and showed him steadfast love and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison.

Vs 19 - We suspected this. When he heard the testimony of his wife. All of the **good** that Joseph had done **evaporated**, it was like it had **never happened**. In spite of all the blessings he was enjoying, the idea that this young man tried to have sex with his wife stirred, as it would in each of us, a great anger.

Thus, what Mrs. Potiphar said, brought Potiphar's blood to a boil!

Vs 20 - Potiphar takes Joseph, where he was serving as a household slave and places him in prison. This is the first use of this **Hebrew word in the Bible**. It will ultimately be used **2055 times!**

He places him in the **common prison**, where the king's prisoners are held. **It seems that Potiphar** could have had **Joseph executed**. Yet instead, he has him imprisoned.

How long was Joseph in Potiphar's house? We really do not know. **Dr. Arnold Fruchtenbaum** states in his commentary: *"... Joseph spent about seven to nine years in Potiphar's house."*

We can imagine that he goes from a good life as far as being a slave is concerned to a very harsh life, little food and water, probably a very dirty and filthy environment.

Good news, we do not have to imagine. The Bible provides a peek into the prison (Ps 105:16-18).

We might wonder where is God while this is happening. This young man has maintained his morality and virtue and there does not seem to be in reward in doing that!

I would remind us, this same thing happened to Jesus, Peter said this (I Pet 2:23).

Again, in the life of Joseph we see these amazing pictures of the coming Messiah, Jesus Christ.

But there is a larger context to what Peter said in (I Pet 2:19-23).

ONE OTHER POINT: Did you notice it is **not recorded** that Joseph made any **defense**. He could have, we do not know, but it is not recorded. This of course reminds us of our Lord and Savior Jesus (is 53:6-7).

Vs 21 - I love this conjunction... Potiphar threw Joseph in jail, based on a false charge. But **Yahweh was with Joseph! While Joseph in prison**, Yahweh showed Joseph his **steadfast love** and **gave him favor in the sight of the prison keeper**.

APPLICATION: If you belong to Jesus, look beyond the **difficult work situation**, the **difficult family situation**, the **difficult financial situation** and what you will see is the **steadfast love** of the Lord for you!

IMPORTANT POINT: Do you recognize what we do not read? This treatment by Potiphar's wife was unfair, but **we do not read about a single complaint from Joseph**. It seems what we find is a young man who is, entrusting himself to him who judges justly! (1Pe 2:23 ESV)

²² And the keeper of the prison put Joseph in charge of all the prisoners who were in the prison. Whatever was done there, he was the one who did it. ²³ The keeper of the prison paid no attention to anything that was in Joseph's charge, because the LORD was with him. And whatever he did, the LORD made it succeed.

Vs 22 - And the keeper of the prison put Joseph in charge of all the prisoners who were in the prison. Of course he did, because Yahweh is with him, because Yahweh is giving him favor.

Now this Hebrew man is running the local prison, under the head prison keeper. Notice, the keeper of the prison, put Joseph in charge of all the prisoners in the prison.

Notice also, whatever was done there, Joseph was the one who did it, Joseph was the one who **made the final decision**. God now has his man running the **Pharaoh's prison in Egypt**.

What we cannot see, is through the sins of men, **God is in the background** working it all together for the ultimate good of Joseph and the ultimate glory of God. **This is the God we serve! The sovereign of the universe!**

What if we viewed our problems through that lens? What if we viewed each trial, each trouble, each problem, that was not clearly brought about by our own sins, as the hand of a sovereign God working in our lives?

Vs 23 - The prison keeper **did not worry about anything** that Joseph was doing. This is *Deja vu* all over again!

Joseph took charge, made it happen, made the work assignments, and the prison keeper sat in his office and **played games on his cell phone**. But the reason: **Because Yahweh was with him. Whatever Joseph did**, Yahweh made it succeed, Yahweh prospered Joseph in spite of his conditions.

APPLICATION: When you consider that whatever Joseph did, God made to succeed, God made it prosper, I would remind you of **Psalm 1?**
