

Joseph

Themes To Look For

Moses' Narrative Style: Form Follows Content

Experiential Narrative

Quotations Reflect Perception

Names (and Lack of Names) Carry Meaning

Character and Culture: Understanding People

Individual Character

Egyptian Culture and Worldview

Covenantal Application

Walking in Faith: Active and Passive Faith

Errors of Faith: Activism vs. Quietism

God Protects His Covenant People

The Dreamer

Genesis 37:5-11

5 Now Joseph had a dream, and when **he told it to his brothers** they hated him even more. 6 He said to them, “Hear this dream that I have dreamed:
7 Behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and behold, my sheaf arose and stood upright. And behold, your sheaves gathered around it and bowed down to my sheaf.” 8 His brothers said to him, “Are you indeed to reign over us? Or are you indeed to rule over us?” So they hated him even more for his dreams and for his words.

9 Then he dreamed another dream and **told it to his brothers** and said, “Behold, I have dreamed another dream. Behold, the sun, the moon, and eleven stars were bowing down to me.” 10 **But when he told it to his father** and to his brothers, his father rebuked him and said to him, “What is this dream that you have dreamed? Shall I and your mother and your brothers indeed come to bow ourselves to the ground before you?” 11 And his brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the saying in mind.

To Shechem and Dothan

Genesis 37

12 Now his brothers went to pasture their father's flock near Shechem. 13 And Israel said to Joseph, "Are not your brothers pasturing the flock at Shechem? Come, I will send you to them." And he said to him, "Here I am." 14 So he said to him, "Go now, see if it is well with your brothers and with the flock, and bring me word." So he sent him from the Valley of Hebron, and he came to Shechem. 15 And a man found him wandering in the fields. And the man asked him, "What are you seeking?" 16 "I am seeking my brothers," he said. "Tell me, please, where they are pasturing the flock." 17 And the man said, "They have gone away, for I heard them say, 'Let us go to Dothan.'" So Joseph went after his brothers and found them at Dothan.

Shechem and Dothan



Shechem and Dothan



What Is Providence?

What does the man from Shechem teach us about God's sovereignty over his Covenant?

How would you have thought about this if you were in Joseph's sandals?

Was this event exceedingly unlucky?

Confusion

Genesis 37

25 Then they sat down to eat. And looking up they saw a caravan of **Ishmaelites** coming from Gilead, with their camels bearing gum, balm, and myrrh, on their way to carry it down to Egypt. 26 Then Judah said to his brothers, “What profit is it if we kill our brother and conceal his blood? 27 Come, let us sell him to the **Ishmaelites**, and let not our hand be upon him, for he is our brother, our own flesh.” And his brothers listened to him. 28 Then **Midianite** traders passed by. And they drew Joseph up and lifted him out of the pit, and sold him to the **Ishmaelites** for twenty shekels[c] of silver. They took Joseph to Egypt.

36 Meanwhile the **Midianites** had sold him in Egypt to Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the guard.

29 When Reuben returned to the pit and saw that Joseph was not in the pit, he tore his clothes 30 and returned to his brothers and said, “**The boy is gone, and I, where shall I go?**” (lit. “where am I to come?”)

Potiphar's Wife

Genesis 39

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.

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.

Potiphar's Wife

Genesis 39

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. 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.”

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The Master's Anger

Genesis 39

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.

Who was he really angry at?

Joseph's punishment

His wife avoided language of rape / sex in speaking to her husband
He didn't listen to the details of his wife's story

Egyptian View of Dreams

Joseph dreamed dreams

The butler and baker dreamed dreams

Pharaoh dreamed dreams

Gen. 41:8 “In the morning his mind was troubled, so he sent for all the magicians and wise men of Egypt. Pharaoh told them his dreams, but no one could interpret them for him.”

Pharaoh's Dream

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Pharaoh calls the “scribes of the House of Life”

Pharaoh explains the dream in detail to them

They cannot explain it

Pharaoh is apparently not upset by this, he just accepts it

Why?

Nebuchadnezzar's Dream

Daniel 2:2-13

1 Nebuchadnezzar had dreams; his mind was troubled and he could not sleep. 2 So the king summoned the magicians, enchanters, sorcerers and astrologers to tell him what he had dreamed.

He does not tell them what his dream was (because he doesn't remember)

5 The king replied to the astrologers, "This is what I have firmly decided: If you do not tell me what my dream was and interpret it, **I will have you cut into pieces and your houses turned into piles of rubble.**

10 The astrologers answered the king, "There is no one on earth who can do what the king asks!..."

12 This made the king so angry and furious that **he ordered the execution of all the wise men of Babylon.**

Egypt vs. Babylon

Egypt:

- Characterized by order, tradition, custom, law, ritual
- You don't mess around with dream interpretation
- The magicians didn't dare make up an interpretation
- Pharaoh didn't threaten to punish them for not being able to interpret the dreams

Babylon:

- Characterized by arbitrary power unbound by law
- The magicians were perfectly willing to make something up an interpretation, and Nebuchadnezzar knew it
- Nebuchadnezzar was perfectly willing to execute them all for failing to interpret an unknown dream, something that had never been expected of them before

Egyptian Dream Book

Beatty Dream Papyrus, British Museum
May date as early as 12th dynasty

- 1) The dreamer sees himself
- 2) Dreams predict the future
- 3) Dreams are allegorical
- 4) Use principles of similarity of concept, sound (pun)

If a man sees himself:

With a dwarf... Bad - half his life is gone
[Vision]... [Good/Bad] – [Interpretation]

Joseph Installed as Vizier

Genesis 41:14 And when he had **shaved himself** and changed his clothes, he came in before Pharaoh... 42 Pharaoh took his **signet ring** from his hand and put it on Joseph's hand, and arrayed him in garments of **fine linen**, and put a **gold chain about his neck**.



FIG. 14.—Installation of an Egyptian Vizier.

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Metropolitan Museum of Art,
New York City,
Photo by Michael Pixley



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A New Name

Gen 41:45 “And Pharaoh called Joseph’s name Zaphnath-Paaneah. And he gave him as a wife Asenath, the daughter of Poti-Pherah priest of On. So Joseph went out over all the land of Egypt.”

Zaphnath-Paaneah = God speaks and he lives

Asenath = Belonging to Neit [goddess of war and creation]

Poti-Pherah = given by Ra [sun god]

Pharaoh brings Joseph to new life as vizier

God brings Joseph to new life

A Foreigner as Vizier?

Genesis 41: 39-41, 43-44

39 So Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Since God has shown you all this, there is none so discreet and wise as you are; 40 you shall be over my house, and all my people shall order themselves as you command; only as regards the throne will I be greater than you.” 41 And Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Behold, I have set you over all the land of Egypt.” ... 43 Thus he set him over all the land of Egypt. 44 Moreover Pharaoh said to Joseph, “I am Pharaoh, and without your consent no man shall lift up hand or foot in all the land of Egypt.”

- Several instances of foreign viziers in Egyptian history
- Sesostris I had a foreign vizier (was it Joseph?)
- A foreign vizier posed no threat of usurpation or coup