

# GENESIS CHAPTERS 39-40

39-40 Gen NLT-C  
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<b>Genesis Previously</b>		
<b>Mankind Created</b>	<b>Nations Formed</b>	<b>Abram Covenanted</b>
<b>Abram at War, is Honored, Land Boundaries Specified</b>		
<b>Sarai substituted, then Rejected Hagar; the Lord supported Her Expanded Names given to Sarai and Abram.</b>		
<b>Abraham was Visited and Warned about Sodom Sodom Was Destroyed, but Lot and Daughters Were Saved.</b>		
<b>King Abimelech takes and quickly returns Sarah</b>		
<b>Isaac is born, then Hagar and Ishmael are dismissed</b>		
<b>The near-sacrifice of Isaac and the death of Sarah.</b>		
<b>Isaac Marries Rebecca</b>		
<b>Isaac prays for a son and received two. God blessed Isaac.</b>		
<b>Jacob acquired both the family birthright and family blessing.</b>		
<b>Then Jacob left Canaan to marry. He saw a stairway to heaven.</b>		
<b>Jacob married Leah, then Rachel. He acquired property.</b>		
<b>Jacob returns to Canaan, Laban pursues, but makes agreement</b>		
<b>Jacob reconciles with his brother Esau.</b>		
<b>The Dinah incident, Jacob renamed Israel, Rachel dies.</b>		
<b>Joseph sold into Egypt. Tamar outwits Judah.</b>		

We are watching the story as God moves his key man Joseph to Egypt and elevates him to a key place in the government. God is active in the affairs of earth.

## JOSEPH AT POTIPHAR'S HOUSE

**(39:1) When Joseph was taken to Egypt by the Ishmaelite traders, he was purchased by Potiphar, an Egyptian officer. Potiphar was captain of the guard for Pharaoh, the king of Egypt.**

- **Joseph** was immediately connected with a ruler of **Egypt**. His slavery enabled this introduction to the ruling class.

(2) The LORD was with Joseph, so he succeeded in everything he did as he served in the home of his Egyptian master. (3) Potiphar noticed this and realized that the LORD was with Joseph, giving him success in everything he did. (4) This pleased Potiphar, so he soon made Joseph his personal attendant. He put him in charge of his entire household and everything he owned.

- **Joseph** received a special blessing from the **Lord**. The success was not all his own doing. This statement of vs. 4 occurs four times in this chapter. The **master** identified the source of **Joseph's** success as the **Lord** and elevated **Joseph** to be his personal attendant. Soon he was elevated to overseer of **Potiphar's** entire estate.
- **Burton Coffman** raises the possibility that **Potiphar** had become a eunuch after his earlier marriage. That would provide a rationale for the behavior of **Potiphar's** wife.

**Coffman** quotes **Henry M. Morris**:

“It was a custom in ancient pagan countries, beginning with Sumeria, to require prominent officers associated closely with the king's court to be castrated, in order to minimize the possibility of their taking over the kingdom and founding their own dynasty. Here it seems that either Potiphar (already married) had consented to be castrated in order to hold the office, or that his wife, after the event, married him for financial or political reasons. Some eunuchs were known to have wives.”

(5.) From the day Joseph was put in charge of his master's household and property, the LORD began to bless Potiphar's household for Joseph's sake. All his household affairs ran smoothly, and his crops and livestock flourished. (6.) So Potiphar gave Joseph complete administrative responsibility over everything he owned. With Joseph there, he didn't worry about a thing—except what kind of food to eat! Joseph was a very handsome and well-built

proofs of the authenticity of the Biblical narrative of Joseph's, and eventually Israel's, time in Egypt."

### THE DREAMS WERE FULFILLED

(20) Pharaoh's birthday came three days later, and he prepared a banquet for all his officials and staff. He summoned his chief cup-bearer and chief baker to join the other officials. (21) He then restored the chief cup-bearer to his former position, so he could again hand Pharaoh his cup. (22) But Pharaoh impaled the chief baker, just as Joseph had predicted when he interpreted his dream. (23) Pharaoh's chief cup-bearer, however, forgot all about Joseph, never giving him another thought.

- God's timing: it was **three days** until **Pharaoh's** birthday party. Indeed, in **three days** the **cup-bearer** was **restored** and the baker was **impaled**. Tragically, the happy **cup-bearer** forgot how he was restored and **did not remember Joseph's** appeal. When a person under pressure makes promises, he may forget them when the situation improves. Humorist **Will Rogers** once said, "The short memories of the American voters is what keeps our politician in office."
- It is not possible to know how many years **Joseph** stayed in prison. **James E. Smith** suggests 10 years. His time in prison was "training time for reigning time." Things that were meant by others for evil turned out to be for good.
- The **cup-bearer** forgot, but the Lord did not. He had ways to accomplish His purposes.

**young man, (7) and Potiphar's wife soon began to look at him lustfully.**

- The Egyptian came to trust **Joseph** with everything he had. A lingering problem for **Joseph** was that he was **handsome and well-built**. Remember that his mother Rachel was noted for her beauty also. Genesis 29:17:  
**There was no sparkle in Leah's eyes, but Rachel had a beautiful figure and a lovely face.**

### POTIPHAR'S WIFE WANTS JOSEPH

(7b) "Come and sleep with me," she demanded. (8) But Joseph refused. "Look," he told her, "my master trusts me with everything in his entire household. (9) No one here has more authority than I do. He has held back nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How could I do such a wicked thing? It would be a great sin against God."

- The Egyptian's **wife** was unprincipled. She wanted to have sex with **Joseph**. His refusal had three reasons:
  - He had earned his master's trust.
  - She was contracted to the Egyptian as his **wife**. That contract had to be honored.
  - Most importantly, it would be a **wicked** and was a **great sin against God**.
- **Joseph** was aware of **God** even though separated from others who worshiped the Lord. Sexual relations without the marriage contract is always a **sin against** the Lord. **Burton Coffman** captures the pressure of the moment: "What a temptation this presented to Joseph! The youthful passions of life were at full tide in him. He might have reasoned that it would be the means of his escape from slavery. He might have felt that the wrongs he had suffered entitled him to any revenge that was handy. The prospect of secrecy was evident. He was far from home, living in a culture that did not have the moral standards he believed in. It might also have occurred to him that his

refusal would make his status worse. And, most importantly of all, it was a continual and persistent temptation that was renewed 'day by day.'"

### JOSEPH IS SUBJECTED TO FALSE CHARGES

(10) She kept putting pressure on Joseph day after day, but he refused to sleep with her, and he kept out of her way as much as possible. (11) One day, however, no one else was around when he went in to do his work. (12) She came and grabbed him by his cloak, demanding, "Come on, sleep with me!" Joseph tore himself away, but he left his cloak in her hand as he ran from the house. (13) When she saw that she was holding his cloak and he had fled, (14) she called out to her servants. Soon all the men came running. "Look!" she said. "My husband has brought this Hebrew slave here to make fools of us! He came into my room to rape me, but I screamed. (15) When he heard me scream, he ran outside and got away, but he left his cloak behind with me."

- **Joseph** avoided Mrs. Potiphar, but had to do **work** in the house. Vs. 11. Potiphar's wife found a way to frame **Joseph** because of his constant rejection of her advances. **Joseph** said "no" again and she accused **Joseph**, before the other staff men, of attempted rape.
- The name **Hebrew** was a derisive term as seen in Genesis 43:32:
 

**The waiters served Joseph at his own table, and his brothers were served at a separate table. The Egyptians who ate with Joseph sat at their own table, because Egyptians despise Hebrews and refuse to eat with them.**

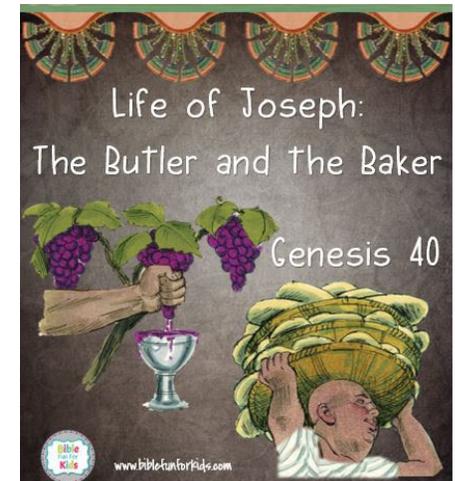
So Potiphar's wife was putting down **Joseph's** nationality.
- **C.C Crawford** speaks highly of Joseph: "Here he soon rose to the high post of overseer, and the house, we are told, was divinely blessed for his sake, a fact which even Potiphar

**from now Pharaoh will lift you up and impale your body on a pole. Then birds will come and peck away at your flesh."**

- The **chief baker** liked the outcome of the cupbearer's **dream**, so asked **Joseph** about his own dream.
- Being a lunch for the **birds** was the worst kind of death. **C.C. Crawford** observes: "To the Egyptian who held that the welfare of the soul in the next life would be dependent on the preservation of the body, that is, the earthly body, such a destiny would be particularly offensive."
- **Joseph** explained **the baker's dream** as meaning his death was coming in **three days**. **Tom Bradford** has an insightful comment here:

"Egyptian hieroglyphs prove out many of the details of this story. For instance, the idea of the baskets on top of the baker's head; this was exactly the way males carried items in Egypt; they balanced them on their heads. The stacked baskets of bread on the baker's head were simply a normal means of

conveying the bread from the ovens to the palace, which the baker would have done several times a day. We've all seen this sort of thing on TV Travel shows. But, here's the thing: you would NEVER see an Egyptian woman put a load on her head; rather, Egyptian women toted things on their shoulders and back. And, this was exactly the opposite from the customary way the Oriental cultures toted loads. So, this little insight is just one of many



**Joseph** had been successful in explaining **dreams** before. He knew that God would guide him.

### THE CUP-CARRIER'S DREAM

(9) So the chief cup-bearer told Joseph his dream first. "In my dream," he said, "I saw a grapevine in front of me. (10) The vine had three branches that began to bud and blossom, and soon it produced clusters of ripe grapes. (11) I was holding Pharaoh's wine cup in my hand, so I took a cluster of grapes and squeezed the juice into the cup. Then I placed the cup in Pharaoh's hand." (12) "This is what the dream means," Joseph said. "The three branches represent three days. (13) Within three days Pharaoh will lift you up and restore you to your position as his chief cup-bearer. (14) And please remember me and do me a favor when things go well for you. Mention me to Pharaoh, so he might let me out of this place. (15) For I was kidnapped from my homeland, the land of the Hebrews, and now I'm here in prison, but I did nothing to deserve it."

- **Joseph** explained the **dream**, but in return, wanted his case explained to the **Pharaoh**. He had been **kidnapped** from Canaan and wanted justice. **Joseph** used the same Hebrew word translated here as **prison** (verse 15) as the one that described the hole where he was confined by his brothers back in Canaan. Genesis 37:24.

### THE BAKER'S DREAM

(16.)When the chief baker saw that Joseph had given the first dream such a positive interpretation, he said to Joseph, "I had a dream, too. In my dream there were three baskets of white pastries stacked on my head. (17) The top basket contained all kinds of pastries for Pharaoh, but the birds came and ate them from the basket on my head." (18) "This is what the dream means," Joseph told him. "The three baskets also represent three days. (19) Three days

himself recognized (vv, 3-6). We have to admit that Joseph, whatever may have been his faults as a youth, certainly developed into one of the most admirable men of all those who figure in the Old Testament records. The character of Joseph stands out as one of the purest in the whole compass of sacred history. No temptation could overcome his high-toned morality, no calamity could shake his implicit faith in God. Adversity in its bitterest form did not unduly depress him, and neither did the giddiest height of prosperity generate unseemly pride."

(16) She kept the cloak with her until her husband came home. (17) Then she told him her story. "That Hebrew slave you've brought into our house tried to come in and fool around with me," she said. (18) "But when I screamed, he ran outside, leaving his cloak with me!"

- Potiphar's wife blamed her husband for the imaginary event because he had purchased Joseph as a slave. She convinced Potiphar. However, Joseph did not **leave his cloak** beside her. She grabbed it and put it there. Vs 12-13. He lost his **cloak** but saved his character and eventually gained a crown. Joseph lived by faith in God. God was testing Joseph to prove that he was capable of ruling more than just Potiphar's house. He would eventually become the second ruler of Egypt. This is the second time that a garment of Joseph's was connected with trouble for him. The first was when his **cloak** of many colors was used to convince Jacob that Joseph was dead.
- Believers are taught to flee fornication, idolatry, and youthful lusts. Better to flee than to fall.

### JOSEPH IN PRISON

(19) Potiphar was furious when he heard his wife's story about how Joseph had treated her. (20) So he took Joseph and threw him into the prison where the king's prisoners were held, and there he remained.

- So **Joseph** was jailed. While this looks like a failure, it became the means of getting **Joseph** before the King (Pharaoh) of Egypt.
- The people of Canaan did not have jails. This was Egypt. The fact that **Joseph** was not executed may indicate that Potiphar did not entirely believe his wife; he couldn't help knowing her true character. At first, imprisonment was painful. At a later time the Psalmist wrote in Psalms 105:17-18:

**Then He sent someone to Egypt ahead of them-- Joseph, who was sold as a slave. They bruised his feet with fetters and placed his neck in an iron collar.**

**(21) But the LORD was with Joseph in the prison and showed him His faithful love. And the LORD made Joseph a favorite with the prison warden. (22) Before long, the warden put Joseph in charge of all the other prisoners and over everything that happened in the prison. (23) The warden had no more worries, because Joseph took care of everything. The LORD was with him and caused everything he did to succeed.**

- The **Lord** was active in steering Joseph's life. **Joseph** won the favor of the chief jailer. This responsible man could see the hand of God in **Joseph's** life. So **Joseph** rises to leadership another time. He was, potentially, the leader of Jacob's sons because he was the first-born son of Jacob's favored wife. Then he became a leader in Potiphar's estate and now he is a leader in **prison**. He was gifted with a talent for organizing and management.
- Joseph was a living example of what New Testament believers read in Romans 8:28:

**And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to His purpose for them.**

## **THE PROPHETIC DREAMS OF PRISON INMATES**

**(40:1) Some time later, Pharaoh's chief cup-bearer and chief baker offended their royal master. (2) Pharaoh became angry with these two officials, (3) and he put them in the prison where Joseph was, in the palace of the captain of the guard. (4) They remained in prison for quite some time, and the captain of the guard assigned them to Joseph, who looked after them.**

- The **cup-bearer** is that officer of the household who tasted the wine and passed it to those at the table. He was often chosen for his personal beauty and attractions and in ancient oriental courts was always a person of rank and importance. From the confidential nature of his duties and his frequent access to the royal presence, he possessed great influence. The wine-tasting was sometimes for security, to prove that the wine was not poisoned.
- Notice God's timing. The Lord's intervention is often in the timing of events, even in our lives. One of these prisoners would eventually get an even better job for God's man **Joseph**.

**(5.) While they were in prison, Pharaoh's cup-bearer and baker each had a dream one night, and each dream had its own meaning. (6) When Joseph saw them the next morning, he noticed that they both looked upset. (7) "Why do you look so worried today?" he asked them. (8) And they replied, "We both had dreams last night, but no one can tell us what they mean." "Interpreting dreams is God's business," Joseph replied. "Go ahead and tell me your dreams."**

- Again notice the Lord's timing. The **cup-bearer** and the **baker** had prophetic **dreams** the same night. In **prison**, they could not hire an interpreter (verse 8).
- Joseph volunteered to interpret the **dreams** while giving credit to **God**. The Lord had spoken directly to Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Rebecca and Jacob, but not **Joseph**. Still,