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## A Biographical Study of Josesph

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# Joseph

## CHRONOLOGICAL SUMMARY

- I. Joseph, the favored son
  - A. Loved by his father (Gen. 37:3)
    1. The reasons involved
      - a. Because he had been born to Jacob in his old age
      - b. Because he was the firstborn son of Rachel, Jacob's beloved wife
    2. The reward involved—Jacob gave him a brightly colored coat.
  - B. Loathed by his brothers (Gen. 37:2-11)
    1. The reasons involved
      - a. Because he reported to his father some of their bad actions
      - b. Because of his two dreams, both in which he saw his 10 brothers bowing down before him
    2. The results involved (Gen. 37:2, 12-35)
      - a. The trip—Jacob sent Joseph to check up on his brothers. He finally located them near the town of Dothan. He was 17 at this time, and was a shepherd.
      - b. The treachery
        - (1) The brothers at first planned to kill him.
        - (2) They stripped him of his brightly colored robe.
        - (3) They then decided to throw him into a dry cistern and leave him to starve to death.
      - c. The transaction—Finally, seeing some Ishmaelite and Midianite merchants passing by en route to Egypt, they sold Joseph for 20 shekels of silver.
      - d. The trickery—The brothers then dipped Joseph's coat in the blood of a slaughtered goat, leading Jacob to believe his son had been killed and devoured by a wild animal.
- II. Joseph, the faithful steward
  - A. His service
    1. Upon reaching Egypt, Joseph was sold by the merchants as a slave to Potiphar, one of Pharaoh's military officials (Gen. 37:36).
    2. Joseph was soon entrusted to run the entire household of Potiphar (Gen. 39:1-6).
  - B. His self-control
    1. The request—Joseph was repeatedly urged by Potiphar's wife to sleep with her (Gen. 39:7).
    2. The refusal—Joseph refused her sexual advances for two reasons (Gen. 39:8-9).
      - a. He would not sin against his master.
      - b. He would not sin against his God.

3. The revenge—The rejected wife falsely accused Joseph of attempted rape (Gen. 39:10-19).

C. His sufferings—Potiphar believed his wife and had Joseph thrown into prison (Gen. 39:20).

### III. Joseph, the forgotten slave

A. Joseph, the prison keeper—“But the LORD was with Joseph, and shewed him mercy, and gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison. 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” (Gen. 39:21-22).

B. Joseph and the prisoners (Gen. 40:1-23)

1. Who they were

a. Among the inmates there were two political prisoners.

b. One was the royal chief cupbearer and the other was the chief baker, both of whom had angered Pharaoh for some reason.

2. What they dreamed—Both these men experienced strange dreams and told them to Joseph, hoping he could explain their meaning (Gen. 40:5-23).

a. The information in the dreams

(1) The chief cupbearer's dream

(a) He saw a vine with three branches loaded down with grapes.

(b) He saw himself squeezing the grapes into Pharaoh's cup and handing it to him.

(2) The chief baker's dream

(a) He saw himself carrying three baskets of bread on his head for Pharaoh.

(b) The birds, however, ate the bread.

b. The interpretation of the dreams

(1) The chief cupbearer's dream—Joseph predicted that within three days the cupbearer would be restored by Pharaoh to his original office.

(2) The chief baker's dream—Joseph predicted within three days the baker would be hanged by Pharaoh and the birds would eat his flesh. Within three days both prophecies were fulfilled.

### IV. Joseph, the famed statesman

A. The dreams of Pharaoh—The king of Egypt, like the two prisoners, also experienced two dreams which bothered him. Suddenly the cupbearer remembered Joseph's ability to explain dreams. At Pharaoh's command, Joseph was brought before him and interpreted the dreams (Gen. 41:1-32).

1. The information in the dreams

a. Pharaoh's first dream

- (1) He saw 14 cows coming up out of the Nile River—seven were fat, and seven were skinny.
      - (2) The seven skinny cows ate up the seven fat ones.
    - b. Pharaoh's second dream
      - (1) He saw 14 heads of grain—There were seven healthy ones on a single stalk, and seven thin and scorched ones on another stalk.
      - (2) The seven thin heads of grain swallowed up the seven healthy ones.
  - 2. The interpretation of the dreams
    - a. The 14 cows and the 14 stalks represented 14 years.
    - b. The first seven years would be a time of great crop growth.
    - c. The second seven years would be a time of terrible famine.
- B. The decree of Pharaoh
- 1. Joseph's proposal—Joseph presented a plan of action in light of Pharaoh's dreams (Gen. 41:33-36).
    - a. The king should appoint a food administrator.
    - b. The kings should collect and store 20 percent of all food produced during the first seven abundant years to prepare for the following seven years of famine.
  - 2. Joseph's promotion—Pharaoh appointed Joseph on the spot to this office (Gen. 41:37-44).
    - a. He placed on Joseph's finger the king's own signet ring.
    - b. He dressed him in robes of fine linen and put a gold chain around his neck.
- C. He gave him the chariot of his second-in-command.
- 3. Joseph's program
    - a. Joseph was now 30 years old. He married an Egyptian girl and fathered two sons through her (Gen. 41:45-46, 50-52).
    - b. He stored up enormous quantities of food during the seven abundant years (Gen. 41:47-49).
    - c. As he had predicted, the seven fruitful years gave way to seven years of famine (Gen. 41:53-57).
      - (1) The Egyptians immediately came to Joseph for food.
      - (2) The nations eventually came to Joseph for food.
- V. Joseph, the forgiving saint
- A. Joseph and his brothers
- 1. The forgotten brother
    - a. The first trip of the brothers to Egypt (Gen. 42:6-26)
      - (1) Joseph's brothers traveled to Egypt to buy food. He immediately recognized them, but they did not know him.

- (2) They bowed at his feet, thus fulfilling the two dreams he once had experienced.
  - (3) To test them, he accused them of being spies and placed them in custody for three days.
  - (4) He finally agreed to sell them the needed food and allow them to return under two conditions:
    - (a) One of the brothers, Simeon, had to stay behind as a hostage.
    - (b) The remaining nine brothers had to promise to bring Benjamin (Joseph's youngest brother) back with them during their next trip for food.
  - (5) Joseph gave orders to fill their bags with grain and to return each man's silver back to his sack.
- b. The second trip of the brothers to Egypt (Gen. 43:15—44:34)
- (1) Upon their arrival in Egypt, this time with Benjamin, Joseph invited his brothers to a meal.
  - (2) He reassured the guilt-stricken brothers (who still did not recognize him) that he meant them no harm.
  - (3) At the noon meal, he brothers once again bowed down to Joseph.
  - (4) After their meeting and speaking to Benjamin, Joseph was so moved he was forced to leave the room for a moment to weep.
  - (5) Joseph sent his brothers back to Canaan, but not before secretly hiding his silver cup in the sack belonging to Benjamin.
  - (6) Shortly after they left, his steward (at Joseph's command) caught up with the brothers and accused them of stealing his master's silver cup.
  - (7) They denied the charge, agreeing that if one had stolen it, he would become the steward's, Joseph's slave.
  - (8) A systematic search revealed the cup in Benjamin's sack.
  - (9) The shocked and grief-stricken brothers followed the steward back to Joseph's house.
  - (10) Joseph confronted his brothers for the final time before revealing himself to them.
  - (11) The brothers continued to maintain their innocence, but requested that they all might stay with Benjamin as slaves.
  - (12) Joseph, however, refused, saying that only Benjamin would be allowed to stay.
  - (13) A distraught brother, Judah, begged Joseph to keep him in place of Benjamin, or else their aged father Jacob would die with grief.
2. The forgiving brother (Gen. 45:1-15)
- a. The revelation by Joseph

- (1) Unable to control himself any longer, Joseph ordered all his attendants out.
- (2) He then told his astonished and terrified brothers who he was.
- b. The reassurance by Joseph
  - (1) He told them not to be distressed or angry with themselves, for it was God who had allowed them to sell him that he might save many lives.
  - (2) He requested that they return home and bring Jacob to Egypt, for the famine would continue for another five years.
  - (3) He promised to provide for all of them in Egypt.

B. Joseph and his father

- 1. Pharaoh promised Joseph he would personally see to it that his father and brothers enjoyed the best Egypt could offer (Gen. 45:16-20).
- 2. Joseph and his father were reunited at Goshen for the first time in 15 years (Gen. 46:29).
- 3. Joseph formally presented his father and brothers to Pharaoh (Gen. 47:1-10).
- 4. He then settled and provided for them in the district of Goshen (Gen. 47:11-12).
- 5. Joseph governed wisely over Egypt during the final five years of drought, as the famine increased.
  - a. When the Egyptians ran out of money to buy food, he agreed to take their livestock as payment.
  - b. When the livestock was gone, he accepted their land.
  - c. Even though Joseph easily could have enslaved the people, he did not, but to the contrary decreed that each farmer could keep 80 percent of what he raised, requiring only 20 percent to be given back to Pharaoh.

C. Joseph and his sons

- 1. Joseph brought his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, to Jacob for a final blessing (Gen. 48:1).
- 2. Over the initial objection of Joseph, Jacob pronounced a greater blessing upon Ephraim, the second son, than he gave Manasseh, the firstborn (Gen. 48:8-20).

VI. Joseph, the fruitful shade tree

A. Joseph received his father's blessings (Gen. 49:22-26)

- 1. Even though Joseph was the eleventh son, Jacob gave him the rights of the firstborn son (Gen. 48:21-22; 1 Chron. 5:1-2).
- 2. Jacob predicted Joseph would continue to be as a fruitful vine near a spring, with extended branches, helping others.
- 3. In spite of persecution, God himself would continue to both protect and prosper him.

B. Joseph removed his father's body.

- 1. The return

- a. At the age of 147 Jacob died (Gen. 47:28; 49:33).
  - b. Joseph and his brothers carried their father's body back to Canaan for burial (Gen. 50:1-14).
2. The reassurance—He once again reassured his concerned brothers he meant them no harm. "Fear not . . . ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive. . . I will nourish you, and your little ones. And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them" (Gen. 50:20-21).
  3. The request—Just prior to his death at age 110, Joseph desired a favor and described the future (Gen. 50:20-26).
    - a. The future described—He predicted that God would someday lead the people of Israel out of Egypt back to Canaan.
    - b. The favor desired
      - (1) He requested that, at that time, his bones be carried back to Canaan.
      - (2) Moses later took these bones with him when he left Egypt (Exod. 13:19).
      - (3) When Joseph entered the promised land he buried them at Shechem (Josh. 24:32).

VII. Joseph, the foreshadow of the Savior—Joseph was the most pronounced foreshadow and type of Christ in the entire Old Testament. Notice the amazing similarities between the two:

- A. Both were beloved by their fathers (Gen. 37:3; Matt. 3:17).
- B. Both regarded themselves as shepherds (Gen. 37:2; John 10:11-16).
- C. Both were sent by their fathers to their brethren (Gen. 37:13-14; Luke 20:13; Heb. 2:12).
- D. Both were unjustly hated by their brethren (Gen. 37:4-5, 8; John 1:11; 7:5; 15:25).
- E. Both were plotted against by their brethren (Gen. 37:20; John 11:53).
- F. Both were severely tempted (Gen. 39:7; Matt. 4:1).
- G. Both were taken to Egypt (Gen. 37:36; Matt. 2:14-15).
- H. Both were stripped of their robes (Gen. 37:23; John 19:23-24).
- I. Both were sold for the price of a slave (Gen. 37:28; Matt. 26:15).
- J. Both were bound (Gen. 39:20; Matt. 27:2).
- K. Both remained silent and offered no defense (Gen. 39:20; Isa. 53:7).
- L. Both were falsely accused (Gen. 39:16-18; Matt. 26:59-60).
- M. Both experienced God's presence through everything (Gen. 39:2, 21, 23; John 16:32).
- N. Both were respected by their jailors (Gen. 39:21; Luke 23:47).
- O. Both were placed with two prisoners, one of which was later lost, the other saved (Gen. 40:2-3; Luke 23:32).
- P. Both were 30 at the beginning of their ministry (Gen. 41:46; Luke 3:23).
- Q. Both were highly exalted after their sufferings (Gen. 41:41; Phil. 2:9-11).
- R. Both took non-Jewish brides (Gen. 41:45; Eph. 3:1-12).
- S. Both were lost to their brethren for a while (Gen. 42:7-8; Rom. 10:1-3; 11:7-8).
- T. Both forgave and restored their repentant brothers (Gen. 45:1-15; Zech. 12:10-12).

U. Both visited and were honored by all earthly nations (Gen. 41:57; Isa. 2:2-3; 49:6).

## **THEOLOGICAL SUMMARY**

- I. The psalmist referred to five events in Joseph's life (Psa. 105:17-22).
  - A. Being sold as a slave
  - B. Having his feet bruised with shackles
  - C. Being placed in irons
  - D. Interpreting Pharaoh's dreams
  - E. Ruling over all of Egypt under Pharaoh
- II. John mentioned the fact that Jesus met the Samaritan woman near the plot of ground Jacob once gave to Joseph (John 4:5).
- III. Stephen referred to Joseph during his defense before the Sanhedrin, pointing out the following (Acts 7:9-14):
  - A. That he was sold by his envious brothers into Egyptian slavery
  - B. That God was nevertheless with him, both delivering him and giving him wisdom
  - C. That he became ruler over all Egypt
  - D. That he later forgave his brothers in Egypt
- IV. The book of Hebrews refers to his faith (Heb. 11:22).
  - A. As demonstrated through his predictions concerning the Exodus
  - B. As demonstrated by his request to have his bones carried back to Canaan

## **STATISTICS**

*Father:* Jacob (Gen. 35:22-26)

*Mother:* Rachel (Gen. 30:22-24)

*Spouse:* Asenath (Gen. 41:45)

*Sons:* Manasseh and Ephraim (Gen. 41:51-52)

*Brothers:* Full brother: Benjamin (Gen. 35:24). Half-brothers: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, and Asher (Gen. 35:23-26)

*Sister:* Half-sister: Dinah (Gen. 30:21)

*First mention:* Genesis 30:24

*Final mention:* Hebrews 11:22

*Meaning of his name:* "Increaser"

*Frequency of his name:* Referred to 214 times

*Biblical books mentioning him:* 16 books (Genesis, Exodus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, 1 Chronicles, Psalms, Ezekiel, Amos, Obadiah, John, Acts, Hebrews)

*Occupation:* Chief associate to Pharaoh (Gen. 41:37-40)

*Place of birth:* Haran (Gen. 27:43; 30:25)

*Place of death:* Egypt (Gen. 50:26)

*Age at death:* 110 (Gen. 50:22)



*Important fact about his life:* He was Jacob's favorite son who used his position in Egypt to rescue his family from famine (Gen. 37:3; 45:7-11).