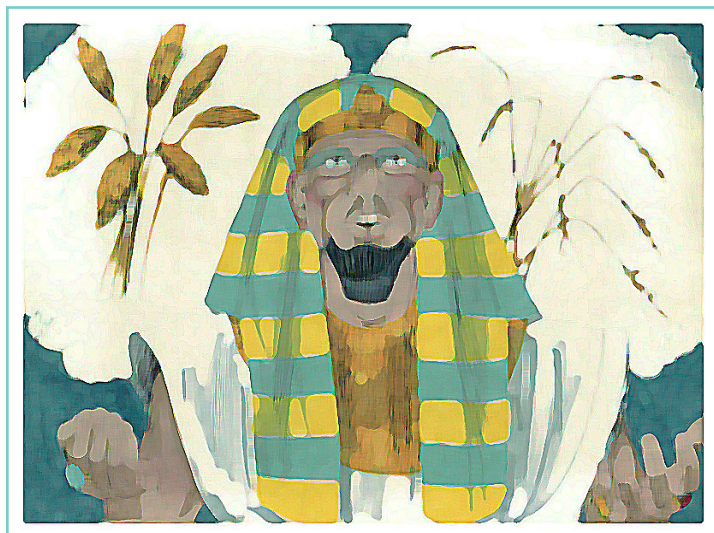


Lesson 4: Perseverance



Old Testament

New Testament

Where in the Bible?

The Joseph story cycle concludes the Book of Genesis.

Introduction

Joseph had been sold into slavery and unjustly thrown into prison in Egypt. When the great Pharaoh of this land began to have troubling dreams, Joseph was called before the king that God might reveal the meaning of the strange images he saw.

Read: Genesis 41:15-43

On reading these verses, what are some of your initial impressions and questions? What stands out to you?

The Old Testament: Pentateuch

The **Pentateuch** (the first section of Scripture) tells the story of Israel's ancestors. Scripture is honest about the real-life struggle of this family, not hiding the sin and jealousies they dealt with. They were not some false ideals or perfect examples; they were real people.

Biblical Time Period: Slavery

In God's wisdom, the misfortune of being sold off to slavery was not the end for Joseph. Elevated to leadership in the land, Joseph used his position in Egypt to save his family. The Book of Genesis concludes with the family of Israel moving to Egypt, where Joseph provided them a new home. This corresponds to the time in Egyptian history known as the Hyksos Dynasty (16th and 15th Centuries B.C.) and the rule of the Canaanite Shepherd Kings.

Over time, the Israelites entered a long period of slavery in Egypt, summarized briefly in Exodus 1-2.

When in Time?

Because of a famine in Canaan, God's people moved to Egypt at the time of Joseph, where they prospered and multiplied. Years later, they became slaves to the Pharaoh, the King of Egypt, when he feared that the Hebrews would rebel. According to the timeline below, about how many years were the Israelites slaves in Egypt?

SLAVERY IN EGYPT = Approximately _____ years (to check your answer, look up Genesis 15:13)



Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. And he said to his people, "Behold, the people of Israel are too many and too mighty for us. Come, let us deal shrewdly with them ..." (Exodus 1:8-10a).

Discuss: Genesis 41:15-43

1. At this point in the story, where was Joseph? What was his situation? How did he get there? (For a hint, skim the previous chapters in Genesis.)
2. What is a "Pharaoh"? What did this Pharaoh see in his troubling dream? What did he do when he awoke?
3. How did Pharaoh hear about Joseph? What did Joseph do differently from the magicians? According to verse 16, where did Joseph's ability come from?
4. According to Joseph, what did Pharaoh's dream mean? What did the cows and the heads of grain represent? How did this show what was going to happen in Egypt?
5. From what you see here, does it seem that the Pharaoh trusted Joseph? Why or why not? What happened to Joseph after he translated the dream?
6. Read Acts 2:17-18. Do you think that dreams can have a symbolic or hidden meaning? Have you ever felt that God was saying something to you through a dream? How would a person of faith verify whether something is or is not a message from God?
7. How did God use Joseph as instrument of his will? Through Joseph, what did God accomplish in this story? How did this save many lives?
8. Joseph had suffered much before he reached this point. What if circumstances in his life had never brought him to Egypt? What can this story teach us about trusting in God and God's timing?

Where in the World?

The map shows a closeup of the land between Canaan and Egypt. Joseph lived with his family in the town of Shechem, in Canaan, until his jealous brothers sold him off as a slave and he was taken to the Land of Egypt.

The Hyksos Dynasty ruled in Egypt from the city of Avaris, from about 1700-1550 B.C. Sometimes referred to as the Shepherd Kings, the Hyksos were descendants of Canaanite people who had migrated to Egypt around 1800-1700 B.C.

This was the same time that the biblical story of Joseph took place, when the Bible says that the Hebrew people came to Egypt and settled in Goshen. On the map, trace Joseph's path from Shechem to Avaris.

