

# Joseph in Prison

Stephanie Fehr | September 27

## Context

- Abraham Cycle: Genesis 12-22
  - God promises: land, descendants, and blessing
- Isaac Cycle: Genesis 23-26
- Jacob Cycle: Genesis 25-35
- Joseph Cycle: Genesis 37-50
- “the relentless drumbeat of God’s faithfulness and blessing” Dennis Olson

## Joseph Genesis 37-50

- The Joseph novella
- Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat
- Gen 37:
  - “Israel loved Joseph more than any of his other sons” (v.3)
  - Dreams: ruling his family
  - Sold to slavery, faked death

## Joseph Genesis 37-50

- Clothing theme
- End of ch.37: in Egypt, sold to Potiphar (captain of the guard)

## Genesis 39

- vv.1-6a: Joseph rises to prominence
- vv.6b-20a: the trouble
- vv.20b-23: Joseph in prison/second rise

## vv.1-6a: Joseph rises to prominence

- Slave in Potiphar's house
- v.2 tells us that "The LORD was with Joseph so that he prospered"; v.3 "the LORD was with him... the LORD gave him success in everything he did."
- Potiphar puts Joseph in charge
- The LORD blesses the house of Potiphar (v.5)

## vv.6b-20a: the trouble

- v.6b: "Now Joseph was well-built and handsome..."
- Foreshadowing trouble, temptation, more failing
- Absalom: 2 Samuel 14:25 - "In all Israel there was not a man so highly praised for his handsome appearance as Absalom. From the top of his head to the sole of his foot there was no blemish in him."

## vv.6b-20a: the trouble

- v.7: Potiphar's wife to Joseph: "Come to bed with me!"
- Joseph refuses because of Potiphar and God (v.9)
- She catches his cloak (v.12)

## vv.6b-20a: the trouble

- Potiphar's wife is not a good person
  - Lies to the servants and Potiphar
    - "That Hebrew slave you brought us came to me to make sport of me" (v.17)
- Jabs at Hebrew identity
- Potiphar is angry, Joseph is in prison with the king's prisoners

## vv.20b-23: Joseph in prison

- v.20b: "But..."
- v.21: "...the LORD was with him; he showed him kindness and granted him favour..."
- Prison warden puts Joseph in charge of the prison
- v.23: "...the LORD was with Joseph and gave him success in whatever he did."

## God's presence

- God was active with others:
  - Spoke to Abraham, appears in a vision (ch.12), appears in vision (ch.15)
  - Wrestles with Jacob (ch.32), vision in dream (ch.28)
  - Messenger from God to Hagar (ch.16)

## God's presence

- Joseph's story - biblical narrator and Joseph will mention God or God's involvement
  - "the LORD was with Joseph" (Gen.39:2, 3, 5, 21, 23)
  - Joseph was then successful
  - Continuing the blessing from Abraham

## God's presence

- Could be interpreted as - “live in the presence of God/be faithful and you will gain success”
- Prosperity Gospel, Health and Wealth
- Attempt to control God and his blessings

## God's presence

- *With: Reimagining the Way You Relate to God* by Skye Jethani
- *LIFE From God* - “want God’s blessings and gifts, but are not particularly interested God himself”
- We see financial wealth as blessing and right relationship with God
- Financial wealth is not the currency of the Kingdom of God

## God's presence

- “The story of Joseph... looks backward at suffering after it has been survived rather than making false forward-looking promises about the future.” - Kathleen O'Connor
- Read during the exile
- God told the Israelites to settle, seek peace and prosperity of their captors (Jeremiah 29:5-11)

## God's presence

- God is hidden, but not absent
- God was there all along, despite the human experience of divine absence

## God's presence

- Romans 8:28: "And we know that in all things God works for the good for those who love him, who have been called according to his purposes."
- Romans 5:3b-4: "...we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope."

## Takeaway

- "The Lord is with you... he shows you steadfast loving kindness" (adapted from Genesis 39:21)
- This one difficult situation is not the end... God will use things for good