

The Big Picture

By Doug Hamilton

Joseph the Favorite

Genesis 37:3-4 Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his sons, because he was the son of his old age; and he made him a varicolored tunic. ⁴ His brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers; and *so* they hated him and could not speak to him on friendly terms.

- The primary reason that he was the favorite of the twelve sons of Jacob was because Joseph was the first of two children of his favorite wife Rachel (Gen 29:18-20).
- He was shown preferential treatment as demonstrated by the multi-colored tunic, something that was an honor to have in that culture. Because of that, his ten older brothers hated him.

Joseph the Dreamer

First Dream

Gen 37:5-8 Then Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him even more. ⁶ He said to them, “Please listen to this dream which I have had; ⁷ for behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and lo, my sheaf rose up and also stood erect; and behold, your sheaves gathered around and bowed down to my sheaf.” ⁸ Then his brothers said to him, “Are you actually going to reign over us? Or are you really going to rule over us?” So they hated him even more for his dreams and for his words.

- The brothers were already jealous of Joseph, but when he told them about a dream of bowing sheaves to his, this was nearing a breaking point.

Second Dream

Gen 37:9-11 Now he had still another dream, and related it to his brothers, and said, “Lo, I have had still another dream; and behold, the sun and the moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me.” ¹⁰ He related *it* to his father and to his brothers; and his father rebuked him and said to him, “What is this dream that you have had? Shall I and your mother and your brothers actually come to bow ourselves down before you to the ground?” ¹¹ His brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the saying *in mind*.

- Yet another dream and this time the dream called for the entire family to bow down to Joseph, something that even earned a rebuke by the father Jacob.

Joseph the Hated

- Gen 37:12-ff. One day Jacob sent Joseph to go check on his brothers who were out in a distant field shepherding. It was then that his jealous brothers plotted to kill him, saying “*Here comes this dreamer! Now then, come and let us kill him and throw him into one of the pits; and we will say, ‘A wild beast devoured him.’ Then let us see what will become of his dreams!*” (37:19-20)
- Jacob’s firstborn, Reuben, convinced them to just scare Joseph by throwing him into the pit with the intention of rescuing him later. The problem was that the other brothers sold him into slavery to the Ishmaelites before Reuben returned.

Gen 37:26-28 Judah said to his brothers, “What profit is it for us to kill our brother and cover up his blood? ²⁷ “Come and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites and not lay our hands on him, for he is

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our brother, our own flesh.” And his brothers listened to him.²⁸ Then some Midianite traders passed by, so they pulled him up and lifted Joseph out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty shekels of silver. Thus they brought Joseph into Egypt.

- When Reuben found out that Joseph had been sold to the traveling band of Midianite traders, together they tried to cover it up by telling Jacob that he had been killed by a wild beast. They even went as far as to dip Joseph’s multi-colored garment in goat’s blood. The news crushed Jacob’s heart.

Gen 37:33-34 Then he examined it and said, “It is my son’s tunic. A wild beast has devoured him; Joseph has surely been torn to pieces!”³⁴ So Jacob tore his clothes, and put sackcloth on his loins and mourned for his son many days.

Joseph the Slave

Gen 39:1-4 Now Joseph had been taken down to Egypt; and Potiphar, an Egyptian officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the bodyguard, bought him from the Ishmaelites, who had taken him down there.² The LORD was with Joseph, so he became a successful man. And he was in the house of his master, the Egyptian.³ Now his master saw that the LORD was with him and *how* the LORD caused all that he did to prosper in his hand.⁴ So Joseph found favor in his sight and became his personal servant; and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he owned he put in his charge.

- When a man is being blessed by God, it is hard not to be noticed by those around you. In just a short time Potiphar discovers that the prosperity of the LORD was with Joseph and the result was promotion to the position of overseer of the house.

Joseph the Hottie

Gen 39:6-9 says that he was “handsome in form and appearance.”⁷ It came about after these events that his master’s wife looked with desire at Joseph, and she said, “Lie with me.”⁸ But he refused and said to his master’s wife, “Behold, with me *here*, my master does not concern himself with anything in the house, and he has put all that he owns in my charge.⁹ “There is no one greater in this house than I, and he has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How then could I do this great evil and sin against God?”

- Her lust for Joseph persisted until one day she just threw herself at him only to meet his refusal. She was angry and decided to frame Joseph by saying he tried to have relations with her. When Potiphar found this out, he had Joseph thrown into prison.

Joseph the Prisoner

Gen 39:21-23 But the LORD was with Joseph and extended kindness to him, and gave him favor in the sight of the chief jailer.²² The chief jailer committed to Joseph’s charge all the prisoners who were in the jail; so that whatever was done there, he was responsible *for it*.²³ The chief jailer did not supervise anything under Joseph’s charge because the LORD was with him; and whatever he did, the LORD made to prosper.

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- Even while being unjustly locked up in prison the Joseph prospered and he was made a supervisor of the prisoners. The chief jailor put his trust in the young Hebrew prisoner.

Joseph the Interpreter

The Cupbearer and Chief Baker's Dreams

Genesis 40:5-23 "...the cupbearer and the baker for the king of Egypt, who were confined in jail, both had a dream the same night, each man with his *own* dream *and* each dream with its *own* interpretation. ⁶ When Joseph came to them in the morning and observed them, behold, they were dejected. ⁷ He asked Pharaoh's officials who were with him in confinement in his master's house, "Why are your faces so sad today?" ⁸ Then they said to him, "We have had a dream and there is no one to interpret it." Then Joseph said to them, "Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell *it* to me, please."

- With that in mind, the cupbearer told him the dream and Joseph interpreted that the man would be and restored to his office. The only request Joseph asked was to make mention to Pharaoh for his personal release from prison.
- The chief baker liked what he heard and asked Joseph to interpret his dream as well. Things did not turn out well for the baker for it was interpreted that he would be executed in three days.

Gen 40:21 He restored the chief cupbearer to his office, and he put the cup into Pharaoh's hand; ²² but he hanged the chief baker, just as Joseph had interpreted to them. ²³ Yet the chief cupbearer did not remember Joseph, but forgot him.

Pharaoh's Dreams

Gen 41:1 Now it happened at the end of two full years that Pharaoh had a dream, and behold, he was standing by the Nile. ² And lo, from the Nile there came up seven cows, sleek and fat; and they grazed in the marsh grass. ³ Then behold, seven other cows came up after them from the Nile, ugly and gaunt, and they stood by the *other* cows on the bank of the Nile. ⁴ The ugly and gaunt cows ate up the seven sleek and fat cows. Then Pharaoh awoke. ⁵ He fell asleep and dreamed a second time; and behold, seven ears of grain came up on a single stalk, plump and good. ⁶ Then behold, seven ears, thin and scorched by the east wind, sprouted up after them. ⁷ The thin ears swallowed up the seven plump and full ears. Then Pharaoh awoke, and behold, *it was* a dream. ⁸ Now in the morning his spirit was troubled, so he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt, and all its wise men. And Pharaoh told them his dreams, but there was no one who could interpret them to Pharaoh.

- The cupbearer finally remembered Joseph and told Pharaoh of his ability to interpret dreams. Pharaoh called for Joseph and the interpretation was made. There would be seven years of abundant harvest followed by seven years of drought. With that information Pharaoh would be able to prepare for his kingdom and the people.

Joseph the Prime Minister

Gen 41:40-44 "You shall be over my house, and according to your command all my people shall do homage; only in the throne I will be greater than you." ⁴¹ Pharaoh said to Joseph, "See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt." ⁴² Then Pharaoh took off his signet ring from his hand and

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put it on Joseph's hand, and clothed him in garments of fine linen and put the gold necklace around his neck. ⁴³ He had him ride in his second chariot; and they proclaimed before him, "Bow the knee!" And he set him over all the land of Egypt. ⁴⁴ Moreover, Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Though I am Pharaoh, yet without your permission no one shall raise his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt."

- He was only thirty years old when he became the Prime Minister of Egypt. During that first seven years the storage houses were filled to the brim. When the seven years of famine were underway, the people were able to come and buy grain from Joseph. Verse 57 states "*The people of all the earth came to Egypt to buy grain from Joseph, because the famine was severe in all the earth.*" The result was Pharaoh reaching a whole new level of power.

Joseph the Intimidator

Gen 42:1-2 Now Jacob saw that there was grain in Egypt, and Jacob said to his sons, "Why are you staring at one another?" ² He said, "Behold, I have heard that there is grain in Egypt; go down there and buy *some* for us from that place, so that we may live and not die."

- The famine spread even to the region of Palestine, resulting in Jacob sending his ten eldest sons to Egypt to buy grain. When they arrived into the land and appeared before Joseph, they did not recognize him. 42:7 *When Joseph saw his brothers he recognized them, but he disguised himself to them and spoke to them harshly. And he said to them, "Where have you come from?" And they said, "From the land of Canaan, to buy food."*
- He remembered the dreams from thirteen years prior and realized they were coming true. Joseph accused the brothers of being spies, to which they denied, revealing information about the family. They persisted and so did he by locking them up in jail for three days. When they were released, Joseph gave the commandment to bring Benjamin the youngest when they returned and kept Simeon locked up as earnest until then.
- When Jacob heard that Benjamin would have to go to Egypt, he refused to even entertain the idea. He was not going to lose the "only" son that reminded him of Rachel.

Joseph the Cunning

- The famine continued and Jacob once again called for his sons to go back to Egypt to buy more food. Judah reminded his father Jacob that Benjamin was required to go. Under protest of this, Jacob permitted it. Gen 43:6 *When Joseph saw Benjamin with them, he said to his house steward, "Bring the men into the house, and slay an animal and make ready; for the men are to dine with me at noon."*
- He brought Simeon out of the cell and united him with the others. Joseph invited the brothers to a meal with him, but they still did not recognize him. He checked on the status of their father Jacob. Upon seeing his younger brother Benjamin, he had to leave the room and gather his composure.
- When they headed back to Canaan, Joseph had his royal cup hidden in Benjamin's grain sack. As soon as they were out of sight, he sent his men to arrest Benjamin for theft. They were hauled back before Joseph, resulting in Benjamin's arrest. They pleaded that if Benjamin did not return with them that Jacob would die from grief. Gen 44:34 *"For how shall I go up to my father if the lad is not with me—for fear that I see the evil that would*

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overtake my father?” Judah even offered himself as a substitute for Benjamin, but what was about to occur would totally turn their worlds upside-down.

Joseph the Preserver

Gen 45:1-4 Then Joseph could not control himself before all those who stood by him, and he cried, “Have everyone go out from me.” So there was no man with him when Joseph made himself known to his brothers. ² He wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard *it*, and the household of Pharaoh heard *of it*. ³ Then Joseph said to his brothers, “I am Joseph! Is my father still alive?” But his brothers could not answer him, for they were dismayed at his presence. ⁴ Then Joseph said to his brothers, “Please come closer to me.” And they came closer. And he said, “I am your brother Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt.” ⁵ “Now do not be grieved or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life.”

- Finally we see the big picture! He was sold into slavery in order to provide deliverance for his family. They would be going back to Canaan and move the rest of the family, including Jacob the father.

Gen 45:26-28 They told him, saying, “Joseph is still alive, and indeed he is ruler over all the land of Egypt.” But he was stunned, for he did not believe them. ²⁷ When they told him all the words of Joseph that he had spoken to them, and when he saw the wagons that Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of their father Jacob revived. ²⁸ Then Israel said, “It is enough; my son Joseph is still alive. I will go and see him before I die.”

- Joseph was hated by his brothers, but he did not let it conquer him.
- They sold him into slavery, but he thrived in the house of his master!
- They threw him in prison and he once again soared for the kingdom of God!
- They took him out of prison and he again shined for the glory of the LORD!
- Most of you know how this historical account turns out. Jacob died in the loving care of his family in Egypt. The people flourished in famine, persecution and deliverance.

It is about the Big Picture!

- Genesis 46:27 states that “...*all the persons of the house of Jacob, who came to Egypt, were seventy.*” They were twelve tribes totaling seventy souls. If there was no redeemer in Egypt concerning Joseph, the Israelites would have perished, but that was not in the big picture.

It is about a Bigger Picture!

- *Exodus 15:27* Then they came to Elim where there were twelve springs of water and seventy date palms, and they camped there beside the waters.
- This account was more than 400 years after the account of Joseph. The Israelites had grown into a group of millions from only seventy. That is the bigger picture!

It is about an even Bigger Picture!

- Matthew 1:21-23 “She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.” ²² Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by

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the Lord through the prophet: ²³ “BEHOLD, THE VIRGIN SHALL BE WITH CHILD AND SHALL BEAR A SON, AND THEY SHALL CALL HIS NAME IMMANUEL,” which translated means, “GOD WITH US.”

- Those seventy grew into millions, took the Promised Land, was carried away into exile and still was able to bring forth the Savior of the world! That is an even Bigger Picture!

It is about the Biggest Picture of All!

- Genesis 15:5 God told Abraham “...Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them.” And He said to him, “So shall your descendants be.”
- Hebrews 11:12 Therefore there was born even of one man, and him as good as dead at that, *as many descendants* AS THE STARS OF HEAVEN IN NUMBER, AND INNUMERABLE AS THE SAND WHICH IS BY THE SEASHORE.
- John 1:12-13 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, *even* to those who believe in His name, ¹³ who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.
- Revelation 7:9-10 After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation and *all* tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches *were* in their hands; ¹⁰ and they cry out with a loud voice, saying, “Salvation to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.”
- What started out as a crime against a young man named Joseph ultimately led him through slavery, through imprisonment, through government, through deliverance, through nation building and through a Messiah and all who chose to follow Him.

The challenge

1. Always keep the Big Picture in Mind.
2. Always keep the Little Picture in the Big Picture.
3. Always remove anything that does not fit into either picture.