

WHAT IS A JOSEPH MINISTRY?

John S. Torell

February 2022

THE BACKGROUND

The story of Joseph's amazing life can be found in the Bible.¹ He was the eleventh son of Jacob, born to his father's favorite wife – Rachel.² Jacob's large family was dysfunctional since he was tricked into marrying Leah. He loved Rachel, but getting her could only be attained by marrying her older sister.³

Each of the sisters in turn had a slave girl as their personal attendant, and when Jacob married the two sisters who were in competition with one another, he also inherited the two slave girls. In time Rachael and Leah forced Bilhah and Zilpah to have sexual intercourse with Jacob and conceive proxy children on their behalf.⁴

There was no harmony among Jacob's burgeoning family as there was constant strife due to the fact that Jacob was laid back in his disciplinary approach. The boys grew to be wild men, and when their sister was abducted and raped by Shechem – a Canaanite prince – they concocted a scheme and murdered all the males in the city.⁵

THE STORY OF JOSEPH

The Bible does not provide any information on the life of Joseph until he is around 17 years old. Joseph received two prophetic dreams that indicated he would rule over his parents and siblings and this infuriated his brothers. The dreams would sustain him when he was sold as a slave.⁶

When Jacob arrived to the city of Haran in Mesopotamia, he met the love of his life in the daughter of Laban. He wanted to marry Rachel, but was tricked by Laban, who had him marry her sister Leah first. As a result of this deception by Laban, Jacob tolerated Leah, but he loved Rachel.⁷

Rachel bore him two sons, Joseph and Benjamin. Joseph quickly became the favorite and Jacob made him a coat of many colors which made all the other brothers envious.⁸

Jacob used Joseph as a spy on his brothers and this was one of the reasons they hated their younger brother. When Jacob sent Joseph to inspect the shepherding business of his brothers at Dothan, they stripped him of his coat of many

¹ The Book of Genesis, chapters 37-50

² Genesis 30:22-24

³ Genesis 29:16-35

⁴ Genesis 30:1-21

⁵ Genesis 34:1-31

⁶ Genesis 37:1-11

⁷ Genesis 30:30

⁸ Genesis 37:3-4

colors – which to them was a uniform of a supervisor for Jacob – and after having kept him in a pit for a short time, sold Joseph as a slave to Midianite traders on their way to Egypt. Shortly thereafter Joseph was sold as a slave to an officer in the Egyptian army.⁹

It is obvious that Joseph was educated and could read, write, and do arithmetic. While the Bible does not specify this detail, it is recorded in archeology and ancient history that Egypt had been conquered by the Hittite Empire. Thus, the Pharaoh that ruled Egypt at this time was a Hittite. In order for Potiphar to turn over his entire household business to Joseph indicates that Jacob's son was able to quickly learn the language of the Hittites, and with his skill of reading, writing and mathematics, he ran Potiphar's business.¹⁰

Potiphar had a wife that lusted after the young slave. Joseph rebuffed her many advances and she felt scorned. Eventually she staged a rape scene and it caused Joseph to be cast into prison. Reading between the lines in the Bible, Potiphar must have known that his wife was a loose woman and that she had lied about the alleged rape. The sentence for a slave should have been death, but Potiphar only put Joseph in prison and did nothing more.¹¹

Joseph was housed in the king's prison, but he was not abandoned by God. In time the jailer also came to the same realization as Potiphar when it came to Joseph overseeing matters. Joseph worked for the jailer, who made him a supervisor over the prisoners, over the food distribution, and the purchasing of supplies for the prison.¹²

Eleven years had passed after Joseph was sold into slavery and he kept up with the daily

routine at the prison. One day two high ranking officers were imprisoned and effectively became the wards of Joseph. God gave these two men disturbing dreams and Joseph was able to provide the interpretation through the power of the Holy Spirit. On Pharaoh's birthday, the butler was restored to the palace, but the baker was hung – both of these actions were accurately predicted by Joseph, who asked the butler to speak to Pharaoh on his behalf. But once the butler returned to the palace, he forgot all about the slave in the jail.¹³

Two years later Pharaoh had two distressing dreams. The butler remembered what Joseph had done for him when Pharaoh could not find anyone at the palace to interpret the dreams for him. Joseph was brought to the palace and surprisingly told Pharaoh that he could not provide an interpretation, but he was confident that God would show him what the dreams were all about. The end result was that Pharaoh made Joseph prime minister of Egypt and put him in charge of the coming crisis. Joseph was 30 years old at this time and he spent the next seven years gathering food for the coming famine.¹⁴

RULING AS A PRIME MINISTER

It is important to note that Joseph did not use his newfound power to contact his family in Canaan. He did not know if the famine would affect them and focused on the following:

1. He married and fathered two sons as he lived in his own palace.
2. He supervised the construction of storage facilities where the seven years of surplus grain would be stored. So much grain was stored that Joseph's staff was not able to

⁹ Genesis 37:13-36

¹⁰ Genesis 39:1-6

¹¹ Genesis 39:7-20

¹² Genesis 39:21-23

¹³ Genesis 40:1-23

¹⁴ Genesis 41:1-47

compute how much they gathered during the seven year period.¹⁵

THE FAMINE

Joseph had built up an organization that kept the food supplies safe by the time the famine struck. It is obvious that he had civil servants that worked in warehouses and military units at each storage center ensured that no food was stolen.

The Bible does not state if Joseph used state funds to buy the surplus grain during the seven good years, but once the famine began, his people were ordered to release the grain from the storage places.

Joseph never sent a delegation to find his father and family in Canaan; he refused to walk in the flesh and waited for God to move upon his family.¹⁶

DEALING WITH THE FAMILY

This worldwide famine was ordained by God as part of His plan to grow Jacob's burgeoning family into a nation. It was never the Lord's intention for Jacob to marry two sisters and add two more slave girls. Abraham had one wife and did not marry Keturah until after Sarah died.¹⁷ Isaac also only had one wife in Rebecca.¹⁸

The perfect will of God was for Jacob to marry Rachel and have children with her. The Bible tells us that Laban was Jacob's uncle by way of his mother. Thus, Jacob married Rachel and Leah, which were of the family of Abraham. The Bible does not reveal the nationality of the slave girls – Bilhah and Zilpah. Abraham was born in Chaldea and this meant the bloodline was Chaldean.¹⁹

The reason that I am emphasizing the nationality of the Abrahamic family is to make sure that people understand that Abraham was not Jewish.

Once the famine began in earnest and people started to starve, Jacob sent his ten older sons to Egypt to buy food. Joseph reserved the right to control who came to Egypt from other nations to buy grain, and when his ten brothers arrived, he immediately recognized them, but they were ignorant of his true identity. He realized this was a fantastic opportunity to reconcile the family and move them to Egypt. But it had to be done in stages so that the ten brothers responsible for selling him into slavery would repent of their evil action.

This brings us to a question: What kind of Bible did Joseph have?

JOSEPH'S BIBLE

Most decisions are based upon some kind of knowledge while others can be attributed to intuition or a gut feeling. The only scripture at Joseph's disposal was a portion of the Book of Genesis (chapters 1-36) and the Book of Job. Joseph also had access to the Books of Enoch, and with the three different writings, he had knowledge of the future Redeemer that later would be known as the Messiah.

God had not revealed his name to anyone yet and the only way to describe the Lord and set Him aside from demon gods was to refer to Him as "The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob." It was not until some 400 years later that Moses asked for the name of God and he was told "Yahweh," which means "I am that I am" or the "existing one."²⁰

JOSEPH'S PURPOSE IN LIFE

Once contact was established between Joseph and his ten brothers, he began to work on the plan God had for him and his extended family. Here is what Joseph knew:

¹⁵ Genesis 41:48-53

¹⁶ Genesis 41:54-57

¹⁷ Genesis 25:1

¹⁸ Genesis 24:67

¹⁹ Genesis 11:26-32

²⁰ Exodus 3:13-14

1. The descendants of Abraham were going to spend 400 years in Egypt. Eventually there would be affliction, but something miraculous was going to happen and they would leave Egypt with great riches.²¹
2. Joseph's immediate job was to ensure that Jacob's family (70 persons) was brought to Egypt and settled in a place where they could grow in number during the next 400 years.
3. Abraham was the great-grandfather of Joseph and this means he was the fourth generation after Abraham. While Joseph knew that he would not live to see the Hebrews exit from Egypt, his job was to bring them in and establish them in the land of Egypt.

IMPLEMENTING GOD'S PLAN

As Joseph started to implement God's plan, he knew that he could not trust his brothers, and it would be necessary to control them. After a harsh interrogation, Joseph arrested Simeon and told the other nine they were free to go, but if they wanted Simeon back, they had to return to Egypt with Benjamin.²²

The homecoming of the nine brothers to Canaan caused a great commotion for Jacob. Joseph and Benjamin were the only sons from his beloved Rachel. He thought that Joseph was dead and he certainly was not willing to give up Benjamin to some Egyptian official. God used the famine to break Jacob's will.²³

It is important to note that Joseph already knew his necessary actions would create stress and anxiety for his father and Joseph trusted that God would sustain him. It would have been far easier to send additional food to his father in Canaan

without stipulations, but then God's will would not be accomplished. Joseph did not operate with his emotions, but in revelation knowledge.

There was going to be one more test for the ten older brothers with Benjamin and Joseph had a hard time not breaking down emotionally. Nevertheless, he was determined to follow God's plan, and after a banquet, he sent them back to the land of Canaan. Unbeknownst to them, a silver cup was planted in Benjamin's sack. The eleven brothers dejectedly returned under guard to Egypt and waited for judgment. They reasoned amongst themselves and confessed that these events must have happened as a result of selling Joseph into slavery.²⁴ To have a Joseph ministry, you cannot be sentimental and live by your emotions. The ten brothers had to be brought to repentance before Joseph could reveal himself and offer them forgiveness.²⁵

LIVING IN THE WILL OF GOD

When you are in the will of God, you can be confident that He will work out the details. It is vital to understand that Joseph did not seek out Pharaoh and ask permission to bring his family to Egypt. The king, hearing of the reconciliation, told Joseph to bring his family to Egypt and offered the best land.²⁶

To have a Joseph ministry means that you do not try to force open doors that God does not want opened. Case in point, Joseph did not try to bring Esau and his family to Egypt. He knew that his uncle had forfeited his birthright and could not be mixed with the children of Jacob.

Joseph was also wise in dealing with people. He selected five of his brothers in an elaborate plan and had set up an appointment at Pharaoh's palace. The Hebrews were bequeathed the most fertile land in Goshen. Joseph also introduced his

²¹ Genesis 15:13-14

²² Genesis 42:1-26

²³ Genesis 42:27-38; 43:1-15

²⁴ Genesis 43:15-34; 44:1-34

²⁵ Genesis 45:1-15

²⁶ Genesis 45:16-28

father to Pharaoh, who was willing to receive a prayer blessing from him. Pharaoh was not a believer in the real God – the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob – but because he had seen the wisdom of Joseph and the guidance of God in his life, he submitted himself to Jacob’s prayer. To have a Joseph ministry, you must speak openly about your faith in God and what He has done for you. Joseph did not charge his family for the grain they needed; it was given them free of charge.²⁷

CONDUCTING BUSINESS

Joseph was the prime minister of Egypt, but he was also a skilled businessman. He knew that as long as Pharaoh was on the throne of Egypt, his family would be safe in Goshen. It was in his best interest to make sure that Pharaoh stayed politically strong.

The people of Egypt had the money necessary to pay for the grain they needed during the first year of the famine. When they had run out of money in the second year, Joseph told them that could trade grain in return for livestock.²⁸

The third year of the famine saw them run out of livestock to trade for grain and Joseph told them that he would use state money to purchase their properties and enable them to buy grain again.²⁹

Joseph used events from the famine to change the demographic of Egypt. He ordered the people to move into cities and abandon the land they had sold. This meant that the state of Egypt now effectively owned all land; private land ownership came to an end except for the holdings of the pagan priests.³⁰

With the famine coming to an end, Pharaoh controlled the source of all seed in Egypt. Joseph crafted a law allowing people to work the state-

owned farm lands. They would receive seed from the state, and in return, they agreed to allocate 20% of the harvest to Pharaoh.

Joseph lived to be 110 years old; he was 30 years old when he became the prime minister. If we include the 14-year period – 7 years of plenty and 7 years of famine – Joseph was a prime minister for a total of 66 years before he died.

JOSEPH WAS A REVELATION MAN

Joseph knew that his purpose on earth was to preserve the bloodline for the future Redeemer. God gave him 110 years during which he established his eternal position as one of the patriarchs of Israel. He knew that there was no future for Israel in Egypt and wanted to make sure that he was not permanently buried there. When the Hebrews left for the Promised Land, they were to take his bones with them.³¹

Joseph was taken to Paradise when he died, spending some 2,000 years there until the resurrection of Jesus when he was granted access to heaven. He has been in heaven for some 2,000 years, and if we compare his 110 earth years to the afterlife, we can see that mankind has a short time to prepare for the hereafter.

Joseph’s ten brothers did not trust him and they lived in fear for 17 years that Joseph would settle the score once their father died. They did not understand their brother had offered them total forgiveness. Joseph could have used his political power but he assured his brothers that they were safe and he held no animosity towards them.³²

Joseph knew that life on earth was just the beginning, and he made sure that when God was moving the twelve tribes out of Egypt, they were

²⁷ Genesis 47:1-12

²⁸ Genesis 47:13-17

²⁹ verses 18-20

³⁰ verse 22

³¹ Genesis 50:1-13

³² Genesis 50:14-26

to take his bones and bury him in the Promised Land. Joseph has spent some 4,000 years in paradise and in heaven and I am sure he is looking forward the 1,000 years kingdom when he will receive an eternal resurrected body.

Joseph had political power and wealth, but he never used his position to enrich himself or establish himself as a potentate. He humbly carried out his assignments and then departed for his eternal rewards. Joseph lived a relatively good life on earth with a palace, wife and children, and was content with the blessings bestowed upon him.

EDUCATION

Joseph set up an educational system for his family and their descendants that would survive 400 years in a pagan nation. Included among this was worship and sacrifices to the Living God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, teaching the history of man from Adam and Eve, not marrying outside of their religion, and not assimilating into Egyptian society. He appointed rulers from the different families and set up an educational system that would continuously roll over to the next generation. That meant Joseph had to ensure 50 chapters of the Book of Genesis were copied and distributed among the 12 tribes (families), including the book of Job and the books of Enoch. He disallowed any changes to the historical writings.

It was necessary to set up a school system to train teachers, scribes and judges. In looking back at the Hebrew's 400 years in Egypt, the system instituted by Joseph worked well, and by the time Moses arrived on the scene, the knowledge of God had been preserved. It was time for the Lord to take the people of Israel to a new level as He brought them back to the Promised Land.³³

MODERN DAY JOSEPH MINISTRY

Joseph was a transition man and his job was to move the bloodline of Abraham from Canaan to Egypt. Moses was a transition man; his job was to move the bloodline from Egypt to the Promised Land. Christians are living in "Egypt" and waiting for the coming of Jesus that will transition into the millennium kingdom. Since the church is worldwide and includes all nationalities, there is a great need for men and women to have a Joseph ministry since we are now entering a transition period. We are about to leave the church age behind and move into the time of the tribulation, which will be dominated by the rule of the Antichrist and the False Prophet.

Some people called into a Joseph ministry have gone through much suffering but that does not mean sorrow and woe are necessary to fulfill a Joseph ministry. Each person is unique and all of us certainly have been called by God to serve in the kingdom of God. The Joseph ministry requires spiritual maturity.

A man or a woman who has been called by God to be in a Joseph ministry must not only be born again, but also baptized in the Holy Spirit to have the needed spiritual power.

Joseph underwent a 13-year program of relocation and suffering that saw him whisked away from Canaan and his family's business of cattle and shepherding. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were nomads and God wanted Joseph residing in one place. In order to move Joseph to become the prime minister of Egypt, he was first taken to Potiphar's house, then to prison, and finally to Pharaoh. God used supernatural events like a famine and dream interpretations to establish Joseph.

³³ Exodus 1:1-7

Joseph learned not to be bitter or hold grudges; he had a willingness to forgive those who had hurt him. God would never have let him become a powerful ruler without humbleness and humility.

To be fully effective in a Joseph ministry, a person should go through deliverance so that he is not bogged down with curses and evil spirits. Though it is not necessary to endure great suffering to have a Joseph ministry, each person is unique and there is no set mold that every person fits into.

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE

What would a modern Joseph ministry look like?

1. Financial support for a church, a mission outreach, TV and radio ministries, rescue missions, for an evangelist, a pastor or a missionary, etc.
2. Education to prepare people for the coming Antichrist.
 - a) Recruiting and training teachers and supporting them with finances.
 - b) Promoting research and writing of articles, books, and pamphlets.
 - c) Using every chance to personally preach, teach, and minister to people.

BUSINESSES AND OTHER ENTERPRISES

A Christian called into a Joseph ministry is erecting a business and it is imperative that he live a godly life and operate in the light. He cannot allow any lies or shady business practices to tarnish his reputation. Everyone in the company should be aware that the owner of the company is a Christian. This is something that should be boldly proclaimed to customers and

employees. If possible, try to hire Christians to work in your company.

No Christian should ever partner with an unbeliever. You can hire an unbeliever, but not ever become a partner with them. All business transactions must be legal. That means no cash under the table or cheating on taxes.

Satan is merciless, and when a Christian sins and cuts corners, the accuser is there to bring up the matter at the courthouse in heaven. Lucifer will demand the right to strike the sinning person and it always ends in disaster.³⁴

SUMMARY

Joseph lived for 17 years with a dysfunctional family, spent 13 years as a slave, and then ruled as a prime minister for 80 years. He has spent the last 4,000 years waiting for Jesus to return to the earth and set up his millennial kingdom. He was faithful in his calling on earth and now he has lived a fantastic life in Paradise and in heaven. Each person called into a Joseph ministry can attain a nice position in the 1,000 years kingdom and in eternity.

Remember that salvation is the gift of God; it is not something that cannot be earned.

“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” (Ephesians 2:8-10)

Our eternal positions will depend entirely upon how well we work out our salvation on earth.³⁵

Are you called into a Joseph ministry?

³⁴ Job 1:1-22; 2:1-13

³⁵ Philippians 2:12-15; 1 Corinthians 3:11-15; 2 Corinthians 5:10-11