

Chapter Three

Joseph's Destiny - From Prisoner to Governor of the Land



AND NOW THIS MAN OPENS TO US the vista of the Canaanite landscape. The parched wilderness gives way to the surrounds of Jacob's bustling encampment. Bleating goats hurry past us while two nomadic shepherds suddenly appear out of the swirling dust to greet us and just as quickly disappear on the trail before them. This Man gestures to us to rest awhile and so as we sit on the barren earth we notice an elderly gentleman of noble stature. Beside him in eager conversation is a youthful lad, equally noble. We begin to wonder who these two might be. Surely the elderly gentlemen could be the patriarch Jacob of whom we have learned so much. But who might the youthful lad be?

Solving the puzzle, This Man begins his own conversation.

"Ah indeed, the elderly man is the patriarch Jacob and the young lad walking beside him is Joseph, Jacob's second youngest son. And indeed Joseph is the most awe inspiring of all of Jacob's twelve sons. For blessed by God's leading providence, Joseph is destined for fame far beyond anything he could ever imagine, but his journey toward fame is a sorrowful road to travel.

And Joseph's sorrow of heart and soul begins with the death of his mother while giving birth to youngest brother Benjamin.

You may remember Rachel was Jacob's favorite wife and this favouritism cascades over into Joseph's life. More and more Joseph becomes the son of Jacob's old age. Always eager to help his father around the camp, a special bond forms between father and son. And to show his appreciation and love for Joseph, Jacob makes for him a striking coat of many colours, a special coat fine enough to be worn by noblemen.

Now Israel (Jacob) loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age. Also he made him a tunic of many colors. But when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him and could not speak peaceably to him. Genesis 37:3-4

And this is only the beginning of trouble for,

Joseph had a dream, and he told it to his brothers; and they hated him even more. So he said to them, "Please hear this dream which I have dreamed: "There we were,

binding sheaves in the field. Then behold, my sheaf arose and also stood upright; and indeed your sheaves stood all around and bowed down to my sheaf.” And his brothers said to him, “*Shall you indeed reign over us? Or shall you indeed have dominion over us?*” So they hated him even more for his dreams and for his words.

Then he dreamed still another dream and told it to his brothers, and said, “Look, I have dreamed another dream. And this time, the sun, the moon, and the eleven stars bowed down to me.” So he told it to his father and his brothers; and his father rebuked him and said to him, “*What is this dream that you have dreamed? Shall your mother and I and your brothers indeed come to bow down to the earth before you?*” And his brothers envied him, but his father kept the matter in mind. *Genesis 37:5-11*

And so one day while the brothers are away from home grazing the flock in a place called Shechem, concern for their wellbeing troubles Jacob’s mind. So father Jacob says to Joseph,

“Please go and see if it is well with your brothers and well with the flocks, and bring back word to me.” So he sent him out of the Valley of Hebron, and he went to Shechem. *Genesis 37:14*

As Joseph disappears over the rugged landscape, little does Jacob realise this is the last time he will see his beloved son for many long years.

Eventually Joseph finds his brothers in a place called Dothan for they have moved on from Shechem feeding the flock. From a distance the brothers catch sight of Joseph approaching, his coat of many colours dazzling in the sunlight. Once again envy flares in their hearts.

Now when they saw him afar off, even before he came near them, they conspired against him to kill him. Then they said to one another, “Look, this dreamer is coming! Come therefore, let us now kill him and cast him into some pit; and we shall say, ‘Some wild beast has devoured him.’ We shall see what will become of his dreams!”

But Reuben heard it, and he delivered him out of their hands, and said, “Let us not kill him.” And Reuben said to them, “*Shed no blood, but cast him into this pit which is in the wilderness, and do not lay a hand on him*”—that he might deliver him out of their hands, and bring him back to his father. So it came to pass, when Joseph had come to his brothers, that they stripped Joseph of his tunic, the tunic of many colors that was on him. Then they took him and cast him into a pit. And the pit was empty; there was no water in it. *Genesis 37:18- 24*

Ignoring Joseph's cries echoing from the pit, the brothers sit down to eat a meal, when looking up they see a dust trail swirling toward them. Very soon a company of Ishmaelite traders on their way down to Egypt meet the brothers. Conspiring together, the brothers decide to sell Joseph to the Ishmaelites. And so after a time of haggling a bargain is struck for twenty shekels of silver. Now to hide their guilt before their father, the brothers kill a goat and dip Joseph's coat in the animal's blood. Genesis 37: 28

Then they sent the tunic of many colors, and they brought it to their father and said, "We have found this. Do you know whether it is your son's tunic or not?" And he recognized it and said, "It is my son's tunic. A wild beast has devoured him. Without doubt Joseph is torn to pieces." Then Jacob tore his clothes, put sackcloth on his waist, and mourned for his son many days. Genesis 37: 32-34"

Father Jacob's deep grief at losing his precious son, washes over into our own souls. But now This Man turns our shared grief towards Joseph who is struggling to make any sense of his broken life.

"On the road to Egypt, Joseph watches the hills of home sink slowly below the horizon. Never will he roam there again. Separated from his father's love and the comforts of home at the tender age of seventeen Joseph's future looks very bleak indeed. Genesis 37: 2

Bound like a prisoner with no hope of escape his dreams of honour seem to only mock him every step of the way. But Joseph is not alone; God is near to turn the cruel conflict for good. For believe it or not Egypt is the very place where Joseph's dreams are destined to become a living reality.

And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. Romans 8:28

And so at last the weary Ishmaelites with Joseph in tow arrive in Egypt, the World Empire of the day. Passing through Egypt's spectacular wonders the traders lead Joseph to the slave market and like a piece of merchandise, Joseph is sold to Potiphar.

Now Joseph had been taken down to Egypt. And Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him from the Ishmaelites who had taken him down there.

The LORD was with Joseph, and he was a successful man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian. And his master saw that the LORD was with him and that the LORD made all he did to prosper in his hand So Joseph found favor in his sight, and served him. Then he made him overseer of his house, and all that he had he put

under his authority. Genesis 39:1-4

Amazingly, as a common slave Joseph is promoted to administrator and manager over all of Potiphar's household and property.

But Joseph's integrity is about to face temptation from an alluring source.

Now Joseph was handsome in form and appearance. And it came to pass after these things that his master's wife cast longing eyes on Joseph, and she said, "Lie with me." But he refused and said to his master's wife, "Look, my master does not know what is with me in the house, and he has committed all that he has to my hand. There is no one greater in this house than I, nor has he kept back anything from me but you, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" So it was, as she spoke to Joseph day by day, that he did not heed her, to lie with her or to be with her. Genesis 39:6-10

But one day while Joseph is alone in the house, Potiphar's wife tries to lie down with Joseph yet again and she catches hold of his tunic. Immediately Joseph flees from the scene but alas his tunic is pulled from his body. Scorned again and with Joseph's garment clutched in her hand Potiphar's wife sees an opportunity to frame Joseph with lies and cause his downfall.

And so she called to the men of her house and spoke to them, saying, "See, he has brought in to us a Hebrew to mock us. He came in to me to lie with me, and I cried out with a loud voice. And it happened, when he heard that I lifted my voice and cried out, that he left his garment with me, and fled and went outside." So she kept his garment with her until his master came home. Genesis 39:14-16

And to her husband she tells the same damning lie. With one stroke of reprisal Potiphar could easily put Joseph to death. But Potiphar is not really sure if his wife is speaking the truth and so his anger toward Joseph is tempered with a lesser degree of punishment saving Joseph's precious life.

So it was, when his master heard the words which his wife spoke to him, saying, "Your servant did to me after this manner," that his anger was aroused. Then Joseph's master took him and put him into the prison, a place where the king's prisoners were confined. And he was there in the prison. Genesis 39:19-20

Once again things have gone terribly wrong for Joseph and it seems as if his dreams of destiny shall never be realised. But once again God is working to return good for evil.

As Joseph is faithful to God, so God shall be faithful to Joseph.

But the LORD was with Joseph and showed him mercy, and He gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison. Genesis 39:21

Very soon Joseph is put in charge of all the prisoners.

And whatever he did, the LORD made it prosper. Genesis 39:23

Now as time passes the king's chief butler and chief baker are imprisoned under the suspicion that one of them attempted to harm the king's life.

And the captain of the guard charged Joseph with them, and he served them; so they were in custody for a while. Genesis 40:4

One day Joseph notices that the butler and baker are troubled and so he asks them, "Why are you troubled and downcast?" They tell Joseph that during the night each had a strange dream and they do not know what the dreams could possibly mean.

So Joseph said to them, "Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell them to me, please." Genesis 40:8

And so they tell Joseph their dreams and Joseph interprets their meaning. To the chief butler Joseph said in three days Pharaoh the king will restore you according to the former manner, when you were his butler. Genesis 40: 13

But to the chief baker Joseph said "Within three days Pharaoh will lift off your head from you and hang you on a tree; and the birds will eat your flesh from you." Genesis 40: 19

And so within three days all that Joseph said to the king's servants comes to pass. Now Joseph says to the chief butler

"...remember me when it is well with you, and please show kindness to me; make mention of me to Pharaoh, and get me out of this house. For indeed I was stolen away from the land of the Hebrews; and also I have done nothing here that they should put me into the dungeon." Genesis 40:14-15

But upon his release from prison the chief butler only forgets Joseph and so Joseph continues to languish in prison. Yet little does Joseph realise that one day the butler's forgotten dream shall become the key in God's hand to release Joseph from prison and to deliver him into a great destiny beyond anything he could ever imagine.

Meanwhile two long years pass by and in the outside world events are taking shape.

One morning there is quite a stir in the palace for during the night Pharaoh the king has also dreamed a strange dream and not knowing the dream's meaning, he too is troubled:

Now it came to pass in the morning that his spirit was troubled, and 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 for Pharaoh. Genesis 41:8

Hearing this news the chief butler remembers his own dream and how the meaning had come to pass just as Joseph interpreted. And so the butler informs the king that there is a Hebrew called Joseph in the king's prison who possesses Godly wisdom to interpret dreams. Joseph's hour of destiny is about to strike!

Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they brought him quickly out of the dungeon; and he shaved, changed his clothing, and came to Pharaoh.

And Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I have had a dream, and there is no one who can interpret it. But I have heard it said of you that you can understand a dream, to interpret it." So Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, "It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh an answer of peace." Genesis 41: 14- 16

With this the King tells his dream to Joseph.

Then Pharaoh said to Joseph: "Behold, in my dream I stood on the bank of the river. Suddenly seven cows came up out of the river, fine looking and fat; and they fed in the meadow. Then behold, seven other cows came up after them, poor and very ugly and gaunt, such ugliness as I have never seen in all the land of Egypt. And the gaunt and ugly cows ate up the first seven, the fat cows. When they had eaten them up, no one would have known that they had eaten them, for they were just as ugly as at the beginning. So I awoke. Also I saw in my dream, and suddenly seven heads came up on one stalk, full and good. Then behold, seven heads, withered, thin, and blighted by the east wind, sprang up after them. And the thin heads devoured the seven good heads. So I told this to the magicians, but there was no one who could explain it to me."

Then Joseph said to Pharaoh, "The dreams of Pharaoh are one; God has shown Pharaoh what He is about to do: The seven good cows are seven years, and the seven good heads are seven years; the dreams are one. And the seven thin and ugly cows which came up after them are seven years, and the seven empty heads blighted by the east wind are seven years of famine. This is the thing which I have spoken to Pharaoh. God has shown Pharaoh what He is about to do. Indeed seven years of great plenty will

come throughout all the land of Egypt; but after them seven years of famine will arise, and all the plenty will be forgotten in the land of Egypt; and the famine will deplete the land. So the plenty will not be known in the land because of the famine following, for it will be very severe. "And the dream was repeated to Pharaoh twice because the thing is established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass." Genesis 41:17-32

Then Joseph said to the king,

"Set over the land of Egypt a wise discerning man and give him assistant officers to collect one-fifth of all the grain harvested during the seven years of abundance." Genesis 41:34

Hence the gathered produce can be stored in storehouses so that when the seven years of famine come upon the land the people may come and buy grain for food.

So the advice was good in the eyes of Pharaoh and in the eyes of all his servants. And Pharaoh said to his servants, "Can we find such a one as this, a man in whom is the Spirit of God?" Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Inasmuch as God has shown you all this, there is no one as discerning and wise as you. "You shall be over my house, and all my people shall be ruled according to your word; only in regard to the throne will I be greater than you." And Pharaoh said to Joseph, "See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt." Then Pharaoh took his signet ring off his hand and put it on Joseph's hand; and he clothed him in garments of fine linen and put a gold chain around his neck. And he had him ride in the second chariot which he had; and they cried out before him, "Bow the knee!" So he set him over all the land of Egypt. Genesis 41:37- 43

Thus in one miraculous step Joseph goes from prisoner to governor over the world's empire."

At this amazing news we are stunned and spellbound and we see reflected in This Man's face the glory of God's good pleasure bestowed upon Joseph's faithful life. Now we are eager to find out what will happen next in Joseph's life. Or have we seen an end to Joseph's promised destiny? With an air of anticipation This Man turns a page in his ancient book and his voice unfolds yet another chapter flowing from Joseph's extraordinary life.

"And Pharaoh called Joseph's name Zaphnath-Paaneah. And he gave him as a wife Asenath, the daughter of Poti-Pherah priest of On. So Joseph went out over all the land of Egypt.

Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh king of Egypt. And

SEEDS OF HEALTH

When we set out to research sunlight and human health in 2019, this was the question we wanted to answer: How has human understanding about sunlight changed in the last 20 years?

You see, almost 20 years ago, writers in our lay ministry produced a series of healthy living books. Back then, we wrote about sunlight exposure for vitamin d3 production. We also wrote that too much sunlight and a high fat diet were suspected causes of skin cancer development. Do these still hold true and what else do we know in 2019?

Well, we confirmed that the Bible still holds these overarching truths:

- the sun was created for life on our world;
- sunlight is powerful for preventing disease and inactivating harmful bacteria;
- light is a symbol of the True Son, of purity and goodness.

There have also been changes in the past 20 years in human understanding of diet and sunlight, and also research about the health effects of man made chemicals and sunlight exposure. And as you would expect, even more understanding and research about vitamin d3. You can read more throughout this book.

But for now, let's pause and consider that big ball of warmth and light we call "sun". The sun is our lifeline. Your life, my life, the birds you hear singing at dawn, the insects' and animals' lives, the trees and plants which provide oxygen to breathe, timber to build shelters with, food to eat, beautiful flowers for the soul, and medicines to heal with. Almost all living organisms are dependent upon sunlight for life in one way or another. You could say we are consumers of light.

Without the sun, where would you be?

- Always in the dark and extremely cold.
- With a very limited survival.
- Most life forms would perish quickly.
- Species of microorganisms, harmless while kept dormant by sunlight, would suddenly flourish and dominate, and become harmful.

As you go to sleep at night, do you assume the sun will appear tomorrow to give you light? Of course you do. The sun gives us light in the morning until the

evening when darkness arrives. We take for granted that this will always be so. We have FAITH that the sun will give us light and varying degrees of warmth every day.

And now dear reader, take a step back. For the conclusion is this: the sun in the sky is of course, to give us an example of the True Light of life.

“I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.” John 8:12

Yes, the most healing effect of the sun, is the beautiful knowledge we have from the Bible that tells us Who created the sun!

You see, throughout much of human history, there have been humans who worship the sun. How interesting, and rather short-sighted to my way of thinking to worship something which is a creation. To me, the worship belongs to the Creator of the sun!

For after all, the Sun was placed in the sky by the Father’s power flowing through His Son, as the Son spoke this earthly light into existence! How beautiful!

Along the way, I learned something else too, call me slow if you like, but this was my discovery through a chance encounter with a 30 second video:

A meteor was seen streaking across the sky in the United States of America, and someone happened to have cameras on the outside of his house which captured the meteor passing. I expected to see a bright streak across the night sky. You see the night was dark, perfectly calm and clear. But I was surprised because suddenly, the night sky was a clear blue, as bright as day as the meteor passed over. Then, just as quickly, the night descended again.

What did I learn: Darkness, no matter how dark, does not replace light. Oh no. Darkness only conceals True Light for a short time.

Yes, dear friends, for those who believe that Jesus Christ is our Saviour and for those who also follow and keep the commandments that God so kindly gave us, darkness, however black, however evil, is only temporary. The True Light of our lives is always there for us, in our Bibles and in our hearts, so that we can be free indeed from darkness. And one day, not too far away, dear friends, if we are faithful, we can be free from darkness eternally.

“If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” John 8:31-32

Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh, and went throughout all the land of Egypt. Now in the seven plentiful years the ground brought forth abundantly. So he gathered up all the food of the seven years which were in the land of Egypt, and laid up the food in the cities; he laid up in every city the food of the fields which surrounded them. Joseph gathered very much grain, as the sand of the sea, until he stopped counting, for it was immeasurable. Genesis 41:45-49

And just as God foretold, the seven years of plenty come to an end and the seven year famine begins to spread over the sun parched lands.

The famine was over all the face of the earth, and Joseph opened all the storehouses and sold to the Egyptians. And the famine became severe in the land of Egypt. So all countries came to Joseph in Egypt to buy grain, because the famine was severe in all lands. Genesis 41:56-57

Now far away in the land of Canaan, Jacob and his sons are also suffering through the famine. Having depleted their food supplies Joseph's brothers' journey down to Egypt to buy grain.

And this is where Joseph's early dreams find their fulfillment in God's unfolding plan.

And the sons of Israel went to buy grain among those who journeyed, for the famine was in the land of Canaan. Now Joseph was governor over the land; and it was he who sold to all the people of the land. And Joseph's brothers came and bowed down before him with their faces to the earth. Genesis 42:5-6

A little startled, Joseph recognizes his brothers, but now he is a mature adult and dressed as a high ranking Egyptian, so his brothers do not recognise him.

As his brothers bow before him, suddenly like a flash from the past Joseph recalls his dream of destiny. But little do the brothers realise, that Joseph's dream is now a living reality in their lives.

And so over a period of time Joseph tests his brothers to see if they are truly sorry for their sinful past. When Joseph is satisfied his brothers have truly changed for the better and he can truly trust them, with overwhelming emotion Joseph reveals his hidden identity.

Then Joseph could not restrain himself before all those who stood by him, and he cried out, "Make everyone go out from me!" So no one stood with him while Joseph made himself known to his brothers. And he wept aloud, and the Egyptians and the

house of Pharaoh heard it. Then Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph; does my father still live?" But his brothers could not answer him, for they were dismayed in his presence. And Joseph said to his brothers, "Please come near to me." So they came near. Then he said: "I am Joseph your brother, whom you sold into Egypt. But now, do not therefore be grieved or angry with yourselves because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life. For these two years the famine has been in the land, and there are still five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvesting. And God sent me before you to preserve a posterity for you in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now it was not you who sent me here, but God; and He has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt. Hurry and go up to my father, and say to him, 'Thus says your son Joseph: "God has made me lord of all Egypt; come down to me, do not tarry. You shall dwell in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near to me, you and your children, your children's children, your flocks and your herds, and all that you have.'" " Genesis 45:1-10

Imagine Jacob's response of hearing that his favorite son is yet alive and soon they will be reuniting again! From that very moment, sorrow of heart is turned into overflowing joy praising God for His bountiful goodness.

So Israel took his journey with all that he had, and came to Beersheba, and offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac. Then God spoke to Israel in the visions of the night, and said, "Jacob, Jacob!" And he said, "Here I am." So He said, "I am God, the God of your father; do not fear to go down to Egypt, for I will make of you a great nation there Genesis 46:1-3

With abounding gratitude Jacob and his sons with all their wives, children, possessions and livestock journey down to Egypt and by Pharaoh's decree they dwell in the fertile land of Goshen, the best farming land in all Egypt.

Protected by Egypt's superpower might, Goshen is a secure place for God's people to grow into a great nation.

And there will be no interference from the Egyptians, for they consider farming livestock is for the lower caste and a lifestyle not to be associated with.

Now the growing multitude of people ascending from the 12 patriarchal families is known as the nation of Israel.

So Israel dwelt in the land of Egypt, in the country of Goshen; and they had possessions there and grew and multiplied exceedingly. And Jacob lived in the land of Egypt

*seventeen years. So the length of Jacob's life was one hundred and forty-seven years.
Genesis 47:27-28*

As Jacob nears the end of his life he gathers his 12 sons to his side and blesses them according to each tribe's future prosperity.

... And he blessed them; he blessed each one according to his own blessing. Genesis 49:28

Of the twelve sons and twelve tribes Judah is destined to carry forward the human genealogy giving birth to Jesus the Saviour of the world.

...the Lion of the tribe of Judah... Revelation 5:5

Thus accordingly, Jacob blesses Judah with these words:

Judah is a lion's whelp;

From the prey, my son, you have gone up.

He bows down; he lies down as a lion;

And as a lion, who shall rouse him?

The scepter shall not depart from Judah,

Nor a lawgiver from between his feet,

Until Shiloh comes;

And to Him shall be the obedience of the people. Genesis 49: 9-10