

# Potiphar's Wife said: Come to Bed with Me! But Joseph Ran Out of the House

## 39: 6b-18

**DIG:** What tactics does Potiphar's wife use to tempt Joseph? What did Joseph choose to do? What tactics does she use to seek revenge on Joseph? What **two** ways did Joseph foreshadow the life of Christ?

**REFLECT:** What can we learn from Joseph about the importance of a good attitude in every situation? What does he teach us about dealing with sexual sin?

Now Joseph was well built and handsome (39:6b), evidently having much of his mother's attractiveness (29:17b). A similar statement was also made much later that David had a fine appearance with handsome features (First Samuel 16:12b), but God wasn't impressed with handsome features. Saul looked like a king (First Samuel 9:1) and Absalom was known for his handsome appearance (Second Samuel 14:25), but the LORD rejected both because, as He said to the prophet Samuel: Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. ADONAI does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but ADONAI looks at the heart (First Samuel 16:7).

After a while his master's wife took notice of Yosef and she determined to have her way. She said: Come to bed with me (39:7)! The rabbis teach that Potiphar's wife had seen in her horoscope that she was destined to have a child by Joseph.

Although adultery was subject to severe legal penalties in Egypt, it apparently was often condoned and not uncommon. Though nothing is said explicitly to this effect, one gets the impression that this was not the first of his wife's amorous adventures. There is no indication that Yosef led her on in any way. However, as he became more and more important around the household, and more and more on his own, Joseph gradually became more and more attractive to this woman.<sup>595</sup>

But he refused. There was resolve in his answer. There was no hesitation. He knew right from wrong and told his master's wife, "With me in charge, my master does not concern himself with anything in the house; everything he owns he has entrusted to my care" (39:8). Potiphar totally trusted Joseph. He could have gotten away with it if he had wanted. **32. Both Joseph and Jesus were tempted, but did not sin, as opposed to Judah in the**

previous chapter. Yosef did not give in to Potiphar's wife and sin. Joseph was not tempted in Canaan by his brothers, but in Egypt, which is a Biblical symbol of the world. Likewise, Yeshua was not tempted by His brothers according to the flesh, which would be represented by the Jews, but by the Adversary, the prince of this world (John 12:31). Therefore, we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are - yet was without sin (Hebrews 4:15).

In rejecting her invitation, he tried not to offend her. He said: No one is greater in this house than I am. My master has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife (39:9a). He knew nobody else might know, but more importantly, God would know. The eyes of ADONAI are everywhere, keeping watch on the wicked and the good (Proverbs 15:3).

Yosef had thought about this in advance and had made a commitment to God. How could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God (39:9b)? Although Joseph feared Potiphar, he feared displeasing God even more. To him God came first. The lessons of the old home had not been forgotten in spite of all the treatment he had received. On the contrary, the way in which ADONAI had been with him and prospered him in his slavery was even more reason for loyalty and integrity. So because of his relationship with God, he faced temptation and held his ground.<sup>596</sup> But sin does not give up so easily.

Potiphar was an officer of Pharaoh, and would be away from home a great deal. He was probably away from home too much.<sup>597</sup> And although she spoke to Joseph day after day thinking that she could wear him down, he refused to go to bed with her or even be with her. He then deliberately and wisely sought to avoid her daily advances by refusing to even be around her. But nothing worked. One day he went into the house to attend to his duties, and none of the household servants was inside (39:10-11). Potiphar's wife seizes the opportunity and forces the issue with Yosef when they are alone.

She caught him by his cloak and probably tried to pull him down onto her bed. The word cloak appears about two hundred times in the TaNaKh. It appears that it could refer both to an outer garment (Second Kings 7:15) and an inner garment (Ezekiel 26:16).<sup>598</sup> The Hebrew consonants for cloak are *b-g-d*. The word is a homonym to the verb *b-g-d*, which means to deal treacherously in marriage relations. The human author may be employing a play on words to highlight the deceitfulness of the adultery of Potiphar's wife.<sup>599</sup>

**She begged: Come to bed with me! But unwilling to yield to her, he wiggled his way out and left his cloak in her hand as he ran out of the house half-clothed (39:12).** Sometimes it is not enough to be committed and to desire to do what is right. Sometimes we simply have to avoid putting ourselves at risk. When in doubt, just walk (or run) away.<sup>600</sup> **Flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart (Second Timothy 2:22).** At that point, her lust suddenly turned to rage. No one turned her down . . . let alone a slave! Who does he think he is, anyway? **She was humiliated and she could only think of revenge. She may not have had Joseph, but she had his cloak!**

**When she saw that he had left his cloak in her hand and had run out of the house, she called to her household servants. She would use his own clothing against him, claiming attempted rape. Trying to get the servants on her side, she sarcastically blamed her husband for her supposed distress when she said: Look, this Hebrew has been brought to us to make sport of us! He came in here to rape me, but I screamed. When he heard me scream for help, he left his cloak beside me and ran out of the house (39:13-15).** There is no response from the servants. Over the years they had come to know that Joseph was a man of integrity, and they knew her only too well. But they were hardly in a position to challenge her.

*This was the second time Joseph's clothing was used to bring a false report about him (37:31-33). In both cases he had been serving faithfully. But also in both cases, Joseph ended up in bondage.<sup>601</sup>*

**She kept his cloak beside her until his master came home (39:16). She would not let the evidence out of her sight because she had to lie to her husband when he arrived home. Then she proceeded to tell him the same lies that she had told the household servants. But even he does not escape her blame. How could he bring that slave into the household and give him such authority and freedom that he would try to take advantage of his own faithful, long-suffering wife!<sup>602</sup> She was a liar. Later, Yeshua would say to those like her: You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies (John 8:44).**

**Then she told him the lie: That Hebrew slave you bought us, came to me to mock or make sport of me.** Notice the change in wording. Earlier, she referred to Joseph merely as a Hebrew, now she calls him a Hebrew slave. Also, when talking to her household servants, she used us, now before her husband she uses me. She tried to get under his skin with her

**lies.** But as soon as I screamed for help, he left his cloak beside me and ran out of the house (39:17-18). **33. Both Joseph and Jesus were falsely accused. Potiphar's wife made up a lie to condemn Joseph, and so did those who accused Christ.** The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for false evidence against Jesus so that they could put him to death. But they did not find any, though many false witnesses came forward (Matthew 26:59-60a).

Poor old **Potiphar** was between a rock and a hard place. The more things change, the more they stay the same; a beautiful, lonely **wife** with a husband that probably spends too much time at work. **He** probably didn't believe **her**, but **he** knew **he** had to do *something* for appearance's sake.