

-Save This Page as a PDF-

While Joseph was in Prison the LORD was with Him, and Granted Him Favor with the Prison Warden

39: 19-23

While Joseph was in Prison the LORD was with him, and granted him favor with the prison warden. DIG: How is the sovereignty of God seen in the story of Joseph? Does Potiphar buy his wife's story? If so, why doesn't Joseph receive the death penalty? What was the basis of Joseph's good fortune in prison? What was the turning point there? What four ways did Joseph foreshadow the life of Christ?

REFLECT: How does God's showing His grace in bad situations motivate you to remain faithful to Him? How does God's promise of His presence motivate you to remain faithful? Can you reflect on a time when looking back, you realized that the Lord had protected you? How does that affect your faith? Joseph could have turned the hurts in his life into bitterness, but he found healing instead. What made all the difference for him? What makes all the difference for you?

When Joseph's master heard the story his wife told him, saying, "This is how your slave treated me," Potifar burned with anger, although part of him suspected that she was lying (39:19). *Notice it does not say he burned with anger against Joseph.* Potiphar knew Joseph and his wife too well to really believe that he had heard the whole story. Potiphar probably burned with anger at his wife because this wasn't the first time he suspected something like this and because he realized that he was going to lose a trusted slave. But more than anything, he realized he would lose the services of one who had been extremely profitable for him. Nevertheless, for appearance's sake, he had to do something.

34. Neither Joseph nor Jesus said a word to defend themselves. In Chapter 37 we noticed Joseph's passive submission to wrong done to him by his heartless brothers. So here, when he is falsely accused by Potiphar's wife, not a word of appeal is made, nor is there any murmuring against the cruel injustice done to him as he was about to be cast into prison. When he was hated, like our Savior, he did not hate back. How this reminds us of what the prophet Isaiah wrote: He was

oppressed and afflicted, yet He did not open His mouth; He was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so He did not open His mouth (Isaiah 53:7). There are eighty ways that the life of **Joseph** would prepare the Jews for the coming of **Jesus Christ** (see the commentary on **Genesis [Iw](#) - The Written Account of the Generations of Jacobs**).

If **Potiphar** had believed **his wife** and was truly angry with **him**, **Joseph** would have been executed on the spot, no questions asked. In contrast, **the king's prison** was a place for political prisoners and would hardly have been expected to accommodate foreign slaves guilty of crimes against their masters. **Potiphar** was in a difficult position. **He** could not ignore **his wife's** accusation without publicly humiliating **her** and **himself** even if **he** were certain **she** was lying. The action **he** took against **Joseph** spoke volumes and *was as minimal as it could have been and still retain the family's honor.*⁶⁰⁴

Joseph's master took him and put him in prison, the place where the king's prisoners were confined (39:20a). 35. For the sake of appearances, both Joseph and Jesus were cast into prison (First Peter 3:18-19). It is evident that Potiphar did not believe the accusation of his wife against Yosef. This couldn't have been the only time her low character became obvious. Potiphar had probably suspected this many times before. Besides, if he really believed her, the chief executioner would have immediately put his Hebrew slave to death. How striking is the parallel between the acts of Potiphar and Pilate! He, too, did not believe in the guilt of our Lord. He said: I find no fault in Him (John 18:38 KJV). He knew the low character of those who accused the Savior. But, as an officer of the Roman Empire who had been accused of rebelling against Cesar (John 19:12), for political expediency and for the sake of appearances, he passed judgment on Him.

36. Both innocent, Yosef and Yeshua suffered severely at the hands of the Gentiles. Not only was Joseph envied and hated by his own brothers, and sold by them into the hands of the Gentiles, but he was also treated unfairly by the Gentiles and unjustly sent to prison. Initially, they bruised his feet with shackles and his neck was put in irons (Psalm 105:18). But God was with him and Joseph's response to this torture softened the heart of the prison warden. Thus, God rescued him from all his troubles (Acts 7:9b-10a). And Jesus also suffered severely. Now as Yeshua was going up to Yerushalayim, He took the twelve apostles aside and said to them: **We are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn Him to death and will turn Him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified. On the third day He will be**

raised to life (Matthew 20:17-19).

Joseph's life had hit rock bottom. One moment **he** was the trusted servant to the head of the prison guards, and the next moment **he** was an inmate in that same prison - all through the lies of **his mater's wife**. **He** sat in the darkness **in irons**, crushed, in the darkest hour of **his** life. **He** was in a living hell. After ten years in a foreign land **he** was in prison without a friend in the world. **He** lifted **his** eyes to a **God he** could not see and cries out, "Why?" **He** tries to adjust the shackles on **his** feet so they do not cut **him** when **he** moves. **He** feels the iron yoke around **his** neck. The darkness hid the tears that were running down **his** face, and **he** began to review **his** life. How did I ever get to this black hole? Have you ever asked yourself that question? How did I get in this mess? Years of constant heartache. Years of one failure after another. You cry out, "**God**, where are **You**?"

At some point in your life you will have a similar experience as **Joseph in prison**. If you haven't been there, one day you're going to go there. It will be the darkest moment in your life. It may be the day your divorce is finalized. It may have been the day you buried your precious child. It may be the day that your teenage daughter comes to you with the news that she is pregnant. It may have been the day your son was sent to prison, never to come home again. It may be the day you discover that your spouse is cheating on you.

On that day you need to remember that champions are never chosen from the ranks of the unscarred. **Joseph** died with scars around **his** legs and neck. **Jesus** died with the scars of **His** flogging and the cross. Paul had scars on his back from the Roman whip. And in this life, you will have scars. No one gets to heaven without scars because you will have trouble in this life. But it doesn't mean that **God** does not love you; it means you are a human being. Trouble strengthens you, it teaches you, and it reminds you that you need **His** help.

ADONAI says to you: **Call to Me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know (Jeremiah 33:3).** Call to God because **He** is **ADONAI Shamah (Ezekiel 48:35)**, or **the LORD who is there**. **He's** there in the pit, **He's** there in the **prison**, **He's** there when you pray, and **He's** there when you feel all alone and forgotten. It is then that you will hear a gentle whisper saying: **I will never leave you or forsake you (Heb 13:5).** King Solomon said: **I called on your name, God, from the depths of the pit; You heard my plea, "Do not close your ears to my cry for relief." You came near when I called You and You said, "Do not fear" (Lam 3:55-57).**⁶⁰⁵ And in **his** darkest hour, **Yosef** called upon the **Rock of Isra'el (49:24)** and **God was with him**.

***Joseph** could have been consumed by the way **he** had been treated, first by **his** brothers,*

and then by **Potiphar's wife**. **He** could have sulked. The hurts could have festered in **his** heart until **he** became bitter. Instead, **Joseph** found healing. **He** saw beyond **his** scars and allowed **God** to bless and prosper **him**.⁶⁰⁶ We are not told precisely at what point it dawned on **Joseph** that **God** had sent **him** on ahead of **his** family to save them; but to give **him** hope, it could have possibly happened here at **his** lowest point when **he** was in prison and humanly speaking, had no chance of release.

37. Both Joseph and Jesus won the respect of their jailers, but while Yosef was there in the prison, ADONAI was with him; He showed him kindness and granted him favor in the eyes of the prison warden (39:20b-21). And even the Roman centurion, the one who was in charge of the crucifixion of the Savior said: Surely this was a righteous man (Luke 23:47b).



The final paragraph (**39:20b-23**) creates a perfect symmetry for this chapter. Each phrase matches almost perfectly with a corresponding phrase in the opening paragraph (**39:1-6a**). Once again the narrator states: **ADONAI was with him** while **he** was **in prison**, just as **He** had been **with him** in **Potiphar's house (39:2)**. **Joseph found favor in the eyes of the prison warden**, just as **He** had **with Potiphar**. **The prison warden put Joseph in charge of** everything that went on **there**, just as **Potiphar** had placed **Yosef in charge of his** entire **household (39:4)**. **God** blessed **Joseph's** work and made everything **he** did **in the prison** prosper, just as **He** had done earlier when **Joseph** was in **Potiphar's household (39:5)**. This symmetry illustrates that **the LORD** was in control of every aspect of **Joseph's** life.⁶⁰⁷

Without argument, the story of **Joseph** is one of the clearest accounts of the sovereignty of **God** found anywhere in the Bible. It is not a systematic theology of that doctrine. Instead, it is more powerful because we see how the hand of the sovereign **God** was evident in a real human life. There **in prison, ADONAI, the LORD of mercy, showed him kindness**. *Mercy or kindness* in Hebrew is *hesed* and bears quite a complex meaning. It generally means *faithfulness and steadfast love in a relationship*. But it also specifically refers to the superior

party in the relationship *and the protection offered to the inferior party* (see my commentary on **Ruth**, to see link click [Af](#) - **The Concept of Chesed**). In other words, **the LORD was protecting Joseph. So, the warden put Yosef in charge of all those held in the prison, and he was made responsible for all that was done there (39:22). The warden** would never do that if he was a rebel with a bad attitude; **he** totally trusted **Joseph**.

The warden paid no attention to anything under Joseph's care, because ADONAI was with Joseph and gave him success in whatever he did (39:23). Again, not unlike **Potiphar's** household, **the prison** was blessed because of **Joseph** and **Joseph** was blessed because of **God**. Corrie Ten Boom, author and survivor of the infamous Ravensbruck Concentration Camp, said, "There is no pit so deep enough, that **God** is not deeper still."⁶⁰⁸ **Yosef** would certainly have agreed with that because **God** was the source of **his** success. But was it **His** will that **Joseph** be in **prison**? Well, it was really necessary that he be there, as we'll see in the next file.