

Joseph

Genesis 37:1-50:26

Period of Bible history

Patriarchs. This period is the beginning of Hebrew history and includes the call of Abraham and history of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph.

Major Events

- Joseph's dreams (37:1-11)
- Joseph sold into slavery (37:12-36)
- Joseph and Potiphar (39:1-23)
- Interpreting dreams (40:1-41:36)
- Joseph and his brothers reunited (45:1-14)
- Joseph's family in Egypt (46:1-4)

Important Individuals

- Jacob: Also called Israel, he is the son of Isaac and father of the 12 tribes of Israel.
- Joseph: The eleventh son of Jacob, through Joseph God led the Israelites into Egypt.
- Reuben: Oldest son of Jacob. When the brothers jealousy threaten Joseph's life, Reuben convinces the brothers not to kill him.
- Judah: Leads the brothers to profit from Joseph by selling him into slavery.
- Potiphar: An officer of Pharaoh of Egypt. Joseph serves in Potiphar's house.
- Potiphar's wife: Little is known about her other than her attempt to seduce Joseph and her lies about him that lead him into prison.
- Two prisoners: In prison Joseph meets Pharaoh's former cupbearer and former baker. He interprets dreams from each of them. The cupbearer later contributes to Joseph's freedom.
- Pharaoh: Ruler of Egypt, he elevates Joseph to a position of great power. The Pharaoh at that time was probably Sesostris II who reigned from 1897-1878 BC. The years of famine probably took place under Sesostris III, 1878-1843 BC. Historical events during the reign of these Pharaohs correspond well with what the Bible describes taking place during the years of plenty and the years of famine.

Covenants

There are no new covenants in this section. Instead we see the early stages of the fulfillment of what God told Abraham would take place. In Genesis 15:12-16 God told Abraham that before the covenant promise of the land of Israel was fulfilled the people would for four hundred years be sojourners in a land not theirs but would be delivered to the promised land at the end of that time. Through Joseph God leads the people into Egypt.

Outline of Genesis 37:1-50:26

- I. Joseph and his brothers (37:1-36)
 - A. Joseph dreams that he will have authority over his family (37:1-11)
 - B. Joseph kidnapped and sold into slavery by his brothers (37:12-36)
- II. Judah and Tamar (38:1-30)
 - A. Judah neglects his responsibility to his daughter-in-law Tamar (38:1-11)
 - B. Tamar tricks Judah into thinking she is a prostitute (38:12-23)
 - C. Tamar shames Judah (38:24-30)
- III. Joseph in slavery (39:1-23)
 - A. Joseph serves in Potiphar's house (39:1-6a)
 - B. Potiphar's wife attempts to seduce Joseph (39:6b-10)
 - C. Joseph is lied about and thrown into prison (39:11-23)
- IV. Joseph in prison (40:1-41:36)
 - A. Joseph interprets the dreams of the baker and the cupbearer (40:1-23)
 - B. Joseph interprets the dreams of Pharaoh (41:1-36)
- V. Joseph established as a leader in Egypt (41:37-57)
- VI. Joseph and his brothers reunited (42:1-45:28)
 - A. Joseph's brothers go to Egypt to find food (42:1-5)
 - B. Joseph negotiates with his brothers, giving them food but keeping Simeon as prisoner unless the brothers return with Benjamin (42:6-38)
 - C. The brothers delay but famine forces them back to Egypt with Benjamin (43:1-34)
 - D. Joseph tests his brothers and finally reveals himself (44:1-45:28)
- VII. The Israelites in Egypt (46:1-47:12)
 - A. Once Jacob learns of Joseph's position he and all his family go to Egypt (46:1-34)
 - B. Jacob and the rest of the Israelites settle in the region of Goshen, in Egypt but separate from them (47:1-12)
- VIII. Expanding Pharaoh's control (47:13-26)
- IX. Jacob's death (47:27-50:14)
 - A. Jacob instructs his sons to bury him in Canaan (47:27-31)
 - B. Jacob blesses Joseph's sons, focusing on the younger son Ephraim (48:1-22)
 - C. Jacob blesses all his sons (49:1-27)
 - D. Jacob's death and burial (49:28-50:14)
- X. Joseph reassures his brothers (50:15-21)
 - A. 50:19-20 contains an amazing verse showing God's authority even over sin, evil, and famine, using these to bring about his will: *But Joseph said to them, "Do not fear, for am I in the place of God? As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.*
- XI. Joseph's death (50:22-26)