

A Kairos Moment

Genesis 37

INTRODUCTION: When studying the Bible, we must be aware of what theologians call the **Law of Proportions** - that is, we are to assume that **greater space equals greater thematic importance** to the overall biblical narrative.

With that in mind, consider that 14 full chapters, Genesis 37–50, are dedicated to the life of one man - Joseph. That's roughly 25–30% of the entire book.

John Phillips points out that God used only three words to create the stars. Two words in Hebrew, three in English.

Genesis 1:16 (ESV)

¹⁶ And God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—**and the stars.**

Now, consider the sheer power required to, as Moses puts it, “**make the stars.**”

The Sun releases: 3.8×10^{26} watts of power every second. The Sun produces over 10 trillion times more power than all of humanity combined. In one second, the Sun releases more energy than humanity has used in our entire history.

And the Universe is filled with such stars! Yet when it came to the significance of the creation of all of those stars, God gave two words in Hebrew and three in English. Joseph receives 14 chapters.

Thus, Phillips deduces through the law of proportion that God ***is more interested in making Saints than He is in making stars.*** And if there is any saint that God was personally vested in making it was this man, Joseph.

The Study of Joseph is Important for a Number of Reasons:

1. National Importance for Israel

Remember this book is written by Moses as the human author during the 40 years of wilderness wanderings. The Israelites, as slaves in Egypt, did not really know who they were or how they got there. This narrative reveals they are descendants of Jacob, providentially delivered through Joseph. Having grown from 70 souls to approximately 2 million in the span of 400 years.

2. Christological Importance

John Phillips suggests that Joseph is the most Christlike man in the entire OT.

Arthur Pink cites 101 parallels between Jesus and Joseph. We will say more about that in a moment.

3. Moral Importance — Joseph is a Model of Godliness at Every Stage of Life

- As a 17-year-old, Joseph is one of the youngest holy men in Scripture.
- As a godly young single, he flees moral temptation (Potiphar's wife). The command 'flee youthful lusts' derives directly from Joseph's example.
- As a businessman — faithful steward in Potiphar's house.
- As an administrator — faithful under Pharaoh, second in the entire kingdom.
- As a dying man, he refuses burial in Egypt, trusting God to take him home. He is buried in Canaan after the Exodus.

He is faithful as a shepherd, faithful as a steward, faithful as a prisoner, and faithful under Pharaoh. At every stage, Joseph is a man worth following.

CONTEXT: Remember the last time we were together, Jacob had settled with his family in the land of Canaan. He was the father of 12 sons and 1 daughter. God has reaffirmed His covenant with Jacob and given him a new name, Israel. These 12 sons would become the 12 tribes of Israel.

- Genesis 35:16-27 Rachel dies in childbirth as she gives birth to Benjamin.
- Genesis 35:28-29 Isaac dies at 180 years of age.
- Genesis 36, we have a genealogy of Esau's descendants, the Edomites.
- Then, in Genesis 37, we are introduced to Joseph, the son of Rachel.

Seventeen years have passed since the birth and naming of Joseph in Chapter 30. No special reference has been made to him from that moment to this, except for the genealogical note in 35:24. His life has been relatively obscure until this point. ***Now the time of Joseph has come; God will move him from obscurity to prominence.***

There are two GREEK words translated as TIME in the Bible - one is **Chronos**, which means a sequence of moments. The other is **Kairos**, which means a season of time or opportunity - this word is used 86 times in the NT.

When Jesus told Mary, "My time has not yet come," he used the Greek word **Kairos**. It does not refer to a time on the clock, but a moment in history.

How do you know when you are in a Kairos moment? Well, three things tend to align, and we see all three in Genesis 37.

1. Providential Favor

The word Providence is made up of a compound word - pro - video, meaning to see ahead. It means more than to simply look into the future. Providence means God sees the future in the same sense that He sees the now. In other words, God is just as much

in charge of the future as He is of the present. He is governing then just as He is governing now.

That's important to recognize from the beginning of this section, because you see - God is hidden through much of this portion of Genesis.

The key verse in this storyline of Joseph is Genesis 50:20 (ESV)

²⁰ 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.

In other words, everything we observe in the life of Joseph is more significant than Joseph. Every trial, every difficulty, every attack - though they were meant for evil against him personally... behind the scenes, God was working to bring about a plan that would be VERY GOOD for untold thousands of people.

That being said, look with me at

TEXT: Genesis 37:1–36 (ESV)

¹ Jacob lived in the land of his father's sojournings, in the land of Canaan. ² These are the generations of Jacob. Joseph, being seventeen years old, was pasturing the flock with his brothers. He was a boy with the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah, his father's wives. And Joseph brought a bad report of them to their father.

The scripture introduces Joseph as Joseph the Whistle Blower. That is significant; the bad report he brings to Jacob will cause him to grow in his father's esteem, but his brothers will only hate him more.

³ Now Israel loved Joseph more than any other of his sons, because he was the son of his old age. And he made him a robe of many colors.

Now, remember that Joseph was the son of Rachel, Jacob's favorite bride. As such, he seems to have been given some authority over his brothers.

- **Reuben** was the true firstborn and should have been the family's Patriarch. We didn't deal with it explicitly, but chapter 35 records Reuben's attempt to secure his leadership of the family by sleeping with his father's concubine. When Jacob heard of it, he was outraged. Reuben was not allowed leadership in the family.
- **Simeon and Levi** couldn't lead because of the disgraceful slaughter of the Shechemites in chapter 34.
- Technically, **Judah** should have come next in birthright as the fourth-born. But he doesn't receive the birthright from Jacob; Joseph, the eleventh-born, receives it according to 1 Chronicles 5:1-2. Judah would receive the scepter, but Joseph the blessing. Why? Because he was the son of Rachel, the beloved wife.

Now, this wasn't Joseph's choice, this certainly wasn't Joseph's fault - but through the Providence of God, Joseph was the favored son. The sign of favor is in verse 3.

³ Now Israel loved Joseph more than any other of his sons, because he was the son of his old age. ***And he made him a robe of many colors.***

The sign of Joseph's authority was this multicolored Tunic.

It wasn't Joseph's fault that he was favored by Jacob; it wasn't Joseph's fault that he was given the multicolored tunic, but it was Joseph's fault that he wore it. Perhaps Joseph was oblivious to the fact that this would stoke the jealousy of the brothers, or perhaps Joseph didn't care.

Solomon the wise warns us that **Proverbs 27:4 (ESV)** ⁴ Wrath is cruel, anger is overwhelming, but who can stand before jealousy?

Anger is dangerous, but it's typically short-lived; it cools. Not so with jealousy. Jealousy grows; it becomes a lens through which one sees the world. It is cold, calculated, and sustained - it compares, fixates, and plots.

⁴ But when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him and could not speak peacefully to him.

Providential favor is a sign that you may be stepping into a Kairos moment. Providential favor may include:

- Increased Responsibility
- Internal Clarity or Calling
- Shift from Obscurity to Prominence

How do you know when you are in a Kairos moment? Providential Favor...

2. Prophetic Alignment

Joseph has two revelatory dreams. Both indicate that he will somehow be placed into a position of authority.

• Dream 1: The Sheaves

⁵ Now Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers they hated him even more. ⁶ He said to them, "Hear this dream that I have dreamed: ⁷ Behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and behold, my sheaf arose and stood upright. And behold, your sheaves gathered around it and bowed down to my sheaf." ⁸ His brothers said to him, "Are you indeed to reign over us? Or are you indeed to rule over us?" So they hated him even more for his dreams and for his words.

Notice how the brothers interpret the dream immediately — and correctly. There is no ambiguity. Joseph's sheaf rises; theirs bow. The meaning is unmistakable, and it infuriates them. But what they fail to see is that this dream is not Joseph's ambition speaking — it is God's agenda being revealed.

• Dream 2: The Stars

⁹ Then he dreamed another dream and told it to his brothers and said, “Behold, I have dreamed another dream. Behold, the sun, the moon, and eleven stars were bowing down to me.” ¹⁰ But when he told it to his father and to his brothers, his father rebuked him and said to him, “What is this dream that you have dreamed? Shall I and your mother and your brothers indeed come to bow ourselves to the ground before you?” ¹¹ And his brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the saying in mind.

The second dream expands the scope. Now it is not merely sheaves — symbols of labor and provision — but the sun, moon, and stars: the entire created order bowing before Joseph.

I wonder if there have been prophetic words spoken over your life? I know I’m a Baptist and God doesn’t normally speak to Baptists, but it has been my observation that God tips his hand from time to time.

That’s one of the reasons you need to have your family in Church. Maybe it’s a little old lady who smiles and says something to your daughter. Or a man who speaks a word into the life of your son. But God tends to speak to the church through the church.

ILLUSTRATION: When I was called into the ministry, I called my parents to tell them that I was leaving my chosen career path and following God’s call into a life of ministry. Keep in mind, no one in my family had done that, and I really didn’t know what it meant. Nevertheless, I heard the call. I called my parents that evening and told them. Dad told me that God spoke to him when I was only 9 months old.

I wonder if God has spoken a word over your life? Can I say something gently? Perhaps he had, and you weren’t in church that day. Just a thought...

How do you know when you are in a Kairos moment? Providential Favor, Prophetic Alignment...

3. Persecution Increases

¹² Now his brothers went to pasture their father’s flock near Shechem. ¹³ And Israel said to Joseph, “Are not your brothers pasturing the flock at Shechem? Come, I will send you to them.” And he said to him, “Here I am.” ¹⁴ So he said to him, “Go now, see if it is well with your brothers and with the flock, and bring me word.” So he sent him from the Valley of Hebron, and he came to Shechem.

Joseph gets to Shechem, and they weren’t there. A man tells Joseph they’ve gone to Dothan, nearly 60 miles away.

17b. So Joseph went after his brothers and found them at Dothan.

18 They saw him from afar, and before he came near to them they conspired against him to kill him.

How did they recognize him at a distance? The coat. That multicolored tunic, visible across the open terrain, marked him like a target. The very symbol of his father's love became the thing that identified him for destruction.

19 They said to one another, "Here comes this dreamer. 20 Come now, let us kill him and throw him into one of the pits. Then we will say that a fierce animal has devoured him, and we will see what will become of his dreams."

Notice their words: "*Here comes this dreamer.*" In Hebrew, the phrase is literally, it's "the master of dreams." They mock the very thing God gave him. Do you hear the arrogance? ***They think they can murder the man and thereby murder God's plan.*** They think a pit in the ground can cancel a prophecy from heaven.

21 But when Reuben heard it, he rescued him out of their hands, saying, "Let us not take his life." 22 And Reuben said to them, "Shed no blood; throw him into this pit here in the wilderness, but do not lay a hand on him"—that he might rescue him out of their hand to restore him to his father. 23 So when Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped him of his robe, the robe of many colors that he wore. 24 And they took him and threw him into a pit. The pit was empty; there was no water in it.

The word "**stripped**" in the Hebrew means to skin an animal — the robe was violently ripped from him. They didn't just remove his coat; they tore his identity from his body. And the word "**threw**" is not a generic term; it is the word used for dumping a dead body into a grave. When used of a living person, it means to abandon someone to death.

25 Then they sat down to eat.

Let that sink in. Their seventeen-year-old brother is screaming in a hole in the ground — we know he was screaming because **Genesis 42:21** reveals that the brothers later confessed, "We saw the distress of his soul, when he begged us and we did not listen." He was crying out, pleading with them. The casualness of their cruelty is staggering.

25b. And looking up they saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead, with their camels bearing gum, balm, and myrrh, on their way to carry it down to Egypt. 26 Then Judah said to his brothers, "What profit is it if we kill our brother and conceal his blood? 27 Come, let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him, for he is our brother, our own flesh." And his brothers listened to him.

And then Judah speaks up. Now, you might think Judah is the hero of this moment. He says, "Let's not kill him." But listen to his reasoning: "What *profit* is it if we kill our brother?" Profit. Judah is doing math. He's not moved by conscience; he's motivated

by commerce. “We can make money off this boy.” And so they sell their own brother — the son of their father — for twenty shekels of silver. That’s the price of a slave. That’s what Joseph was worth to them.

28 Then Midianite traders passed by. And they drew Joseph up and lifted him out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty shekels of silver. They took Joseph to Egypt. 29 When Reuben returned to the pit and saw that Joseph was not in the pit, he tore his clothes 30 and returned to his brothers and said, “The boy is gone, and I, where shall I go?”

31 Then they took Joseph’s robe and slaughtered a goat and dipped the robe in the blood. 32 And they sent the robe of many colors and brought it to their father and said, “This we have found; please identify whether it is your son’s robe or not.” 33 And he identified it and said, “It is my son’s robe. A fierce animal has devoured him. Joseph is without doubt torn to pieces.” 34 Then Jacob tore his garments and put sackcloth on his loins and mourned for his son many days.

The irony here is strong. Jacob — whose very name means *deceiver* — is now on the receiving end of a deception. And notice the instrument: a slaughtered goat and a garment dipped in blood. Do you remember how Jacob deceived his own father? He put goat skins on his arms and wore Esau’s garments to trick blind Isaac. Now his own sons use a goat’s blood on a garment to trick him. The sin of the father has come home.

35 All his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted and said, “No, I shall go down to Sheol to my son, mourning.” Thus his father wept for him.

And then the narrator gives us one last, quiet line:

36 Meanwhile the Midianites had sold him in Egypt to Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the guard.

While Jacob weeps, while the brothers lie, God is already at work. Joseph is exactly where he needs to be. The persecution was real, but Providence was never absent, and the Prophecy was still coming to pass as God promised.

I’ve been a believer for almost as many years as I’ve been a preacher, and I have observed something - God’s blessings are almost always preceded by persecution.

ILLUSTRATION: In 2 Samuel 16:11, a descendant of Saul named Shimei comes out to curse and mock David. Abishai offers to cut his head off for cursing God’s anointed. David says, “No, don’t do that, let him curse.” Abishai asks why. David answers, “ Well, for one thing, all of these bad things he is saying may be correct. David wasn’t defensive, but another thing he pointed out was that God may hear him and bless me as a result. Cursing almost always precedes blessing.

Are you in a Kairos moment? Where is the place where God has Sovereignly placed you for such a time as this? Does it align with words spoken over you? Are you feeling the heat of persecution? If so you are in good company - Joseph has been there and, by the way, Jesus has been there.

CONCLUSION/INVITATION:

You see, through all of this, Joseph was being turned — involuntarily — into the savior of one human family. But Jesus came voluntarily to be the Savior of us all.

The pit Jesus fell into was vastly deeper. His cry was vastly greater. His nakedness and sense of abandonment went infinitely beyond anything Joseph experienced.

Here is the One who lost the Father's coat, so you can be assured you have it.
Here is the One who lost the Father's love — paying our penalty — so we could know, in spite of our imperfect lives, that God loves us.
When I ask God to accept me because of what Jesus has done, I get the coat. I know He loves me.

Jesus — the ultimate Joseph — came to His own, and His own received Him not. Sold for silver. Stripped naked. Crying out in the dark. Lost — so we could be saved.

Christianity is the only religion that even claims that God has suffered — that God has gone into that pit — that God is there in the dark beside you. He knows what it is like.

Are you starting to understand? Is God calling you? I wonder if you are in a Kairos moment right now.