

CHAPTER X

Joseph

Gen. 37 to 50

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Hints to Bible Study

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Every youth should be familiar with the history of Joseph. King Midas had conferred on him the power of transforming everything he touched into gold; but had this gift not been changed, Joseph would have starved. In the modern Midas do we not behold the shrinkage of the soul, it being unfed? How much more desirable the gift of Joseph, the power to transform every event of life into good. What so easily could have been evil in the life of another, he turns into stepping stones and mounts upon them to a position of great power, saving the nations about him, and feeding them through the years of a great famine. "Perfect adjustment to our environment would be eternal life;" as long as human life exists, the story of Joseph will stand out as the symbol of direct purposefulness.

With the perspective that history gives us, how easily we read the intents of the Creator, and all His guidance of man. Here is a family grown from a great ancestor, Abraham, the product of a great civilization. Another powerful contemporaneous civilization exists; this too must be in the consciousness of a race who can transmit to succeeding generations what is in its consciousness. So this family must be transported to Egypt, and Joseph is the bridge over which they must be safely carried.

Joseph has the inheritance that every child has a right to have; he is the son of a woman whom his father loved. Early in life he develops the power of imagination, thus imaging a great life. It is just as easy to image a great life as it is a small one, and it is far more interesting. Joseph is a dreamer, i.e., he thinks visions, images. It is Whitcomb Riley who says,

"The dreamer lives forever,
But the toiler dies in a day."

It is the mind that we put into our lives which makes them, and those who use their thoughts in this definite, constructive way, are, in the language of the Bible, Dreamers of Dreams.

Until French soldiers, who were digging at the mouth of the Nile, discovered the Rosetta stone, which enabled us to read the hieroglyphics of Egypt, this story of Joseph seemed most improbable. How could a foreign-born youth, one of an alien race, enter into the land of the proud Pharaohs and so quickly ascend to political heights? The stories of this great Book are amply verified. The characters of

Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph are too valuable to reduce to mythology. We are reading Egyptian history now and we read that the Hyksos or Shepherd Kings conquered Egypt and reigned for several hundred years. These kings were of Asiatic origin and would gladly place one of the Semitic race in a position of power provided he had the fitness. It requires extraordinary ability to rule a conquered people in their own territory, and the prime minister is the real ruler, so we know that Joseph was a great statesman.

Joseph's brethren were jealous of him. His father had given him a coat of Oriental embroidery; and this favored lad of his father dreams his dreams of future greatness, and with youth's indiscretion tells about it. They will be rid of him, so he is sold into slavery and deported into Egypt. Does he waste time or energy in resentment or self pity? Not he; that is no way out of the dilemma. Joseph is a practical dreamer. The one man in life who cannot be kept down is the *practical mystic*; life to such a one is a fascinating game and he pits his own resources against anything that can happen to him. Man is always greater than any circumstance or condition will he but hold fast to his own God-given Mind.

Sold by his brethren he enters Potiphar's house and his ability soon makes him chief steward. Well favored, as well as brilliant, he attracts the attention of an unscrupulous woman. He will waste no more time on vice than he will in anger, self pity or revenge. Joseph is a man of values and vice has no value. True to his employer, he refuses to betray him and is falsely imprisoned. Joseph does not know how to stop, so he keeps right on; and whatever was done in that prison, Joseph was the doer of it.

Always alert, he makes friends there and is not daunted if they forget him, he will make more and he will continue to do so until he succeeds. The way out of that prison is by friends and he will continue to make friends. The friend and the opportunity never fail to come to the one who steadfastly looks for them in faith.

The power of Joseph comes from dealing with God only. He harbours no revenge for any of those who have injured him, they might mean it for evil but God meant it for good. How easy it is to forgive a fellow-being for anything done to us if we but look through the individual to the forces at work for us. All nature is in league to place us where we belong; and behind all individuals whom we contact is a Power that is not of themselves, and It is working out Its purposes through them. Holding this Power responsible for all that occurs to us, we find that it always measures up to the responsibility and we have neither praise nor blame for our associates.

We glory in the innate goodness of mankind when we find that the men who sold their brother Joseph will protect Benjamin with their lives. If this were a fairy story or a melodrama, the wicked brothers would all be punished; but this is true life in a world watched over by Divine Love. A father like Jacob, a brother like Joseph, must of necessity redeem them. The only punishment for sin that God desires is correction of

the sin; and man, when touched by the God love, desires for his enemy nothing but that he SEE.

Nothing that anyone ever does to us really injures us, only our own attitude of thought can do that. All injury is actually self-inflicted. Joseph's brothers did not injure him when they sold him into slavery. Potiphar's wife did not injure him when she falsely accused him; for the very simple reason that he did not invest that power in them. If God be all-power then there is no other power, and the power of Joseph is seen to be the reflection of the Power that he believed in.

The families of each of the eleven brothers become eleven of the tribes of Israel. Joseph's name is not given to a tribe, but the two half tribes of Ephraim and Mannasseh, sons of Joseph, become the twelfth tribe. The Hyksos Pharaoh would welcome to Egypt and give to the twelve sons of Jacob the fertile valley of the Nile delta, the land of Goshen; for it was greatly to their interest to invite and give choice lands and positions to all that were of Asiatic origin, thus gaining cohorts that enabled them to keep the conquered Egyptians in subjection. Thus they strongly entrenched themselves in the land, and securely held this kingdom for five hundred years.

Again we have the two brothers. Joseph brings his two sons to Jacob that they may receive the blessing of Israel. Although Jacob is blind with age, and Joseph places the first born on the right hand of his father and the younger on the left, the hands of the old seer cross over and it is Ephraim that receives the blessing. The younger brother is a fruitful one, and it is his name which lingers. Mannasseh (one who forgets) is forgotten. Nowhere in the Bible is the elder son blessed. Symbol of mortal man, whose "days are as grass; as a flower in the field so he flourisheth, and the wind passeth over it and it is gone; and the place thereof knoweth it no more." All mortality is thus destined to go, but the younger brother, the Spirit of man, abideth forever; yea, and he shall be blessed.