

# OpenTheo

## From Prisoner to Prince (with Dr Sam Emadi)

September 6, 2022



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Dr Sam Emadi, senior pastor of Hunsinger Lane Baptist Church, joins me for a discussion of his new book, 'From Prisoner to Prince: The Joseph Story in Biblical Theology' (<https://amzn.to/3TNmFzS>).

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## Transcript

Hello and welcome. It's been a while since I've recorded one of these, but I am joined today by Sam Emadi, who's the senior pastor of Hunsinger Lane Baptist Church. He has an MDiv and PhD from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, and we're here to discuss his book From Prisoner to Prince, which is on the story of Joseph.

And as you well know, I am fascinated by the story of Joseph, the place that it has within the book of Genesis and within Scripture more generally. And who better to discuss it than someone who's written a fantastic book on the subject in the last few years. So thank you so much for joining me, Sam.

Thanks, Alastair. Delighted to talk to you. So first of all, I would love to hear your thoughts on what is it that makes the story of Joseph stand out? What are some of the things that invite questions and exploration of this story as distinct from other stories, especially within the book of Genesis? Yeah, many things in the story of Joseph cause it

to stand out, both at a literary level, at a theological level.

So one thing that's immediately noticeable about the story of Joseph is the fact that it is so unlike the Abrahamic stories or the stories of Isaac and Jacob, which tend to be more episodic and strung together. Whereas Joseph's story is 14 chapters of kind of a singular narrative arc that's developed. Additionally, Joseph has a kind of Esther-like quality to the story.

Whereas in Genesis 1 to 36, you regularly have what I call kind of the curtain of heaven being peeled back and the Lord himself interjecting into the story and theological commentary being given in terms of the events. We're given the God's eye view, the theological interpretation of what's going on. We often don't have that in the Joseph story.

And so the only time we're told about something about what the Lord is doing in the Joseph story is in Genesis 38 and 39, when the Lord judges Ur and Onan, but then the Lord blesses Joseph. But other than that, the Lord is pretty well absent from the story until the reconciliation episode, at which time you have another theophany and the Lord appearing to Jacob in a dream in chapter 46. I think that's all significant in terms of why it all plays out that way.

So on account of the length of the narrative, on account of the way that the story is told, kind of more from a secular perspective than from the intensely theological perspective of 1 to 36, I mean, those are just some of the reasons why the Joseph story stands out. And you mentioned the appearance of the Lord in the dream to Jacob. The striking thing is, Joseph does not have such an appearance or direct word from God.

He has his dreams, but those aren't theophanic. And so it seems that there's a shift from the earlier stories of the patriarchs, which involved theophanies even in human form in the story of Abraham in chapter 18. But in the story of Joseph, it seems that God is revealing himself differently in that story.

Yeah, that is something that's interesting about the Joseph story is because we know how the story ends, and because we, like Joseph, recognize that those dreams came from the Lord, and that they played out exactly as those dreams suggested history would play out. We come to Genesis 37 with an understanding that these dreams are from the Lord. But if you're reading the text carefully, they are different from the dreams that are given to Jacob, for instance.

And I think it's part of that ambiguity at the beginning of the Joseph story, which gives texture and color and theological flavor to the whole thing. Yeah, so we have to be careful with Joseph's dreams that we not import our understanding of where this ends with our kind of initial understanding of what's happening in Genesis 37 in the way that it's different from what's been going on with Jacob. So one of the unusual features of the

stories of patriarchs that my attention was drawn to a few years back, I think it was by Wenham, the fact that the patriarchs, their ages, are a sort of sequence.

So Abraham is 175 when he dies, seven times five squared. Isaac is 180, which is five times six squared. Jacob is 147, three times seven squared.

But then Joseph is five squared plus six squared plus seven squared. And it seems even in that age that there's something of summing up of the stories of those who have gone before him. And yet the story of Joseph seems to be out on a bit of a limb.

It's told in a different way. It seems to be a story that is a bit jarring from the other stories of the patriarchs, let alone the stories that precede those. So within the structure of the book of Genesis, how do we make sense of the story of Joseph? Isn't a fitting climax to the book? Is it something that is just extra material shoved in there? How is it serving the author of Genesis and his ends? Yeah, that observation, Alistair, about the ages of the patriarchs and the way that Joseph's age reflects this idea that he's a fulfillment or a capstone of the stories that have been being told throughout the book of Genesis, I just think it's a remarkable feature of God's revelation to us.

And I think hints at the purpose of the Joseph story. It also hints at the profound literary sophistication of Genesis 37 through 50. I mean, certainly of all of Genesis.

But Genesis 37 through 50, we find numbers being used in very creative literary ways. One thing that I've pointed out in my dissertation is the number three occurs regularly in the Joseph story. You have three sets of dreams.

You have three trips to Egypt. There are certain words that are used three times in the Joseph story. So there's all sorts of dreams.

And certainly within the dreams of the two fellow prisoners, there's lots of threes there. Lots of threes, yeah. Even Joseph, he interprets those dreams on Pharaoh's birthday.

And then he's released two years later on that third birthday of Pharaoh, which I think also has three-day significance, which we see throughout the book of Genesis. In terms of that broader question you're asking, it's such an important question. What is the function of the story of Joseph in the book of Genesis? That's one of the questions that drove me to consider the story of Joseph for my dissertation, because I was dissatisfied with many of the responses that were being given to that question, particularly among historical critical literature, which would identify Joseph as a kind of 10th century wisdom tradition tale that was retroactively shoved into the book of Genesis in order to give an account for how it is that the Israelites ended up in Egypt.

Just at a theological level, I would have issues with that type of understanding. But then you look at folks who are trying to do more canonical readings of the Joseph story, and you didn't get much help there either. So you look at Brevard Childs, and he basically

puts a big question mark around the Joseph story in terms of its function in the book of Genesis.

I think what we see in the Joseph story is a fitting resolution to the story of Genesis. All of the major threads and themes that have been layering upon one another in the book of Genesis come to a resolution in Genesis 37 to 50. I have a friend who pastors in Houston.

His name's Gunnar Gunderson. He likes to say that in the Bible, God loves to put himself in impossible situations so that he can show off. I think that's a great summary of what's going on in the book of Genesis, or in the Joseph story in particular.

You think about the threats that have been building in the book of Genesis against the fulfillment of God's promise. There is the threat of, and all of these are kind of directly related to what's initially developed in the curse. There's the threat of famine.

There's the threat of fratricide and fraternal conflict, sibling rivalry. Well, all of those things come to a head in spades in the book, excuse me, in the Joseph story at the top of that, you've got exile outside of the land, in the land of Egypt. So it's this utterly impossible situation that's layered all of these themes that we've seen developed in Genesis 1 to 36.

And the Joseph story shows us how the Lord can overcome those things, how the Lord can bring resolution and redemption through those things, how he can bring evil out, a good out of evil, Genesis 50-20. And so it's a resolution to all of these themes throughout Genesis. It's why I've, at one point in the book, I say, you know, the story of Genesis takes us from famine to feast and from fratricide to forgiveness.

And at the latter end of that equation, in both of those situations, feast and forgiveness is the story of Joseph. And just one other word here, one problem I think, or at least one shortfall of typical evangelical literature on the Joseph story is that it's often used to defend the doctrine of compatibilism in terms of God, the relationship between God's sovereignty and human responsibility. It's a theological reading.

Well, I think that's totally appropriate. I think that's right and good. And I think the Joseph story does teach us compatibilism and the relationship between divine sovereignty and human responsibility.

But we have to remember in the context of Genesis, God's employing his divine sovereignty to fulfill his promises. So it's not just a lesson on compatibilism, as if it's out of a systematic theology textbook. It's the fact that God can kind of overcome every conceivable threat to the fulfillment of his promise and by his providence bring about resolution and fulfillment of those promises.

So one of the connections with the earlier parts of Genesis that you drew that are not really considered before was the relationship between the story of Joseph and the story

of Cain and Abel. Could you say a bit more about that and particularly the material before chapter 12 and the fall of Abram? What are some of the connections that you see there? Yeah, there's a lot of interesting connections and suggestive illusions between Genesis 37 to 50 and Genesis 1 to 11. Now, mainly what my book focuses on is how Joseph develops the promises of the Abrahamic covenant, land, seed, blessing, and kingship.

But of course those promises that are given to us in Genesis 12 and Genesis 15 are themselves developments of what we see the Lord establishing creation in the garden and in the Noahic covenant. So there are interesting and again suggestive illusions between Joseph and Adam. Adam is a beloved son and a servant king.

I think those descriptors very easily fall on Joseph himself. We find an interesting reversal of the fall narrative in Genesis 39. So whereas Adam is naked and eats and brings shame and disobedience, Joseph in Genesis 39, he resists Pharaoh's wife.

He is obedient but it leads to him moving from being clothed to being naked. And what's also interesting there in Genesis 39 is that Moses says that the only thing that Potiphar kept back from Joseph was the food that he would eat. And then when Joseph retells that arrangement, he says that the only thing that Potiphar has kept back from him is Potiphar's wife.

So there does seem to be this, it may be that the food that Potiphar ate is this euphemism for his wife, which again is bringing this connection between Genesis 3. Genesis 37 is essentially a repeat, a replay of Genesis 4. Genesis 4 has two key Hebrew words that occur frequently in that chapter and those are the words blood and brother in Hebrew, dam and ach. And you don't really find that word pair used with any degree of frequency in the rest of the book of Genesis until you get to Genesis 37. What we find in Genesis 37 is this is a repeat of the Cain and Abel story.

This is yet another incident of fratricide and that's certainly what the brothers intend. Reuben steps in and you know Judah, it ends up with Joseph being sold into slavery. But later on in the story, the brothers themselves, they understand themselves to have killed Joseph.

They assume that he's dead. So whereas Genesis 4 ended in fratricide, Genesis 37 is going to take a different turn and what we're going to see is that the Lord resolves the problem of fratricide initially introduced to us in the Cain and Abel story through a rejected royal deliverer who exercises forgiveness, which is what transforms the hearts of his brothers and brings about reconciliation in the covenant community. Now those connections with the earlier part of the story also highlight the way that when Abraham's called, he's just there to solve not just, he's not just there to be blessed as an individual.

He's there for problems in the creation at large and for humanity at large. He's going to

be the means by which nations will be blessed. He'll be a father to many nations, etc.

How do we see the story of Joseph as an initial fulfillment of the story of Abraham's call and how does that help us to read Genesis as a whole? Yeah, one of the big things that I'm arguing in my dissertation is that Joseph needs to be understood as a fulfillment character in the book of Genesis, specifically with regard to the Abrahamic promises. I think this has a certain degree of apologetic value as well in terms of conversations with historical critical literature, which want to siphon off the Joseph story and say that it's purely wisdom literature and it's not in any way developing kind of the covenantal storyline of the rest of Genesis. So the language that I use is that Joseph is an anticipatory fulfillment.

He is a genuine and true fulfillment of the Abrahamic promises, but one that anticipates a greater fulfillment to come. I often liken it to the original Star Wars. So if you go to see Star Wars in 1977, Luke Skywalker blows up the Death Star.

There's a big medal ceremony at the end. You know, the rebellion's been saved. You walk out of that movie with two feelings.

Number one, boy, that movie had a great resolution. You know, the bad guys were defeated and the good guys were victorious. You also walk out of that movie expecting a sequel because the empire's still out there and Darth Vader got away and Luke Skywalker's not a Jedi.

You know, there's more work to be done. That's the Joseph story at the end of Genesis. It's a resolution and a fulfillment that anticipates something greater.

With regard to blessing, which is a kind of central promise in the Abrahamic covenant, we see through Joseph, through this rejected royal deliverer, the blessing of God begin to go to the nations. That's made explicit in Genesis 39, where the Lord is with Joseph in Genesis 39.3 and Genesis 39.23. And what is the result of the Lord being with Joseph? He blesses Potiphar. I think the exact language is that the Lord blessed Potiphar on account of Joseph.

You know, it's interesting, even the commentators that I would read that were the most skeptical of seeing any relationship between Joseph and the Abrahamic promises would have to concede that this is very clearly Abrahamic language. We also see the theme of blessing play out in Genesis 47, when you have the encounter between old man Jacob and Pharaoh, king of Egypt. And what happens in that encounter is you would expect rich, powerful Pharaoh, who leads the world superpower, giving his blessing to old man Jacob with his 70, you know, his little tribe of 70.

But in fact, it's Jacob who blesses Egypt. And I think what you have in those two individuals is the representative of two nations. Jacob, the representative of the nation of

Israel, and Pharaoh, the representative of the nation of Egypt.

And in some sense, I think you could even say that Pharaoh, as the representative of the world superpower of the time, is representative of the Gentiles at large, the nations in general. And so there in Genesis 47, you have a narrative unfolding of exactly what the Lord promised to Abraham, that his seed would be a blessing to the nations. And then just on top of that, Joseph's provision for the Egyptians in the midst of the famine is itself, again, a narrative unfolding of a seed of Abraham blessing the nations.

It seems that the story of Joseph picks up a lot of the threads of the earlier story of stories of the patriarchs. This is one thing I found very helpful reading various Jewish commentators upon the text, people like Rabbi David Forman and others, where, for instance, you have the connections back to the story of Sarai in the house of Pharaoh, or you have the connections back to the stories of Hagar and Ishmael. Here's an Egyptian maidservant in the house of Hebrew, and she's being persecuted by the mistress, who then goes on to blame her husband.

And she's cast out, brought in this, because Ishmael is laughing at or mocking Isaac. And you have a very similar thing in chapter 39. You have the Ishmaelites in chapter 37, bringing Joseph down.

He's the Hebrew now in the house of Egyptians. The Egyptian master is blamed by the Egyptian mistress, who wants to use this Hebrew servant for her own sexual ends. And she says, you brought in this Hebrew slave to laugh at us, to mock us, again, playing on the name of Isaac, and he's cast out.

And so there's a very similar series of events taking place there. Or the allusions back to the story of Hagar wandering in the wilderness, sent out towards Shechem, sent out with things on the shoulder. The wandering in the wilderness with the skin being dry, casting down the sun, going a distance away to eat.

And then you have the stories of Rachel and Laban, the camels coming from Gilead, and the sun who's surely torn the throat of Pharaoh, and the teraphim. And all these sorts of allusions, the language of the binding of Isaac, do not kill the child. And all these actions when Reuben's trying to intervene, etc.

The deception of Isaac with the goat and the coat, and now it's being used to deceive Jacob. And so all this deep memory of all that's gone wrong within the patriarchal narrative comes to the surface again, like a reopened wound in the story of Joseph. And so that resolution of the story is really taking all these themes and addressing things that have not been set right.

And it seems to me that the way that you're presenting the story of Joseph within the story of Genesis as a whole really makes sense of the freight that it's bearing. It's not

just an isolated narrative on the continuing adventures of the house of Abraham. There's a sense this is the family drama, all the unresolved issues coming to a head in the casting out of this son.

Like Ishmael was cast out. What's going to happen with this son? Yeah, I think that's exactly right. And you know, there's other connections there as well with regard to Isaac.

So Jacob identifies Joseph as the son of his old age, which is an interesting phrase, *ben zakenim*. He uses a different phrase for Benjamin. You would expect that that would be applied to Benjamin, the youngest son, but there's actually a different phrase that's used for that.

Also translated son of his old age. Why is Joseph referred to as a *ben zakenim*, son of his old age? That's the language that Abraham used to describe Isaac. So Joseph is being cast with this Isaac-like identity.

I think to mirror the very types of connections that you're talking about. Additionally, one very important development that we see in the Joseph story that connects back to previous sections of Genesis is the promise of seed and specifically the language of being fruitful and multiply. We find in the Joseph story that the Lord through the means of Joseph's wise administration and forgiveness of the family brings about this anticipatory fulfillment of the seed promise.

You can see that in a number of ways throughout the Joseph story. Genesis 46 lists the 70 descendants of Jacob who are now coming into the land of Egypt and settling in the land of Goshen. That's significant, I think, because of its relationship to Genesis 10, which lists 70 nations.

And so I believe it's identifying Jacob's family, the people of Israel, as the new humanity that is now being fruitful and multiplying. But I think what's particularly significant in the Joseph story is Genesis 47, 27, which discusses or mentions that Joseph settles the people of Israel in the land of Goshen and there they are fruitful and multiply exceedingly. Now what's interesting is that language is again used in Exodus 1, 7. And ordinarily, that's when that Exodus 1, 7 is a passage a number of biblical theologians will point to and allude to in terms of seeing Israel as a new Adam and the creation of a new humanity that's fulfilling the commission of Genesis 1, 28.

Of course, that's all true. But I just point out that language is first used in Genesis 47, 27, that they're in the land of Goshen and they are fruitful and multiply exceedingly. And when you look at that language in Genesis, that language of be fruitful and multiply, it is first a command given to Adam and then restated to Noah.

And then that word pair or those words individually get transposed into the music of promise in the Abrahamic covenant. Genesis 47, 27 is the first time that that language



occurs in the indicative. It actually happens.

Genesis 1, 28, the promise is given to Abraham. They finally become a reality in history. And of course, I argue that that happens through the ministry of Joseph.

Now that's part of the function that he's playing in the story of Genesis is Moses is showing his readers how it is that the Lord will fulfill his covenant promises. And it looks like he's going to do that through a rejected royal deliverer. Also what you mentioned earlier, Alistair, about Joseph being a resolution to so many threads that are run through Genesis.

I think one of the most beautiful illustrations of this is Joseph's second forgiveness of his brothers and his confession of faith in the sovereignty of God in Genesis 50, 20. What you meant for evil against me, God meant for good in order to save many people alive. Now that language of good and evil, we've seen before in Genesis 2 and Genesis 3 with the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

What you have here is a remarkable contrast between Adam, who wants to take defining good and evil into his own hands and function as the divine authority, which dictates right and wrong, and Joseph, who trusts God's authority and trusts God's sovereignty and providence to bring good out of evil. And so it's this wonderful contrast there between the two poles of Genesis in this word pair good and evil with Adam being the failed beloved son and servant king who takes good and evil into his own hands and Joseph, the true beloved son and servant king who leaves good and evil in the hands of the Lord. So one of the things that you mentioned in the book that never really occurred to me to reflect upon is the way in which moving the family down into Goshen is a means to protect them from intermarriage with the people in Canaan and to just becoming another one of the undifferentiated peoples of the land mixed in with the Hittites and the others.

And it seems to me that that also would present Joseph not just as protecting his family from the famine but as a sort of Noah figure. He's bringing this, the nation as an ark, down into a place where they're going to be prepared to later repopulate the earth. But they're brought away from the land for that period of time and the counting of the people in chapter 46 I think is fascinating.

James Bajan talks about the way it's structured around sevens like the clean animals on the ark and so you have the 70 and then you have seven sevens ascribed to each one of the mothers and so you have the way that the children are ordered and there's a certain degree of artificiality to this. To a certain degree it's a literary construction. There are other ways that you could organize the names and the characters involved but it's very clear that he wants us to see this as the number 70 ordered in this particular way.

And I'll be interested to hear more of your thoughts the way that the passage down into

Egypt and Joseph going ahead of them, that that is salvation and preparation for the people as a whole within the larger canvas of redemptive history not just from the immediate threat of the famine. Yeah I'm intrigued by your allusion to Noah there. You're actually putting some pieces together for me that I'd not considered previously.

There are some interesting connections with Noah in Genesis 45. I'm looking in my bible for the specific reference. I may not find it in time but well no here it is in Genesis 45 as Joseph is revealing himself to his brothers in verse 7, God sent me before you to preserve a remnant on earth.

That's interesting because that's language that's again going to show up in Isaiah 10 and Isaiah 37, 2 Kings 19, Joel 2 to talk about the remnant that the Lord preserves in exile. So you know I'm not suggesting that there's direct literary dependence. Maybe there is but there's certainly kind of the seed of a remnant theology that's already developing here in the story of Genesis.

But if you continue on in seven to preserve a remnant and to keep alive for you many survivors and this language keep alive is language that is significant and prominent in the story of Joseph, excuse me in the story of Noah. So you can look back at Genesis chapter 6 verse 19 through 20, Genesis chapter 7 verse 3, Joseph it seems is casting himself or at least the work that he's doing in Noahic terms in his preservation of the seed. That happens as you mentioned to the famine, it also happens by way of protecting the purity of the seed.

So we talk about these different threats running through Genesis, one's famine, one's fratricide violence against the seed. Well another one is intermarriage and the accompanying spiritual infidelity and idolatry that accompanies intermarriage and that's a threat that we find developing all through the book of Genesis. We can see it I think play out to a degree in Genesis 38 by Joseph relocating his family to Goshen where they would be untroubled by the Egyptians on account of the Egyptians own prejudices against them, preserves the purity of the seed and keeps Israel from dissolving itself into the nations as it were.

That was first suggested to me by one of my someone who was on my doctoral committee Peter Gentry who in his language which I think I quote in the book he says something to the effect of the Lord through Joseph put Israel into the womb of Egypt in the land of Goshen. Well that womb imagery I think is so helpful. I do as well.

It's all about the woman in travail at the beginning of the book and the woman is the women of Israel, it's Jacob and then the midwives about Israel giving birth but it's also Israel as a nation and the womb is Egypt and when Israel comes out through the narrow passageway they're brought into new life it's in connection with giving laws concerning the firstborn to open the womb and Israel is the Lord's firstborn and there's all these connections that suggest that this is not just a nice illustration this is actually the way

the text is considering what's taking place. Yeah I think that's exactly right. They're brought through the narrow watery passageway of the Red Sea.

You mentioned something earlier about the influence that this has on the rest of redemptive history in terms of how God preserves his people. I think this is why you have a cluster of Daniel-like characters around the exile and why you don't have that same cluster of Joseph-like characters around the exile. Well you don't have that same cluster of Joseph-like characters in Joshua through 2 Kings let's say, though I do think there are connections between David and Joseph.

Jim Hamilton has written a very helpful piece on that. Yes and Peter Lighthouse in his commentary of Sunday Me also talks about some of those connections but I think one of the one thing that you see in Joseph is a pattern for how the Lord preserves his people in a place of exile and Joseph's life also functions as it were as a down payment of the promise of Exodus and the promise of return to the land. Joseph himself understands his own life and death in that way as he's giving a final commission to his family in the time of his death that they would bring up his bones out of the land of Egypt into the land of Canaan.

He understands that his ministry as it were is ultimately about preserving and affecting this Exodus that's going to take place back into the land. I think that's why Daniel for instance describes himself with this Joseph-like imagery because in so doing what he's doing for his readers is creating the hope and the expectation that just as the Lord delivered Israel out of this initial exile in the land of Egypt he's going to do the same thing again and just as Joseph's life was a sign that the Lord was going to work an act of deliverance my life is going to do the same thing because I'm a Joseph-like character, an exiled Jew in a foreign court who comes to the right hand of power. I found all the verbal correspondences that you draw between Joseph and Daniel incredibly helpful.

It fills out, you might have an instinctive connection that you think these characters are similar but when you actually see the list of verbal correspondences and other things it builds out that picture considerably. Yeah and I think really what I felt myself doing there was just compiling so many observations that have been made by so many others going all the way back to the 19th century with an article by someone by the name of Rosenthal I believe all the way up to just a couple of years ago an article published by my friend Josh Philpott who I think has a superb article on the relationship between Joseph and Daniel and I relied on his research quite a bit. Before we get into a discussion of those sorts of characters like Daniel and Esther I'd like to spend just a few moments thinking about Joseph as a paradigm for the whole Exodus event.

There's a sort of death and resurrection pattern within the story of Joseph that we see he's presumed dead and then when he's found to be alive and Jacob's spirit returns to him he almost becomes alive as well and then also the bringing up of the bones of

Joseph is seen as a great sign of faith that Joseph makes these instructions concerning his bones and within the story of the Exodus more broadly a lot of attention is given to the bones in chapter 13 I think of Exodus is mentioned that they took the bones of Joseph with them and the very end of the book of Joshua they finally settle in the land it ends on the note of burying the bones of Joseph. When Joseph dies at the same age as Joshua there seem to be some other interesting points of similarity he's buried at Shechem the place he was sent to originally and then afterwards ended up going from to go to Dothan and then ultimately leaving the land but there's a sort of return of the bones of Joseph to the place from which they were taken and there's also a return in the story more generally it's the Terebinth tree beneath which Jacob when he first returned to the land after his time with Laban he buried the household gods before going down to Bethel and it seems that there is a sort of full circle here that provides a paradigm for seeing the whole Exodus event within the story of the return of Joseph's bones. I think that's right and I think that's the original readers of Genesis I think would have derived great hope from that.

One thing that we see in the Joseph story that we also see in other kind of micro stories within the book of Genesis are these miniature Exodus events so we see that for instance in Genesis 12 Abraham goes into the land of Egypt his wife's taken into essentially slavery there's plagues brought upon the house Abraham leaves with riches we find the same thing with the death of Jacob at the end of the Joseph story as Jacob's bones are taken out of Egypt they're buried in the land of Canaan and as that and then of course there's a return to the land of Egypt in that but that in itself is an Exodus story as the kind of historical individual Israel goes on an Exodus back to the land of Canaan. I think I made an absolutely fascinating book on that by Rabbi David Foreman, the Exodus you almost passed over arguing that within that you see a sort of god of Egyptian chariots and horses leading this procession taking the route of the later Exodus into the land of Canaan and it's a picture of what could have been if Egypt had responded properly. It's a sign of possibility and I found that fascinating suggestion.

Yeah I was actually just going to go to that place I learned that from you from listening to you that there is in that Exodus event almost kind of a counterfactual of what might have been had Egypt responded rightly to the Lord. I've also I've not fully developed this in my own thinking I do think there is some interesting first Exodus second Exodus themes that are developing in Genesis and if you compare what's going on there with the Egyptians leading the Exodus to bury Jacob compare that to Isaiah 19 and the anticipation that Egypt is going to be my people and the Lord's going to deliver them from oppressors just as he did for Israel. I think there might be some interesting kind of anticipations of a second Exodus work that's going to include Gentiles as part of the work that the Lord's going to do but what's also interesting about that that Jacob Exodus is essentially you have parallels between the burial of Jacob's bones and the burial of Joseph's bones.

Jacob's final words about his bones being buried in the land of Canaan. Joseph's bones and his final words about his bones being buried in the land of Canaan. I think what we're meant to see is a relationship between those two things.

Moses is drawing a parallel between those two characters to create this sense of anticipation just as Jacob's bones were taken back to the land of Canaan so also Joseph's bones are a reflection of the fact that the Lord's going to take the entire nation back to Canaan and that there's going to be a complete restoration of the nation. One thing I didn't get to develop in my dissertation which I wish I, well that I would like to develop more maybe in a later work is all of the resurrection imagery that you're suggesting as part of this. Joseph is thrown into a pit and then brought out of the pit which is language that we find throughout the Psalms suggesting death and resurrection.

It's also interesting that when the brothers go back to Jacob to indicate that Joseph has revealed himself to them, what is it, what are the first words out of their mouth when they go to Jacob? Your son Joseph is alive. Not we found Joseph living in Egypt. It's an announcement that he's alive.

It's like a resurrection announcement. Of course there's three day themes developed throughout the Joseph narrative as well. Alistair, I don't know if you are familiar with this book or have read it.

I have not read it yet. I've only just received it. I'm trying to find it here.

Figuring Resurrection. Joseph as Death and Resurrection Figure in the Old Testament and Second Temple Judaism by Jeffrey Pulse. I've not had an opportunity.

I have a copy of it. Okay yeah. Yeah I've not had an opportunity to read it yet but I'm eager to invest in it.

You mentioned the appearance of Joseph-like figures around the period of the exile so we can think about characters like Daniel in particular. And even before that we have someone like Jeremiah whose experience has a number of resonances with that of Joseph. One of the most arresting series of connections that I've come across with the story of Joseph that I've not seen before and I've not seen anyone else discuss it by Rivke Stern discussing the story of Joseph and its relationship with the story of Gedaliah in Jeremiah 40 and 41.

So there you have Nebuchadnezzar who's the captain of the guard. He releases Jeremiah. He entrusts everything is entrusted to Gedaliah and then the people are prostrating.

Everything's seeming to go right and then Johanan comes to talk to Gedaliah to plead that he take action because someone's his life is going to be taken. He plays a sort of Reuben role. Then the next chapter you have Ishmael and ten men coming down and

they sit down and they break bread with Gedaliah and then trick and kill him.

Gedaliah was the appointed one. He had the hope of peace with him and everything. That could have been the opportunity for Israel to remain in the land.

And then 80 men come from Shechem with torn clothes and Ishmael kills them, the men with the torn clothes, and throws them into a pit. And then of course they go down into Egypt and it seems that Israel's story at its very ugly end and just before the exile is returning to it's that ugly point of its beginning as a people. And so at this point in exile whether it's Jehoiachin or whether it's Mordecai or Esther or Daniel or Jeremiah, suddenly there's this cluster of Joseph figures.

And how does Joseph give us a paradigm within which to understand what's taking place in the Exodus? Especially when it seems we're back to square one. Those are fascinating connections that you're making there with the the book of Jeremiah that I'd not considered. So I'd mainly focus in my work on what we might call the more positive points of contact between Jewish exiles and Joseph in Egypt.

I say positive because it was the relationship between the heroes of the story we might say. Daniel, Mordecai, Esther, so forth. It is interesting to consider how Jeremiah might be pointing us to negative associations in that we're essentially watching a repeat as it were of the actions of the brothers of Joseph leading to his initial exile.

I'd never considered that. In terms of what we find in literature about the time of the exile, as I mentioned what you have is a theme that talks about the exalted Jew in the foreign court. So you have Daniel, you have, I'm sorry about the dinging, I'm not quite sure how to turn that off, you have Daniel, you have Esther, you have Mordecai also an exalted Jew in a foreign court.

Even as you mentioned Jehoiachin there at the end of second Kings who is given a place at the king's table. There's some debate about whether that's positive or whether that's negative. I mean obviously it has negative elements to it.

Israel's in exile, that's a negative thing. But I do think the resonance with the Joseph story allows us to see these Jewish figures who reach a prominent place in the foreign court as the function of that would be to instill hope among exiles. That just as the Lord acted previously through Joseph to bring about resurrection and return into the land, the Lord's going to do the same thing again.

The whole shape of the Hebrew canon really has at these two poles, you know, exalted Jews in a foreign court and obviously those are most prominent with Daniel as someone who can interpret dreams. It's interesting that Daniel is also bringing us back to the world before Abraham. It's Babel, it's the land of Shinar.

That's right. It's the great towers, whether it's the tall tree that everything is sheltering

beneath or the towering image or the golden image and then the confusion of languages. All these themes of the story of Babel and yet now you have a Joseph figure in the midst of that.

I think that's right. Part of my, not fully worked it out, but wondering about kind of first and second Exodus types of suggestions in the book of Genesis. I also wonder about potential kind of chiasm there just in terms of the overall structure of the biblical storyline that leads us from Babel to Egypt to Egypt and then back to Babel again with Daniel.

So the echoes of the story of Joseph do not end in the Old Testament. We find them continuing in the New. The story of Joseph is referenced in Hebrews 11, which we've already mentioned, the instructions concerning his bones.

We also have references to Joseph in the story of Stephen and his speech and then there might be connections with the story of Christ. How are we to understand those? Where do we see the connections in the story of Jesus, for instance, and how might Joseph give us a paradigm to understand what's taking place in the Gospels? So if you look at a passage like Mark 12, Jesus is telling the parable of the tenants and it's a summary of Israel's history, drawing mainly from imagery given to us by Isaiah in Isaiah chapter 5 in terms of a vineyard and a vineyard owner. Jesus clearly in the parable is identifying himself as the vineyard owner's son who is sent to the tenants and who beat and kill the vineyard owner's son.

What's interesting is you already have there a certain degree of conceptual similarity between what's happening in Genesis 37 and what's happening here in Mark 12. You have a beloved son of a father who's being sent to oversee work that is going on and then is met with hostility and violence. But the language that the tenants use is they see the sun coming and in Mark 12 7, this is the air, come let us kill him.

And that language, is used, I believe, only in the Septuagint in Genesis 37, I believe 37 11 to talk about the brothers of Joseph seeing Joseph far off and saying, come let us kill him. It's interesting is Jesus is here summarizing the story of Israel. And what is he drawing from in order to be able to summarize Israel story? He's drawing from the story of Joseph.

I think that in itself is evidence of the typological significance of the Joseph story and the way that it really is kind of its own kind of encapsulated retelling of the entire story of Israel. At the same time, I think what Jesus is showing us is that we ought to read the story of Joseph Christologically. He is part of this pattern of a beloved son who's rejected and suffers violence at the hand of his brothers.

Jesus himself is making that identification. We find specific mention of Joseph in Acts 7. So far as my memory serves me correctly, we've got the mention of Joseph in Hebrews

11. He's mentioned just in passing in John 4. And then the most significant kind of extended theological discussion of Joseph is in Stephen's speech in Acts 7 when he's defending himself against the claims that he was speaking against Moses and against the temple.

Of course, what Stephen is doing in that speech is quite interesting. I think he structures that speech around the covenants, around Abraham, around Moses, around David, then obviously the discussion of the temple. But with regard to Abraham, the person that he focuses on most distinctly is the character of Joseph.

And it's amazing to get into the weeds of Stephen's speech with regard to the Joseph story. You see what a careful interpreter he was of the Joseph story. A number of commentators who would reject any sort of typological reading of the Joseph story look at Stephen's speech and they say, well look, he doesn't talk about Joseph being a deliverer.

He focuses on Joseph forgiving his brothers. To which my response is, that's exactly right because that's what the story of Genesis focuses on and it's through the means of forgiveness that he delivers his brothers. He delivers them from famine by forgiving them.

And Joseph therefore is put as part of this pattern, this covenantal pattern in Acts 7 where you have a deliverer who is rejected by his associates, his brothers, his family. Joseph is part of that pattern. Moses is part of that pattern.

David is part of that pattern. Well where does Stephen end? Well he looks at his his opponents and he says, as your fathers did, so do you. So he's identifying them as part of this typological pattern of rejection of deliverers of which Christ would be at the end in terms of fulfillment in that line.

So I think Stephen in Acts 7 is laying out for us a typological argument of associations between these Old Testament figures that ultimately finds fulfillment in So I think when we look at the New Testament discussions of Joseph, in both instances, we find explicitly Christological readings of the Joseph story. And I think there's plenty of reasons, many we've already discussed, some we haven't, of evidence within the Joseph story itself that Moses intends for this to be read eschatologically and messianically. Most definitely.

I think just the themes of resurrection, the three days elements, the ways in which even episodes within the story of Joseph seem to have a symbolic import about the whole, the story of the interpretation of the dreams of the two fellow prisoners, for instance, and the way that Joseph himself becomes, in some sense, the chief baker and cupbearer of Egypt. And so in those stories we can also see all sorts of resonances with the story of Christ. We can maybe pick up on a number of the allusions that you mentioned in one of your footnotes in detail to the story of Joseph in the first chapter of Genesis, or the first



chapter of Matthew, where you have another son of Jacob called Joseph who has dreams and leads his people down into Egypt.

And it seems you'd have to be a bit dull to miss all of those. And even later on in Matthew, you have the 11 persons called his brothers who bow down to him as he says that all authority has been given to him. And you have several other allusions that maybe are not quite so clear, connected with other characters.

Joseph begging Pilate to bury Jesus, much as Joseph asked Pharaoh to bury Jacob. Yeah, you also have Luke's account where Mary treasures these things in her heart, which is very similar to the language that's used of Jacob when he hears of the dreams. I think there might be something as well with regard to Jesus being crucified between two criminals.

One is saved, the other is not. Joseph in Genesis says to the saved criminal, remember me, whereas the saved criminal in the account of the crucifixion says that same language to Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom. I think one of the... important and suggestive pieces of evidence from within the Joseph story itself, which shows us that Moses intends for us to read this story as a messianic pattern, is in the blessing given to Judah in Genesis 49.

So I think most folks who are kind of consistently reading their Bible would recognize Genesis 49.10 as a messianic prophecy, that the scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet until tribute comes to him, and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples. But if you back up and read the previous two verses, Genesis 49.8, Judah, your brothers shall praise you. That's a play on words, Judah, your brothers shall yada you.

Your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies, which is, I think, a suggestive subtle allusion to Genesis 3.15. You've got foot on head here, hand on neck. It's the type of mortal combat that exists between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. But then you have this, the last line in Genesis 49.8, your father's sons shall bow down before you.

So you have this image of 11 brothers coming and they are pishtahawa, they're bowing down before Judah. Now I would suggest, you know, if you are one of the original readers of Genesis, you get to a passage like this and you are astounded by this prophecy. Wow, look at this king who's going to come from the line of Judah, who's going to be a fulfillment of the promise originally given to us in Genesis 3.15. What's this guy going to look like? Well, this language of bowing down is used three times in Genesis 37, in Joseph's dreams to describe the stars or the sheaves of wheat that come and bow down before Joseph.

It's then used again another three times in Genesis 43 and 44, when it records the actual

historical account of the brothers coming and bowing down before Joseph. Now here you have a prophecy about a coming king from the line of Judah and his father's sons, his 11 brothers, because it's framed in terms of the person of Judah, is going to come and they're going to bow down, pishtahawa, same word, they're going to come bow down before him. So I think if you're reading the book of Genesis and you come to this prophecy and you're asking, wow, what is this king going to look like? Well, your first frame of reference to be able to understand what this person is going to be is the character of Joseph, whom you have just read about.

So I think in Genesis 49, 8 through 10, we are seeing evidence of the fact that Moses intends for us to understand Joseph as an eschatological messianic figure, because the coming king from the line of Judah is going to look quite a bit like Joseph. Thank you so much for this discussion. The book is called *From Prisoner to Prince* and it's in the *New Studies in Biblical Theology* series.

There is so much more within the book that I recommend you get into if you found this helpful in our discussion. And again, thank you so much for joining me. Thanks Alistair, it was a delight.