

# Our Place at His Place

*Victim Eyes*

August 23, 2020

**Welcome you to where we accept God's answers to prayer, and reuse to play the victim!**

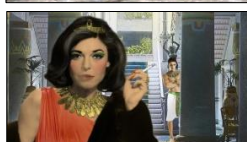
**Ever feel like God's not listening?** Or, at least, not *acting* like He's listening? **Are you sure it's not you not listening?** Or, at least, not *acting* like your listening?



The story of Joseph (a.k.a. Lil' J) and Potiphar's wife (a.k.a. Mrs. P) isn't about a guy who *can't* be tempted, but a young "well built and handsome" man, who keeps God first and foremost while facing *fierce* temptations! Daniel had the lions' den; and Lil' J has the cougar's cage!



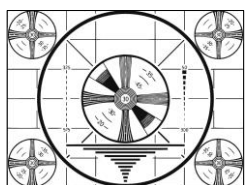
[Pharaoh's] captain of the guard, bought him from the Ishmaelites [and Lil J was put to work as a field slave on Potiphar's plantation. And] ... The Lord was with Joseph and he prospered, [Know why? Not by spiritual *magic*; but, by *doing* the things the Lord *prosper*s.] and [because anyone could see the value of someone who lived their faith] *he* lived in the house of his Egyptian master. [Lil J's in da *house!* The most *powerful* house, in the most *powerful* city, in the most *powerful* country in the world! And now, Potiphar keeps *his* heavily-eyelinered eyes on Lil' J. And] When his master saw that the Lord was with him *and* that the Lord gave him success in everything he did, [And *why?* You know this. Because he did the things that are blessed with success. And] Joseph found favor in his [guy-linered] eyes and became his attendant. [Which means more than I think you think it means; it means] Potiphar put him in charge of his household, and he entrusted to his care *everything* he owned. [And Lil' Joe became the C.O.O. of Potiphar's entire plantation!] – Genesis 39:1-4 NIV



**Potiphar saw what Lil' J believed, because he lived out his faith;** and *that* makes it *attractive*. Jesus said:

You are the light of the world. ... let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven. – Matthew 5:14-16 NIV

This is what Joseph did and what Potiphar saw. You know, **everyone who watches us sees what we believe.** Whether you want 'em to or not. In fact, **those around us know far more precisely what we really believe than we do.** Because, *seeing* is believing; and our *heart* is deceiving.



Lil' J's livin' the dream at Mr. P's. "Thank you Lord, for this dream job! What an answer to prayer!" **THIS IS A TEST.** This is only a test. For the next several seasons **your obedience will be stretched to its limits,** as you struggle to survive what comes with success, **as you're being prepared for** the things you can't see and can't know, but are known as: **what's next.**



Three things we learned last week, about Egyptian men in Joseph’s day, in order of importance: 1) their rabbits had *huge* ears; 2) their rabbits were *very* tall; and 3) **their skirts were very short**. And had a quick release. **And they all wore ‘em. And little else**. And when Mrs. P acted on the impulse of her fantasies, it was do or die. Literally. And, Lil’ J “left” “his cloth” (not pirate shirt, cloak, or feathered cap) “in her hand”, and in a flash was outside, where bemused servants were waiting, as ordered by Mrs. P. And later that day, Mr. P came home.



When we left off, I said verse 19 is the setup, and verse 20, the punch line; because, **verse 19 deliberately avoids stating for whom Potiphar’s anger burns**, knowing the reader will assume it’s Joseph. But then, when we see what Potiphar *does*, we know who he *believes*.



When his [Lil’ J’s] master heard the *story* his wife told him, saying, “This is how your *slave* treated me,” he burned with anger. Joseph’s master [Captain of the palace guard and commander of the royal prison and execution agency in his basement] took him and [Chopped his head clean off? No] put him in [The latest torture device?! No] prison, [Like a dungeon, where he’s chained to a wall and left to starve?!] No] the place where the *king’s* prisoners were confined. [Oh. So ... he could ... wait in dread of the fate to come? No. So he could do the books] – Genesis 39:19-20a NIV



He’s a foreign slave accused of the capital crime of attempted rape of a royal official’s wife. Yet, he isn’t even beaten or flogged or ... *anything*. And ancient Egypt wasn’t exactly *soft* on crime! An odd reaction, don’t you think, if the king’s biggest, baddest, warrior-commander is burning with anger toward him? But, remember that *part* where Potiphar kept his grease-painted peepers on Lil’ J? And remember how Lil’ J had found favor in Potiphar’s Max Factored lookers? Turns out, **the same convictions that caused Joseph to flee, formed his character**. And Mr. P watched him enough to *know* that he *knows* him. Same for Mrs. P. He knew *her* all too well.

I said the safest place in a cougar cage is to stay as far from the cougar as possible. But, **what would be the only guaranteed safe space? Your own cage!** a cage within a cage; which is where Mr. P puts Lil’ J. And, knowing how Mrs. P pursued him, “day after day” so that Lil’ J couldn’t let himself “even be (alone) with her”. I’m guessin’ his most frequent and earnest prayer was: “Keep me from sinning with her!” **And then, she unwittingly triggers the answer to his prayers!**



You see, **God’s answers often come wrapped in unexpected and unattractive ways**. So, don’t ignore ‘em or exchange ‘em. **Our prayers are always answered**. We just refuse to accept the answer most of the time. **It doesn’t meet our approval**. And though Lil’ J’s unaware, he’s in the *Lord’s* care; and it’s an answer to prayer.

And though he’s bound, he’s bound to realize that he’s finally free, in “protective custody,” from the one temptation that was bound to take him down. And the Lord was with Lil’ J in Mr. P’s prison, and he prospered, and you *better* know why!

Lil' J won't play the victim. Instead of blaming, **He takes on responsibility in the face of unfair adversity!** Wow. Who does *that*? The "lights of the world" who do the things the Lord prospers, and act in ways that bring "praise to our Father in heaven," and the success He loves to bestow.

When **we feel abandoned by God and hurt by others, we default to playing the victim**, and then we seize control in self-centered ways. And then, instead of trusting the loving Father who created us in *His* image, we get mad at an *unloving* god we resentfully create in *our* own; because, **when you play the victim you make God the villain**. And *that's* why ...

We live by *faith*, not by *sight*. ... So we make it our goal to please *him*, ... For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, – 2 Corinthians 5:7-10 NIV

You see, **Joseph was living the dream** in Potiphar's palace; **but not the dream God promised to fulfill**. Just as his brothers were living in the Promised *Land*; but not in the *promise*. To get 'em in the promise, and then back into the Promised Land, God's got'a get 'em into Goshen.

Lil' J was in da house; but, still in bondage. He was living the dream of a slave. **Any time we settle for living the dream without the promise, it becomes a nightmare**. Like a marriage, without joyful intimacy; wealth without contentment. Success without satisfaction. Or faith, prayer, and worship, without closeness and confidence. So, **don't settle for the incomplete**. But **begin to live in the promise, and settle down and wait and let the dream work itself out**.



We *know* the trade route the Ishmaelites took – along the Nile through the land of Goshen, the world's largest oasis, God prepared as a treasure to bless and prosper the nation of Israel through Lil J. But, Lil' J enters Goshen at the lowest point of his life thus far. But, don't worry Lil J, it gets worse.



Sure: wild geese fly through a turquoise sky above fertile green pastures and towering palm trees, mirrored in duck ponds and freshwater canals. I mean, yeah, there's grasslands and grain fields as far as the eye can see, with their huge, happy, herds, and grazing flocks, and serene Shepherds. And it's *all* gonna be yours one day, Lil J. And that's not even the half of it. But, he can't hear me. He's busy praying: "Where are you God?! What are you thinking?! *Wow* that's beautiful land! Answer me, Lord; why won't you save me?! *Man* that's a lot'a ducks!" **We can't see the ways God simultaneously works**. Because, **He's always got His eyes on our eternal best**. Thankfully, Lil' J has his eyes on the Lord.



And as they made their way south, they passed this obelisk at the city of On, where a little girl named Asenath was humming and playing and being prepared by the Lord for Lil J. Two of their sons become two *nations* in Israel. **Most of His work is just too subtle to see**. *Intentionally*. And **you and I need to go through what we need to go through to fulfill our created destiny**.

There's a lot of kinks to work out of Lil J, to *prepare* him to handle future trials *and* the treasures God has in store. **Sometimes we give the enemy too much credit**. We can't know what all God is doing even *around* us. **But, we can trust that He is, and He knows, and He's good**.

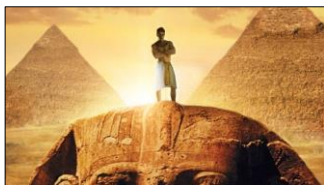
And **we can know His plan**. That's simple: **He wants to help you conquer what you think will conquer you**. Temporary health, wealth, or power may not be for your eternal best right now ... or ever. But **overcoming sickness, poverty, and weakness through Christ always are**. So, the only way we miss out on what matters most is by playing the victim and seizing self-centered control.



Executions were carried out from Potiphar's basement prison. But, know what else was carried out from there? Internal inquiries and investigations. Mrs. P has spun her *story* to the *one* man who oversees the "Colombos" of ancient Egypt. And according to an ancient Jewish *legend*, Potiphar deduced the truth from a tear in Lil J's wrap-around.

"Did you scream for *help*, or for *the help*." "For help. I have witnesses." "Well, that's what's bothering me, ma'am. The *help* say they saw the perpetrator flee *before* they heard the scream. And, none of the help seem to know why they were waiting outside. Isn't *that* curious. May I see that wrap-around again? Oh, this is nice. Very regal. But, did you notice the tear here?" "It's ripped, so what?" "Why would your Chief of Staff wear a torn wrappy? Sets a bad example." "I probably tore it *defending* myself." "Hmm. Okay. Well I'll be going now. Just one more thing: *typically*, clothes are torn off the *victim*; but in *your* case Mrs. P, they were torn off the *perpetrator*! That's a *first* for me, ma'am!

But, if Potiphar thought Joseph was innocent, why'd he imprison him? Well, **it was standard practice** in the 12th Dynasty, like the 21st century, **to keep up appearances at the cost of convictions**. If Potiphar indicts his wife, the palace gossip will focus on the Commander who can't command his own home, or satisfy his wife. That's when he comes up with the cage within a cage idea. **Protective Custody**! Brilliant! It *looks* like punishment to those *outside*; and he can continue benefiting from Lil J's abilities on the *inside*. It's a good plan except for *one* small thing: **it's a sin against God**, against **Joseph**, and against **Potiphar's own integrity**. The very thing he does shows that he knows that he shouldn't do the very thing he does! Here's the rule of righteousness: **you do what's right and then** (*eventually*; maybe in eternity) **you get to see why it was so right**. Otherwise, you can *never* know what God was planning.



And ever wonder whatever became of Mrs. P *after* Lil J becomes ruler of *all* the land of Egypt? (Gen 41:43) *She* knew *he* knew that *she'd* played the victim and seized self-centered control. And knowing what *she'd* do if *she* were him, she's likely looking over her shoulder for fear of his revenge. But then, she never *did* know him that well, *did* she?

Oh, **revenge is sweet ... till that bitter aftertaste**, which inevitably comes; because, **the sweetness is just a thin skin ... covering rancid self-pity**. So, **don't play the victim**. Not when you're following and representing the One who conquered *everything*.

**Walk by faith and not by sight**; because, we're more concerned with how our peepers look than what they actually see. **Do the things the Lord prospers. Act in ways that bring Him praise, and you true success**. That's how we *bring* our Father glory and honor. And please, do us all a favor and, **don't settle for an "acceptable" level of bondage**. The Lord *always* and *only* offers *total* freedom, in a place where the *God-given* dreams, that we *dare* to dream, really *do* come true.