

# Genesis: A Living Conversation “Exile”

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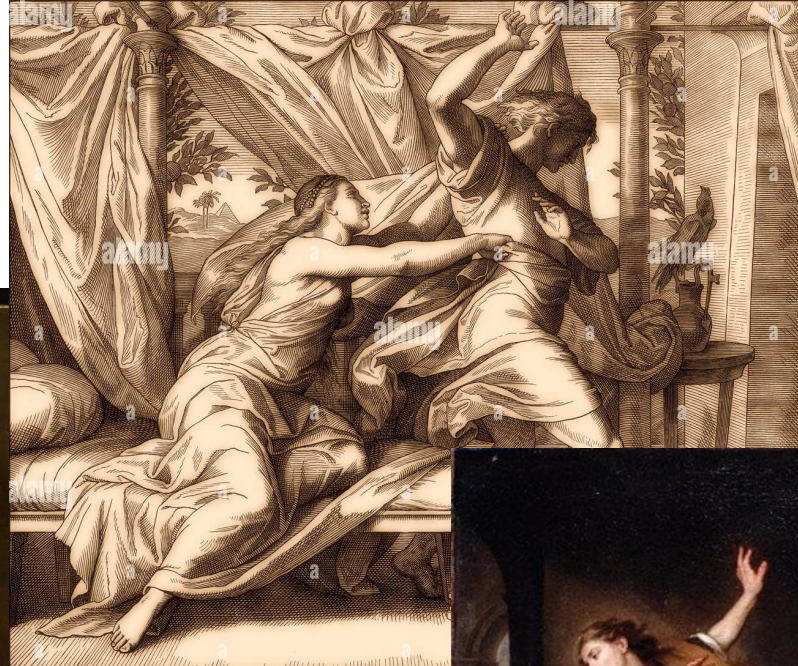
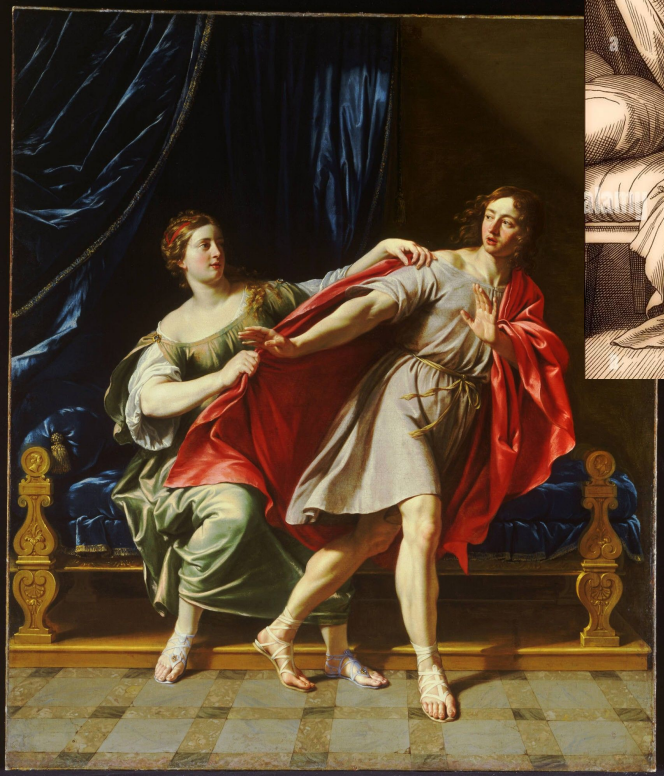
- Joseph rejecting Potiphar's wife
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# Joseph Rejecting Potiphar's Wife

- Caution against foreigners
  - Threats of people leaving the community
  - Threats of foreigners' gods
- Joseph is a symbol of beauty
  - Islamic tradition emphasizes choosing between human beauty/love and divine beauty/love
  - Jewish tradition also agrees that Joseph was beautiful and attractive
- The relationship between master and slave
  - Seeing Potiphar as a father figure
  - Owing one's master fidelity
  - Doesn't want to commit adultery
  - "... she doesn't try to seduce him or persuade him. She just says, lie with me. It's an imperative. It's — get in bed with me. She's trying to make use of him. So she has been rebuffed in something that she thought she could get away with because he was a slave." Francisco Garcia-Treto

# Themes of Misogyny

- Potiphar's wife's purpose in the narrative is to punish Joseph for rejecting her sexual advances.
  - Women were taught to be a symbol of evil to keep young men focused on religious studies
- Is this the word of God?
  - "If someone were to read the Potiphar story in such a way that the message was women are sexually aggressive, oppressive beings. In other words, in a misogynistic way, that would of course not be the word of God. I would agree with you. On the other hand, we can't very well excise that. It's part there." Francisco Garcia-Treto
- She is in a position of power over Joseph. She does not ask Joseph, but orders him to sleep with her and she is still rejected.
  - Joseph holds the moral high ground
- In Islamic tradition, she is seen as a romantic heroine that beholds the beauty of Joseph as a creation of God



# Joseph as an Underdog

- Joseph makes his way up the social ladder
  - Joseph is sold into slavery, exiled, and imprisoned. He keeps his faith, God remains with him, and he eventually becomes one of the most powerful people in Egypt.
  - “The ones who are lowly are raised up.” Dianne Bergant
- “From a Jewish perspective, Egypt on some level is the quintessential exile. . . He names his [second child] Ephraim. The meaning of the name in Genesis 41 is God made me fertile — where? In the land of my affliction. . . He’s fertile. He rises. He finds himself. But Egypt is yet the land of his affliction.” Norman Cohen
  - Joseph as an immigrant
    - Exodus Pharaoh lords over the Jewish people and commits acts of evil.
    - Genesis Pharaoh accepts Joseph as Egyptian and puts him in a position of power even though he is a foreigner and a slave

# Divine Intervention

- Joseph's brothers hate him for the dreams he tells them about, and they sell him to Potiphar, one of Pharaoh's officers, but "The Lord was with Joseph, and he became a successful man; he was in the house of his Egyptian master." (39.2)
- Joseph gains favor from the pharaoh because of this presence and makes him an overseer of the house; and the Lord blesses the Egyptians' house for Joseph's sake
- "God's not in the story as a character, but God's not in my life or your life as a character either... God is in my life as feelings, promptings, inclinations. The kind of thing that you can easily miss... And I see Joseph sort of picking the right vibes in this situation..." -Francisco Garcia-Treto