

## **Some Pilgrims in Progress: A Profile**

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**“Some Pilgrims in Progress” denotes a website devoted to discussion of Biblical social facts. The object is rehearsal of revealed social facts to counter hyper-individualistic (magical) readings of the Bible often wanting in plausibility. Thus, a cursory reading of Genesis may conclude Joseph was a tattle tale and a braggart for “ratting” on his stepbrothers (Gen. 37:2) and provoking his brothers hatred and envy by telling his self-serving dreams (Gen. 37:6-11).**

**A closer look at the text reveals Joseph as a capable, rising manager of Israel Industries. Joseph responsibly reported the bad shepherding of the sons of Bilhad and Zilpah. But, the favoritism of Jacob, e.g., the “coat of many colours,” so provoked anger of Joseph’s brethren they “could not speak peaceably unto him” (Gen. 37:4) making his job ultimately impossible. Joseph’s dreams were prophetic messages to not destined to be suppressed in a memory hole. They brought Joseph envious “blow back” from his hateful brothers, but his father, Jacob, also a prophetic dreamer (Gen. 28:12-15), “observed the saying” of the dreams (Gen. 37:11).**

**Fast forwarding, one finds Joseph overcoming one disaster after another with apparent ease of a Greek demigod equipped with “get-out-of-jail-free” deus ex machina, a magic sword, etc. Potiphar sees the Lord made everything Joseph did “to prosper in his hand” (Gen. 39:3) so he made him manager of his entire household. Likewise “the LORD was with Joseph” in prison and the warden made Joseph manager of the prison (Gen. 39: 21-22). Finally, Joseph successfully interprets Pharaoh’s dreams and is made ruler of all Egypt (Gen 41:39-44). But, this “magic wand” interpretative framework omits “the rest of the story.” It is the part most needful for the common man whose few days under the sun are “full of trouble” (Job 14:1).**

**We are explicitly told that Joseph’s troubles were part of God’s sovereign plan for Israel. As Joseph later reminded his brothers, “Ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive” (Gen. 50:20). But this plan was not executed ala a heathen, classical Greek drama. Joseph is not a demigod exempted from the normal vanities of life under the sun (Ecclesiastes 1:2-14).**

**Rather Joseph learned the hard work formula for business success from his father, Jacob, who protested to Laban, “Thus I was; in the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night; and my sleep departed from mine eyes” (Gen. 31:40). No successful business can be run on a “nine-to-five” basis of wage workers mesmerized by the weekend. Jacob also taught Joseph how to avoid bitterness which can incapacitate in business failure (Heb. 12:15). Finally, it should be noted that Joseph in prison was positioned to enter Pharaoh’s court. The courtiers Joseph befriended, like the butler, soon assisted in implementation of his ambitious plan to save all Egypt and Israel from financial ruin and chaos in famine (Gen. 41:32-37; 45:9-11).**

**Our hyperindividualistic culture likewise distorts our reading of the rest of the Genesis record and indeed the entire Bible. When the revealed social facts are taken into account, it is inescapable that “there is no new thing under the sun” (Ecc. 1:9), however inventive men may be in their assertions to evade God’s law. The gospel is not slot-machine magic, thank God.**