



A YEAR
with
GOD
Daily Devotional

DAY 25



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DAY TWENTY-FIVE

Genesis 38 - 40

Faithful in the Dark

Genesis 38 is the chapter that interrupts the Joseph story at its most suspenseful moment. Joseph has just been sold to Potiphar. We want to follow him. We want to know what happens in Egypt. And instead the narrative pivots to Judah - and what follows is one of the most uncomfortable, morally tangled chapters in the entire book. It is in the Bible on purpose. The discomfort is the point.

God does not include the messy chapters because He made a mistake. He includes them because the messy chapters are where some of the most important things happen. The redemption line runs directly through the scandal.

Judah leaves his brothers and goes down to stay with a man named Hirah. He marries a Canaanite woman. He has three sons: Er, Onan, and Shelah. He finds a wife for Er - a woman named Tamar. Er is wicked and God takes his life. Then Onan is wicked and God takes his life. And Judah, afraid that his third son will die too, sends Tamar home to her father's house and promises to give her Shelah when he is grown. He does not keep that promise.

Years pass. Judah's wife dies. He goes to Timnah for the sheep-shearing. Tamar hears he is coming and she makes a decision born

of desperation and injustice: she takes off her widow's garments, covers herself with a veil, and sits by the road. Judah sees her, thinks she is a prostitute, and goes in to her. She takes his seal, his cord, and his staff as a pledge. He never returns to pay her. She goes home and puts on her widow's garments again.

Three months later, Judah is told his daughter-in-law is pregnant by immorality. He says: bring her out and let her be burned. And Tamar sends him his own seal, his cord, his staff: the man to whom these belong is the father of my child.

*“She is more righteous than I, ”since I did not give
her to my son Shelah.”*

- Genesis 38:26

Judah says it. Out loud. She is more righteous than I. He withheld what was owed to her. She took what she needed. And Judah - to his credit - does not pretend otherwise. He owns it. And Tamar gives birth to twin sons: Perez and Zerah.

Perez, the son born of this scandalous chapter, is in the genealogy of Jesus. Matthew 1 lists him by name. God did not write Tamar out of the story. He wrote her into the line that leads to the Saviour. He does not require a clean story to produce a holy one.

- The people in your past that you think disqualify you may be the very threads God weaves into the tapestry of His purposes.

He is not embarrassed by your story.

Chapter 39 returns to Joseph - and the contrast with Judah is immediate and striking. Where Judah went down and compromised, Joseph is in a situation where compromise is being offered to him daily, and he refuses.

Potiphar's household prospers because of Joseph. Potiphar sees it. He puts Joseph in charge of everything. And the text says something that will become a refrain across the next several chapters:

“The Lord was with Joseph.”

- Genesis 39:2

Not: the Lord was with Joseph when things were good. Not: the Lord was with Joseph because he had earned it. The Lord was with Joseph in the house of an Egyptian officer, a foreign slave, thousands of miles from home, with no prospect of return. The Lord was with Joseph there.

God's presence is not tied to your geography or your circumstance. He is with you in the house of Potiphar. He is with you in the pit. He is with you in the prison. His “with you” is not conditional on your “where.”

Potiphar's wife wants Joseph. She asks him day after day. And day after day he says no. Not just because it would wrong Potiphar. He says: how could I do this great wickedness and sin against God? His integrity is not primarily social - it is theological. He is not keeping himself pure for his reputation. He is keeping himself pure because

he lives in the awareness of God's presence.

- Integrity held in the awareness of God's presence is a different thing entirely from integrity held for the sake of appearances.

One lasts. The other bends under pressure.

She grabs his garment. He leaves it in her hand and runs. She uses it against him. And Joseph, for the second time in his life - first the pit, now the prison - is handed the consequence of someone else's wrong.

But the Lord was with Joseph in the prison. The keeper of the prison sees something in Joseph and puts everything under his care. The same favour Potiphar saw. The same grace operating in a smaller, darker space.

The favour of God does not require a platform. It operates in prisons. It functions in pits. It shows up in the smallest, most overlooked places and makes itself impossible to miss.

Chapter 40 brings two men into the prison with Joseph: Pharaoh's cupbearer and his baker, both under a cloud of royal displeasure. They each have a dream in the same night and wake up troubled. Joseph notices. He asks: why are your faces downcast today?

- He is in prison for something he didn't do. And he is asking other people how they are. That is a quality of character that circumstances cannot manufacture. Only God can build that in a person.

He interprets their dreams. The cupbearer will be restored in three days. The baker will be executed. Both come true exactly as Joseph said. And Joseph asks the cupbearer for one thing: remember me when you are restored. Mention me to Pharaoh.

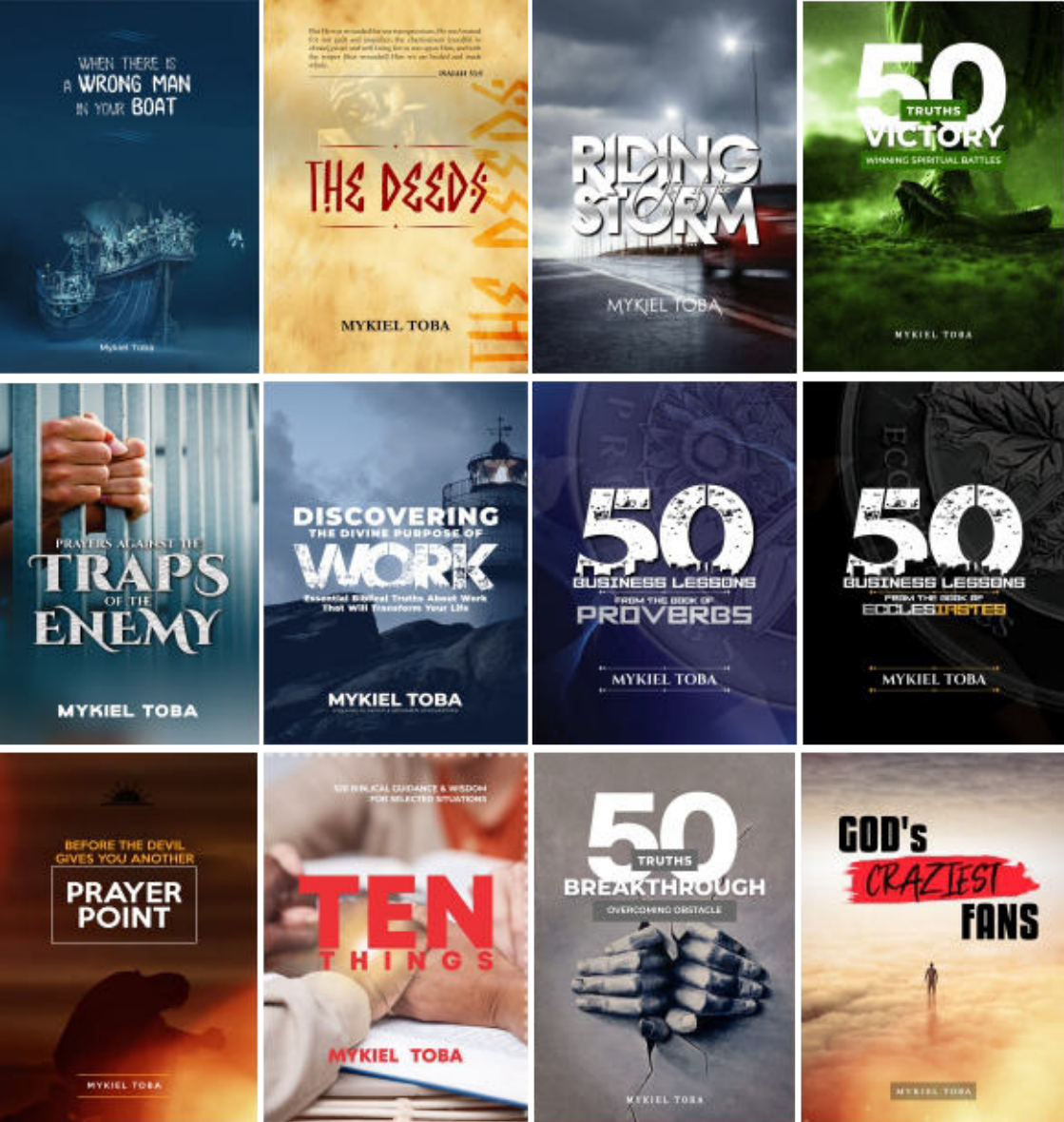
The cupbearer is restored. And the last verse of the chapter is one of the quietest and most devastating lines in the Joseph story: yet the chief cupbearer did not remember Joseph. He forgot him.

Joseph waited two more years in that prison after the cupbearer forgot him. Two years. But the God who was with him in the pit and with him in Potiphar's house and with him in the prison had not forgotten him - even when the man who promised to remember him did. God's memory does not depend on human faithfulness. His timing does not require our help to stay on schedule. Speak this over yourself today:

*The Lord is with me - not just in the good places,
but in the pit, the prison, the forgotten season.
God's memory does not depend on human faithfulness.
He has not forgotten me. His timing is on schedule.*

TOMORROW - Day 26 Genesis 41- 42

Two years after the cupbearer forgets, Pharaoh has a dream. And suddenly Joseph is remembered - not by the cupbearer's kindness, but by God's timing. Come back tomorrow. The moment the pit was preparing him for is finally here.



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