

A LIFE-PRESERVING RECAPITULATION OF GENESIS 1-11 IN THE JOSEPH CYCLE

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“And he said, “I am your brother, Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. And now do not be distressed or angry with yourselves because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life...And God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors.” Gen 45:4-5,7 (ESV)

But Joseph said to them, “Do not fear, for am I in the place of God? As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today. So do not fear; I will provide for you and your little ones.” Gen 50:19–21 (ESV)

This paper investigates how the author of Genesis intentionally places the story of Joseph at the end of the book to serve as a capstone figure, providing a hopeful and messianic trajectory for the remainder of the biblical narratives. The idea of Joseph as a type has been explored in recent works by authors such as David Mitchell, Emadi, and Hamilton, who have evaluated the Joseph narrative from the lens of covenant typology or royal narrative typology. I will be examining the Joseph story through the lens of messianic typology by using an aspect of the Genesis account that I feel has been neglected in much of the scholarly literature. If Joseph is a type of the coming messiah, is there any evidence that can be demonstrated between the Joseph narrative of Gen 37-50 and the primeval history that is provided in Genesis 1-11? If Joseph is indeed intended as a messianic type, one would expect there to be a strong relationship not just between his narrative and the patriarchal narratives (which has been successfully demonstrated by others such as Samuel Emadi), but also the pre-patriarchal narratives which serve as the foundational Israelite worldview and the origin of humanity's problems such as temptation, sin, death, and idolatry.

By comparing these opening chapters of Genesis 1-11 to the Joseph narrative found in the closing chapters of Genesis 37-50, we will look to answer our fundamental question. Is there sufficient evidence to conclude authorial intent to portray Joseph as a typological fulfilling character to the foundational history of Israel? If so, I believe this will not only help further establish Joseph as a typologically messianic figure, but also strengthen the biblical-theological interpretation of Genesis as a cohesive work. To accomplish this, we will move through the Joseph narrative while establishing textual and conceptual connections between it and the primeval history of Gen 1-11 specifically in the stories of creation, the Garden of Eden, the flood, and the Tower of Babel. All Scripture references will be done using the ESV translation unless otherwise noted.

Working Definitions and Outline

Before investigating the text for evidence messianic recapitulation, it is important to define the key terms used as part of the analysis. The definitions provided here are not meant to be perfectly exhaustive since concepts such as messianic expectation, typology, and recapitulation are complex and deserve more comprehensive treatment whenever possible. Rather than being exhaustive, these definitions serve as working definitions so that there can be a reasonable level of shared understanding for the purposes of working through the texts.

We will use a working definition of “messiah” and “messianic” to be referring to “the hope of the coming of a royal agent who will serve God’s kingdom purposes, an expectation that Christians believe finds fulfillment in Jesus Christ” which I have borrowed from Abernathy and Oswell.¹ While there are many themes, motifs, and stories throughout the Old Testament that are linked to the messiah (and ultimately then to Jesus), the messiah is primarily viewed as a royal figure.

For our working definition of “typology” or referring to something or someone as “a type,” we will think of it as an intended, future-oriented pattern provided by the author. More specifically we will define typology as “Typology is God-ordained, author-intended historical correspondence and escalation in significance between people, events, and institutions across the Bible’s redemptive-historical story.”² This does not require the author to have complete understanding of the type’s eventual fulfillment. Rather, it simply requires the biblical author to write according to an intended sequence or pattern that will be expanded upon (but never contradicted) and ultimately realized at some time in the future.

With some of our important terms defined, we can evaluate the general structure of the argument being made in this paper. We will see that the Joseph story not only has striking similarities to Gen 1-11 in terms of shared language and concepts, but it also shares the same sequence with connections beginning with Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, Noah and the flood, and finally the tower of Babel. We examine the Joseph story in the same sequence to find the similarities and important differences between the texts. Finally, we will close by showing how the author of Genesis intentionally provides a typological lens in the ending of the Joseph story to demonstrate how the text should also be understood as being messianic.

Introduction to Joseph the Dreamer (Echoes of Eden)

The first example of the recapitulation of Gen 1-11 in the Joseph cycle is how the author introduces Joseph using language that links Joseph to the human characters found in the first few

¹ Andrew T. Abernathy and Greg Goswell, *God’s Messiah in the Old Testament: Expectations of a Coming King* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, a division of Baker Publishing Group, 2020), 001.

² James M. Hamilton, *Typology: Understanding the Bible’s Promise-Shaped Patterns: How Old Testament Expectations Are Fulfilled in Christ* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Academic, 2022), 26.

chapters of Genesis: Adam, Eve, Cain, and Abel. In the Joseph story we are immediately presented with fraternal strife as is so common throughout Genesis beginning with Cain and Abel and continuing through to the sons of Noah, Abraham, and Isaac. It seems at first glance that the offspring of Jacob will continue to suffer from the same fate of feuding and strife as previous generations have suffered. In addition to the general theme of fraternal strife, we are given specific textual links by the author back to these opening stories. Beginning with the story of Adam and Eve in Gen 3:7 we see that Jacob presents Joseph a “robe of many colors”, as is translated in the ESV as well as in today’s own cultural identifier of the character of Joseph. We see in the Hebrew however that this robe is a כְּתֹנֶת (kethonet). This same word is used in the plural form in Gen 3:21 to refer to the “garments” (כְּתֹנֶת) of skin that God provides for Adam and Eve. This type of garment is associated with priestly service throughout the Old Testament (Exo 28:4, Exo 29:5, Lev 16:4). This garment is provided for Adam and Eve prior to their exile. As we will see, this too seems to be the case for young Joseph. Not only do we receive a textual link to Adam and Eve, but we then find another textual link between Joseph and Abel. Prior to the giving of the garment, we are introduced to Joseph who is “pasturing the flock” with his brothers. This task of רֹעֵה צֹאן (roeh tzon) is the same task we see undertaken by Abel in Gen 4:2 who was a רֹעֵה צֹאן or “keeper of sheep”. Already there are ominous undertones and troubling connections seen in this special gift given to Joseph by his father that link him to the earlier stories of Adam and Eve as well as Cain and Abel.

Immediately after this we see Joseph positioned as a potential messianic figure as he is presented in the text as a future royal agent. Genesis 37 continues with the story of Joseph having two dreams. The first dream, as he tells his brothers, has Joseph working in the field with his brothers binding sheaves. This picture of the sons of Jacob, heirs to the promise, sweating in the field to produce grain for food may be an allusion to the described curse of Adam in which God tells him that “cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread” (Gen 3:17b-19a). Here in Joseph’s dream we find the brothers working the plants of the field together, presumably to provide for their own sustenance as well as that of the entire clan. The twist of Joseph’s dream however is that his own sheave stands up! Not only that, but the sheaves of his brothers gather around it and bow down to the sheaf of Joseph! This is of course interpreted by Joseph’s brothers as him עֲלֵינוּ (to reign as king, translation mine) over them. One observation that might be made about this interpretation is that it is not the brothers who bow down to Joseph in the dream. Rather, it is the work of their hands, or that which comes after them, which performs the actions. Is the dream meant to hold symbolic meaning not only for the present generation, but also for some time still yet to come? This idea may prove tenable if a pattern of revealing things about the distant future can be discerned within the rest of the Joseph narrative. Nonetheless, Joseph’s brothers clearly see this as a sign of future rulership for Joseph himself and this fuels their hatred for him all the more (Gen 37:8). Joseph then has another dream which he tells not only to his brothers but also

to his father Jacob (Gen 37:10). In this dream the sun, moon, and eleven stars were bowing down to Joseph. This dream not only draws the ire of his brothers but also of his father who says “Shall I and your mother and your brothers indeed come to bow ourselves to the ground before you?” Despite his rebuke, Jacob keeps this dream in mind.

There is an interesting contrast between the realm of the two dreams. In the first dream we see a clear realm of earth (sheaves, field) associated with kingship for Joseph. In the next dream, however, we see a clear realm of the heavens (sun, moon, stars) associated with kingship for Joseph. While this second dream is likewise interpreted by Joseph’s family as being a sign of earthly kingship as Jacob ascribes its meaning of him, his wife, and other sons bowing before Joseph, heavenly objects are much more commonly associated with divine beings, not humans, throughout the Bible as well as the ancient Near East. This is particularly true when it comes to objects of worship (Deut 4:19). Another possible sign that this dream bears a different meaning than the one provided by Jacob is that in the dream, the moon, which Jacob associates with his wife, also bows before Joseph. We see the fulfillment of the first dream where his eleven brothers (including Benjamin) bow before him occurring in Gen 43:26 and Gen 44:14. There is, however, no incident described in the rest of the Joseph story where his brothers, his father, and his father’s wife bow before him. While this may be inferred to have happened at some point after their relocation from Canaan to Egypt, it is never stated. Additionally, this is unlikely to have happened as there is no mention of Leah during the family’s relocation to Egypt and she was buried “in the cave that is in the field at Machpelah, to the east of Mamre, *in the land of Canaan*” (Gen 49:30-32, emphasis mine). There is no mention of Jacob or his sons leaving Egypt after their relocation, except for the burial of Jacob after his death and embalming (Gen 50:13). Does this second dream then also have implications of future fulfillment, not by Joseph and his family, but of one who is to come like Joseph with possible divine association or object of divine reverence? Through his two dreams Joseph is presented in messianic terms to such a degree that his brothers and even his father, the patriarch Jacob, have strong reactions to its implications.

Joseph Sent Into Exile

The text then provides another example of recapitulation between Joseph and the story of Adam and Eve by presenting the theme of exile and the theme of bread as a symbol of suffering. After these dreams, begins the descent of Joseph into exile. We are faced with the familiar story where Joseph is sent by his father Jacob to see if it is going well with his brothers who are shepherding the sheep near Shechem. After finding them in Dothan, his brothers see Joseph, remove his כִּתְיָה (priestly tunic) and throw him into a nearby pit. Joseph is then moved from one form of death (the pit) into another, exile into Egypt. As part of his exile, we see similarities with the exile of Adam and Eve from God’s presence. After their sin they were exiled from sacred land and given a כִּתְיָה (priestly tunic) which was made from the bloodshed of an animal. This exile then led to the fratricide of Cain killing Abel. These stories share many of the same symbols and themes.

Joseph's כְּתֹנֶת is removed from him and dipped in animal blood as his brothers sentence him into exilic death from the promised land of God's presence. I would suggest given the density of shared themes between the narratives, that it is appropriate to consider another: the motif of bread. As the brothers ponder Joseph's fate in the pit, the text mentions that they sit down to eat bread. Although the word bread is omitted in many translations including the ESV, the word לֶחֶם is used alongside the verb אָכַל (Gen 37:25). This suggests that the idea of them eating bread specifically may bear some significance as the אָכַל is sufficient to communicate that they simply were eating. As we will see, the author continues to use the word לֶחֶם for the special purpose of using bread as a motif (an observable pattern) throughout the Joseph cycle. There are nearly twice as many uses of לֶחֶם in the Joseph cycle (14x) as there are in all of Genesis leading up to it (8x). Given the presence of other themes from Genesis 3 and 4, I believe this inclusion of לֶחֶם is meant to provide an ongoing reference to the curse described to Adam and that he would "eat bread by the sweat of his brow". These themes of exile from the promised land and bread's association with suffering provides further evidence of recapitulation.

There is also a subtle factor that connects this suffering event to the typological understanding of Joseph. While not obvious in Genesis 37, this scene of Joseph's descent into an exilic death seems to be endured willingly. As we will see later in Genesis when Jacob is on his deathbed, Jacob recognizes that Joseph did not resist his brothers. During his blessing, Jacob says of Joseph: "The archers bitterly attacked him, shot at him, and harassed him severely, yet his bow remained unmoved" (Gen 49:23–24a). Here Jacob indicates that Joseph did not defend himself against his brothers but rather willingly endured the suffering. This idea is mentioned in *The Testament of Joseph*³. While there is debate around the authenticity and editorial history of this document, it conveys a believable truth: Joseph was a free and favored man who would be hard to mistake for a slave. It is doubtful that, had he protested in the slightest, he would not have been returned home by the Ishmaelite traders. The Ishmaelites were also descendents of Abraham and would no doubt have sought to avoid kidnapping and selling a son of Jacob. While Adam and Eve were driven from sacred space due to their sin and not of their choosing, Joseph chose to endure the shame of exile and was driven from sacred space due to the sin of his brothers. This idea of an individual willingly suffering for the sake of Israel will continue to be a key messianic motif throughout the Old Testament.

Also present in this story is the apparent recapitulation of the seed of the woman against the seed of the serpent. In the text we find a striking contrast of Joseph and his brothers. Continuing with the earlier themes of fraternal conflict and fratricide, in this story it is Joseph who is presented in the likeness of righteous Abel as the seed of the woman and his brothers, the other tribal patriarchs of Israel, who are presented in the likeness of Cain as the seed of the

³ R. H. Charles, ed., *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs: Translation* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1908). (Testament of Joseph 11.2)

serpent.⁴ Just as Abel was betrayed by his jealous brother Cain in a field away from witnesses, so too Joseph is betrayed by his jealous brothers in a field away from home and without witnesses.

Already in this first chapter of the Joseph story of Gen 37, we have seen how Joseph recapitulates the early chapters of Genesis by sharing the same blood stained garment as Adam and Eve, is presented as a future king, and in the likeness of Abel experiences enmity against the seed of the serpent as demonstrated by the betrayal of his brothers. This betrayal also occurs within the backdrop of life-giving bread for others associated with the toil and suffering of Joseph.

Joseph's Sexual Innocence (Echoes of the Flood)

Although Genesis continues with the story of Judah and Tamar, the significance of its interaction with the rest of the Joseph narrative is outside the scope of this article. Picking the story back up in Genesis 39 we find in the Joseph story examples of recapitulation of the flood narrative beginning in Genesis 6. Joseph is sold into the service of Potiphar in Egypt and the LORD was with Joseph. During this time in Potiphar's house Joseph became successful in everything that he did to such an extent that Potiphar put everything that he had in Joseph's charge. The text, however, is careful to point out that Potiphar had no concern for anything except for the bread (לֶחֶם) that he ate (Gen 39:6). It is quite possible that this is a metaphor for his marriage as bread and eating bread can have associations with sexual relations in the ancient near east.⁵ Furthering the motif of bread throughout the narrative, just as with the story of his brothers, the life-giving act of other people eating bread coincides with a treachery and death for Joseph. This treachery comes in the form of seduction and deceit by Potiphar's wife. She "lifts up her eyes" upon Joseph who was beautiful in form and appearance and tries to seduce him. Joseph, however, refers to this as a "great evil" and a sin against God. This leads to false accusations of sexual infidelity against Joseph and his confinement to chains in prison (Ps 105:18).

While there are echos of other patriarchal stories within this narrative such as the incident between Abraham and Sarah and Abimelech (Gen 20), I believe there are also echoes of the pre-patriarchal narrative found in the sins of the flood story of Genesis 6 and 9, specifically the sin of the sons of God in Gen 6:1-4 and the sin of Ham in Genesis 9:20-28. The flood narrative is sandwiched between two stories of sexual transgression that violate the boundary of authority. In Genesis 6 we see the sons of God who take human wives for themselves. While not obvious at first glance, this story too contains a theme of the seed of the women against the seed of the serpent. Here we have a continuation of the parties from Genesis 3: humanity against the divine. Noah is righteous in his generation while the rest of humanity is being corrupted by an evil divine influence. Michael Heiser summarizes this event well while leaning on 2 Peter 2:1-10 and

⁴ James M. Hamilton, *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment: A Biblical Theology*, Illustrated edition (Wheaton, Ill: Crossway, 2010), 84.

⁵ Ronald Veenker, "Forbidden Fruit: Ancient Near Eastern Sexual Metaphors," *HUCA* 70/71, 1999, 65.

Jude 5-7, “Scholars agree that the passages are about the same subject matter. They describe an episode from the time of Noah and the Flood when ‘angels’ sinned. That sin, which precipitated the Flood, was sexual in nature; it is placed in the same category as the sin that prompted the judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah. The transgression was interpreted by Peter and Jude as evidence of despising authority and the boundaries of “proper dwelling” for the parties concerned”.⁶

This same pattern of despising authority through sexual sin against the promised seed happens again immediately after the flood in Gen 9. Here we see Ham committing a sexual offense (the nature of which is debated) against the authority of his father in what was likely a case of maternal incest.⁷ Ham through an act of sexual sin attempts to usurp his father or otherwise corrupt the line of the seed of the women. Though the flood acted as a “great reset” upon the earth, the issue of the heart of man remained and we are immediately faced with the same problem established in Genesis 3 of the seed of the women against the seed of the serpent.

In both stories (the sin of the sons of God and the sin of Ham) we have stewards of divine authority falling into sexual sin that causes them to cross the boundary of authority. Here Joseph is tempted with a sin of similar nature. He is being enticed by his master’s wife to despise the authority over him and to transgress his proper dwelling as a servant through an act of sexual transgression. Rather than yielding to this temptation, Joseph honors the boundaries of authority and refuses. In this way Joseph is once again successful in areas that the figures of Gen 1- 11 have failed.

Instead of Joseph’s success leading to his justification, however, it tragically leads to his further descent. Not only is Joseph in Egypt, the realm of the dead, but he is now put into confinement in the king’s prison. While not obvious at first, this has a striking similarity to the story of the sons of God according to oldest traditions that are recorded in places such as 1 Enoch and Jubilees. After the sons of God transgress the authority of God by taking human wives, they are confined in the prison of the abyss until their final judgment. While they are guilty of the transgression for which they are punished, Joseph suffers innocently. Egypt is also founded through the lineage of Noah’s son Ham. This link is even made explicitly regarding Joseph and Israel’s sojourn in Psalm 105:23. In the house of Ham, Joseph proves morally triumphant.

There is one more interesting link between Joseph in Egypt and the sin of Ham. In Genesis 42:9-12, we read that Joseph’s brothers come into Egypt to buy grain as the famine has spread and is being experienced in Canaan. When Joseph’s brothers are brought before him, Joseph asks them if they have come to Egypt to “see the nakedness” of the land. This phrase has

⁶ Michael S. Heiser, *Reversing Hermon: Enoch, The Watchers & The Forgotten Mission of Jesus Christ* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2017), 14.

⁷ John Sietze Bergsma and Scott Hahn, “Noah’s Nakedness And The Curse On Canaan (Genesis 9:20-27),” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 124, no. 1 (2005): 25–40.

puzzled scholars as it is unclear what exactly Joseph could be alluding to whether it be military strength, food shortages, or something else entirely. It is interesting to note that Joseph uses the phrase associated with Ham as his brothers come into Egypt, the land of Ham.

Through the sequence of Joseph in Potiphar's house, we have seen how the narrative recapitulates the flood narrative of Genesis 6-9. Just as the sons of God and Ham the son of Noah despise the authority over them and violate the boundaries of authority through committing acts of sexual immorality, Joseph is presented with a strikingly similar temptation. In typological fashion, however, Joseph does not yield to the temptation and, rather than being vindicated, suffers unjustly by being chained in the depths of prison in gloomy darkness.

Joseph's imprisonment leads to yet another example of bread as the symbol of the curse within the Joseph narrative. Despite being wrongfully imprisoned, God continues to be with Joseph and he continues to be successful in all that he does and eventually is second in command over the entire prison. Eventually the king's Chief Cupbearer and Chief Baker are imprisoned and put into Joseph's care. After some time, on the same night, both men have a dream and require interpretation. Joseph interprets the dream of the Chief Cupbearer to be about his restoration in 3 days. The Chief Baker's dream, however, is interpreted to mean that he will be hanged in 3 days. This is interesting in light of the possible symbolism of bread so far in the narrative where bread has been a marker of destruction. Joseph's interpretations come to pass after 3 days and Joseph is forgotten by the Chief Cupbearer and left in prison.

Joseph's Uniting Provision (Echoes of Babel)

Next, we find examples of recapitulation between the following section of the Joseph narrative during his time in prison and before Pharaoh with the story of the Tower of Babel through a shared theme of scattering/gathering as well as shared language used regarding borders, tongues, and the whole earth. Two years after Joseph interpreted the dream of the Chief Cupbearer and the dream of the Chief Baker, Pharaoh had two dreams that cannot be interpreted by others within his court. After learning of Joseph's abilities from the Chief Cupbearer, Pharaoh summons Joseph to provide an interpretation. In his first dream, he sees cows on the banks (שְׁפֵת) of the Nile and in his second he sees ears of corn. Both dreams carry the same meaning of 7 years of plenty which will be followed by 7 years of great famine. As we will read later in the narrative, the famine is not limited to Egypt but is over all the earth (כָּל-הָאָרֶץ) in Gen 41:57. The combination of these two terms שְׁפֵת and כָּל-הָאָרֶץ brings to mind the pre-patriarchal story commonly referred to as the Tower of Babel. The term used for the "banks" of the Nile (שְׁפֵת) is found in Genesis 11:7-9 to describe the language and speech that is confused by the LORD. Additionally, the phrase "all the land" (כָּל-הָאָרֶץ) is used to describe the destination of those being scattered and both terms are used exactly three times:

"Come, let us go down and there confuse their language (שְׁפֵת), so that they may not

understand one another's speech (שָׁפַת). So the LORD dispersed them from there over the face of all the earth (כָּל־הָאָרֶץ), and they left off building the city. Therefore its name was called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language (שָׁפַת) of all the earth (כָּל־הָאָרֶץ). And from there the LORD dispersed them over the face of all the earth (כָּל־הָאָרֶץ)“ Gen 11:7-9.

The idea of language, speech, and borders were closely aligned throughout the Ancient Near East and in many ways are still connected ideas today. The implications of the famine being like the events at the Tower of Babel are severe. This is no small famine and no ordinary work of man can survive it. This view may be further strengthened if the story in the early part of Exodus is related. In the opening sections of Exodus we learn that the people of Israel continue to be fruitful and multiply in the land of Egypt even after the death of Joseph and his brothers. Immediately following this section, however, we read about Joseph being forgotten by a new king of Egypt who then oppresses the people of Israel in a manner eerily similar to the tower of Babel story. In both stories we see the same phrase “Come, let us...” which, in Exodus, is used by Pharaoh to describe his dealings with the Israelites. The only other place in the Torah where this Hebrew term (הִבָּהּ) is used is in the Tower of Babel story where it is used twice by the people building the city and once by the LORD in describing his intent to act against them. Not only is this instigating verb used identical in both stories, but both stories also involve the building of cities through the means of brick (לִבְנָה) and mortar (חֹמֶר).⁸ Interestingly, this enslavement by Pharaoh led to the “spreading out” of the Israelites because they were becoming so numerous. This is in contrast to the dispersion of Babel. At Babel the people began to spread out as they were dispersed and fractured. In Egypt, God spreads His people out through prosperity, even in affliction. If the Joseph story demonstrates a reversal of Babel it makes sense that the beginning of Exodus would demonstrate its collapse back into the same problem once Joseph is forgotten. Here Joseph is giving a preview in some way of what an ultimate reversal will be like but it is not for him to achieve. While he is able to create unity and provision for the peoples across the earth, it is only temporary and limited.

Through this time before Pharaoh we have seen the recapitulation of the Tower of Babel in the Joseph narrative. Joseph interprets Pharaoh's dreams with language and implications similar to that of Babel found in Genesis 11. However, instead of it being an act of judgment as at Babel, Joseph is presented typologically as a solution to the event. Rather than it leading to the scattering and spreading out of peoples, it leads to the reunification and provision of nations under the sovereignty of Joseph as the royal figure as we will see in the next section.

Joseph's Ascent (Echoes of New Creation)

It is at this point in the Joseph story that we find a sharp change in narrative direction. Within the previous sections we have seen how Joseph recapitulates the narrative of Gen 1-11

⁸ Sheila Tuller Keiter, “Outsmarting God: Egyptian Slavery And The Tower Of Babel,” *Jewish Bible Quarterly* 41, no. 3 (2013): 200–204.

along his descent into exilic suffering and death. It is at this point that we find Joseph recapitulates the narrative of Gen 1-11 through his messianic ascent into sovereign rule and dominion. Along with his interpretation to Pharaoh, Joseph offers him counsel on what to do now that the interpretation has been established. He tells Pharaoh to choose someone discerning and wise and set them over the land to make preparation. Pharaoh is pleased with Joseph's plan and knows the perfect person for the job. As Pharaoh says regarding Joseph, "'Can we find a man like this, in whom is the Spirit of God?' Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, 'Since God has shown you all this, there is none so discerning and wise as you are.'" (Gen 41:38–39). Pharaoh rightly recognizes the agent of Joseph's power as being the Spirit of God (אֱלֹהִים רוּחַ), who was last referenced in Gen 1:2 as the Spirit of God (אֱלֹהִים רוּחַ) hovered over the face of the waters during creation. Joseph is then given dominion over the land (Gen 41:41) and fashioned as the image of Pharaoh himself (41:42). He is then given a new name, a wife (who would soon bear him two sons) and is fully established over the entire kingdom (Gen 41:45). The parallels with creation and the role of Adam are evident. As would be expected with the symbolism of new creation, this marks a turning point in the Joseph narrative and marks his ascension from death into a new life of unprecedented power and dominion. Joseph has been raised up from death and is presented as a new Adam to reign and exercise dominion at the right hand of power.⁹

This story of ascent into kingship likely becomes a powerful narrative framework that is used to describe great rulers later during the Old Testament period. We see a reversal of this dynamic with Moses. Moses, who is already Egyptian royalty, strikes down an Egyptian to save his Hebrew kinsman only to be told "Who made you a prince and a judge over us?" (Ex 2:14). This causes Moses to flee Egypt back into the Negev. This is a strong echo of the interaction with Joseph's brothers after his dreams where they despise him for his claim to rulership and he is then exiled into Egypt. Echoes of and allusions to the Joseph story are also found within the story of David. This correlation between the Joseph story and the David story is well documented and explained by James Hamilton. For the sake of brevity, I will provide one of his charts detailing just some of the linguistic points of contact between the two narratives that he observes¹⁰:

Genesis 37–50	Samuel
Gen 38:1, 12, 20 Adullamite	1 Sam 22:1 Cave of Adullam

⁹ Timothy J. Stone, "Joseph in the Likeness of Adam: Narrative Echoes of the Fall," in *Genesis and Christian Theology*, ed. Nathan MacDonald, Mark W. Elliott, and Grant Macaskill (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2012), 70.

¹⁰ James M. Hamilton, "Was Joseph a Type of the Messiah? Tracing the Typological Identification between Joseph, David, and Jesus," *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* Volume 12, 2008, 57.

Gen 38:26 Judah says of Tamar, “she has been more righteous than I because . . .”	1 Samuel 24:17 Saul says to David, “you have been more righteous than I because . . .”
Gen 37:5, 9; 39:2, 3, 21, 23; 48:21 Yahweh was with Joseph	1 Sam 16:18; 17:37; 18:12, 14, 28 Yahweh was with David
Gen 39:3 Yahweh causes everything Joseph does to succeed	1 Sam 16:18; 18:5, 14–16, 30 Yahweh with David to make him successful
Gen 39:4 Joseph found favor in Potiphar’s sight	1 Sam 16:22 David found favor in Saul’s sight
Gen 39:6 Joseph’s handsome appearance	1 Sam 16:12, 18 David’s handsome appearance
Gen 41:26 Joseph “stood before” Pharaoh	1 Sam 16:21 David “stood before” Saul
Gen 41:38 Joseph has the Spirit	1 Sam 16:14 David has the Spirit

Interestingly, we are told that Joseph is 30 years old when he enters into the service of the king. The age of 30 would also be known to mark the age for the beginning of Levitical service (Numbers 4). Only two other figures begin their kingship specifically at age 30, David (2 Sam 5:4) and Jesus (Luke 3:23). As demonstrating the continual connections between Joseph’s ascent into power and the dominion of future Israelite leaders extends beyond the scope of this paper, hopefully this is enough to demonstrate how foundational the story of Joseph and his rise to power is to Israelite thinking throughout the Scriptures. Joseph recapitulates the story of Adam, not as an exile like we witnessed in Gen 37, but as an appointed ruler at the right hand of power to exercise dominion and subdue nature.

Joseph’s Testing (Echoes of Good and Evil)

As Joseph has now been presented as a new Adam, it is perhaps not surprising that we next find recapitulation of the temptation in the Garden of Eden, with an unexpected twist. The famine had impacted Jacob and his family in the land of Canaan and so Joseph’s brothers went to Egypt hoping to buy grain. Joseph is no longer dressed as his brothers would be but is instead dressed in Egyptian royal garb. His brothers, therefore, do not recognize him but Joseph does

indeed recognize his brothers. Joseph pretends to be a stranger and begins to test them. They are first tested by leaving Simeon in Egypt while they return home with grain in order to bring Benjamin with them. This is to “confirm” to Joseph that they are not spies and are telling the truth about having another brother and that they are honest men.

While evaluating the structure and scope of these tests is beyond the scope of this article, I would like to evaluate a particular allusion that may further strengthen allusions back to the pre-patriarchal narratives. In chapter 44 we read about Joseph having the money for food placed back into his brother’s sacks and to also place his cup, a cup of silver, into the sack of his youngest brother Benjamin. Shortly after leaving the city, the brothers are overtaken by Joseph’s servant and confronted for stealing the cup. Joseph himself gives the words for his servant to use when confronting his brothers which may indicate an elevated importance for the exact words that are used. His brothers are accused of repaying “evil for good” by stealing the cup. Not only this, but it is explained to them that this cup is used by Joseph to practice divination. Whether or not Joseph actually practiced divination using this cup is subject to debate but there is no question that such practices were well known and Joseph’s brothers would have easily believed that this was within the realm of possibility.¹¹

This short message of confrontation contains some language that provokes imagery of the Garden of Eden: Evil (רָע), Good (טוֹב), and Serpent/Divination(נָחֵשׁ). It is worth noting that the words for the serpent in Genesis 3 is different from the word used for divination in Genesis 44. They do, however, share the same root נָחֵשׁ which is used in its noun form in Genesis 3 and its verb form in Genesis 44. Adding to the significance of the wording is the earlier presentation of Joseph as the promised seed of the woman and his brothers as the seed of the serpent. These various elements layer together to portray two images of striking similarity. Here in Egypt we find a twist on the story of life and death and the temptation of sin. It is now Joseph who is testing his brothers and has accused them of doing evil similar to that of Adam and Eve. This event then leads us into the final confrontation before the restoration of all Israel.

This final confrontation demonstrates similarities and important differences with the events of enmity and familial strife that follow the failure of Adam and Eve to resist temptation in the Garden of Eden. This section of Gen 44 is a turning point in the way that Joseph’s brothers are presented collectively. Additionally, it is a critical turning point in the relationship between Joseph and his entire family, including his father Jacob. Within the text, we see a marked shift in position where Joseph’s brothers are now recognized as “Judah and his brothers” (Gen 44:14). Here again we see Judah taking a lead role over the other tribal heads and assuming leadership and responsibility for their well being. This is in line with the promise he made to Jacob before heading back to Egypt that he would provide himself as collateral for the safety of Benjamin, in

¹¹ Victor Harold Matthews, Mark W. Chavalas, and John H. Walton, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament*, electronic ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000).

whose sack Joseph's silver cup was found and was now at risk of being enslaved. In his attempt to bargain with Joseph, Judah offers for all the brothers to be enslaved rather than simply for Benjamin to be left as a slave. At first glance this may seem odd as many have interpreted the motives of Judah to be the liberation of Benjamin. If all of the brothers are enslaved, surely Benjamin is not liberated but instead shares his condemnation. Judah then speaks to Joseph and makes his true motivation known. Judah is not seeking the well being of his brothers, but the well being of their father Jacob. Judah tells Joseph that by keeping just Benjamin as a slave, it will lead to the death of Jacob because of his great despair. Judah, who had sold his brother Joseph into slavery, was now willing to subject himself to slavery in order to preserve the life of Jacob. Judah, who once acted as the seed of the serpent against Joseph as the seed of the woman, now aligns himself with the seed of the woman by attempting to preserve life at his own expense for the sake of his father. It is this realization that finally causes Joseph to have an emotional break and to end the testing of his brothers.

Joseph's Forgiveness (Enmity Undone)

We see the recapitulation of fraternal strife as Joseph is now presented with the opportunity to confront his brothers in secret. After sending everyone else out of his presence, Joseph is now alone with his brothers for the first time since they betrayed him. Throughout the Genesis narrative, siblings being alone has universally led to negative and extreme outcomes. Looking at the chart below, we can see that this pattern should set off alarm bells to the hearers or readers of this story when Joseph sends everyone else out of his presence:

Text	Siblings	Location	Outcome
Gen 4	Cain & Abel	Alone in the Field	Cain Murdered Abel
Gen 9	Shem, Ham & Japheth	Outside Noah's Tent	Ham Uncovered Noah's Nakedness
Gen 19	Lot's Daughters	Alone in the Cave	Daughters Committed Incest to Produce Prodigy
Gen 25	Jacob & Esau	Coming in from the Field	Esau Sold His Birthright to Jacob in Exchange for Food
Gen 37	Jacob's Sons	Field of Dothan	Joseph's Brothers Sold Him as a Slave into Egypt

Interestingly, all of these incidents have a tremendous impact on the promised seed of the woman. They are evil acts committed against the blessed offspring or can be seen as outcomes that further the seed of the serpent through continued enmity of offspring through rival nations. Now we find Joseph in the position to exercise power over his siblings in a similar manner.

Joseph reveals himself to his brothers and asks about the life of his father Jacob. His brothers react with understandable silence and stand in dread before their brother who holds their life in his hands.

Rather than the recapitulation leading to continued enmity, Joseph does not act according to what we would expect from the earlier narratives. Rather than taking revenge or otherwise seeking restitution, he draws them near to himself and instructs them to not be distressed or angry with themselves for selling him *here* (emphasis mine). This is an interesting use of the adverb הֵנָּה that indicates Joseph's belief that he was not simply sold into Egypt but was sold into this moment in time as הֵנָּה brings with it the sense of temporal and not just geographic location. He immediately confirms this by saying that God sent him before them לְמַחְיָה. This construction is handled in various ways as it is sometimes translated as a verb "to preserve life" in places such as the ESV but the root חָיָה is a noun. When viewed as a noun instead of a verb you get a translation similar to "as a deliverance" in the LEB. The difference is subtle but impactful. When translated as a noun, it correctly emphasizes Joseph's role, not his specific actions. Joseph is offered up by God to be the object of deliverance for His people, not a simple servant who acts in manners of deliverance for His people. This is critical to understanding the typology of Joseph. Here Joseph dissolves the enmity that has been present since Cain and Abel. He does this not by his actions but by his willingness to be offered up as a deliverance for the sake of his brothers. This sacrifice not only leads to the immediate salvation of his brothers, but for even more to "preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors".¹²

This theme of keeping alive and preserving life is a dominant theme in the flood story. The verb for keeping life or alive חָיָה is used in different forms three times in Genesis 6 and here too is used by Joseph to describe his purpose. Beyond simply preserving their life, Joseph immediately makes known his authority and power to bless his family by relocating them to the best part of Egypt and providing for them throughout the famine period. The blessing of fruitfulness and multiplication for the tribes of Israel is unlocked through the sacrifice and forgiveness of Joseph. The flood story finds its recapitulation as Joseph demonstrates his role as a deliverance from death for the sake of the remnant. Interestingly, it seems that Joseph is not presented as a new Noah, one who delivers from death but instead is presented as a new ark, one who is the object by which deliverance from death is achieved. This is noteworthy for its potential implications for Joseph as a messianic type as not simply a deliverer of God's people, but as the actual means of deliverance.

¹² This word for remnant (שְׁאֵרִית) is surprisingly not used in the Genesis flood story but becomes a major theme and is used heavily in the prophets such as the book of Isaiah and especially in Jeremiah where it is used 24 times in various ways and of various peoples but is most often used to describe the remnant of Judah and messianic promises such as in Jeremiah 23.

Salvation of the Gentiles (A Change of Allegiance)

For our purposes of demonstrating Joseph as a messianic type, it is important to observe that, in addition to the deliverance of Israel, Joseph also saves the lives of the Gentile people of Egypt while establishing nearly absolute dominion of the land.¹³ As the famine continues into the following years, the people of Egypt become increasingly desperate for food. After selling all of their livestock to Joseph for Pharaoh in order to afford food, eventually the people are left with nothing but themselves and their land as a potential currency for obtaining food (Gen 47:13-19). This total lack of food is summarized in verse 13 by noting the lack of bread (ֶחֶלֶב). Again we are confronted with bread as the symbol of suffering and death. Instead of this curse working against Joseph as earlier in the story, however, we find that it is everyone except for Joseph who suffers. After his ascent to the right hand of power, it is Joseph who becomes the giver of bread and life to all who subject themselves to his authority. The people of Egypt come to Joseph and ask that he “Buy us and our land for food, and we with our land will be servants to Pharaoh. And give us seed that we may live and not die, and that the land may not be desolate.” (Gen 47:19). While some have objected to the idea of Joseph enslaving the Egyptians, the text may offer an alternative emphasis. Joseph does indeed buy the Egyptians and their land, however, the author places the emphasis not on the people as slaves but on the land now belonging to Pharaoh. Joseph does not subject the people to new tasks as slaves, but rather simply relocates them off of his newly acquired land. This is more evident in the LEB translation, “As for the people, he transferred them to the cities, from one end of the territory of Egypt to the other.” (Gen 47:21). He provided food and seed for all Egyptians so that they could provide for themselves and “their little ones”. He did not impose new work on the people, but simply a tax to be paid at harvest. The people respond by telling Joseph that he has saved their lives.

I propose that in light of the examples of recapitulation and messianic typology observed so far, that the author intends for this story to be seen not as an act of enslavement by Joseph but as an act of Gentile deliverance and absolute geographic rule by Joseph as the messianic type. It is not enough for the royal agent of God to deliver the people of Israel by providing land and seed but he must also deliver the nations with the same provisions, by means of the people subjecting themselves to the rule and authority of the king.

Hopeful Trajectory (The Blessings of Jacob)

As we have investigated and seen many examples of the recapitulation of Genesis 1-11 within the Joseph story, we now come to the end of Genesis where we find that the author demonstrates intent for the fate of Joseph and his brothers to be understood not simply as history but as typology. Beginning in Genesis 48 we read that Jacob is near death and begins to impart

¹³ This is of course one slight exception to his dominion over the land. Joseph does not come to possess the land held by the priests. While this land was not sold to Joseph, it was already part of the allowance given to them by Pharaoh himself.

his blessing on his descendants. This also marks a pivotal point in the formation of Israel as a confederacy of tribes. One would expect for the 12 tribes of Israel to contain a tribe according to Joseph. However, we see instead of this, that Jacob claims Joseph's sons Manasseh and Ephraim as his own. Joseph is not recognized directly but is instead given a double blessing by his two sons taking his place within the tribal allotments. This "splitting" of the Joseph tribe into the tribes of Manasseh and Ephraim (with Ephraim receiving the first-born blessing) has the unfortunate consequence for many Bible readers as they lose the connection between these two tribes and Joseph throughout the remainder of the Biblical narrative. For the rest of the Old Testament, Manasseh and Ephraim stand in the place of Joseph, with Ephraim at the head. As we will see, many of the future generations of Israelites expect a leader like Joseph from the tribe of Ephraim. It is also interesting to note that Joseph is given a portion of land by Jacob during this blessing. This is the only part of the promised land that is given as an inheritance and it is given explicitly to Joseph and not his brothers.

After this private blessing of Joseph by Jacob, Joseph's brothers are called and all the 12 sons of Jacob are blessed. This blessing is not simply for legal, patriarchal, or material benefit as one might expect. Beyond these purposes, Jacob states that the reason for this blessing is "that I may tell you what shall happen to you in days to come" (Gen 49:1). According to the author of Genesis, these blessings should then be understood as prophetic and provide interpretive power for the future of the Biblical narrative. It is for this reason that messianic typology in this story is especially appropriate beyond that of other standard Biblical narratives or blessings. As the interpretation of Jacob's blessing for the various tribes is filled with textual and other difficulties, the discussion of the blessings for the tribes other than Judah and Joseph extends beyond the scope of this paper. For the blessing of Judah, it is worth noting that this has a long history of messianic interpretation. This is especially true for sections such as "The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet" (Gen 49:10a) which has a long tradition of being understood to be a reference to a messiah from the tribe of Judah. In addition to this blessing of Judah, the blessing given to Joseph has some astonishing implications. I have copied it here in its entirety as translated in the Lexham English Bible:

²² *Joseph is the bough of a fruitful vine,
a fruitful bough by a spring.
His branches climb over the wall.*

²³ *The archers fiercely attacked him.
They shot arrows at him and were hostile to him.*

²⁴ *But his bow remained in a steady position;
[his arms] were made agile
by the hands of the Mighty One of Jacob.*

From there is the Shepherd, the Rock of Israel.

²⁵ *Because of the God of your father he will help you*

*and by Shaddai he will bless you
with the blessings of heaven above,
blessings of the deep that crouches beneath,
blessings of the breasts and the womb.*
²⁶ *The blessings of your father
are superior to the blessings of my ancestors,
to the bounty of the everlasting hills.
May they be on the head of Joseph,
and on the forehead of the prince of his brothers.*

W. Hall Harris III et al., eds., [*The Lexham English Bible*](#) (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012), *Ge* 49:22–26.

While discussion on this blessing is worthy of its own paper, we will discuss just a couple points that I think are particularly relevant for our purposes. I might offer the following as a summary: Joseph (and his offspring as the blessing is about what will happen to them in “the latter days”) will be fruitful and multiply like a tree planted by running water. This is interesting imagery that is used by the Psalmist to describe the righteous anointed one (Psalm 1-2). Joseph is then described as being attacked by archers yet willingly endures the suffering and does not resist. While being true of Joseph and the way he was exiled by his brothers, this would also be true of a future reality, seemingly of a figure who is pierced unjustly by his foes and willingly endures it by the power of God. This person is then blessed by God with universal blessing. Not only is he blessed by God but is blessed throughout the 3-tier cosmology of the heaven above, here on the earth, and of the deep below.

This blessing being given by Jacob transcends all previous blessings and culminates with the statement that they rest on Joseph who is prince among his brothers. This last statement is especially important for our purposes. While there is certainly a kingship language used in the blessing of Judah (particularly the language regarding the scepter and ruler’s staff), we see it is the Joseph figure who is prince among his brothers. This certainly makes sense in light of the narrative of Joseph himself. It is Joseph who is the ruler of Egypt which includes his family in the land of Goshen. Joseph is the primary king figure among the twelve patriarchs of Israel and it seems Jacob expects the same to be true of his future offspring. This helps make sense of why so many future rulers come from the line of Joseph through the tribes of his sons: Joshua (tribe of Ephraim), Gideon (tribe of Manasseh), and Samuel (tribe of Ephraim). When the united kingdom of Israel was split after the reign of Solomon, it was divided between allegiances to Jeroboam (tribe of Ephraim) and Rehoboam (tribe of Judah). Thus all of Israel became two kingdoms, a kingdom of Joseph and a kingdom of David. We even see this Joseph language used explicitly by the prophets in reference to the northern kingdom (Ezekiel 37:15-28, Amos 5-6, Obadiah 18, Zechariah 10:6). David Mitchell makes the point well, “So ends Genesis. Israel’s first great

leader, Joseph, has saved them all. He is the prince-set-apart among his brothers. He is the father's chosen firstborn, inheriting the double portion, as two tribes with an extra bequest of land. He is the chosen heir to the blessings promised to Abraham. He will be fruitful beyond his brothers. From him will come a hero who will suffer and rise to rule. Meanwhile Judah, rather in second position, is briefly promised a line of kings.”¹⁴

There is (rightfully) an emphasis on David within evangelical circles when it comes to the messianic line and its fulfillment in his offspring Jesus of Nazareth. While the Scriptures clearly paint this picture, I believe we have focused on Jesus in the office of king from the line of David at the expense of Jesus as the righteous seed who suffers for the sake of all and is raised to authority at the right hand of power in the likeness of Joseph.

This distinction between office and typology is one that has made it difficult for many to parse the different promises and figures within the Old Testament. We see this idea of distinguishing between the messianic offices and any messianic prefigurement (or typology) expressed by Irenaeus, one of the earliest church fathers and Biblical theologians. At this point it may come as no surprise that he draws the same conclusion about the relationship between Joseph and Jesus when he writes the following less than a century and a half after the time of Jesus:

*“By these Christ was typified, and acknowledged, and brought into the world; for He was prefigured in Joseph: then from Levi and Judah He was descended according to the flesh, as King and Priest,”*¹⁵

This chapter of Genesis has established the narrative of Joseph as being both typological and messianic. Jacob uses eschatological language in his blessing, chooses Joseph as the firstborn, incorporates Joseph's sons Ephraim and Manasseh into the tribes of Israel, and blesses both Judah and Joseph with a promise of future royalty.

Conclusion

Even though Joseph has long been a critical figure to Biblical Theology, he is often relegated to the role of a transitory figure that helps to bridge the story of the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob with the exodus story and Moses leading the Israelites into the promised land. There is no doubt that the Joseph story can serve as a transition, but it should hopefully be clear at this point that it serves a function much greater than as a narrative bridge. The story of Joseph acts as a capstone to the entire book of Genesis bringing out many themes

¹⁴ David C. Mitchell, *Jesus: The Incarnation of the Word* (Campbell Publishers, 2021), 40.

¹⁵ Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, eds., “Fragments from the Lost Writings of Irenaeus Irenaeus of Lyons,” in *The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus*, vol. 1 (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1885).

and motifs from earliest chapters of 1-11. We have seen how he experiences many of the main issues experienced by Adam and Eve, Noah and Ham, and the builders of Babel among others.

We have seen how Joseph recapitulates the early chapters of Genesis by sharing the same blood stained garment as Adam and Eve, is presented as a future king according to prophetic dreams, and in the likeness of Abel experiences enmity against the seed of the serpent as demonstrated by the betrayal of his brothers. We have seen bread as the symbol of the curse of Adam during his suffering and descent. Joseph recapitulates the suffering under the curse symbolized by bread. Joseph then proves morally triumphant yet continues his descent in his recapitulation of the flood narrative evidenced by his temptation with Potiphar's wife compared against the sons of God and Noah's son Ham despising authority and violating it by committing acts of sexual immorality, Joseph is presented with a strikingly similar temptation. Joseph then recapitulates the Tower of Babel story by providing a means to prevent the famine from scattering and destroying all peoples. He then begins his ascent and is typologically presented as a new Adam figure over creation. His testing of his brothers leads to undoing of fraternal enmity and the restoration of all Israel. In addition to the salvation of Israel, Joseph also exercises provision and salvation for all Gentiles of Egypt who subject themselves to the rule of Pharaoh through him.

By uncovering the recapitulation between the Joseph story and Genesis 1-11 it helps to establish Joseph as an exegetical key for understanding Israelite expectations of what God's salvation plan would look like into the future. The symbols and imagery of Joseph continue to expand beyond these chapters in Genesis and continue throughout the rest of the Old Testament period, especially in the blessing of Moses (Deuteronomy 33) and the Psalms and the prophets of the divided monarchy. While the expansion of Josephite imagery is beyond the scope of this paper, the idea of Joseph as a type of messiah continued to develop beyond the Old Testament into the times of the Intertestamental Period, New Testament Period, and eventually even Rabbinic Judaism.

This level of understanding around the Joseph story can help us better understand not only the text of Genesis and its shape, but also the behavior and relationship between the tribes of Israel as they develop throughout the rest of the Old Testament. With this understanding of Joseph as the established first born and ruling figure of the tribes of Israel, it may help to explain future leaders and structure among the tribes such as establishing Joshua (from the tribe of Ephraim, Joseph's son) as the leader of Israel when they enter the promised land. Additionally, when the kingdom is divided after the reign of Solomon, they are divided between the northern kingdom of Israel (called the house of Joseph) and the southern kingdom of Judah. This monarchal split reflects the different expectations of to whom proper leadership in Israel belongs and which house should rule, Joseph (through Ephraim and Menassah) or David through Judah. Ultimately, if this royal messianic figure is prefigured by Joseph as a type, it is reasonable to

conclude that his ascent to the throne will be preceded by unjust suffering for the sake of others salvation. As Joseph himself tells us, what man intends for evil against His messiah, God will use for good to bring about salvation for Israel and the Gentiles.

So, if Joseph is an exegetical key and that he “prefigured Christ” according to Ireneaus, it seems appropriate to end with a summary along those lines. Let’s conclude then with an attempt at a shared biography between Joseph the son of Jacob and Jesus the son of Joseph, the son of Jacob (Matt 1:16):

The beloved son of his father is hated by his brothers because of his claim to special status. His own brothers betray him and he is sold for silver to be delivered unto death. Even though he is able to prevent his betrayal, he willingly endures the suffering even unto the realm of the dead as he is judged alongside two men, one of which will be hung upon a tree to die and the other to be restored to the king. After this he is justified by the Spirit of God and raised into new life and sat at the right hand of the king to exercise absolute authority and dominion. All nations subject themselves to him as ruler yet he is not recognized by his own brothers in his new, glorified state. He eventually reveals himself to his brothers and they mourn over their betrayal yet the beloved son is merciful and declares that it was the will of God that he might suffer so that others would live. He alone is able to reunite all the tribes of Israel and then ushers all of Israel into a new promised land. He not only brings about salvation for Israel, but also for the Gentiles who turn to him and subject themselves and their lands to him as their sovereign authority.