39

*39:1-23* **Joseph And Potiphar’s Wife**

**Gen 39:1 Now Joseph had been taken down to Egypt, and Potiphar, an Egyptian man, an official of Pharaoh, the chief of the guards, had bought him from the hand of the Ishmaelites who had taken him down there.**

**Now Joseph had been taken down to Egypt,**

“Now {as you know,} {Ishmaelite traders/merchants} had taken/brought Joseph down to {the country of} Egypt,” or “Back/Returning {now} to Joseph: {Remember that} he had been taken/brought down to {the country of Egypt {by Ishmaelite traders/merchants},” Chapter 39 picks up where 37:36 left off and repeats some events (that happened in chapter 37) to remind readers of what happened before chapter 38 interrupted the narrative. Make sure your translation does not sound like Joseph was taken to Egypt twice or sold to Potiphar twice. (See: writing-background)

**and Potiphar, an Egyptian man, an official of Pharaoh, the chief of the guards,**

“and/where an Egyptian {named} Potiphar, who was the captain over Pharaoh’s {personal} guards,” See how you translated “an official of Pharaoh, the chief of the guards” in Gen 37:36.

**had bought him from the hand of the Ishmaelites who had taken him down there.**

“had bought him {as a slave/servant} from the Ishmaelites who had taken/brought him there.” For some languages it is clearer and more natural to change the order of clauses in this verse and say, “Now {as you know,} {some} Ishmaelite traders had taken/brought Joseph down to {the country of} Egypt, and an Egyptian {named} Potiphar had bought him {as a slave/servant} from them. Potiphar {was} {one of} Pharaoh’s officials/officers, the captain over the king’s {personal} guards.” Do what is best in your language. See how you translated “Ishmaelites” in Gen 37:25, 27-28. (See: figs-infostructure)

**Gen 39:2 And Yahweh was with Joseph, and he was a successful man, and he was in the house of his Egyptian master.**

**And Yahweh was with Joseph,**

“But Yahweh was with Joseph {and helped/blessed him},” See how you translated “was with” in Gen 21:20; 26:28.

**and he was a successful man,**

“so that he succeeded in what/everything he did” or “so that he did everything very well”

**and he was in the house of his Egyptian master.**

“as he worked in his Egyptian master’s/owner’s house.” For some languages it is more natural to put this clause first in this verse and say, “As Joseph worked in his Egyptian master/owner’s house, Yahweh was with him/Joseph {and helped/blessed him}, so that he succeeded in everything he did.” Do what is best in your language. (See: figs-infostructure)

**Gen 39:3 And his master saw that Yahweh {was} with him and {that} Yahweh made all that he was doing successful in his hand.**

**And his master saw that Yahweh {was} with him**

“His/Joseph’s master/owner realized that Yahweh {was} with/blessing him/Joseph”. In verses 2 through 20, Potiphar is referred to as Joseph’s master (verses 2-3, 7-8, 16, 19-20) and “the Egyptian” (verse 5); he is no longer mentioned by his name in the Hebrew text. Some translations continue to use Potiphar’s name occasionally in verses 2 through 20 to prevent confusion and make it clear that all of these references refer to the same person, not two or three different people. Do what is best in your language. See how you translated “master” or “owner” in Gen 24:9-10.

**and {that} Yahweh made all that he was doing successful in his hand.**

“and was helping/enabling him/Joseph to succeed/prosper in everything that he did.” or “and was helping/enabling him/Joseph to do everything very well.” See how you translated “successful” in verse 2.

**Gen 39:4 So Joseph found favor in his eyes, and he served him. And he put him in charge over his house and gave into his hand all {that} was his.**

**So Joseph found favor in his eyes, and he served him.**

“So he/Potiphar was pleased with Joseph/him {and treated him favorably/well} and made him his personal servant/attendant.” Make sure that your translation of “in his eyes” refers here to Joseph’s master, not Yahweh. Also see how you translated the idiom “found favor in...eyes” in Gen 6:8. (See: figs-idiom)

**And he put him in charge over his house and gave into his hand**

“He/Potiphar also put him/Joseph in charge of managing his household and taking care of” or “He/Potiphar also appointed him/Joseph as the manager/overseer of/over his {entire} household and entrusted into his care”. Make sure your translation of the pronouns (“he”, “him” and “his”) in verses 2 through 6 refers to the correct person at each point in the text. Also see how you translated the idiom “gave...into the hand of” in Gen 32:16. (See: writing-pronouns)

**all {that} was his.**

“everything {else} {that} he owned.” or “everything {that} belonged to him.”

**Gen 39:5 And it happened from the time he put him in charge in his house and over all that was his, then Yahweh blessed the house of the Egyptian because of Joseph. So the blessing of Yahweh was on all that was his, in the house and in the fields.**

**And it happened from the time**

“Beginning from the time {that}” or “From the time {that}”

**he put him in charge in his house and over all that was his,**

“Joseph’s Egyptian master/owner put him in charge of/over his household and everything {else} that belonged to him,” or “he/Potiphar put him/Joseph in charge of managing everything that belonged to him,” or “Joseph’s Egyptian master/owner did that,”See how you translated “put him in charge...his house and...everything {that} was his” in verse 4. It is repeated in verse 5 in the Hebrew text to emphasize the authority that Joseph was given. Do what is natural in your language.

**then Yahweh blessed the house of the Egyptian**

“Yahweh blessed the household of that Egyptian {man}” or “Yahweh caused that Egyptian’s household to prosper”. Make sure it is clear in your translation of this chapter that “Egyptian”, “master” and “Potiphar” all refer to the same person, not two or three different people.

**because of Joseph.**

“for Joseph’s sake/benefit.” or “because Joseph was working for him.”

**So the blessing of Yahweh was on all that was his,**

“Yahweh/He blessed everything that belonged to him,” or “Yahweh/He caused everything that he owned to prosper,”

**in the house and in the fields.**

“{including} {everything} in {his} household/home and in {his} fields.” or “{including} {his family and servants} in {his} household, as well as {the crops and livestock} in {his} fields.” In this context, “house” especially refers to the people in the house and “fields” refers to what is in the fields. (See: figs-metonymy)

**Gen 39:6 And he left all that {belonged} to him in the hand of Joseph, and he did not think to himself {about} anything except for the bread that he ate. Now Joseph was handsome in form and handsome in appearance.**

**And he left all that {belonged} to him in the hand of Joseph, and**

“In fact, he/Potiphar gave Joseph the responsibility of managing everything that he owned/had, so that” or “In fact, after/since Joseph’s owner put him in charge of everything that he owned,” See how you translated a similar idiom (“gave...into his hand”) in verse 4. (See: figs-idiom)

**he did not think to himself {about} anything except for the bread that he ate.**

“he did not {need to} concern himself with anything {in his household}, except for {personal things/matters like} {deciding} what {kind of} food {he wanted} to eat.” or “the only thing he {needed to} think/decide about {in his household} was {personal things/matters like} what food {he wanted} to eat.” For some languages, it is more natural to put the exception clause first in the sentence. Do what is best in your language. Also, Potiphar did more than decide what to eat; that was just one example of personal decisions which were all he had to concern himself with. (See: figs-explicit)

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**Now Joseph was handsome in form and handsome in appearance.**

“Joseph was well-built/muscular and good-looking.” or “Now Joseph was a very handsome young man.” Some languages have a conjunction such as “Now” that introduces background information and a change of topic. For other languages a paragraph break is enough (without a conjunction). Do what is best in your language. (See: writing-background)

**Gen 39:7 And it happened after those things, then the wife of his master lifted her eyes toward Joseph and said, “Lie with me!”**

**And it happened after those things,**

“So after a while,” or “After {he had been/worked there for} a while,” The phrase “And it happened” introduces and emphasizes an important event. Many English translations do not include this phrase. Do what is natural in your language.

**then the wife of his master**

“his master’s/owner’s wife”

**lifted her eyes toward Joseph**

“started looking {with desire/lust} at Joseph/him” or “started lusting for Joseph/him”. Many languages have a similar idiom that fits well here. Do what is best in your language. (See: figs-idiom)

**and said,**

“and said {to him},” or “and told/demanded {him},” Translate this quote introduction in a way that fits well with what Potiphar’s wife says to Joseph. (See: writing-quotations)

**“Lie with me!”**

“Sleep with me!” or “Come to bed with me!” See how you translated the idiom “lie with” in Gen 19:32. (See: figs-euphemism)

**Gen 39:8 But he refused and said to the wife of his master, “Behold, with me {here}, my master does not think {about} what {is} in the house, and all that is his he has given into my hand.**

**But he refused**

“But Joseph refused” or “But he/Joseph rejected {her request/demand}”

**and said to the wife of his master,**

“and said to her,” or “and told her,” (See: writing-quotations)

**“Behold,**

“Look/Listen,” or “Notice that”

**with me {here},**

“with me {in charge},” or “because of me,” or “since I am {working/serving} here,”

**my master does not think {about}**

“my master/owner does not {need to} think/worry {about}” or “my owner does not {need/have to} concern himself with”

**what {is} in the house,**

“anything that {is} in {his} house” or “{managing} anything in {his} household”

**and all that is his he has given into my hand.**

“In fact, everything that he owns he has given/entrusted into/to my care” or “In fact, he has put me in charge of everything that he owns/has”. Consider whether or not it is best in your language to begin a new sentence here. See how you translated the idiom “gave into...hand” in verse 4. (See: figs-idiom)

**Gen 39:9 He is not greater than me in this house, and he has not withheld anything from me except for you, because you {are} his wife. So how can I do this great evil, and sin against God?”**

**He is not greater than me in this house,**

“{so that} he has no one in his household who has more authority than I do” or “{As a result,} {even} he does not exercise more authority in/over this/his household than I do”. As Joseph’s master, Potiphar still had more authority than Joseph. But he had given Joseph authority to act in his place over everything in his household. Try to make that clear in your translation. Also consider whether it is more natural in your language to begin verse 9 with a new sentence, or to continue the sentence from verse 8.

**and he has not withheld anything from me except for you, because you {are} his wife.**

“and he has given me freedom with everything {in his household}, except you, {of course,} because you {are} his wife.” or “He allows me to do anything {in his household}, except with you, his wife.” The phrase “has not withheld” is a litotes that emphasizes the freedom that Potiphar had given Joseph. Some languages must translate this in a way that does not use a negative word such as “not”. Do what is best in your language. (See: figs-litotes)

**So how can I do this great evil, and sin against God?”**

“So I refuse to do such an evil thing, which would be a terrible sin against God!” or “So there is no way I would {ever} sin against God by doing such an evil thing!” Joseph uses this rhetorical question to emphasize why he will not do what Potiphar’s wife wants. Do what is best in your language. (See: figs-rquestion)

**Gen 39:10 Then it happened even though she kept speaking to Joseph day {after} day, yet he did not listen to her to lie beside her, to be with her.**

**Then it happened even though she kept speaking to Joseph day {after} day, yet**

“Even though Potiphar’s wife kept propositioning/pressuring Joseph every day {to lie/sleep with her},” or “Day after day, Potiphar’s wife kept pressuring/asking Joseph {to go to bed with her}, but”. The phrase “Then/And it happened” is used several times in this chapter (verses 5, 7, 10, 11, 13, 15, 18, 19) to introduce and emphasize important events and to increase suspense so that the audience wonders what the outcome will be. Many English translations have omitted this phrase, possibly for reasons of naturalness. Consider whether you have an expression like this that is natural in your language.

**he did not listen to her**

“he did not do what she wanted, but refused” or “he rejected her requests/demands”

**to lie beside her, to be with her.**

“to lie/sleep with her, and he stayed away from her.” or “to have sex with her and would not {even} go near her.”

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**Gen 39:11 Then it happened on such a day that he went into the house to do his work, and there were no other men of the house there in the house.**

**Then it happened on such a day that**

“{But} then on a day like that,” or “Then/But one such day” or “Then/But one day**”**

**he went into the house to do his work, and**

“Joseph went to {his master’s/owner’s} house {as usual} to do his work, and/but” or “when Joseph went into the/Potiphar’s house to work,”

**there were no other men of the house there in the house.**

“no other menservants from the household were there.” or “none of the other household menservants were there.”

**Gen 39:12 So she caught him by his garment, saying, “Lie with me!” But he left his garment in her hands and fled and went outside.**

**So she caught him by his garment,**

“So/Then Potiphar’s wife caught/grabbed {hold of} him/Joseph by his robe/tunic,” The word “garment” is very general and probably refers to an outer article of clothing, such as a robe or tunic.

**saying,**

“{and} said {to him},” or “{and} said/demanded,” See how you translated this quote introduction in verse 7. (See: writing-quotations)

**“Lie with me!”**

“Come to bed with me!” or “Sleep with me!” See how you translated this quote in verse 7. (See: figs-euphemism)

**But he left his garment in her hands and fled and went outside.**

“But {immediately} he fled and left his robe/tunic {behind} in her hands as he ran outside/outdoors.” or “But he {immediately} got away from her and fled/ran outside/outdoors, leaving his robe/tunic {behind} in her hands.” Make sure your translation does not sound here like Joseph put his garment in her hands. Rather it came off in her hands as he was fleeing.

**Gen 39:13 Then it happened when she saw that he had left his garment in her hands and had fled outside,**

**Then it happened when she saw**

“As soon as she saw” or “After/When she saw”

**that he had left his garment in her hands and had fled outside,**

“that Joseph had left his robe/tunic {behind} in her hands as he ran outside,” or “that Joseph had fled/run outside/outdoors and left his robe/tunic {behind} in her hands,” See how you translated a similar clause in verse 12. (See: figs-infostructure)

**Gen 39:14 then she called for the men of her house and said to them, saying, “Look! He brought to us a Hebrew man to laugh at us! He came to me to lie with me, but I called out with a loud voice!**

**then she called for the men of her house**

“she called out for the {other} household menservants {to come to her}” or “she summoned the {other} menservants of/from her household {to come}”. See how you translated “men of the house” in verse 11. (See: figs-explicit)

**and said to them, saying,**

“Then {when they arrived/came,} she exclaimed to them,” (See: writing-quotations)

**“Look!**

“Look {at this}!” or “Look/See {what happened}!” As Potiphar’s wife speaks, she is probably showing the servants Joseph’s garment in her hands. (See: figs-explicit)

**He brought to us a Hebrew man**

“My husband brought {this} Hebrew slave/servant {here} to/among us”. Make sure that your translation of “He brought” refers here to Potiphar (as verse 17 confirms), not Joseph. (See: writing-pronouns)

**to laugh at us!**

“to mock/insult/humiliate us!” or “to make fools of us!” In this context, “us” is general and includes Potiphar’s wife and the people she is talking to. (See: figs-exclusive)

**He came to me**

“He came here” or “That man/slave came {here} to me”. Make sure your translation of “He came” refers here to Joseph, not Potiphar (who was the subject of the previous sentence in the Hebrew text).

**to lie with me,**

“to rape me,” or “to force me to lie/sleep with him,” Consider again how you translated the idiom “lie with” in the book of Genesis. See Gen 19:32-35; 26:10; 30:15-16; 34:2, 7; 35:22; 39:7, 10, 12, 14. It may be necessary to translate this in different ways, depending on the context. (See: figs-idiom)

**but I called out with a loud voice!**

“but I cried out {for help}!” or “but I screamed/shouted loudly {for help}!”

**Gen 39:15 Then it happened when he heard that I raised my voice and called out, then he left his garment beside me and fled and went outside!”**

**Then it happened when**

“Then when” or “Then as soon as”

**he heard that I raised my voice and called out,**

“he heard me call/cry out loudly” or “he heard me scream/shout {like that},”

**then he left his garment beside me and fled and went outside!”**

“he left his robe/tunic with me and fled/ran outside/outdoors!” or “he {immediately} fled/ran outside/outdoors and he left his robe/tunic behind!” See how you translated a similar clause in verses 12 and 13.

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**Gen 39:16 Then she kept his garment beside her until his master came to his house.**

**Then she kept**

“So she kept” or “Then/So Potiphar’s wife kept”

**his garment beside her**

“Joseph’s robe/tunic with her”

**until his master**

“until {her husband,} Joseph’s master/owner”. Make sure that your translation of this phrase does not sound like her husband and Joseph’s master were two different people. Do what is best in your language. (See: figs-explicit)

**came to his house.**

“came {back} to his home.” or “came/returned home.”

**Gen 39:17 Then she spoke to him according to those words, saying, “The Hebrew slave whom you brought to us came to me to laugh at me!**

**Then she spoke to him**

“Then {when he/Potiphar arrived,} she told him”

**according to those words,**

“the same story.” or “the same thing she had told {the others}.”

**saying,**

“She said,” or “This is what she said:” (See: writing-quotations)

**“The Hebrew slave whom you brought**

“The/That Hebrew slave/servant whom you brought”

**to us**

“among us” or “{to work} for us”. Here the pronoun “us” includes Potiphar, his wife and their household. (See: figs-exclusive)

**came to me to laugh at me!**

“{just now} came to me to mock/insult/humiliate me!” or “came here to make a fool of me!” See how you translated “laugh at” in verse 14.

**Gen 39:18 Then it happened when I raised my voice and called out, then he left his garment beside me and fled outside!”**

**Then it happened when I raised my voice and called out,**

“But as soon as I screamed/shouted loudly,” or “But when I screamed/shouted {for help},” See how you translated verse 15, which is similar to verse 18.

**then he left his garment beside me and fled outside!”**

“he left his robe/tunic beside/with me and ran outside/outdoors!” Consider again how you translated “garment” in verses 12-13, 15-16, 18.

**Gen 39:19 And it happened when his master heard the words of his wife that she spoke to him, saying, “Such {are} the things your slave did to me!” then his anger burned.**

**And it happened when his master heard**

“When Joseph’s master/owner heard”

**the words of his wife that she spoke to him, saying, “Such {are} the things your slave did to me!”**

“his wife say, “This is what your slave/servant did to me,” ” or “what his wife said his slave/servant {Joseph} had done to her,” Make sure that your translation of “his” refers to Joseph’s master here, not Joseph. Also, consider whether it is better in your language to use a direct or indirect quote here. (See: figs-quotations)

**then his anger burned.**

“he burned with anger.” or “he became very angry.” Consider whether or not your language has a similar idiom that would fit well here. (See: figs-idiom)

**Gen 39:20 Then Joseph’s master took him and put him in the round-house, the place where the prisoners of the king were bound. So he was there in the round-house,**

**Then Joseph’s master took him and put him in the round-house,**

“Then/So he had Joseph arrested and put in the prison/jail” or “And/Then he {had soldiers} arrest Joseph and put him in the prison/jail”. Potiphar probably had soldiers arrest Joseph for him, since he had the authority to do that as the captain of the guards. Consider again how you referred to Joseph and Joseph’s master Potiphar in verses 1-20. As usual, after you finish translating a section like this, it is a good practice to read the section aloud at a normal pace and listen carefully to make sure you refer to everyone accurately and naturally at each point in the text. (See: writing-pronouns)

**the place where the prisoners of the king were bound.**

“where the king’s prisoners were confined/imprisoned.” or “where they kept/imprisoned people who had committed crimes against the king.”

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**So he was there in the round-house,**

“So Joseph was/stayed there in the prison,” or “Joseph remained there in prison,”

**Gen 39:21 but Yahweh was with Joseph and showed kindness to him and gave him favor in the eyes of the chief of the round-house.**

**but Yahweh was with Joseph**

“but Yahweh was with him” (See: writing-pronouns)

**and showed kindness to him**

“and was kind/gracious to him”. See how you translated “show kindness” in Gen 24:12.

**and gave him favor in the eyes of the chief of the round-house.**

“and caused the prison warden to be pleased with him {so that he treated him favorably/well}.” See how you translated a similar phrase (“favor in...eyes”) in verse 4. (See: figs-idiom)

**Gen 39:22 And the chief of the round-house gave into the hand of Joseph all the prisoners who {were} in the round-house, and all that they were doing there, he was {the one} doing {it}.**

**And the chief of the round-house**

“{Soon} the warden of the prison” or “So {before long} the warden”

**gave into the hand of Joseph**

“put Joseph in charge of” or “gave Joseph the responsibility for {taking care of}”

**all the prisoners who {were} in the round-house,**

“all the {other} prisoners who {were} in the prison,” or “all the {other} prisoners,”

**and all that they were doing there, he was {the one} doing {it}.**

“so that he was in charge of everything that was done there.” or “so that he {was the one who} managed everything that they did there.”

**Gen 39:23 The chief of the round-house did not look {at} anything in his hand, because Yahweh was with him and Yahweh made what he was doing successful.**

**The chief of the round-house**

“{So} the warden” or “{As a result} the jail/prison warden”. Do what is best in your language. (See: grammar-connect-logic-result)

**did not look {at} anything**

“did not {need to} supervise/oversee anything” or “did not {need to} pay attention to anything at all”

**in his hand,**

“that Joseph was in charge of,” or “that Joseph was managing,”

**because Yahweh was with him**

“because Yahweh was with Joseph”. For some languages, it is more natural to put this clause first in this verse and say, “Because/Since Yahweh was with Joseph and helped him to succeed in whatever he did, the warden did not need to supervise/oversee anything that Joseph was in charge of.” Do what is best in your language. (See: figs-infostructure}

**and Yahweh made what he was doing successful.**

“and gave him success in whatever/everything he did.” or “and helped/enabled him to succeed at everything he did.” See how you translated a similar clause (“Yahweh made all that he was doing successful”) in verse 3.