

# Genesis 40 - Pharaoh's Butler & Baker Imprisoned; Their Dreams & Joseph's Interpretation

## II. Epilogue: Patriarchal history (Gen 11:10—50:26)

### (4) Life of Joseph (Gen 37:1—50:26)

#### (B) Joseph's trials and promotion in Egypt (Gen 39:1—41:57)

##### (b) Joseph's faithfulness in prison (Gen 39:19—41:36)

###### (ii) Interpreting dreams (40:1—41:36)

###### (a) Prisoners' dreams (40:1-23)

###### (i) Dreams (40:1-8)

###### (ii) Interpretations (40:9-19)

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## Genesis 40

### (b) Joseph's faithfulness in prison (Gen 39:19—41:36)

#### (ii) Interpreting dreams (40:1—41:36)

##### (a) Prisoners' dreams (40:1-23)

###### (i) Dreams (40:1-8)

1 Then it came about after these things, *that* the cupbearer and the baker for the king of Egypt offended their lord, the king of Egypt.

1 Then it came about after these things, the cupbearer and the baker for the king of Egypt offended their lord, the king of Egypt.

1 Some time later, both the senior security advisor to the king of Egypt and his head chef offended their master, Egypt's king.

1 And it came to pass after these things, that the butler of the king of Egypt and his baker had offended their lord the king of Egypt.

2 And Pharaoh was furious with his two officials, the **chief cupbearer** and the **chief baker**.

2 Pharaoh was furious with his two officials, the chief cupbearer and the chief baker.

2 Pharaoh was so angry with his two officers—his senior security advisor and his head chef—

2 And Pharaoh was wroth against two of his officers, against the chief of the butlers, and against the chief of the bakers.

- Two high officials in the royal household had offended Pharaoh:
- "...chief cupbearer" - *mashgeh*, drink-giver; a valued member of Pharaoh's household
- In Neh 1:11, the word is translated "cupbearer"
- Nehemiah, who bore that title, was a trusted official in the palace of the Persian monarch
- "...chief baker" - *opeh*, the superintendent of the bakery, responsible for seeing to it that the monarch's food was safe and palatable
- These would also be "tasters" to assure the absence of poison, etc.
- These were not just a butler and a baker, but the chiefs of these two groups
- Pending investigation, they were confined in the same prison to which Joseph had been committed

3 So he put them in confinement in the house of the **captain of the bodyguard, in the prison**, the *same* place where Joseph was imprisoned.

3 So he put them in confinement in the house of the captain of the bodyguard, in the jail, the *same* place where Joseph was imprisoned.

3 that he locked them up in the prison dungeon operated by the captain of the guard, the very place where Joseph was imprisoned.

3 And he put them in ward in the house of the captain of the guard, into the prison, the place where Joseph was bound.

- "...captain of the bodyguard" - Potiphar (Cf. 37:36; 39:1)

- "...in the prison" - Joseph was "numbered with the transgressors" (there were two malefactors next to Jesus on Calvary)

4 And the captain of the bodyguard put Joseph in charge of them, and he took care of them; and they were in confinement for some time.

4 The captain of the bodyguard put Joseph in charge of them, and he took care of them; and they were in confinement for some time.

4 The captain of the guard entrusted them to Joseph's custody, who took care of them, since they were to remain there in custody for a number of days.

4 And the captain of the guard charged Joseph with them, and he served them: and they continued a season in ward.

- This shows that not only did Joseph gain the trust of the prison warden, he also regained trust from Potiphar

5 Then the cupbearer and the baker for the king of Egypt, who were confined in the prison, both had a dream the same night, each man with his *own* dream *and* each dream with its

own interpretation.

5 Then the cupbearer and the baker for the king of Egypt, who were confined in jail, both had a dream the same night, each man with his own dream *and* each dream with its own interpretation.

5 Then the two of them each had a dream. They both had their dreams the same night, and there were separate interpretations for each dream—the senior security advisor and the head chef to the king of Egypt, who had confined them in prison.

5 And they dreamed a dream both of them, each man his dream in one night, each man according to the interpretation of his dream, the butler and the baker of the king of Egypt, which were bound in the prison.

- Pharaoh's butler and baker each had separate dreams on the same night

6 When Joseph came to them in the morning and saw them, behold, they were dejected.

6 When Joseph came to them in the morning and observed them, behold, they were dejected.

6 When Joseph came to see them in the morning, he noticed how downcast they looked! They were both very sad.

6 And Joseph came in unto them in the morning, and looked upon them, and, behold, they were sad.

- The dreams obviously affected both men because their changed outlook was noticed by Joseph

7 So he asked Pharaoh's officials who were with him in confinement in his master's house, "Why are your faces so sad today?"

7 He asked Pharaoh's officials who were with him in confinement in his master's house, "Why are your faces so sad today?"

7 So he asked Pharaoh's officers, who were with him in prison in his master's house, "Why are you so sad today?"

7 And he asked Pharaoh's officers that were with him in the ward of his lord's house, saying, Wherefore look ye so sadly to day?

8 And they said to him, "We have had a dream, and there is no one to interpret it." Then Joseph said to them, "Do interpretations not belong to God? Tell *it* to me, please."

8 Then they said to him, "We have had a dream and there is no one to interpret it." Then Joseph said to them, "Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell *it* to me, please."

8 "We had a dream," they replied, "but there's no one to interpret it."

Interpretations belong to God," Joseph told them, "so please tell me your stories."

**8** And they said unto him, We have dreamed a dream, and there is no interpreter of it. And Joseph said unto them, Do not interpretations belong to God? tell me them, I pray you.

- The butler and baker were sad because there was no professional dream interpreter available in the prison

- In Scripture, only two men function as interpreters of dreams: Joseph and Daniel

— Both served foreign monarchs who worshipped foreign gods, and both interpreted in a foreign land where they had professional interpreters: Egypt and Babylon

- That Joseph did not lose faith in God's promise is proved by his willingness to interpret dreams

— He was still convinced that God's revelation in his two previous dreams would be fulfilled; now he was confronted with two more opportunities

#### *(ii) Interpretations (40:9-19)*

**9** So the chief cupbearer told his dream to Joseph, saying to him, "In my dream, behold, *there was a vine in front of me*;

**9** So the chief cupbearer told his dream to Joseph, and said to him, "In my dream, behold, *there was a vine in front of me*;

**9** So the senior security advisor related his dream to Joseph. "In my dream," he said, "all of a sudden there was a vine in front of me!"

**9** And the chief butler told his dream to Joseph, and said to him, In my dream, behold, a vine was before me;

10 and on the vine were three branches. And as it was budding, its blossoms came out, *and its clusters produced ripe grapes.*

10 and on the vine were three branches. And as it was budding, its blossoms came out, *and its clusters produced ripe grapes.*

10 On the vine were three branches that budded. Blossoms shot out, and clusters grew up that produced ripe grapes.

10 And in the vine were three branches: and it was as though it budded, and her blossoms shot forth; and the clusters thereof brought forth ripe grapes:

- In the dream, he saw all three stages of the development of the grape in quick succession: buds, blossoms, and grapes, which become ripe

11 Now Pharaoh's cup was in my hand; so I took the grapes and squeezed them into Pharaoh's cup, and I put the cup into Pharaoh's hand."

11 Now Pharaoh's cup was in my hand; so I took the grapes and squeezed them into Pharaoh's cup, and I put the cup into Pharaoh's hand."

11 Then, with Pharaoh's cup in my hand, I took the grapes, squeezed them into Pharaoh's cup, then handed the cup directly to Pharaoh."

11 And Pharaoh's cup was in my hand: and I took the grapes, and pressed them into Pharaoh's cup, and I gave the cup into Pharaoh's hand.

- He then made juice (or wine) from the ripened grapes

### **Numerology: 3**

The number 3 is prominent: the vine had three branches; three terms are used to describe the grapes of the bine (budded, blossomed, and clusters of grapes); Pharaoh is mentioned three times; the word "cup" is used three times; and, three times the first-person pronoun is used (I took, I pressed, I placed).

12 Then Joseph said to him, "This is the interpretation of it: the three branches are three days;

12 Then Joseph said to him, "This is the interpretation of it: the three branches are three days;

12 Then Joseph told him, "This is what your dream means: The three branches are three days.

**12** And Joseph said unto him, This is the interpretation of it: The three branches are three days:

13 within **three more days** Pharaoh will **lift up your head** and restore you to your office; and you will put Pharaoh's cup into his hand as in your former practice when you were his cupbearer.

13 within three more days Pharaoh will lift up your head and restore you to your office; and you will put Pharaoh's cup into his hand according to your former custom when you were his cupbearer.

13 Within three days, Pharaoh will encourage you and return you to your responsibilities. You'll attend to Pharaoh's personal wine cup, just as you did when you were his senior security advisor.

13 Yet within three days shall Pharaoh lift up thine head, and restore thee unto thy place: and thou shalt deliver Pharaoh's cup into his hand, after the former manner when thou wast his butler.

- "...three more days" - occurs frequently in Scripture: the trek to Mt. Moriah; Jonah in the great fish; Jesus in the tomb, etc.; see Tag: 3 Days

- "...lift up your head" - in contrast to the baker, whose head would be "lifted off" (v19)

— The dream of the three vine branches of ripening grapes signified that Pharaoh would lift up the head of this man, that is, restore him to service within three days

— Not every detail of the dream was given an interpretation, only the basic points were made

14 Only keep me in mind when it goes well for you, and please do me a kindness by mentioning me to Pharaoh, and get me out of this prison.

14 Only keep me in mind when it goes well with you, and please do me a kindness by mentioning me to Pharaoh and get me out of this house.

14 But keep me in mind when things go well for you. Be sure to extend kindness to me by remembering me to Pharaoh. Bring me out of this prison,

14 But think on me when it shall be well with thee, and shew kindness, I pray thee, unto me, and make mention of me unto Pharaoh, and bring me out of this house:

- Having interpreted the dream, which had a positive outcome, and knowing that his restoration was going to happen, Joseph makes a request to remember him and show him kindness by putting in a good word for him with Pharaoh.

15 For I was in fact kidnapped from the **land of the Hebrews**, and even here I have done nothing that they should have put me into the dungeon."

15 For I was in fact kidnapped from the land of the Hebrews, and even here I have done nothing that they should have put me into the dungeon."

15 because I was kidnapped from the land of the Hebrews. Not only that, I haven't done anything that deserves me being confined to this pit."

15 For indeed I was stolen away out of the **land of the Hebrews**: and here also have I done nothing that they should put me into the dungeon.

- Joseph pointed to his own innocence, stating he suffered two injustices: first, he was sold ("stolen away") into slavery by his brothers, and second he was falsely accused and wrongly imprisoned for rape.

- "...land of the Hebrews" - Joseph clearly understood the promise of the Abrahamic Covenant; this was not the Land of the Canaanites, but rather the Land of the Hebrews

**16** When the chief baker saw that he had interpreted favorably, he said to Joseph, "I also saw in my dream, and behold, *there were* three baskets of white bread on my head;

**16** When the chief baker saw that he had interpreted favorably, he said to Joseph, "I also saw in my dream, and behold, *there were* three baskets of white bread on my head;

**16** When the head chef heard that the interpretation was good, he told Joseph, "I was also in my dream. All of a sudden, there were three baskets with white bread stacked on top of my head.

**16** When the chief baker saw that the interpretation was good, he said unto Joseph, I also was in my dream, and, behold, I had three white baskets on my head:

- Joseph's positive interpretation of the butler's dream encouraged the baker to reveal his dream to Joseph, hoping for the same positive interpretation

17 and in the top basket *there were* some of all kinds of baked food for Pharaoh, and the birds were eating them out of the basket on my head."

17 and in the top basket *there were* some of all sorts of baked food for Pharaoh, and the birds were eating them out of the basket on my head."

17 There was all kinds of food in the basket that was on top, including baked food for Pharaoh. The birds were eating them from the basket on my head."

17 And in the uppermost basket there was of all manner of bakemeats for Pharaoh; and the birds did eat them out of the basket upon my head.

18 Then Joseph answered and said, "This is its interpretation: the three baskets are three days;

18 Then Joseph answered and said, "This is its interpretation: the three baskets are three days;

18 Joseph replied, "This is what your dream means: The three baskets are also three days.

**18** And Joseph answered and said, This is the interpretation thereof: The three baskets are three days:

- Just as the three branches represented three days in the butler's dream, the three baskets represented three days in the baker's dream

19 within three more days Pharaoh will lift up your head from you and will hang you on a wooden post, and the birds will eat your flesh off you."

19 within three more days Pharaoh will lift up your head from you and will hang you on a tree, and the birds will eat your flesh off you."

19 Within three more days, Pharaoh will behead you and hang you on gallows, where birds will eat your flesh from you."

19 Yet within three days shall Pharaoh lift up thy head from off thee, and shall hang thee on a tree; and the birds shall eat thy flesh from off thee.

- Within the same three days as the butler, the chief baker would be beheaded

— The wording in the Hebrew text is exactly the same here as it was in the case of the butler, but with the butler the head was "lifted up" in restoration; with the baker, the head was "lifted off," describing the punishment of beheading

— Again, he gave the basic points without interpreting every detail

— This describes one form of capital punishment that prevailed in Egypt; namely, that the criminal was decapitated and then his headless body gibbeted on a tree by the highway till

it was gradually devoured by the ravenous birds.

(iii) Fulfillment (40:20-23)

**20** So it came about on the third day, *which was Pharaoh's birthday*, that he held a feast for all his servants; and he lifted up the head of the chief cupbearer and the head of the chief baker among his servants.

**20** Thus it came about on the third day, *which was Pharaoh's birthday*, that he made a feast for all his servants; and he lifted up the head of the chief cupbearer and the head of the chief baker among his servants.

**20** On the third day, which just happened to be Pharaoh's birthday, he threw a party for all his servants. He lifted the head of both his senior security advisor and of his head chef in front of his servants—

**20** And it came to pass the third day, which was Pharaoh's birthday, that he made a feast unto all his servants: and he lifted up the head of the chief butler and of the chief baker among his servants.

- "...Pharaoh's birthday" - according to the Rosetta Stone, which allowed interpretation of ancient Egyptian hieroglyphics, it was customary for Pharaoh's to release a prisoner on their birthday

21 He restored the chief cupbearer to his office, and he put the cup into Pharaoh's hand;

21 He restored the chief cupbearer to his office, and he put the cup into Pharaoh's hand;

21 that is, he restored his senior security advisor to his former responsibilities, including attending to Pharaoh's personal wine cup,

21 And he restored the chief butler unto his butlership again; and he gave the cup into Pharaoh's hand:

- According to Joseph's interpretation, the butler was restored to Pharaoh's service

22 but he hanged the chief baker, just as Joseph had interpreted to them.

22 but he hanged the chief baker, just as Joseph had interpreted to them.

22 but he beheaded and hanged the head chef, just as Joseph had interpreted for them.

22 But he hanged the chief baker: as Joseph had interpreted to them.

- Also according to Joseph's interpretation, the baker was beheaded

23 Yet the chief cupbearer did not remember Joseph, but forgot him.

23 Yet the chief cupbearer did not remember Joseph, but forgot him.

23 Despite all of this, the senior security advisor not only didn't remember Joseph, he deliberately forgot him.

23 Yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph, but forgat him.

- On the human side, this was severe ingratitude; however on the divine side, it was not yet time for Joseph's release. He had to wait two more years.
- Yet the significant fact for Joseph was that he was correctly interpreting dreams
  - He did not misunderstand God's revelations to him by dreams
  - He might not have understood his imprisonment, but he was encouraged in his faith. Although the cupbearer forgot him, God did not.
- In this hope Joseph had a persistent faith. His faith was not destroyed by his circumstances.

### **Bread and Wine**

- First mentioned as Melchizedek administers to Abraham (Gen 14)
- The Baker and Wine Steward (Gen 40)
- The Lord's Last Supper (Matt 26)
- Communion (1 Cor 11)