

The Process In Joseph's Life

- With 3700 years of hindsight, we know that that God had a plan and was causing all things to work together for Joseph.
- God would also bring his heart to maturity.

New Prisoners (Gen. 40:1-4)

1 It came to pass after these things that the butler and the baker of the king of Egypt offended their lord, the king of Egypt. 2 And Pharaoh was angry with his two officers, the chief butler and the chief baker. 3 So he put them in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, in the prison, the place where Joseph was confined. 4 And the captain of the guard charged Joseph with them, and he served them; so they were in custody for a while.

- *After these things* means that Joseph is now in his position as the assistant or steward to the chief of the prison. He is about 28 years old at this point.
- There are two new prisoners. These are high-ranking officials, probably close confidants of the king.
- Joseph was not placed over these men, but was placed with them or near to them.

Pharaoh's Officers Have Dreams (Gen. 40:5-8)

5 Then the butler and the baker of the king of Egypt, who were confined in the prison, had a dream, both of them, each man's dream in one night and each man's dream with its own interpretation. 6 And Joseph came in to them in the morning and looked at them, and saw that they were sad. 7 So he asked Pharaoh's officers who were with him in the custody of his lord's house, saying, "Why do you look so sad today?"

8 And they said to him, "We each have had a dream, and there is no interpreter of it." So Joseph said to them, "Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell them to me, please."

A Bit About Dreams

This is the first place where we see someone who we could call a prophet actually interpreting a dream for somebody else. Joseph specifically says that the interpretation of dreams **belongs to God**.

- A prophet was chosen by God to speak on God's behalf. As a part of this ministry, he might receive words from God, or he might see visions and dreams.
- A verbal prophet would have words or some thoughts bubbling up from his spirit into his mind.
- A seer prophet sees visions and dreams.
- Of course there were also *prophetesses*, or female prophets.

Joseph says *interpretations belong to God*. When we look at how dreams worked in the Bible, we can learn a few things.

1. *The Bible's discussion of dreams is very limited.* The Bible simply assumes that people can receive dreams from supernatural sources.
2. *What little we do have about the source of dreams is interesting.* Solomon said that a dream comes because of busyness. There are probably dozens of different theories as to why people dream, both psychological, and physiological.
3. *So if dreams can come because of busyness or other biological reasons, then we also know that not every dream is necessarily meaningful.*
4. *But while not every dream is from God, some dreams are.* So we need to know whether a dream is from God and if so, how to interpret it. God said that if there is a prophet among the people of Israel, He would make himself known to that person in a vision or dream: *Hear now My words: If there is a prophet among you, I, the LORD, make Myself known to him in a vision; I speak to him in a dream.* (Numbers 12:6)
5. *Many prophets had visionary experiences.* Dreams are obviously a kind of visionary experience that we have when we are asleep. In a vision, we are having a visionary experience while we are awake.
6. *The Devil frequently counterfeits, or at least tries to counterfeit, the things that God gives to His children, including the gifts of the Holy Spirit.* We know from the Bible as well as from history, that many kings of the ancient world and even governmental leaders today surround themselves with occult practitioners.

7. *If interpretations belong to God, then that means we should never seek to find out an occult practitioner to interpret our dream for us.*

8. *We should never look to anyone else except God to interpret a dream.*

9. *There may be some symbols in a dream which can provide clues for interpretation, but those should be biblical symbols or biblical numbers, symbols that the Bible clearly uses or associates with some concept. It's so much better to rely on the Holy Spirit. In Numbers 12, God Himself referred to the idea of what He called dark sayings, or riddles. Sometimes God shows us or tells us something mysterious, because He wants us to seek the answer through seeking Him.*

10. *My own personal experiences.*

In this story, it seems that Joseph had an interpretation immediately given to him by the Holy Spirit.

The Dreams Related And Interpreted (Gen. 40:9-19)

9 Then the chief butler told his dream to Joseph, and said to him, "Behold, in my dream a vine was before me, 10 and in the vine were three branches; it was as though it budded, its blossoms shot forth, and its clusters brought forth ripe grapes. 11 Then Pharaoh's cup was in my hand; and I took the grapes and pressed them into Pharaoh's cup, and placed the cup in Pharaoh's hand."

12 And Joseph said to him, “This is the interpretation of it: The three branches are three days. 13 Now within three days Pharaoh will lift up your head and restore you to your place, and you will put Pharaoh’s cup in his hand according to the former manner, when you were his butler. 14 But remember me when it is well with you, and please show kindness to me; make mention of me to Pharaoh, and get me out of this house. 15 For indeed I was stolen away from the land of the Hebrews; and also I have done nothing here that they should put me into the dungeon.”

16 When the chief baker saw that the interpretation was good, he said to Joseph, “I also was in my dream, and there were three white baskets on my head. 17 In the uppermost basket were all kinds of baked goods for Pharaoh, and the birds ate them out of the basket on my head.”

18 So Joseph answered and said, “This is the interpretation of it: The three baskets are three days. 19 Within three days Pharaoh will lift off your head from you and hang you on a tree; and the birds will eat your flesh from you.”

- Each dream has an element of “three,” which Joseph interprets as three days.
- One picture was one of blessing, where the butler was once again ministering to Pharaoh personally. The other man never made it to Pharaoh in his dream, but birds ate his baked goods. Perhaps the birds were meant to speak of death.
- Joseph clearly believes the first man is going to make it, and he specifically asks the first man to put in a good word for him.
- Joseph’s request shows he has not yet fully given his situation over to God. He is still looking for the help of Man, if he can get it.

The Interpretations Are Correct; Joseph Is Forgotten (Gen. 40:20-23)

20 Now it came to pass 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 butler and of the chief baker among his servants. 21 Then he restored the chief butler to his butlership again, and he placed the cup in Pharaoh's hand. 22 But he hanged the chief baker, as Joseph had interpreted to them. 23 Yet the chief butler did not remember Joseph, but forgot him.

- An interesting glimpse of life at the palace. First, notice that it's all about Pharaoh. In the Bible nothing good ever happens at a birthday party!
- Pharaoh makes a show out of bringing these men out of prison but then he hangs the second man. Quite a birthday party!
- In all of this, Joseph was forgotten — at least for the moment. Our times and our situations are in the hands of God.
- The conclusion: Joseph was indeed forgotten by Man, but he was still remembered by God.

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