



**Genesis – 40:1-23**  
**Two Dreams!**  
**(Lesson #49)**

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**Joseph's Timeline**

Event	Joseph's Age	Genesis
Joseph's father moves family from Haran	<b>6</b>	31:17-21
Joseph is sold into slavery	<b>17</b> / <a href="#">Jac 108</a>	37:12-36
Joseph interprets the dreams of cupbearer and baker while in prison	<b>28</b>	41:1
Joseph's grandfather Isaac dies	<b>29</b> / <a href="#">Jac 120</a>	35:28-29
Joseph interprets Pharaoh's dreams and is released from prison	<b>30</b>	41:46
Seven years of plenty, Manasseh and Ephraim born during this time	<b>30-37</b>	41:47-52
Seven years of famine	<b>37-44</b>	41:47-52
Joseph and Jacob reunite (2 years into famine), and family moves family to Egypt	<b>39</b> / <a href="#">Jac 130</a>	45:6, 47:9, 28
Jacob dies	<b>56</b> / <a href="#">Jac 147</a>	47:28
Joseph dies	<b>110</b>	50:22-26

**Outline for this week in your notes:**

- I. The chief cupbearer and the chief baker are incarcerated in the same prison as Joseph (40:1-4)
- II. On a single night both the chief cupbearer and the chief baker have a dream that no one can interpret (40:5-7)
- III. Joseph asked that they share their dreams with him (40:8)
- IV. The chief cupbearer tells his dream to Joseph (40:9-11)
- V. Joseph interprets the chief cupbearer's dream (40:12-14)
- VI. Joseph asks the chief cupbearer to remember him when he is released from prison (40:14-15)
- VII. The chief baker tells Joseph his dream (40:16-17)
- VIII. Joseph interprets the chief baker's dream (40:18-19)
- IX. As predicted both dreams are fulfilled as Joseph had predicted (40:20-22)
- X. The chief cupbearer fails to remember Joseph (40:23)

*40:1 Some time after this, the cupbearer of the king of Egypt and his baker committed an offense against their lord the king of Egypt. 2 And Pharaoh was angry with his two officers, the chief cupbearer and the chief baker, 3 and he put them in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, in the prison where Joseph was confined. 4 The captain of the guard appointed Joseph to be with them, and he attended them. They continued for some time in custody.*

**Vs 1** - Some time passes, this is likely a short time after Joseph was placed into prison and **more specifically put in charge of the prison**, sometime after that, both the Pharaoh's cupbearer and baker were placed into this **same common prison** where Joseph is currently incarcerated.

We would imagine there is not a great deal of time that passes between when Joseph is thrown into prison, when he really takes over running the place, and when the cupbearer and the baker are placed into the prison, but all these events happened in the flow of time.

**It is important to note**, that these two men are much more senior in Pharaoh's administration than they may seem at first.

**In verse 2**, we will learn that the cupbearer was actually the **"chief cupbearer"** and the baker was actually the **"chief baker."**

Now before we move any further, we understand what a chief Baker is and what he does, he likely oversaw the food preparation for Pharaoh.

But we may not be sure about a chief cupbearer. The Hebrew word **שָׂקָה (shaqah)** and it means to **"give drink"** to **"water"** or to **"cause to drink."** Another common translation here is **"butler."**

We know of another **"cupbearer"** from the Bible, his name was Nehemiah (who wrote the book of Nehemiah):  
*"11 O Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of your servant, and to the prayer of your servants who delight to fear your name, and give success to your servant today, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man." Now I was cupbearer to the king. 2:1 ¶ In the month of Nisan, in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, when wine was before him, I took up the wine and gave it to the king. Now I had not been sad in his presence." (Ne 1:11-2:1 ESV)*

Nehemiah was a **cupbearer for Artaxerxes the king**. It seems that he **served the king drinks**, he likely tasted the wine and other beverages to ensure they tasted good and were not poisoned, and he **served as an administrator for the king**.

That is likely very similar to the role of the **"chief cupbearer"** we see here.

These two are said to have committed an **"offense against"** Pharaoh. **The Hebrew** word means **sin**, they **missed the mark somehow**. We can imagine that their misconduct somehow involved food and drink, and that likely it was the same "sin" that landed them both in the Pharaoh's prison, but we do not know for sure.

It seems that they were thrown in prison while the Pharaoh had the matter under investigation.

As a reminder, this is the **common prison**, this is not an American jail for white collar criminals, this is a difficult place, remember what is recorded in the Psalms that is likely being written about this place:

*16 When he summoned a famine on the land and broke all supply of bread, 17 he had sent a man ahead of them, Joseph, who was sold as a slave. 18 His feet were hurt with fetters; his neck was put in a collar of iron;" (Ps 105:16-18 ESV)*

**Vs 2-3** - Further explanation is given by Moses: **Pharaoh was angry** with this **two officers**.

We looked at this word translated **"officer"** last week. It is the Hebrew word that means **Eunuch** or **chamberlain**. So there is a possibility, maybe a better word is that there is likelihood that both of these man had been **castrated**. I would say we cannot be positive.

But Pharaoh was **wrought** with these two officials, he was displeased with these two high officials in his court.

**He put them in the custody** of the **captain of the guard**.

Hopefully we were able to talk about this last week. But if not when we read that they were placed in the house of the captain of the guard, it should make a couple connections in our mind.

*"Meanwhile the Midianites had sold him in Egypt to Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the guard." (Ge 37:36 ESV)*

*"Now Joseph had been brought down to Egypt, and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the guard, an Egyptian, had bought him from the Ishmaelites who had brought him down there." (Ge 39:1 ESV)*

Here we see that the two officials (the chief cupbearer and the chief baker) are thrown into prison we read *“and he put them in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, in the prison where Joseph was confined.” (Ge 40:3 ESV)*

If we understand this correctly, and I believe we are, it means that Potiphar oversaw the prison. He was Pharaoh’s **“captain of the guard”** and one of his areas of responsibility appears to have been this prison.

But the key point, is that they land in the prison where Joseph is also incarcerated.

**Vs 4 - The captain of the guard**, notice seemingly over the prison keeper, appointed Joseph to be with them and so Joseph attended to them.

Here the **captain of the guard (Potiphar)** appointed Joseph to be with them to be in charge of them and to watch over them.

If we understand this correctly, while in prison, **Joseph begins to regain the trust of Potiphar, remember** his wife accused this young man of rape. Now it seems, Potiphar is elevating Joseph, even here in prison.

**THIS LIKELY SPEAKS VOLUMES** to what Potiphar sees in this young man Joseph. Equally, it shows us that **God was using Joseph** even in the **most difficult circumstances**.

Then we are told that the (the chief butler and the chief baker) continued for **some time in custody**, in jail.

We have no clear indicator of the amount of time, but some undisclosed amount of time passes, with the chief cupbearer and the chief baker incarcerated in the same prison with Joseph and Joseph has some form of authority over them.

*5 ¶ And one night they both dreamed — the cupbearer and the baker of the king of Egypt, who were confined in the prison — each his own dream, and each dream with its own interpretation. 6 When Joseph came to them in the morning, he saw that they were troubled. 7 So he asked Pharaoh’s officers who were with him in custody in his master’s house, “Why are your faces downcast today?” 8 They said to him, “We have had dreams, and there is no one to interpret them.” And Joseph said to them, “Do not interpretations belong to God? Please tell them to me.”*

**Vs 5 - Then a single night comes** and, on that evening, both have a dream. On the same evening, while in prison, both have a dream, although their dreams are different, each dream will have its own (unique) interpretation.

Moses is making sure that we get it, he is making sure that we understand that these dreams were different and meant something different.

**Vs 6-7 - So Joseph comes to them in the morning and sees that they were troubled.** Joseph sees that they were sad, that they were vexed.

Now keep in mind that Joseph has his own problems, he is in prison, this is not his prison, but this particular morning when he comes to them, he sees that they are very sad and downcast.

There are a number of points of application, let me grab a few:

- 1) Our jobs, our situations in life, our circumstances in life **are our opportunity to glorify our Savior.**
  - a. Let’s be honest, he was in prison, but he was a good steward and he had a genuine concern for others.

*“Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful.” (1Co 4:2 ESV)*

- 2) This of course is the second point. You are to work for Caesar, like you are working for Christ, and never forget, we are God’s ambassador.  
*“23 Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, 24 knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.” (Col 3:23-24 ESV)*

- 3) It seems to me that Joseph had a **host of reasons to become despondent (the pit, Potiphar's house, and now prison)** and **focus on his problems**. That is **not what he did**, good lesson for you and I when we are in difficult situations.

He asked them plainly: *"Why are your faces downcast today?"*

Now keep in mind that everyday is a day in prison for these men, but here, something is different, they are very sad and very downcast and **Joseph not only notices**, but then **Joseph inquires**.

**Vs 8** - They tell Joseph that we have each had a dream and there is no one to interpret them, there is no one to tell us what our dreams mean.

Each of us is **disturbed by our dream** and we have **no one to tell us what these things mean!**

Now clearly, these men have talked to each other (if no one else) and now they are talking to Joseph.

It is possible that they have shared their dreams with others in the prison, we do not know.

But we are certain they had dreams, we are certain that these dreams have **disturbed them**, and we are certain they are **desiring to understand** the dreams.

Here they are sharing their reality with Joseph.

Notice Joseph's response: *"Do not interpretations belong to God? Please tell them to me."*

Joseph's point, God is able to interpret dreams, interpretations belong to him.

**Please tell me your dream**. He does not say it directly, but it seems, he is at least implying that I will tell you the interpretation because God will tell **me**.

Now let me say something, God has not given me the ability to interpret dreams, in fact I can rarely remember my own dreams more than a minute or two, I wake up in a quandary due to something going on in my dream and then as I am thinking about it, it just fades away.

So I do not have the gift of dream interpretation and I suspect that is true for most of us.

But we do have something and we have access to something that is better than being able to interpret dreams. We have the word of God (God's revelation to man) and we have the promise from God that if we will seek wisdom, God Himself will reward that endeavor.

**Let me show you just a few verses:**

*"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction." (Pr 1:7 ESV)*

*"But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere." (Jas 3:17 ESV)*

*"If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him." (Jas 1:5 ESV)*

*"1 ¶ My son, if you receive my words and treasure up my commandments with you, 2 making your ear attentive to wisdom and inclining your heart to understanding; 3 yes, if you call out for insight and raise your voice for understanding, 4 if you seek it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures, 5 then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God." (Pr 2:1-5 ESV)*

You and I may never interpret a dream, but we can have the wisdom of God to operate day-by-day, if we really desire it, if we will follow God and if we will pursue wisdom.

The stage is set for the saga in chapter 40!

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*9 So the chief cupbearer told his dream to Joseph and said to him, "In my dream there was a vine before me, 10 and on the vine there were three branches. As soon as it budded, its blossoms shot forth, and the clusters ripened into grapes. 11 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 Then Joseph said to him, "This is its interpretation: the three branches are three days.*

**Vs 9-10** - The **chief cupbearer** decides to tell Joseph his **dream first**. We are not sure why, it is possible because he has a clear conscience, knowing he is not guilty of anything. It could be because his dream "seemed" good, we do not know.

**But the** chief cupbearer leads off and says **I had this dream**, and then he begins to tell Joseph his dream.

In this dream **there was a vine** that was **before him**. This **vine had three branches**. **All of a sudden**, the **branches (budded)** put on small buds, **(blossomed)** and it shot forth blossoms, and **(clustered)** those blossoms turned to clusters of grapes and rapidly ripened.

In my mind, he saw one of those time lapse movies (rapid succession) of a grapevine budding, blossoming, and producing clusters of grapes.

**Vs 11** - In the dream the **cupbearer** was **holding Pharaoh's cup** and he took the ripened grapes, pressed them to produce juice or wine in Pharaoh's cup, and then placed the cup in Pharaoh's hand.

This is a vision that matches his past profession.

**Dr. Arnold Fruchtenbaum writes in his commentary:** *"In verses 10-11, the number three is prominent: the vine had three branches, three terms are used to describe the grapes of the vine (budded, blossomed, 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)."*

**Vs 12 - Interestingly enough**, it appears that Joseph immediately gives the cupbearer the interpretation. Maybe he prayed, maybe there was some passage of time, but the text makes it seem like it happened immediately.

**This is the interpretation:**

FIRST, the three branches Joseph says indicate three days. He starts by telling him the meaning of the three branches.

*13 In three days Pharaoh will lift up your head and restore you to your office, and you shall place Pharaoh's cup in his hand as formerly, when you were his cupbearer. 14 Only remember me, when it is well with you, and please do me the kindness to mention me to Pharaoh, and so get me out of this house. 15 For I was indeed stolen out of the land of the Hebrews, and here also I have done nothing that they should put me into the pit."*

**Vs 13** - He then further explains. In three days, **Pharaoh will lift up your head and restore you to your office**. The three branches **represent time**, and in **three days**, your head will be lifted, and **you will be back to serving Pharaoh**.

You will once again place the cup in Pharaoh's hand as you had formerly done when you were serving as chief cupbearer. **Can you imagine the joy that just flooded the chief cupbearers heart?** In just **three days**, according to this **Hebrew slave**, who interpreted his dream, he would be back to serving Pharaoh.

**NOTE:** Notice, Joseph provides one main meaning, he does not deal with every little aspect of the dream. He does not discuss the meaning of the budding, or the blossoms, or even the grapes. He took no interest in explaining the meaning of the "ripened grapes" of the "cup."

He provides an interpretation of the overall dream.

**Vs 14** - Then you see Joseph's request, Joseph's plea: ***Only remember me, when it is well with you, and please do me the kindness to mention me to Pharaoh, and so get me out of this house.***

Once you are released, which is inevitable for God has declared it and I have complete trust in what God has revealed. When you are released, please remember me and do me just one favor. Please mention me to Pharaoh, please mention what is happening to me, so that I can get released from this prison.

**Vs 15** - For I was stolen out of the land of Canaan... No that is not what he says, I was stolen from the **land of the Hebrews**.

It seems that Jacob (Israel) had been teaching his boys about the **Abrahamic covenant**. He had been teaching them that God had promised this land, the land of Canaan to them and to their descendants!

So much so, that Joseph refers to the land as the **land of the Hebrews!**

But here, Joseph tells the chief cupbearer that **he was wrongfully enslaved and stolen from the land**. He goes on to say they **threw me into the pit**.

The word translated pit is: **בֹּרַי (bowr)**. It can mean a **pit, hole, cistern, a dungeon, or even a prison**.

The **first time** we saw this **Hebrew word** was:

*"20 Come now, let us kill him and throw him into one of the pits. Then we will say that a fierce animal has devoured him, and we will see what will become of his dreams." 21 But when Reuben heard it, he rescued him out of their hands, saying, "Let us not take his life." 22 And Reuben said to them, "Shed no blood; throw him into **this pit** here in the wilderness, but do not lay a hand on him" — that he might rescue him out of their hand to restore him to his father." (Ge 37:20-22 ESV)*

This exact same word will be used to describe his current location, let me show you, we will read this next week so I am getting a little ahead of my skis:

*"Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they quickly brought him out of **the pit**. And when he had shaved himself and changed his clothes, he came in before Pharaoh." (Ge 41:14 ESV)*

So which pit is Joseph referring? **Maybe both!**

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**16** When the chief baker saw that the interpretation was favorable, he said to Joseph, "I also had a dream: there were three cake baskets on my head, **17** and in the uppermost basket there were all sorts of baked food for Pharaoh, but the birds were eating it out of the basket on my head." **18** And Joseph answered and said, "This is its interpretation: the three baskets are three days. **19** In three days Pharaoh will lift up your head — from you! — and hang you on a tree. And the birds will eat the flesh from you."

**Vs 16** - The chief baker has been listening to the interpretation of the chief cupbearer's dream. Seeing that his was favorable, he gathers up the strength to share his dream with Joseph.

Here the chief baker states: I too had a dream and there were three “cake” baskets on my head.

It is unclear if it should be translated “**cake**”, “**white**”, or “**white bread**” but in the end that will make little difference. Understand, in the chief baker’s dream he had three baskets on his head.

**Vs 17** - Further, in the top basket, the uppermost basket, there were all sorts of baked foods for the Pharaoh. **But the birds** were eating out of the top basket that was on my head.

So a similar dream, it involves the number three, in both cases it involves their previous employment with the Pharaoh.

We can picture this in our minds, this chief baker, with three baskets on his head, bread in the top basket and the birds eating the bread out of the top basket.

**Vs 18** - **Once again**, it appears that Joseph quickly interprets the dream. If he prayed, it appears to have been a quick and silent prayer and he transitions to the interpretation.

**The three baskets represent three days.** The reason in the dream there were three baskets on the chief baker’s head is the three represent days. This is a similar, at least in **time interpretation** to the one Joseph just provided the chief cupbearer.

But now the interpretation goes a **whole new and horrible direction**.

**Vs 19** - In three days, Pharaoh will **lift up your head from you!** This is the **exact same two Hebrew words (lift up and head)**. But now is added details that go a totally different direction.

You will be **hung on a tree** and as the birds ate the bread out of the top basket in your dream. The birds will eat your flesh.

Now notice, he provides an interpretation of the dream overall, this is its interpretation.

- 1) Three baskets are three days
- 2) After that period, you will be hanged on a tree
- 3) The birds will eat your flesh

Once again, Joseph provides an explanation of the vision overall and we have every reason in the world to suspect that God gave him this interpretation.

**ONE MORE THOUGHT! Here is a prophecy** that the chief baker would be **hanged on a tree**. This reminds us of what would later become law under the **Mosaic covenant**.

Here Moses is outlining what to do with a rebellious son, but the procedure would likely apply to **other capital offenses**:

*“21 Then all the men of the city shall stone him to death with stones. So you shall purge the evil from your midst, and all Israel shall hear, and fear. 22 "And if a man has committed a crime punishable by death and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, 23 his body shall not remain all night on the tree, but you shall bury him the same day, for a hanged man is cursed by God. You shall not defile your land that the LORD your God is giving you for an inheritance.” (De 21:21-23 ESV)*

**As we consider this**, we are of course reminded of what Paul wrote to the church in Galatia:

*“Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us — for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree" — ” (Ga 3:13 ESV)*

But He, the Lord Jesus, was cursed because of our sins, hung on a tree because of our transgressions.

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*20 On the third day, which was Pharaoh's birthday, he made a feast for all his servants and lifted up the head of the chief cupbearer and the head of the chief baker among his servants. 21 He restored the chief cupbearer to his position, 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 cupbearer did not remember Joseph, but forgot him.*

**Vs 20** - On the third day, it turned out was **Pharaoh's birthday**. It appears that Pharaoh **held a celebration, a feast for his servants**. At this celebration, he **lifted up the head of the chief cupbearer** and he **lifted up the head of the chief baker** among the other servants.

**Vs 21** - **First**, at this celebration, **Pharaoh, restored the chief cupbearer**, he lifted up his head in the sense of restoration, he **restored him** to his former position, and once again he **served Pharaoh** as the chief cupbearer!

This is precisely what Joseph had predicted!

**Vs 22** - But then we read that he, Pharaoh - **hanged the chief baker, exactly as Joseph had interpreted**. Both of the prophecies fulfilled in the timeline that Joseph said they would be fulfilled.

It happened, catch the words at the back-half of verse 22: *“as Joseph had interpreted to them.”*

It all happened, just as Joseph had **interpreted them** to the chief cupbearer and the chief baker.

Back to our story... But the good news is that the chief cupbearer has been released from prison. He will share with Pharaoh the story of this Hebrew who has been wrongly enslaved, and who can interpret dreams.

Surely Pharaoh will pull him out of the pit once he understands that he is innocent, and he can interpret dreams.

**This looks like it has turned out great for our brother. Joseph has his get out of jail free card in the chief cupbearer.**

He will hopefully be out of the prison by the end of the day!

**Vs 23** - But the chief cupbearer did not remember Joseph. **He forgot all about him.**

**Wait**, I thought God was going to rescue Joseph. **The chief cupbearer forgot! Where is God** and why cannot he cause the chief cupbearer to **remember** what happened in the prison, surely that is an easy thing for God to do.

**I would remind us:**

*“8 For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD. 9 For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.” (Isa 55:8-9 ESV)*

So that I do not bury the lead and you will see this next week. **It will be two more years before Joseph gets out of this horrible Egyptian prison. But Yahweh loves him, and Yahweh is with him.**

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