

Lesson: Joseph’s Favor and the Promise Pt. 2 (Genesis 40:1-41:57)

God’s favor rested on Joseph, despite his many trials. After being sold into slavery by his own brothers, he found himself in the house of the captain of Pharaoh’s guard. The captain’s wife falsely accused Joseph, leading towards his imprisonment. But even in prison, Joseph was still favored by God. We will find that this favor transformed these horrible circumstances into a heavenly witness. God’s favor made certain that the prison was right where Joseph needed to be in order for God to use him to carry God’s promise for the salvation of his family and the world.

Biblical Takeaways

1. ***Joseph is established as an interpreter of dreams (40:1-23):*** Joseph’s imprisonment bore liberating fruit. In prison, he discovered there were two chief servants of the Pharaoh. The first was the chief cupbearer and the second was the chief baker. Both saw dreams given by God likely to establish Joseph as a dream interpreter. The cupbearer had a dream that contained that used the symbolism of three to establish that he would be promoted by Pharaoh within three days. The chief baker had a dream that also used the symbolism of three to signify that he would lose his head in three days. Joseph’s job was to share what God had intended in each of the dreams. He could not alter the meaning based on his own desires. Both dreams came to pass but the cupbearer forgot about Joseph.
2. ***Joseph interprets Pharaoh’s dreams (41:1-36)***
 - a. In vv. 1-13, The narrative describes Pharaoh’s dreams, the failure of his counsel to interpret them, and the cupbearer’s remembrance that Joseph had God’s gift to interpret them. Pharaoh had two dreams. The first was of seven fat cows and seven emaciated cows coming out of the Nile. The skinny cows devoured the fat ones. Then, the Pharaoh saw seven plump ears of corn and seven blighted corn. The blighted nasty corn ate the plump good looking corn. None of Pharaoh’s counsellors were able to interpret the dreams. The cupbearer was able to remember Joseph at this moment and he was called up to interpret the Pharaoh’s dreams.
 - b. Vv. 14-36, Pharaoh called upon Joseph to interpret his dreams. Joseph reminded Pharaoh (v. 16) that God alone has the power to interpret dreams. And with God’s power Joseph interpreted Pharaoh’s dreams to signify that there would be seven years of plenty and seven years of famine in Egypt. Joseph admonished Pharaoh to save up during the years of plenty to be prepared for the years of famine. Joseph advised Pharaoh to select someone who was discerning and wise to oversee the efforts saving and preserving resources for later use when the famine arrived. We must remember in the ancient world that policy decisions were often made based on perception of divine portents. People went to battle or refrained from going based on what they considered the gods to be saying. This is why Pharaoh sought the divine counsel in the first place.
3. ***Joseph receives his promotion (41:37-57)***
 - a. Pharaoh made Joseph second only to him in all of Egypt. He changed his name to Zaphenath-paneah, which means “the god speaks and lives.”
 - b. Joseph married Asenath, an Egyptian, and had children Manasseh and Ephraim.
 - c. Joseph was able to increase the land holding strength of Pharaoh with his food program.