

## Genesis 40-41 • Chapter Study

### INTRO

Last Wed., PJ got us thru v19, then on Sun he camped out in vs4-7 for a tasty spiritual meal.

I'm not going to repeat his commentary, but we do need to start at v1 for the sake of context.

I could summarize what's happened but the summary wouldn't be any shorter than simply reading the text.

### CH 40

<sup>1</sup> 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. <sup>2</sup> And Pharaoh was angry with his 2 officers, the chief butler and the chief baker. <sup>3</sup> So he put them in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, in the prison, the place where Joseph *was* confined. <sup>4</sup> And the captain of the guard charged Joseph with them, and he served them; so they were in custody for a while.

For the back-story of why Joseph's in prison, you'll have to read the previous chs.

Potiphar, Joseph's previous master, was the captain of the Pharaoh's guard.

Think the head of the Egyptian Secret Service.

It was his job to sniff our plots against the throne.

Potiphar found 1, but wasn't sure who was behind it, the baker or the butler.

By Butler, think **cupbearer**; the guy responsible for all the beverages at the royal table.

The plot involved poison; either introduced thru the food or the wine.

So both of them were thrown in the pokey while the investigation was made.

Joseph, who's been given charge over his fellow prisoners, is taking care of them.

<sup>5</sup> 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 1 night *and* each man's dream with its *own* interpretation. <sup>6</sup> And Joseph came in to them in the morning and looked at them, and saw that they *were* sad. <sup>7</sup> 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?" <sup>8</sup> 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."

Joseph didn't know what the dreams meant, but he knew who did: God.

Since he knew God, he asked them to tell their dreams & maybe God would tell him their meaning.

<sup>9</sup> Then the chief butler told his dream to Joseph, and said to him, "Behold, in my dream a vine *was* before me, <sup>10</sup> and in the vine *were* 3 branches; it *was* as though it budded, its blossoms shot forth, and its clusters brought forth ripe grapes. <sup>11</sup> 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." <sup>12</sup> And Joseph said to him, "This *is* the interpretation of it: The 3 branches *are* 3 days. <sup>13</sup> Now within 3 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.

Joseph interpreted the cupbearer's dream as meaning he'd be exonerated of all charges & restored to his post.

So Joe added . . .

<sup>14</sup> 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. <sup>15</sup> 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."

I love the way PJ said it last week Joseph was content IN his circumstances, but not content WITH them.

Freedom is always to be preferred to imprisonment.

And if it's possible to become free, one ought to seek it.

Joseph's imprisonment was due to an injustice carried out against him by a vengeful woman.

He ought not have been in prison.

But he waited on God for the timing to get out.

He recognized this as a potential door thru which he could gain his freedom.

It's interesting that the Apostle Paul gives much the same counsel to slaves in 1 Cor. 7 when he tells them to serve the Lord as slaves, but if they have the opportunity to secure their freedom, to do so. [vs20-24]

<sup>16</sup> When the chief baker saw that the interpretation was good, he said to Joseph, "I also *was* in my dream, and

there *were* 3 white baskets on my head. <sup>17</sup> In the uppermost basket *were* all kinds of baked goods for Pharaoh, and the birds ate them out of the basket on my head.” <sup>18</sup> So Joseph answered and said, “This *is* the interpretation of it: The 3 baskets *are* three days. <sup>19</sup> Within 3 days Pharaoh will lift off your head from you and hang you on a tree; and the birds will eat your flesh from you.”

Potiphar’s investigation discovered that the baker was behind the conspiracy to assassinate Pharaoh so he was executed.

Okay, that’s where we got to last Wed. // Let’s see what happens . . .

<sup>20</sup> Now it came to pass on the 3 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. <sup>21</sup> Then he restored the chief butler to his butlership again, and he placed the cup in Pharaoh’s hand. <sup>22</sup> But he hanged the chief baker, as Joseph had interpreted to them.

Then this sad comment is added as a PS

<sup>23</sup> Yet the chief butler did not remember Joseph, but forgot him.

Ahh! Joe’s forgotten. He’s forgotten on Earth by man.

But He’s ***never*** forgotten in heaven by God. God’s eye is on Joseph the whole time.

The thing is, there are some pieces that need to be moved into place before Joseph can emerge from prison.

And God didn’t hold counsel with him.

He didn’t send him an email telling him to hang on.

He didn’t update him every week on the progress of His plans.

Wouldn’t we love it if God would make us privy to His counsel?

If He’d send us progress reports & a monthly Gantt chart showing us milestones & a checklist of completed tasks?

Yeah, we’d love that. ***But He doesn’t.***

- He gives us His Word, His promise – ***once!***
- He’s working all things together for good.
- He’ll never leave nor forsake us.
- What He began, He’ll finish.

And with God, once is enough,

Because He is not a man that he could lie, nor the son of man that He’d change His mind.

CH 41

<sup>1</sup> Then it came to pass, at the end of 2 full years, that Pharaoh had a dream; and behold, he stood by the river. <sup>2</sup>

Suddenly there came up out of the river 7 cows, fine looking and fat; and they fed in the meadow. <sup>3</sup> Then behold,

7 other cows came up after them out of the river, ugly and gaunt, and stood by the other cows on the bank of the

river. <sup>4</sup> And the ugly and gaunt cows ate up the 7 fine looking and fat cows. So Pharaoh awoke.

Pharaoh had a dream that was so vivid, he remember it easily upon waking.

Do you remember your dreams? Some do, most remember their dreams in a hazy & uncertain way.

The ancients, & especially the Egyptians, believed dreams were a way the spiritual realm communicated with the living.

Later in Egyptian history, they developed elaborate dream interpretation manuals.

Pharaoh knew this dream had special importance because it was so vivid & because he ***just sensed*** it meant something.

The proof of that was given in what followed . . .

5 He slept and dreamed a 2<sup>nd</sup> time; and suddenly 7 heads of grain came up on 1 stalk, plump and good. 6 Then behold, 7 thin heads, blighted by the east wind, sprang up after them. 7 And the 7 thin heads devoured the 7 plump and full heads. So Pharaoh awoke, and indeed, it was a dream.

Pharaoh knew these dreams, given to him as the ruler of a vast civilization were a message he needed to heed.

So he called in his dream specialists.

8 Now it came to pass in the morning that his spirit was troubled, and he sent and called for all the magicians of

Egypt and all its wise men. And Pharaoh told them his dreams, but there was no 1 who could interpret them for Pharaoh.

These wise **guys**, I mean **men**, didn't have a clue what Pharaoh's dreams meant.

9 Then the chief butler spoke to Pharaoh, saying: "I remember my faults this day. 10 When Pharaoh was angry with his servants, and put me in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, both me and the chief baker, 11 we each had a dream in 1 night, he and I. Each of us dreamed according to the interpretation of his own dream. 12 Now there was a young Hebrew man with us there, a servant of the captain of the guard. And we told him, and he interpreted our dreams for us; to each man he interpreted according to his own dream. 13 And it came to pass, just as he interpreted for us, so it happened. He restored me to my office, and he hanged him."

The palace was all abuzz with Pharaoh's dream and the inability of the wise men to interpret it.

Though it doesn't say, Pharaoh was probably raging!

"What do you **MEAN**, you can't interpret my dream?"

What do I **PAY** you guys for if you can't tell me what a simple dream means?"

That's when the royal cupbearer remembered Joseph; when a primo dream-interpreter was needed, by no 1 less than Egypt's ruler = **PHARAOH**.

<sup>14</sup> Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they brought him quickly out of the dungeon; and he shaved, changed his clothing, and came to Pharaoh.

While for the rest of the ancient world a beard was a sign of manliness, the Egyptians eschewed facial hair.

This is one of the things you'll note about Egyptian art; the men are clean shaven.

In the earliest days of Ancient Egypt, men wore beards like everyone else.

But in the dynastic era, they began to view hair as a link to animals.

And the Egyptians were then in a phase of regarding themselves as linked to the gods.

So they began to shave.

Egyptians **priests** went so far as to remove **ALL** body hair; including eyebrows & eyelashes.

As Joseph was being brought to Pharaoh, he'd have to clean up from his something like 5 to 6 yrs as a prisoner.

15 And Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I have had a dream, and there is no 1 who can interpret it. But I have heard it said of you that you can understand a dream, to interpret it." 16 So Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, "It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh an answer of peace."

There's more in Joe's response than we might assume at first reading.

To help us realize that, this is 1 of those scenes we want to enter.

Egypt was the world's premier power.

Pharaoh's court was filled with earthly glory, splendor, treasure, & emblems of power.

All who came before Pharaoh were awestruck.

Most used the precious lil time they had before him to gain favor; to elevate themselves somehow.

Here's Joseph in his mid-20's.

He's taken out of prison where he's lived for the last 5-6 yrs.

And he's ushered into the throne room of the world's premier power; standing before the world's most powerful man, and he's the 1 being asked a favor of.

**If there was ever a moment to grandstand**, this was it.

But Joe points Pharaoh and his court, not to himself, but to God.

**Look at the exchange again . . .**

15 And Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I have had a dream, and there is no 1 who can interpret it. But I have heard it said of you that you can understand a dream, to interpret it." 16 So Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, "It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh an answer of peace."

Joseph's humility here is simply 1 of the most amazing moments in all the Bible & history.

What makes it all the more stellar is that it's been preceded by years of slavery, injustice, & confusing circumstances.

17 Then Pharaoh said to Joseph: "Behold, in my dream I stood on the bank of the river. 18 Suddenly 7 cows came up out of the river, fine looking and fat; and they fed in the meadow. 19 Then behold, 7 other cows came up after them, poor and very ugly and gaunt, such ugliness as I have never seen in all the land of Egypt. 20 And the gaunt and ugly cows ate up the 1<sup>st</sup> 7, the fat cows. 21 When they had eaten them up, no 1 would have known that they had eaten them, for they were just as ugly as at the beginning. So I awoke. 22 Also I saw in my dream, and suddenly 7 heads came up on 1 stalk, full and good. 23 Then behold, 7 heads, withered, thin, and blighted by the

east wind, sprang up after them. 24 And the thin heads devoured the 7 good heads. So I told this to the magicians, but there was no one who could explain it to me.”

25 Then Joseph said to Pharaoh, “The dreams of Pharaoh are 1; God has shown Pharaoh what He is about to do: 26 The 7 good cows are 7 years, and the 7 good heads are 7 years; the dreams are 1. 27 And the 7 thin and ugly cows which came up after them are 7 years, and the 7 empty heads blighted by the east wind are 7 years of famine. 28 This is the thing which I have spoken to Pharaoh. God has shown Pharaoh what He is about to do. 29 Indeed 7 years of great plenty will come throughout all the land of Egypt; 30 but after them 7 years of famine will arise, and all the plenty will be forgotten in the land of Egypt; and the famine will deplete the land. 31 So the plenty will not be known in the land because of the famine following, for it will be very severe. 32 And the dream was repeated to Pharaoh twice because the thing is established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass. As Pharaoh recounted his dream, God gave Joe the interpretation, which he faithfully rehearsed for the Egyptians ruler.

Egypt would have 7 yrs of great bounty, followed by 7 years of famine which would utterly consume the surplus of the years of bounty.

Pharaoh said he saw the cows in the first dream **come out of the Nile**.

Ancient Egypt was a long, narrow realm lying right along the Nile.

Anything beyond a couple miles of the Nile is desert.

Ancient Egypt was called The Gift of the Nile.

Its waters come from the mountains of Sudan & Uganda.

If there's no snowfall in those mountains due to drought, the Nile drops & Egypt can't irrigate its fields.

The Egyptians knew what it meant to have a year of drought or light rains.

Just 1 such year was hard. Joe foretells 7!

That would strike **utter terror** in the hearts of the Egyptians.

And it would paralyze Pharaoh, because as a god worshipped by his people, he was responsible for their provision.

He was supposed to have power over the Nile.

If he could not feed his people, then they'd rebel and oust him.

But Joe's not finished. // He has more to say.

But I wonder if he didn't offer it in the midst of the stunned silence that followed v32.

As he's standing there, he prays for wisdom on what counsel to give.

God has obviously given Pharaoh this dream **for a reason**.

What point in telling him what's coming **unless there's something he can do?**

33 “Now therefore, let Pharaoh select a discerning and wise man, and set him over the land of Egypt. 34 Let Pharaoh do this, and let him appoint officers over the land, to collect 1/5<sup>th</sup> of the produce of the land of Egypt in the 7 plentiful years. 35 And let them gather all the food of those good years that are coming, and store up grain under the authority of Pharaoh, and let them keep food in the cities. 36 Then that food shall be as a reserve for the land for the 7 years of famine which shall be in the land of Egypt, that the land may not perish during the famine.”

Joseph has spent the last several yrs doing exactly this kind of administration; 1<sup>st</sup> in Potiphar's house, then in the prison.

He proposes the federal govt of Egypt levy a 20% tax on all produce for the next 7 yrs of bumper crops.

Pharaoh's going to have to establish a new governmental structure to collect that tax.

It'll need a chief administrator who'll oversee a staff of assistants.

What's collected will then be stored & doled out during the 7 yrs of famine.

37 So the advice was good in the eyes of Pharaoh and in the eyes of all his servants. 38 And Pharaoh said to his servants, “Can we find such a 1 as this, a man in whom is the Spirit of God?”

Joseph's plan was brilliant & Pharaoh recognized it as such.

It was clear to him God's hand was on Joseph.

Not only that he could interpret the dreams that had the wise men stymied, but that he could come up with such a simple & practical plan.

So Pharaoh nominated Joe to be the chief administrator of that new govt department.

When Pharaoh nominated someone, everyone else thought it was a **brilliant** idea!

39 Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Inasmuch as God has shown you all this, there is no 1 as discerning and wise as

you. 40 You shall be over my house, and all my people shall be ruled according to your word; only in regard to the throne will I be greater than you.” 41 And Pharaoh said to Joseph, “See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt.”

The text makes it seem that Pharaoh did this at their 1<sup>st</sup> meeting.

That he was SOOO impressed with Joe, he made him the prime minister of Egypt.

But it might be better to understand that this happened a bit later, after Pharaoh’d seen how well Joseph’s executed the new tax & storage plan.

He saw how everything Joseph did prospered because of God’s favor, and decided it would be wisest to put not just one department under his oversight, but the entire system & land.

So Joseph, the one-time slave and convict, became Egypt’s Prime Minister, or Grand Vizier; the 2<sup>nd</sup> most powerful man in the world’s most powerful kingdom.

42 Then Pharaoh took his signet ring off his hand and put it on Joseph’s hand;

That ring was THE symbol of Pharaoh’s power.

It’s what was used to make legally binding all treaties, laws, and documents.

and he clothed him in garments of fine linen and put a gold chain around his neck.

Joseph not only HAD power, he was allowed to wear its emblems & symbols.

43 And he had him ride in the 2<sup>nd</sup> chariot which he had; and they cried out before him, “Bow the knee!” So he set him over all the land of Egypt. 44 Pharaoh also said to Joseph, “I am Pharaoh, and without your consent no man may lift his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt.” 45 And Pharaoh called Joseph’s name Zaphnath-Paaneah. And he gave him as a wife Asenath, the daughter of Poti-Pherah priest of On. So Joseph went out over all the land of Egypt.

Translating Joseph’s Egyptian name had been difficult for many years because it was based on archaic roots that obscured by time.

More recent discovered make it clear that Zaphnath-Paaneah meant “Savior of the world.”

There’s a reason Pharaoh **renamed** Joseph, and decked him out with all of these trappings of EGYPTIAN royal power.

It was embarrassing for the Egyptian court that their Prime Minister **wasn’t Egyptian!**

The Egyptians felt themselves superior to others.

They were especially suspicious & skeptical of foreigners.

Historians & archaeologists have now established that slavery was a relatively new fixture in Egypt at the time Joseph first went there.

When that was has been the subject of much debate but the best evidence is that Joseph came to Egypt during their Middle Kingdom and lived during the reigns of **Sesostris II & III** around 1880 BC.

The proud Egyptians would not have been happy with a foreigner ruling as a regent for Pharaoh.

So Pharaoh tried to **camouflage** his foreignness by giving him an Egyptian name, an Egyptians wife, and having him affect Egyptian customs.

The final step in **Egyptifying** Joseph was marrying him into the **Egyptian social network**.

Asenath was the daughter of the high priest of the main religion of Egypt, the worship of Ra, the sun god.

The city of On, later named **Heliopolis** by the Greeks, was the central city of Ra worship.

The priests of On comprised the most learned men in Egypt, and became the real power-brokers in later Egyptians history.

46 Joseph was 30 years old when he stood before Pharaoh king of Egypt. And Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh, and went throughout all the land of Egypt.

**13 yrs** have passed since his brothers sold him off. 13 yrs as a slave, then a convict.

Throughout all that time, Joseph kept his faith in God.

47 Now in the 7 plentiful years the ground brought forth abundantly. 48 So he gathered up all the food of the 7 years which were in the land of Egypt, and laid up the food in the cities; he laid up in every city the food of the fields which surrounded them. 49 Joseph gathered very much grain, as the sand of the sea, until he stopped counting, for it was immeasurable.

At 1<sup>st</sup>, they kept meticulous records of the collection plan.

But eventually the stockpiles exceeded their numbering system.

50 And to Joseph were born 2 sons before the years of famine came, whom Asenath, the daughter of Poti-Pherah

priest of On, bore to him. 51 Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh: [**Forgetfulness**] “For God has made me forget all my toil and all my father’s house.” 52 And the name of the 2<sup>nd</sup> he called Ephraim: [**Fruitfulness**]“For God has caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction.”

While Pharaoh tried to **Egyptianize** Joseph, he maintained his legacy as a Hebrew by giving **his** sons through **Hebrew** names.

Though he’s risen in Egypt, Joseph knows his **real identity** lies in with his family in Canaan.

<sup>53</sup> Then the 7 years of plenty which were in the land of Egypt ended, <sup>54</sup> and the 7 years of famine began to come, as Joseph had said. The famine was in all lands, but in all the land of Egypt there was bread.

This famine was likely due to a region wide drought. The entire Middle East was hammered.

55 So when all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread. Then Pharaoh said to all the Egyptians, “Go to Joseph; whatever he says to you, do.” 56 The famine was over all the face of the earth, and Joseph opened all the storehouses and sold to the Egyptians. And the famine became severe in the land of Egypt.

57 So all countries came to Joseph in Egypt to buy grain, because the famine was severe in all lands.

In ch47 we’ll see that the famine lasted so long & was so severe, Pharaoh ended up owning & controlling virtually *all* of the land of Egypt.

The people went to Joseph so often to buy bread, their savings were depleted and they ended up having to sell their lands, property, even themselves.

It was during this phase of Egyptian history the power of the Pharaoh spread over all Egypt.

### Conclusion

As we end tonight, there’s something we ought to take note of.

Joseph’s story provides a striking parallel to Jesus.

PJ chronicles this handsomely in his book Pit to Palace.

But I want to share some of the ways we’ve seen **just so far** that Joe points us to Jesus . . .

1. Was a shepherd
2. Was loved by his father
3. Was sent unto his brethren
4. But he was hated by them
5. He prophesied his coming glory
6. Was rejected by his brothers
7. Endured unjust punishment from his brothers
8. Was sold for silver.
9. Was handed over to the Gentiles
10. Was regarded as dead, but raised out of the pit
11. Went to Egypt
12. Became a servant
13. Was tempted severely, but did not sin
14. Was falsely accused
15. Made no defense
16. Was cast into prison, and numbered with sinners and criminals
17. Endured unjust punishment at the hand of Gentiles
18. Associated with 2 criminals; 1 was pardoned the other was not
  - a. the butler, with his *wine*, and the baker, with his *bread*, speak of the elements of communion.
  - b. the 3-days before their case was resolved suggests the 3 days before the resurrection
19. Showed compassion
20. Brought a message of deliverance in prison
21. Wanted to be remembered
22. Was shown to have divine wisdom
23. Was recognized as having the Spirit of God
24. Was glorified after his humility
25. Was honored among Gentiles while still despised or forgotten by his brethren
26. Was given a Gentile bride
27. Was 30 when he began his main life’s work
28. Blessed the world with bread

29. Was the *only source* of bread

30. The world was instructed to go to him and do whatever he said

31. Given the name "Savior of the World"