

A Rood Awakening!

Presents

Awakening in the Word

By Glenn McWilliams of TK TORAH KEEPERS
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THE OVERVIEW

Joseph's unpredictable journey continues to take him lower and lower into the world of his exile. Our portion this week continues the narrative of Joseph as he is put through the refiner's fire in the dungeon of his master. Once again, Joseph finds himself at the mercy of others, recognizing that his life is not his own. Yet even in the depths of the earth Joseph soon realizes that YHWH is still his constant companion and the true director of his life. It is here in the depths of Pharaoh's prison that the final piece is put in place for the fulfillment of all that YHWH revealed to Joseph many years earlier through his dreams. Now again, dreams become a significant part of Joseph's journey.

THE OUTLINE

- Genesis 40:1-4 Introduction to the prison scene and the characters
- Genesis 40:5-6 The chief cupbearer and the chief baker have distressing dreams
- Genesis 40:7-8 Joseph offers his services
- Genesis 40:9-11 The chief cupbearer's dream
- Genesis 40:12-13 Joseph's interpretation
- Genesis 40:14-15 Joseph asks a favor and pleads his own case
- Genesis 40:16-17 The chief baker's dream
- Genesis 40:18-19 Joseph's interpretation
- Genesis 40:20-22 The fulfillment of the dreams
- Genesis 40:23 Joseph is forgotten

SUGGESTED STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Who is in control of Joseph's life?
2. Why is Joseph in prison?
3. Who is the captain of the guard?
4. Where is the prison?
5. What is Joseph's charge?
6. Why is the captain of the guard's name not used?
7. Who are Joseph's fellow prisoners?
8. What are the two types of dreams?
9. What is unique about the dreams in the Joseph narrative?
10. What is the source of the prisoners' distress?
11. How does Joseph identify himself?
12. What does Joseph ask?
13. What is Joseph's proclamation?
14. What divine name is used?

THE TEXT

Genesis 40:1-23 *And it came to pass after these things, that the cup-barer of the king of Egypt and his baker had offended their lord the king of Egypt. ²And Pharaoh was wroth against two of his officers, against the chief of the cup-barers, and against the chief of the bakers. ³And he put them in ward in the house of the captain of the guard, into the prison, the place where Joseph was bound. ⁴And the captain of the guard charged Joseph with them, and he served them: and they continued a season in ward. ⁵And they dreamed a dream both of them, each man his dream in one night, each man according to the interpretation of his dream, the cup-barer and the baker of the king of Egypt, which were bound in the prison. ⁶And Joseph came in unto them in the morning, and looked upon them, and, behold, they were sad. ⁷And 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? ⁸And 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 Elohim? Tell me them, I pray you. ⁹And the chief cup-barer told his dream to Joseph, and said to him, In my dream, behold, a vine was before me; ¹⁰and 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: ¹¹and 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. ¹²And Joseph said unto him, This is the interpretation of it: the three branches are three days: ¹³yet 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 cup-barer. ¹⁴But 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: ¹⁵for 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. ¹⁶When 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: ¹⁷and 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. ¹⁸And Joseph answered and said, This is the interpretation thereof: the three baskets are three days: ¹⁹yet 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. ²⁰And 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 cup-barer and of the chief baker among his servants. ²¹And he restored the chief cup-barer unto his cup-barership again; and he gave the cup into Pharaoh's hand: ²²but he hanged the chief baker: as Joseph had interpreted to them. ²³Yet did not the chief cup-barer remember Joseph, but forgot him.*

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We may recall that the Joseph narrative began with the suffering of his mother Rachel, who, although holding the position of favored or beloved wife of Jacob, nonetheless endured the indignation and reproach of infertility.

Genesis 29:31 *And when YHWH saw that Leah was hated, He opened her womb: but Rachel was barren.*

Genesis 30:1 *And when Rachel saw that she bare Jacob no children, Rachel envied her sister; and said unto Jacob, Give me children, or else I die.*

From the very conception of Joseph's life, we should recognize that the Sovereign One is in control.

Genesis 30:22-24 *And Elohim remembered Rachel, and Elohim hearkened to her, and opened her womb. ²³And she conceived, and bare a son; and said, Elohim hath taken away my reproach: ²⁴and she called his name Joseph; and said, YHWH shall add to me another son.*

From the joyful announcement of his birth, Joseph truly appeared to be a blessed and favored child, both by his father and the Sovereign One.

Genesis 37:3 *Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age: and he made him a coat of many colours.*

Genesis 37:6-7 *And he said unto them, Hear, I pray you, this dream which I have dreamed: ⁷for, behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and, lo, my sheaf arose, and also stood upright; and, behold, your sheaves stood round about, and made obeisance to my sheaf.*

Genesis 37:9 *And he dreamed yet another dream, and told it his brethren, and said, Behold, I have dreamed a dream more; and, behold, the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to me.*

While the love and favored status of his earthly father and the ominously hope-filled dreams of his heavenly Father may have delighted and strengthened Joseph's heart, they only served to provoke his brothers to hatred, jealousy, and violence.

Joseph has traveled a long way from the days of his hope-filled youth. Sent lovingly by his father to check on the well-being of his brothers and the family flocks, Joseph was suddenly swept away into the firestorm of his brothers' hatred and jealousy. Joseph's brothers stripped him of the tunic which served as a daily token of his father's love for him. They separated Joseph from the father who loved him and abandoned him to fate in a waterless well. From there Joseph was kidnapped by Midianite merchants and sold to Ishmaelite traders, who then sold Joseph into slavery in Egypt. Isolated and trapped in an

exile beyond his control and far away from his father, friends, and family, Joseph soon came to realize that he was not alone. Even in bondage in Egypt, YHWH was with Joseph and was blessing him.

Genesis 39:2 *And YHWH was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian.*

Genesis 39:3 *And his master saw that YHWH was with him, and that YHWH made all that he did to prosper in his hand.*

However, once again the favored status enjoyed by Joseph brought him further pain and suffering. Not only did Potiphar, the captain of the guard, look upon Joseph favorably, but Potiphar's wife also had her eyes and heart set upon Joseph.

Genesis 39:7 *And it came to pass after these things, that his master's wife cast her eyes upon Joseph; and she said, Lie with me.*

But Joseph rightly refused her every advance.

Genesis 39:8-9 *But he refused, and said unto his master's wife, Behold, my master wotteth not what is with me in the house, and he hath committed all that he hath to my hand;⁹ there is none greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back any thing from me but thee, because thou art his wife: how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against Elohim?*

Genesis 39:10 *And it came to pass, as she spake to Joseph day by day, that he hearkened not unto her, to lie by her, or to be with her.*

Again, it would be a garment of privilege that would cause Joseph to be thrown once more into the depths of a pit.

Genesis 39:17-20 *And she spake unto him according to these words, saying, The Hebrew servant, which thou hast brought unto us, came in unto me to mock me:¹⁸ and it came to pass, as I lifted up my voice and cried, that he left his garment with me, and fled out.¹⁹ And it came to pass, when his master heard the words of his wife, which she spake unto him, saying, After this manner did thy servant to me; that his wrath was kindled.²⁰ And Joseph's master took him, and put him into the prison, a place where the king's prisoners were bound: and he was there in the prison.*

But even in the depths of the prison Joseph is comforted by the presence of the Holy One.

Genesis 39:21 *But YHWH was with Joseph, and shewed him mercy, and gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison.*

There are several prominent themes in the Joseph narrative that certainly come into play in our portion this week. One of the first and most significant themes is that of the sovereignty of YHWH. It should be very clear to all who read the story of Joseph that he is not in control of his life. YHWH has determined Joseph's life from his very conception. It was YHWH who decided when it was time for Rachel to finally conceive and bear a son. From this very opening narrative about Joseph we are taught that "life" is not automatic but is determined by the will of the Creator. Thus, we should never assume that our lives are mere mistakes or evolutionary accidents of nature. Instead, every life is created with meaning and purpose.

We should also recognize that it was YHWH who determined who Joseph's mother would be, what her status would be, and, therefore, what Joseph's place would be in the heart of his father and in the company of his brothers. It was not Joseph who was responsible for the twin dreams that provoked his brothers; it was the Sovereign One. Likewise, it was the Sovereign Creator who orchestrated the

appearance of "the man" at Shechem who directed Joseph to his brothers in Dothan. It was YHWH who appointed the time of the arrival of the Ishmaelite caravan and the Midianite merchants who frustrated the best-laid plans of his scheming brothers. It was YHWH who led the Ishmaelites to Potiphar's house, where Joseph's estate-management skills would be honed for his later management of the state of Egypt. It was YHWH who orchestrated the events that would land Joseph in prison with the chief cupbearer of Pharaoh. It was YHWH who gave the chief baker and chief cupbearer the dreams that Joseph would interpret so that his skills would be recognized when the time came for Joseph to fulfill his purpose as deliverer of the children of Israel from famine. The hand of the Sovereign One is obviously present in every event that tightly knits this entire narrative together.

In the continuing saga of Joseph, we clearly recognize Joseph as a relatively passive character. While he is not a puppet, a robot, or a pawn in some cosmic game, it is clear that the circumstances and events which occur in the life of Joseph are largely outside his control. Regardless of whether he is doing right or wrong, the events guiding his life continue to unfold without his provocation or input. What we do witness in the character of Joseph is the fortitude to make the best of every situation by doing what he already knows to be right. In none of these many narratives do we hear of Joseph complaining, whining, or seeking either revenge or escape. Instead, it would appear from the Torah text that Joseph submits to each situation and seeks to do what is right. By doing so, Joseph puts himself in the place of being blessed, even in the darkest of circumstances.

A second theme, that of divine providence, is closely related to the first theme of the sovereignty of the Creator. The message of YHWH'S sovereignty declares that the Creator has the right to interact in His creation as He so wills. Divine providence is the recognition that what is transpiring in nature is, in fact, the will of the Creator. While not clearly identifying when Joseph comes to understand the events of his life as being directed by divine providence, it is clear that by the end of the story he declares that it is indeed by the hand of YHWH that the circumstances of his life unfolded as they did.

Genesis 50:19-20 *And Joseph said unto them, Fear not: for am I in the place of Elohim?
²⁰But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but Elohim meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.*

Accepting the events and circumstances of our lives as being from the will of our Heavenly Father should change the way in which we respond to them. If we believe, as many unfortunately do today, that everything challenging, uncomfortable, and even personally painful comes from the devil, Satan, or the enemy, we will resist these events and fight against them with all our might and strength. We will do everything within our ability to reverse the circumstances and return to a place of comfort and peace. Unfortunately, this type of thinking gives the impression that our Heavenly Father cannot protect us against such enemy attacks or that He is absent from us. It may also give the erroneous impression that Satan, the devil, or the adversary is equal in strength to the Almighty One.

As is often demonstrated in the lives of believers today, such thinking denies the very sovereignty of YHWH. YHWH alone is Elohim! YHWH alone is sovereign. Whatever happens to us is by YHWH'S will and within His knowledge. We must learn to accept the reality of divine providence. We are not the rulers of our universe. We are not alone. Our lives are not our own. What happens, regardless of whether we deem it to be good or bad, is the will of the Sovereign One; otherwise, it would not be. While there clearly are consequences for our choices, sins, and behavior, YHWH alone is ruler of the universe and determines even these consequences.

In order for us to comfortably accept the circumstances and events of our lives as willed by the sovereign Creator, it is important for us to know His character. It is one thing to know that YHWH is sovereign; however, it is another thing to know that this Sovereign One has ultimate control of the circumstances and events that control and shape our life experiences. In addition, it is essential to understand that the Sovereign One is loving, good, righteous, kind, merciful, holy, just, and desires good for our lives.

In order for us to accept the sometimes challenging and painful events and circumstances of our lives as being somehow willed for us by the Creator, we must first believe that the Creator's orientation toward us

is good and loving. If we believe that the Sovereign One is good, loving, righteous, and just, we will find it easier to believe that whatever happens to us with His knowledge and by His will is likewise good, loving, righteous, and just. The acceptance of this reality brings with it a great sense of peace and comfort in knowing that YHWH still rules the universe, including our lives, and that He still knows about our circumstances and condition and is actively seeking good things for us. Please indulge me for a moment in a personal example.

This past October during Yom Teruah, I became extremely ill. It had been a long time since I had been sick, but suddenly I was violently ill and not recovering. The severity of the illness forced me to the doctors, who diagnosed me with type II diabetes. When I shared the results with friends and family, many offered words of condolence, but personally, I was very grateful. This “affliction” truly has saved my life by forcing me to address a number of my physical and spiritual weaknesses. I am now on the road to better attitudes, better health, a better lifestyle, and for certain, a more active prayer life. I must share the words of the psalmist:

***Psalm 119:67** Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept Thy word.*

***Psalm 119:71** It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn Thy statutes.*

***Psalm 119:75** I know, O YHWH, that Thy judgments are right, and that Thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me.*

The biggest challenge to our faith may well be our ability to genuinely trust the character of the Sovereign Creator and His disposition toward us. It is only a genuine faith in the loving character of our Heavenly Father that allows us to choose to submit ourselves to His will, even when that will involves the refiner’s fire. Here we should recognize that although we are blind to the unrevealed future events of our lives because we are limited in time and space, the Eternal One is beyond time and space and knows very well what will be required of us. As parents, we do our best to prepare our children for the many circumstances of life they will inevitably face. Having lived through many of these experiences ourselves, we prepare our children for what they too will unknowingly face in time. Even though our path may lead us into the refiner’s fire or the tempering fire, our Heavenly Father likewise directs us by His divine providence in order to prepare us for what He knows we must yet face. Trusting in the loving nature of His character, we may be assured that He will give us only what will strengthen us, not what will destroy us.

***Zechariah 13:9** And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on My name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is My people: and they shall say, YHWH is my Elohim.*

***Malachi 3:3** And He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and He shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto YHWH an offering in righteousness.*

***Numbers 31:21-24** And Eleazar the priest said unto the men of war which went to the battle, This is the ordinance of the law which YHWH commanded Moses;²² only the gold, and the silver, the brass, the iron, the tin, and the lead,²³ **every thing that may abide the fire, ye shall make it go through the fire, and it shall be clean: nevertheless it shall be purified with the water of separation: and all that abideth not the fire ye shall make go through the water.** ²⁴And ye shall wash your clothes on the seventh day, and ye shall be clean, and afterward ye shall come into the camp.*

1 Corinthians 10:13** There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but Elohim is faithful, **who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

We should note in all the above passages that not everyone or everything will go through the fire, only those things that are able to withstand it. We may also recognize that this purging is not punitive; rather, it is necessary in order to remove everything that hinders our fulfilling the purpose for which YHWH has called us into the world and redeemed us from the world. This purging likewise creates the possibility of a deeper personal relationship with the Sovereign One Himself. Again, we should clearly see that although in our flesh we may understand such purging or refining experiences to be evil or painful, our spirit should rejoice in being useful to the Creator and being able to draw near to our Heavenly Father.

Isaiah 1:25 *And I will turn My hand upon thee, and purely purge away thy dross, and take away all thy tin.*

Psalms 51:7 *Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.*

Psalms 65:3 *Iniquities prevail against me: as for our transgressions, Thou shalt purge them away.*

Psalms 79:9 *Help us, O Elohim of our salvation, for the glory of Thy name: and deliver us, and purge away our sins, for Thy name's sake.*

Matthew 3:12 *Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.*

1 Corinthians 5:7 *Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Messiah our Passover is sacrificed for us.*

2 Timothy 2:21 *If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work.*

The reality that YHWH is with us even as we go through the processes of refining and purging is the final theme and a source of comfort we may derive from the narrative of Joseph's spiritual journey. Repeatedly in the Joseph story we are told that YHWH is with Joseph. Though often unseen, it is clear that YHWH is indeed with Joseph, guiding his every step. This is true even of Joseph's experience in the depths of the darkness of prison.

Genesis 39:21 *But YHWH was with Joseph, and shewed him mercy, and gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison.*

Genesis 39:23 *The keeper of the prison looked not to any thing that was under his hand; because YHWH was with him, and that which he did, YHWH made it to prosper.*

How much easier it is to embrace the refiner's fire knowing that the Sovereign One is with us in the very midst of the flames! Here we may recall the story of Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah (also referred to as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego by the Babylonians), who were cast into the fiery furnace for failing to worship the image of Nebuchadnezzar.

Daniel 3:21-25 *Then these men were bound in their coats, their hosen, and their hats, and their other garments, and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. ²²Therefore because the king's commandment was urgent, and the furnace exceeding hot, the flame of the fire slew those men that took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. ²³And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. ²⁴Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, and rose up in haste, and spake, and said unto his counsellors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king. ²⁵He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of Elohim.*

Joseph too, while in the fires of Egypt, learned to trust in the character, nature, promises, and presence of YHWH in spite of the circumstances that surrounded his life.

With all that has been stated above said, let us now turn our attention to the very text of our portion itself and address some other pressing issues. First, let us understand quite clearly that Joseph is not in prison for attempting to commit adultery with Potiphar's wife. The Torah is quite emphatic that Joseph neither attempted to commit adultery nor even entertained the thought of committing adultery. Instead, Joseph righteously and valiantly refused every temptation and upheld the honor and trust of his master Potiphar and YHWH his Elohim. We must, therefore, deduce that this was not the reason for Joseph being placed in prison. We must understand that it was not Potiphar or his wife who placed Joseph in prison; it was the Sovereign One. Joseph is in prison because this is where his final refining and tempering will take place. Joseph is also in prison because this is where he will meet and serve the one whom the Sovereign One will use to win his release from prison and place him in Pharaoh's court.

We should also recognize that within the events surrounding Joseph's life are prophetic proclamations of what will happen to the children of Israel in a future generation and a testimony to the life of Yeshua the Messiah. In the unfortunate circumstances that bring Joseph down to Egypt, we see a foreshadowing of the famine that will bring all the children of Israel down to Egypt. In the privilege enjoyed by Joseph in Potiphar's service, we witness the privilege that will be enjoyed by the children of Israel in Egypt as the guests of a favorable Pharaoh. In Joseph's imprisonment we witness the prophetic events of Israel's bondage in the land of Egypt. I do not believe that Joseph understood at all how his life was being used for prophetic proclamation.

Once again, this truth emphasizes our need to submit to divine providence in faith. We never know for certain how YHWH may use our lives to serve His holy purposes. It is, therefore, important that we have complete faith in the Creator's nature and character and surrender our lives to His perfect will.

We may also note that while Joseph's status has slipped, his location has not. To understand this statement we need to again identify Potiphar and his position in Pharaoh's court. We already dealt with this issue to some extent last week, but here let us again recall that Potiphar is described as being an officer of Pharaoh and the captain of the guard.

Genesis 39:1 *And Joseph was brought down to Egypt; and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him of the hands of the Ishmaelites, which had brought him down thither.*

At the end of last week's story we are told that Potiphar, upon hearing his wife's accusations against Joseph, put him in prison.

Genesis 39:20 *And Joseph's master took him, and put him into the prison, a place where the king's prisoners were bound: and he was there in the prison.*

In our story this week we are told where the prison is located.

Genesis 40:3 *And he put them in ward in the house of the captain of the guard, into the prison, the place where Joseph was bound.*

Here we may understand that the prison is part of the very house of Potiphar, and that when Pharaoh's other officers – his chief cupbearer and chief baker – offend Pharaoh, they are sent to the house of Potiphar, where they are placed in Joseph's care.

Genesis 40:4 *And the captain of the guard charged Joseph with them, and he served them: and they continued a season in ward.*

We may ask why the Torah does not use Potiphar's name in this part of the narrative. I would suggest to you that the use of Potiphar's title instead of his name is to demonstrate the change in relationship between Potiphar and Joseph. In spite of Joseph's noble actions, trust has been broken by the seeds of suspicion planted in Potiphar's heart by his wicked and lying wife. Joseph is no longer Potiphar's confidant and trusted servant; instead, he has been reduced to a servant in Potiphar's prison. Where once Joseph served as Potiphar's favored, he now serves as Potiphar's rejected. The rejected officers, the cupbearer and the chief baker, are in some respect Potiphar's equals. It is possible that Potiphar places them in Joseph's care knowing full well that whatever Joseph does seems to prosper. As is typical of Joseph, he proves himself worthy of the trust placed in him, even in prison.

It is in this context of humble service to the rejected and condemned that Joseph demonstrates the very skills that will be utilized to elevate him from prison to a position of power and honor which will be utilized by YHWH to save all Israel.

During their confinement in prison, Joseph's cell mates both have dreams. Joseph, being faithful to his charge, sees the distress upon the men's faces. As officers of Pharaoh, both the chief cupbearer and the chief baker would have enjoyed the privilege of calling upon Pharaoh's sages, necromancers, priests, and magicians to interpret their dreams. We should note here that there are two types of dreams in the Scriptures. In the first type, a message is communicated verbally.

Genesis 20:3 *But Elohim came to Abimelech in a dream by night, and said to him, Behold, thou art but a dead man, for the woman which thou hast taken; for she is a man's wife.*

Genesis 20:6 *And Elohim said unto him in a dream, Yea, I know that thou didst this in the integrity of thy heart; for I also withheld thee from sinning against Me: therefore suffered I thee not to touch her.*

Genesis 31:24 *And Elohim came to Laban the Syrian in a dream by night, and said unto him, Take heed that thou speak not to Jacob either good or bad.*

1 Kings 3:5 *In Gibeon YHWH appeared to Solomon in a dream by night: and Elohim said, Ask what I shall give thee.*

Matthew 1:20 *But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of YHWH appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.*

Matthew 2:13 *And when they were departed, behold, the angel of YHWH appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him.*

Matthew 2:19 *But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of YHWH appeareth in a dream to Joseph in Egypt.*

Matthew 2:22 *But when he heard that Archelaus did reign in Judaea in the room of his father Herod, he was afraid to go thither: notwithstanding, being warned of Elohim in a dream, he turned aside into the parts of Galilee.*

These auditory dreams are fairly self-explanatory and require no interpretation. The second type of dream demonstrated in the Scriptures is of a visual nature and tends to be communicated through symbolic images.

Genesis 28:12 *And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of Elohim ascending and descending on it.*

Genesis 31:10 *And it came to pass at the time that the cattle conceived, that I lifted up mine eyes, and saw in a dream, and, behold, the rams which leaped upon the cattle were ringstraked, speckled, and grisled.*

Genesis 37:6-7 *And he said unto them, Hear, I pray you, this dream which I have dreamed: ⁷for, behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and, lo, my sheaf arose, and also stood upright; and, behold, your sheaves stood round about, and made obeisance to my sheaf.*

Genesis 37:9 *And he dreamed yet another dream, and told it his brethren, and said, Behold, I have dreamed a dream more; and, behold, the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to me.*

The dreams of the two imprisoned officers fall into second category of visual or symbolic communication. It should be understood that the ancient peoples recognized a difference between mere night dreams and prophetic communications. These dreams were clearly understood to be of a significant nature by those who dreamed them.

The possible clue to the significance of these dreams may well be that both men have very similar dreams on the same night. We should note here that all the dreams in the Joseph narrative are significant or prophetic in nature and always come in pairs.

- Genesis 37:6-7 and 37:9 Both dreams declare Joseph's prominence over his family
- Genesis 40:9-22 Both dreams declare the fate of Pharaoh's officers
- Genesis 41:1-37 Both dreams declare the coming famine in Egypt

The fact that these dreams tend to come in pairs seems to indicate that the Sovereign One is trying to communicate and confirm a prophetic reality to the dreamers of the dreams.

The distress in the hearts of the two dreamers is provoked by the fact that they realize they have had unusual and possibly significant dreams, but because of their imprisonment, they cannot avail themselves of the professional dream interpreters, leaving them in a state of ignorance as to the meaning of the dreams. It is Joseph, however, who comes to their rescue. Recognizing their distress, Joseph asks them of its source and offers them encouragement. Joseph's response to them is indeed a profound revelation – he comforts his charges with the revelation that the interpretations belong to Elohim.

Genesis 40:8 *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 Elohim?** Tell me them, I pray you.*

In this one statement Joseph declares the eternal nature as well as the sovereignty of Elohim. Then, without prayer or consultation, Joseph hears and interprets the dream of the chief cupbearer.

Genesis 40:12-13 *And Joseph said unto him, This is the interpretation of it: the three branches are three days: ¹³yet 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 cup-bearer.*

Joseph further confirms and assures the chief cupbearer of the positive meaning of the dream and its interpretation by his request to be remembered when the officer is restored to his position within three days.

Genesis 40:14-15 *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: ¹⁵for 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.

In this explanation Joseph identifies himself as a Hebrew who was kidnapped and wrongly sold into slavery. He has no one to petition for him; therefore, Joseph humbly asks the cupbearer to remember the kindness he has shown him while in his charge.

Seeing the positive response that is given to his fellow officer, the chief baker now too trusts Joseph to interpret his dream, hoping for a similar positive interpretation. Again, Joseph listens carefully to the details of the dream and renders his interpretation. This time, however, the message is not at all positive.

Genesis 40:18-19 *And Joseph answered and said, This is the interpretation thereof: the three baskets are three days: ¹⁹yet 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.*

As tragic as the passing of a life may be, the fact that both men's dreams are nearly identical and yet are of opposite meaning and outcome demonstrates the integrity of Joseph's interpretation, confirming him to be a genuinely gifted interpreter of dreams. We may also note that there is never a case in the Scriptures of a Hebrew seeking the interpretation of a dream; instead, we witness that it is always pagans who seek help in understanding the meaning and purpose of their dreams. This may be explained by Joseph's revelation that interpretations belong to Elohim. Since pagans do not know the true Elohim, they need the help of those who do know the one true Elohim to interpret His symbolic communications for them. Again, we should note that it is Joseph's relationship with the Sovereign One that allows him to be of service, putting him in the right place to fulfill the calling placed upon his life. We may also note that at least twice in Scripture, pagan magicians and wise men could not interpret the dreams of their pagan kings.

Genesis 41:8 *And 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 the wise men thereof: and Pharaoh told them his dream; but there was none that could interpret them unto Pharaoh.*

Daniel 2:1-9 *And in the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar Nebuchadnezzar dreamed dreams, wherewith his spirit was troubled, and his sleep brake from him. ²Then the king commanded to call the magicians, and the astrologers, and the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans, for to shew the king his dreams. So they came and stood before the king. ³And the king said unto them, I have dreamed a dream, and my spirit was troubled to know the dream. ⁴Then spake the Chaldeans to the king in Syriack, O king, live for ever: tell thy servants the dream, and we will shew the interpretation. ⁵The king answered and said to the Chaldeans, The thing is gone from me: if ye will not make known unto me the dream, with the interpretation thereof, ye shall be cut in pieces, and your houses shall be made a dunghill. ⁶But if ye shew the dream, and the interpretation thereof, ye shall receive of me gifts and rewards and great honour: therefore shew me the dream, and the interpretation thereof. ⁷They answered again and said, Let the king tell his servants the dream, and we will shew the interpretation of it. ⁸The king answered and said, I know of certainty that ye would gain the time, because ye see the thing is gone from me. ⁹But if ye will not make known unto me the dream, there is but one decree for you: for ye have prepared lying and corrupt words to speak before me, till the time be changed: therefore tell me the dream, and I shall know that ye can shew me the interpretation thereof.*

In both instances it is a Hebrew slave who brings the correct interpretation and wins a position of power and authority. In both illustrations the Hebrew servants are submitted to the divine providence of YHWH and are in the right place at the right time doing the right thing.

We too should learn from Joseph the importance of submission to the sovereignty of YHWH, faith in the nature and character of the Creator, and trust in His divine providence. Such faith and humble

submission can only be motivated by a deep love for our Heavenly Father. We must be willing to serve wherever and however He needs us.

Some may bear the burden of fame, notoriety, and front-line service in high places, while others may serve nearly unnoticed in humble circumstances. What is important for us to realize is that we serve YHWH, not ourselves. We must learn to trust that no one knows us better than our Creator and that His plan and purpose for our lives, regardless of how difficult the path along which we are called to walk may be, is first for the glory of YHWH. We must realize that whatever His calling may be upon our lives, His intention is to see us fulfill it. To this end YHWH guides our steps so that we may be prepared for all He has in store for us in His perfect plan.

Let us take great comfort from the story of Joseph and be assured that the Sovereign One is in charge – not only of the circumstances of our lives but of the whole universe. Let us also take comfort in knowing that no matter how hot the refiner's fire may get, our Heavenly Father is right there with us, granting us the grace to endure all that is necessary to prepare us for an intimate relationship with Him and to fulfill our unique calling.

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