

September 1- Genesis 40-42 Joseph finds favor in Egypt

Chapter 40

God continues to bless Joseph with gifts -in this case, the spiritual gift of dream interpretation, even while he is still serving as a slave in the prison. The royal cupbearer and bread baker find themselves on the wrong side of Pharaoh and end up in prison and Joseph is sent to wait on them while they are imprisoned. Both men dreamed disturbing dreams on the same night, and Joseph was able to interpret them for them -the cupbearer would be restored to honor (lifted up as in exalted), while the bread baker would be hung (head lifted up as in executed). As wages for interpreting the dreams, Joseph begs the cupbearer to remember him to Pharaoh and to help him get out of his false imprisonment. The interpretation given by Joseph came true just as he had said, the cupbearer was restored to good graces, and the baker was executed, but once the cupbearer was back in the royal court, he forgot all about Joseph and the promise he made to remember him to the king and help him get out of prison. The unspoken theme here is that even though the cupbearer forgot, God remembered Joseph and stayed with him.

Chapter 41

Joseph stayed in prison for another TWO YEARS! When Pharaoh had disturbing dreams that no one in the court could interpret, now at last Joseph was remembered by the cupbearer and recommended to the king. Pharaoh sent for Joseph at once, he was given the dignity of being allowed to shave and wash and change into presentable clothes, and then he came before the king. Pharaoh told Joseph what was reported to him, that Joseph was an amazing interpreter of dreams, but Joseph gave all the glory to God for the gift he had been given, saying "it is not I, God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer." Joseph pointed Pharaoh to the God of the Hebrews by interpreting his dreams with God's power and help. Pharaoh described his dream: 7 fat cows munching reeds in the Nile (the source of life and crop fertility in the region) who were then devoured by 7 sick and skinny cows. And 7 ears full of lush grain, followed by 7 ears of blighted and withered grain. Joseph explained to Pharaoh that both of his dreams had the same meaning, and the doubling of the dreams meant the future was set in stone: 7 years of abundance followed by 7 years of famine. Without being asked for his advice on what he should do about it, Joseph (bold and cocky as ever) chimes right in with a game plan : appoint a man who is discerning and wise and set him over the land of Egypt... Essentially, store away the surplus to provide for the people during the famine. Joseph's pitch was impressive to Pharaoh and all the advisors and Joseph was appointed governor of Egypt on the spot to do what he had described was needed to Pharaoh. He was given the king's signet ring, which gave him the authority to sign things with the king's signature. Joseph was given a royal makeover, and even given a noble wife. In those first 7 years of plenty, even Joseph's wife was fruitful, bearing him two sons who made him forget his past

family troubles. When the famine came, Joseph opened the store houses and all the world came to Egypt for grain. This event partially fulfills God's promise to Abraham that his people would be a blessing to all the world. Because Joseph was placed in Egypt "for such a time as this" he was able to bless the known world with food during these lean times, not just Egypt.

Chapter 42

Jacob sends 10 of his sons (but not Benjamin) down to Egypt to buy grain so they don't all starve now that the famine has reached Canaan. Joseph's brothers arrived and bowed down to him, just like his original dream predicted when he was still a teenager. Joseph recognized them, but they did not recognize him for he would have been dressed as a royal Egyptian. Joseph accuses them of being spies to find out more information about his father and his brother Benjamin, and insists that they bring Benjamin back to him to prove that their words are true about them not being spies (if they're honest in this one statement, that lends validity to everything else that they've said). At first Joseph was still angry about them selling him into slavery and threw all of them in prison and thought he'd send just one of them to send the message to their father, but after 3 days of their imprisonment Joseph had a crisis of conscience, because he fears God, and decided to send all of them home and keep just 1 brother in prison in Egypt as a guarantee. The brothers were dismayed by all of this, and determined that they were now being punished by God for what they did to Joseph, which they felt remorse for. They are now facing "the reckoning for his blood" this is a way of saying divine retribution. When Joseph heard this, he was overcome with emotion knowing that they felt remorse for what they had done to him and that they had learned their lesson. Joseph sent them on their way, with packs full of grain, and returned their money to their packs without telling them. When the brothers later discovered their money still in their packs, they were dismayed because they knew it looked like they had stolen the grain rather than buying it like they were supposed to. How could they go back to Egypt as thieves? But if they didn't go back to Egypt then their brother Simeon would be killed. But they needed to take their brother Benjamin to prevent that fate, but their father did not want to part with his beloved youngest son, the last son of Rachel. Reuben offers his own two sons as a guarantee for Benjamin's life while they travel with him to Egypt. Jacob puts his foot down and refuses to allow Benjamin to go, not willing to lose a 3rd son.