

Do Not Interpretations Belong to God? Tell Me Your Dreams

40: 1-8

DIG: Why do you think Joseph ends up in prison with officials of the Egyptian government? How profound was the reality of God in the life of Yosef? How does Yosef show concern for the cup-bearer and the baker? Does Joseph's reference to ADONAI ring true? In what way did Joseph foreshadow the life of Christ?

REFLECT: It takes a real person of conviction to hold fast to his or her conviction and integrity during a time of suffering such as Joseph experienced. How deep are your spiritual convictions? Is the name of the Lord close to your lips? Why or why not?

Therefore, some time later, after Joseph's imprisonment, the cup-bearer and the baker of the king of Egypt offended their master, the king of Egypt, and put them in custody in the house of the captain of the guard (40:1 and 3a). According to the custom in the Near East, the prison formed part of the house of the chief of the executioners.⁶¹⁰ Thus, it was an extension of Potiphar's house. Maybe part of the reason Potiphar put Joseph there was the hope that some of his blessing would continue to rub off onto him.

Some time later . . . expresses an indefinite period of time. However, we do know that Joseph was twenty-eight at this time. He will be brought before Pharaoh two years after these events (41:1) and will be thirty years old at that time (41:46). So Yosef had been in Egypt, either as a slave in the household of Potiphar, or in prison for eleven years (37:2).⁶¹¹

The cup-bearer was a position of great honor. In a later day Nehemiah, who was the cup-bearer to Artaxerxes, was a man of influence and much ability (Nehemiah 2:1). He was probably the overseer of Pharaoh's vineyards and wine cellar. They were generally eunuchs; they held the cup in their left hand and a fly-flap made of split palm leaves in their right hand. A long napkin, richly embroidered and fringed, was normally thrown over their left shoulder to wipe the lips of the king of Egypt. Before serving, the cup-bearer would take some of the wine intended for Pharaoh and pour a little into the palm of his left hand and drink it. So if the wine were poisoned, the cup-bearer would die and the king of Egypt would be protected.⁶¹²

Now Pharaoh was angry with his two officials, the chief cup-bearer and the chief baker and put them in the same prison where Joseph was confined (40:2 and 3b). **38. Both Yosef and Yeshua were with two other prisoners. Yosef was not alone in his place of shame and suffering. Nor was Jesus as he hung on the old rugged cross at Calvary. And just as there were two criminals imprisoned with Joseph, there were two criminals crucified with Messiah (Luke 23:32-33).**

These two high government officials were put in prison until their cases had been decided. Presumably, their crimes had something to do with Pharaoh's table; possibly even an attempt on his life. Not knowing which one was guilty, both were thrown in jail until their guilt or innocence could be proven. Potiphar, the captain of the guard assigned Yosef to wait on them (40:4a). This is the same verb used back in 39:4 to describe Joseph's relationship to Potiphar. So although Joseph still maintains his position of authority, when the chief cup-bearer and chief baker arrive on the scene, his responsibilities are expanded to include meeting the needs of these two very important prisoners.⁶¹³ In other words, Potiphar wanted to make sure they were taken care of, and who better to put his mind at ease than Joseph! This sets the stage for Yosef's rise to prominence.

After they had been in custody for several days, each of the two men, the cup-bearer and baker of the king of Egypt, who were being held in prison, had a dream the same night, and each dream had a meaning of its own. When Joseph came to them the next morning, he saw that they were dejected. God had three days accomplish His task because Pharaoh's birthday was three days away. So, prompted by the Ruach HaKodesh, Joseph asked Pharaoh's officials who were in custody with him in his master's house, "Why are your faces so sad today?" They answered: We both had dreams, but they were so difficult that there is no one to interpret them (40:4b-8a). The Egyptians did have professional dream interpreters, but none were available to them in prison.

Then Joseph said to them, "Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell me your dreams" (40:8b). Here he put himself in the position to prophesy and be God's mouthpiece, while at the same time denying any magical or mystical power in which the Egyptians believed. Yosef did not use the word ADONAI, when speaking to the Egyptians. He used the word God, or Elohim because it is a more generic name for the deity and would be less offensive to the Egyptians. ADONAI was a name that was particularly identified with the Hebrews as a people.⁶¹⁴

Joseph gives God all the glory in this. Later on we will find another young Hebrew in a foreign court who will do the same thing. Daniel also gave God the glory, and we should do the same. Anything we do for the Lord should be done to the praise of God. Make sure that God gets the glory for it. When we hog the glory for ourselves, we squander our own blessing. We need to give God the glory as Joseph does here. It is interesting to see that God used dreams in the TANAKH. We don't need dreams today because the canon of Scripture is complete, but in that day, God did speak in dreams.⁶¹⁵

Consequently, Joseph understood that their dreams had come from ADONAI. Not only that, he realized that God was beginning to work His will through two more dreams like he had when he was a teenager (37:5-11). The interpretation of those two previous dreams had led to his slavery in Egypt, but his interpretation of these two dreams would lead to his position of authority over all of Egypt.