

## GENESIS

### Lesson 36 - Chapters 40 and 41

#### READ GEN 40 all

About eleven years had passed since his older brothers sold Joseph into slavery.

He's 28 years old, now. I wonder if Joseph still thought his dreams of his family bowing down to him, that had much to do with his current condition, bore any significance; or, were they just that...dreams of childhood? Because from where he sat, so long removed from Canaan and from his family, he may well have forgotten all about those sheaves of grain bowing before him, and the sun and the moon and eleven stars paying homage to him. But, let's be very clear about what those dreams meant to Joseph: it meant to him that, if they were true, HE was going to get the firstborn blessing. That the first 10 of his older brothers would be skipped over, and HE would become the inheritor of all the wealth and authority of the clan of Israel.

Joseph is sitting in prison, because the wife of his master, Potiphar, lied and said he tried to assault her. How long he had been languishing in prison is difficult to know....but it was long enough that he gained the trust of the jailer. Then something happened, and Pharaoh became angry with two high government officials: the official cupbearer, and the head baker. These were NOT servant positions, though EVERYBODY was, by definition, subservient to Pharaoh. No, these men were likely right in line behind Potiphar in authority. But, as is often the case with Orientals (remembering it was Orientals...Semites.... not Egyptians, now ruling Egypt), some unknown offense winds up costing men their freedom or their lives. Likely as not, the Pharaoh was simply in a bad mood, or unknowingly (as these two officials were apparently Egyptian) they committed some foopah of Oriental sensibilities, and these two men wind up arrested; and like Joseph, held in the house of the prison captain...not the regular prison as the common folk had to suffer.

After some time Joseph noticed one morning that they both had puzzled and bothered countenances. He inquired what troubled them and they each reported that they had had a dream, and they couldn't understand what it meant. It wasn't that these men saw danger in their dreams...it was that in prison there were no seers available...no dream interpreters...to tell them the significance of their night visions. Dreams were considered to be important in that era, and so there were professional dream interpreters available for a fee. We begin to see the level of faith to which all of Joseph's sufferings had taken him, as he responds "don't interpretations belong to God?" And, he says, tell me your dreams.

They proceed, with the cupbearer going first. He speaks of a vine, with 3 branches, and grapes forming on the branches, which he makes into wine for the Pharaoh. Instantly, God gives Joseph the meaning, and Joseph tells the cupbearer some good news: within 3 days the Pharaoh will reinstate the cupbearer to his position, and all will be well.

This seems, now, to have emboldened the baker, who, undoubtedly as a result of witnessing the interpretation of the cupbearers dream, expected equally as good news. The baker, who of course dreamt within the context of his life's experiences, just as the cupbearer had done within his own, saw 3 baskets of bread on his head, apparently stacked one upon the other. For, the uppermost basket attracted birds which came and ate the baked goods right from the basket, while still on the baker's head. Joseph had to tell the baker the bad news that on the same day that the cupbearer was going to be restored, the baker would lose his life. And, of course, that's exactly what happened.

One little detail: many versions say that the baker was hung from a tree. That's not really what was said; what was actually said is that he would be impaled on a tree. Hanging was not a typical manner of execution in this era, but beheading was. And, often the headless corpse was impaled on a stake (or a tree) as a warning to others.

Now, as an interesting aside: Egyptian hieroglyphs prove out many of the details of this story. For instance, the idea of the baskets on top of the baker's head; this was exactly the way males carried items in Egypt; they balanced them on their heads. The stacked baskets of bread on the baker's head were simply a normal means of conveying the bread from the ovens to the palace, which the baker would have done several times a day. We've all seen this sort of thing on TV Travel shows. But, here's the thing: you would NEVER see an Egyptian woman put a load on her head; rather, Egyptian women toted things on their shoulders and back. And, this was exactly the opposite from the customary way the Oriental cultures toted loads. So, this little insight is just one of many proofs of the authenticity of the Biblical narrative of Joseph's, and eventually Israel's, time in Egypt.

The last sentence of this chapter is a rather sad one, but so typical of mankind: Joseph, having shown kindness to the cupbearer, had requested that the cupbearer might do the same for him after being restored to his position. But, we are told that now that everything was back to normal for the cupbearer, he forgot about poor Joseph, and left him languishing away for a crime he had not committed.

### **READ GEN 41 all**

I told you something earlier that may have caught some of you off guard: that at the time of Joseph, Egypt was ruled by Semites...descendants from Shem, son of Noah. That in fact, the Pharaoh of Egypt at the time Joseph was made ruler of the land, was NOT an Egyptian. And, that during about a 150 year period, official Egyptian government records regarding Egypt's history suddenly ceased.

And, the reason for this is that Kings and Pharaohs tended not to write down defeats and times of being subjugated. Understanding this helps to understand how Joseph became so powerful, and how Israel was, at first, so free to grow and prosper; but, later, how it became the brunt of Egypt's rage, and the Israelites eventually became slaves.

I mentioned that there were several records of that time, however, that were written down and

preserved by private Egyptian citizens, and they tell the story of these foreign rulers, the Hyksos rulers.

I would like to read to you a short account as taken from the Egyptian historian Manetho, who compiled several of these records and left them for us to ponder.

“We had a king called Tutimaeus. In his reign, it happened. I do not know why God was displeased with us. Unexpectedly from the regions of the East, came men of unknown race. Confident of victory they marched against our land. By force they took it, easily, without a single battle. Having overpowered our rulers they burned our cities without compassion, and destroyed the temples of the gods. All the natives were treated with great cruelty for they slew some and carried off the wives and children of others into slavery. Finally they appointed one of themselves as king. His name was Salitis and he lived in Memphis and made Upper and Lower Egypt pay tribute to him...and when he found a city in the province of Sais which suited his purpose (it lay east of the Bubasite branch of the Nile and was called Avaris) he rebuilt it and made it very strong by erecting walls and installing a force of 240,000 men to hold it. Salitis went there every summer partly to collect his corn and pay men their wages, and partly to train his armed troops and terrify foreigners.”

Here we have a very emotional, and condensed, recounting of the conquering of Egypt by the Semites from Asia. We even have the name, an Arabic name, of the conquering king.... Salitis. How it must have stuck in the craw of the Egyptian people to be overrun so easily and swiftly by these (to their minds) uncivilized hords.

Yet, in God's unfathomable Divine Providence, this set the stage for Joseph to assume a powerful position, and for Israel to be held hostage in Egypt for over 4 centuries.

Now, I would like you to take note of a name that is mentioned by Manetho: Avaris. For, in Exodus, we shall spend some time talking about this city. Avaris is the large city that became home to the Hebrews, the Israelites, in the land of Goshen, Egypt. The very place most secular archaeologists say doesn't exist: a place where an enormous population of Hebrews existed after Joseph's time. And, note what a large place it was, for this Salitis, the new foreign Pharaoh, stationed almost a quarter of a million troops there just to secure it.

One last thing: a little earlier I used some terms...Bedouin, Semite, and Oriental.... kind of interchangeably. Let me explain it: the overall continental landmass that contains what we today call the Middle East is Asia. So, it is proper to call people who hail from the Middle East then, as now, Asians, or Asiatics.... people of Asia. Orientals refer not to people from the entire continent of Asia, but to Middle Easterners, and people extending to China. Orientals are a subgroup of Asians. Semites are people who descended from Shem. Descendants from Abraham are Semites because Abraham was a Semite. Therefore Arabs and Hebrews are both Semitic people. Bedouins were a certain branch of Semitic peoples that tended to be desert dwellers, and wanderers. So, it is proper to say that the people who invaded and conquered Egypt were a) Bedouins, because they were desert dwellers.... b) Semites, because they were descendants of Shem, c) Orientals, because they were part of a Middle Eastern Culture, and d) Asians or Asiatics because they were from the continent of Asia.

Let's now continue with our study of Genesis 41.

Two years pass from the end of the previous chapter. Joseph is nearing 30 years old, and prison is still his home. Dreams have so far been nothing but trouble for Joseph, but now that is all about to change.

The Pharaoh has two dreams, and they are disturbing to him. Why so disturbing? Because they seemed so real, that after he awoke V7 says that he was relieved to realize they were just dreams. Yet the content was such, that they seemed more than a dream...more like a vision...so he felt he must pursue the meaning. He calls all of his "magicians" and "wise men" to tell him the meaning of these dreams. These two groups of men the Pharaoh summoned were his brain trust, his governmental cabinet; they represented the spiritual and the intellectual elite of Egypt...and they were stymied.

The religion of Egypt, the spiritual, consisted of much magic and sorcery to go with the many gods and goddesses. The Pharaoh, as all his of subjects, believed strongly in the ancient Mystery Babylon styled religion of Egypt, so it was an integral part of life. Christians could learn much from the unwavering commitment these pagans had to their religion (even though it was false), for they considered it the center of their lives. Every facet of their existence was tied to their belief system, unaware that it was a counterfeit system designed by Satan; so the Pharaoh naturally had these experts in religion, these spiritualists, as part of his group of close advisers.

Conversely, the "wise men" were not representatives of the spiritual, they were the Egyptian intellectuals; they represented the worldly knowledge and science that had been developed to such a high level in Egypt.

Pharaoh tells these men about his dreams; but they stood silent, having no understanding as to their meaning. The chief cupbearer, who had been imprisoned by Pharaoh two years past, now reluctantly steps forward. He tells Pharaoh about this Joseph who accurately interpreted his, and the chief baker's, dreams. Pharaoh immediately orders Joseph to be brought before him.

Pharaoh tells Joseph that he has had dreams, which his brightest and best not could interpret; but that he was told that Joseph could. Joseph answers completely truthfully: "It isn't in me. God will give Pharaoh his answer....."

And, so here stands the Hebrew slave, Joseph, in the company of Pharaoh and the most admired religious leaders and the intellectual elite in all of Egypt, being asked to do what they couldn't possibly do, for they were not equipped to do it. Since indeed these were prophetic dreams of Holy truth given by God to Pharaoh, how could the simple, wholly inadequate, employment of worldly knowledge and false, though sincere, religion possibly fathom their meaning? It can NEVER be so; but it forever will be that **only** the children of God, in spiritual union with the Father, can know the truth. And, Joseph is about to announce the truth to Pharaoh.

First, Joseph makes it clear that these dreams are from God. Next, he informs Pharaoh that both of these dreams are concerning the same matter: a coming time of great famine. The first dream was about cows; first 7 healthy ones, then 7 sickly ones. The second dream was about corn; first 7 healthy stalks of corn, then 7 sickly ones. It was important that there were two dreams because one concerned the livestock, and the other the field crops; that is, both major elements of the food supply were going to be effected by what was coming.

As is God's way, He does not bring judgment without sufficient warning for those who pay heed to Him. So, God says He will see to it that there will be 7 wonderfully, unusually, abundant years of food growth and harvest, before 7 years...not of less than normal production.... but of TERRIBLE famine.

What comes next is wisdom from Joseph about what to do about the coming trial. Of course, the nature of the wisdom is such that we can have no doubt as to its source: the Creator of all. Joseph says, in paraphrase: Pharaoh, during the next seven years, make it a law that all throughout Egypt, 20% of all produce will be stored away for that day, 7 years into the future, when it will be needed for the lean times. Rather than living especially high during the 7 years of unusual plenty, be wise, and use that time to prepare. I suspect that the people were not too thrilled at this ruling. After all, as they looked around all they saw was prosperity. The future seemed bright, without a cloud on the horizon. Why this negativity? No doubt, many saw it as a conspiracy of these detested foreign Hyksos rulers to simply confiscate food from the people and somehow enrich themselves. How difficult it is to believe God, instead of our eyes, especially when things are going well. But, one has to give the Pharaoh a lot of credit for taking Joseph seriously...and ACTING on it, and not just pondering it.

I wonder: would we have the faith to do what this heathen Pharaoh was about to do? Would we have the faith to hear from God that a time of terrible tribulation was nearing, and that we needed to prepare by putting aside some of our time, our riches, our labors, our interests, ourselves? Could we intentionally deprive ourselves when we were in the midst of abundance, when life was good? Could we do it on FAITH, and not by what we see with our eyes? Could we do it when the best and brightest minds, and our most prestigious religious leaders, tell us that the future is unknowable...except as they can discern it from their positions of authority?

Beloved, I sure hope we can; because we HAVE been told. We are right now in that time of relative abundance and plenty, just before the onset of the greatest trial mankind has ever, or will ever, experience. How do I know this? God has revealed it to us. He has shown us in his Word what signs to look for; and they have happened, and are happening. He has told us unequivocally that when Jerusalem is back in the hands of the Jews, that that generation will see the coming of the Lord. He has also told us that a few months before Jesus once again sets His feet on the Mt. of Olives, there will be a time so terrible that we cannot possibly comprehend it. He has told us to prepare; prepare by giving over our lives to Him. By following the wisdom that comes from God: living within our means, getting out of debt, seeking Him instead of personal pleasures, learning to rely on Him and nothing else. Trusting Him, believing Him, and not what our fleshly senses and corrupted intellect tells us. For, those of us in our time who do not prepare will experience devastation many fold more than what Egypt was about to experience.

It doesn't matter that most of our religious leaders are blind to it. It doesn't matter that our academic elite scoff at it. It doesn't matter that our government sees everything in terms of geo-political realities, and our lawmakers see things in terms of attaining and maintaining personal power. For most of our secular and religious leaders are as oblivious to reality as were Pharaoh's wise men and magicians. You see, God has not entrusted the truth to them: He has entrusted it to US...His true Church. Not the façade of Church institution, with its bureaucracies and man-made doctrines; rather His people, His followers, sanctified through the blood of Christ.

For the Pharaoh, the next question was who was going to make sure that all that needs to be done is done? The answer was obvious. The man God chose to deliver the message should be the one to carry out the preparations: Joseph.

In one of the most unlikely events, the Hebrew slave is removed from the dungeon and anointed the ruler of all Egypt. Joseph goes from the outhouse to the penthouse, and the only higher authority is Pharaoh himself.

A ceremony was held, so that all Egypt would know Joseph's position over them. As part of this ceremony, Pharaoh gave Joseph a new name: Zaphenath-panea. The form we have Joseph's name in today seems to be a hybrid Egyptian and Hebrew word. Scholars say it means either "God speaks, he lives", or it means "the creator and sustainer of life". More recent scholarship draws that into doubt. It would make more sense that this name is purely Egyptian and indeed, we find that there is a common word used in naming Egyptians, "zat-en-aph"; and it means, "he who is called". The second word of Joseph's new name, panea, is also fairly easily identifiable in the Egyptian language. Aneah was a usual word for "life" in Egypt. So the Egyptian meaning of his name was likely something along the lines of "he who is called life".

In our day a name is simply a way to identify a person; but in ancient times a name was far more than that. A name was a person's reputation. It was a statement of one's character and attributes, or perhaps even status in society. Thus, when Joseph went from house-slave, to prisoner, Vizier of Egypt, a new name was necessary; one, which reflected the Pharaoh's view of Joseph's position and purpose. And, to seal Joseph's appointment and make it permanent...and, without doubt, to achieve Joseph's loyalty...Pharaoh gave to Joseph a wife: Asenath, daughter of a Priest. This was no small thing. This priest was of the Temple of On...the city of the Sun God. At the time, this temple was to honor the god Re, later called Atum-Re; Re was the highest Egyptian deity. Later, the city of On...about 7 or 8 miles north of Cairo... would come to be known as Heliopolis, city of the sun. So, Joseph married the daughter of the priest of the Sun God, Re.

Once the ceremonies were concluded, Joseph set about traveling throughout Egypt, setting up a system and seeing to it that an enormous amount of grain was saved and stored. We're told that the 6 years before the family were abundant...the Bible term meaning there were 6 years of bumper crops.

Six years pass; it's one-year before the onset of the famine. Joseph now has two sons by his



Egyptian wife, the first-born being Manesseh, and the younger being Ephraim. BTW, these are Hebrew names, not Egyptian. However, due to the customs of those days, that remains the same to this day for Hebrews and many other cultures, the mother's nationality and genealogy determined that of the children. So, despite their Hebrew names, these two boys were without question Egyptian children. Now, the foreign mother of an Israeli could renounce her nationality and gods and become a member of Israel; if that happened, then the mother was not considered foreign, anymore (despite her genealogy), but Hebrew. That did NOT happen in this case. Asenath, mother of Joseph's children, was Egyptian and there is no evidence that she gave up her Egyptian-ness. In fact, it would have been unthinkable, given her position as the daughter of the Sun god's priest, and as a princess of Egypt, to become a Hebrew. Tuck this important fact about Asenath, Manesseh and Ephraim away in your memories. We've talked about this in a number of ways before: but remember, these two grandchildren that Jacob is not yet even aware he has, Ephraim and Manesseh, these two children of Joseph, born of his Egyptian wife, are by all accounts Egyptians...gentiles. Notice also that the Torah is clear on two important points in verses 51 and 52: first, Ephraim means "fertile", in the sense of abundant. We'll see this carry over into Jacob's prophetic blessing of Ephraim later in Genesis. But, also note that Joseph in no way viewed Egypt as an enemy. Rather, he sees Egypt as a friend, even a place of comfort. He even refers to it as a sort of replacement home. So, while we'll eventually see the Hebrews become Egyptian slaves, we'll also find in the Bible a certain favor of God towards Egypt, especially in the last days of the last days.

Well, the famine hits just as God said it would. But, we're also told something here that is often overlooked: this famine was widespread. Now, many Bibles say that the famine was severe throughout the world, but that's not really what the Hebrew says. It says that the famine spread over the "panim of the eretz"..... "the face of the land". This is a very general term, not one that seeks to indicate all land masses, known and unknown, of the entire planet earth. However, as we'll find out in a little while, not just Egypt, but the whole of the Middle East was also affected.

And, notice how the distribution of the stored up grain occurred. It was rationed, or sold. The grain was not given away. Egyptian records of that time, describing the famine and how the grain distribution was handled, have been found, and they completely vindicate the Biblical record, which we will shortly encounter. What we know is that as people ran out of money, they gave up their starving cattle to Pharaoh in exchange for grain, the staple food. When they ran out of cattle, they gave up their land. And, when they had nothing else to sell, they sold themselves into bond-servitude to the Pharaoh. In this way, Pharaoh eventually owned all the land and all the wealth of Egypt. It also allowed him to build up an enormous slave-class workforce to construct magnificent Temples, roadways, and cities. As cynical and hardhearted as this was, God used the situation to save lives: and to assure the survival of Israel.

One final thought and we'll move on: I wonder what the Egyptian people thought of Joseph during this time of famine? Do you suppose he got thanked for forcing them to save up grain...do with less during a time of plenty..... thereby allowing them to survive later on? Or, did he get the blame and their hatred when so many had to sell themselves into slavery in order to obtain that grain? After all, Pharaoh had made Joseph the front man; Joseph was the supreme administrator of this program, and as we saw the Pharaoh had a large public ceremony to

make it clear to all just what Joseph's position was. All cunning politicians put someone between them and the people, to act both as a buffer and a lightning rod. When things go well, the politician jumps to the front to accept the credit and the adoration of the people. But, when something goes wrong, or is unpopular, the politician becomes silent and invisible and the front man catches the flak. Something tells me that the left-over bitterness from this event surrounding the confiscation of grain from the Egyptian people's private land, and then the selling of what should have been their own grain back to them.... often at the cost of their own freedom..... had much to do with how things went some time later. For it was after Joseph died, and new Pharaohs were in place, and Joseph's family, the Hebrews, had grown and prospered, that the dispossessed people of Egypt turned on them. Matters like this famine situation are not easily forgotten, and its unthinkable that this didn't have much to do with Egypt eventually turning the tables on Joseph's family, by enslaving them.

Next week, chapter 42.