

Joseph explains two dreams

We read from the Bible (ERV):

GENESIS 40

Joseph Explains Two Dreams

1 Later, two of Pharaoh's servants did something wrong to Pharaoh. These servants were the baker and the man who served wine to Pharaoh. 2 Pharaoh became angry with his baker and wine server, 3 so he put them in the same prison as Joseph. Potiphar, the commander of Pharaoh's guards, was in charge of this prison. 4 The commander put the two prisoners under Joseph's care. The two men continued to stay in prison for some time. 5 One night both of the prisoners had a dream. The baker and the wine server each had his own dream, and each dream had its own meaning. 6 Joseph went to them the next morning and saw that the two men were worried. 7 He asked them, "Why do you look so worried today?"

8 The two men answered, "We both had dreams last night, but we don't understand what we dreamed. There is no one to explain the dreams to us."

Joseph said to them, "God is the only one who can understand and explain dreams. So I beg you, tell me your dreams."

The Wine Server's Dream

9 So the wine server told Joseph his dream. The server said, "I dreamed I saw a vine. 10 On the vine there were three branches. I watched the branches grow flowers and then become grapes. 11 I was holding Pharaoh's cup, so I took the grapes and squeezed the juice into the cup. Then I gave the cup to Pharaoh."

12 Then Joseph said, "I will explain the dream to you. The three branches mean three days. 13 Before the end of three days, Pharaoh will forgive you and allow you to go back to your work. You will do the same work for Pharaoh as you did before. 14 But when you are free, remember me. Be good to me and help me. Tell Pharaoh about me so that I can get out of this prison. 15 I was kidnapped and taken from the land of my people, the Hebrews. I have done nothing wrong! I should not be in prison."

The Baker's Dream

16 The baker saw that the other servant's dream was good, so he said to Joseph, "I also had a dream. I dreamed there were three baskets of bread on my head. 17 In the top basket there were all kinds of baked food for the king, but birds were eating this food."

18 Joseph answered, "I will tell you what the dream means. The three baskets mean three days. 19 Before the end of three days, the king will take you out of this prison and cut off your head! He will hang your body on a pole, and the birds will eat it."

Joseph Is Forgotten

20 Three days later it was Pharaoh's birthday. He gave a party for all his servants. At the party Pharaoh allowed the wine server and the baker to leave the prison. 21 He freed the wine server and gave him his job back, and once again the wine server put a cup of wine in Pharaoh's hand. 22 But Pharaoh hanged the baker, and everything happened the way Joseph said it would. 23 But the wine server did not remember to help Joseph. He said nothing about him to Pharaoh. The wine server forgot about Joseph.

Explanation

Joseph is innocent in prison. But God takes care of him. He makes sure the head of the prison is kind to him. Joseph is allowed to do chores for him.

Joseph learned how to manage a large household in Potiphar's house. He can put that skill to good use here. The jailer gives him more and more tasks and at one point the jailer no longer looks after his work at all: he trusts Joseph completely.

For God is with Joseph and He allows everything Joseph does to succeed.

One day two new prisoners arrive. For them, too, Joseph may take care of. They are Pharaoh's chief cupbearer and master baker. They are both guilty of an offense against Pharaoh.

When they have been in prison for some time, on the same night they both have a dream.

The next morning they are sick of it. Joseph notices right away. "Why do you look so gloomy today?" he asks. They say, "We had a dream and there is no one to explain it to us."

Now something remarkable happens: Joseph dreamed twice as a teenager: once that all the sheaves in the field bowed to his sheaf and once that the sun, moon and stars bowed to him. Although he felt that these dreams came from God, he did not receive the explanations that accompanied these dreams.

Now he said to the cupbearer and the baker, "Only God can explain dreams." "Tell me what you dreamed."

Joseph does not say this out of curiosity, but he knows that God can tell people something through a dream. He wants to be available to God if Who wants to use him as a dream interpreter. Joseph also sees that God blesses everything he does. So, even though he has never done it before, he believes with all his heart that God can give him the explanation of dreams.

Is this also how you view God? 'If God wants it, He can use me for this. I am open to it.' In whatever way comes your way: if you can pray for someone/ if you can bless someone/ if you can speak an encouraging word/ even if you can pray for someone for healing/ or in some other way. That might be pretty scary.

Especially if you've never done it before.

So how does Joseph do this? Is he going to fast and pray for a week first? Is he going to sacrifice or on his knees calling on God? No, he says very simply: just tell me what you dreamed.

He lays everything before God: "Lord, if You will, You can help me.

The cupbearer tells his dream. He says, "I saw a vine with 3 branches. It grew very fast; leaves, flowers and bunches of grapes came on it. I had Pharaoh's wine cup in my hand, picked the grapes, squeezed them into the cup and gave the cup to Pharaoh."

Joseph said, "I know! I know what the dream means."

No earthquake or vision. No angel appearing in a bright light. But God reveals the explanation in Joseph's head and heart.

He tells that the 3 branches are 3 days. "In 3 days Pharaoh will give you a high place: he will give you back your job. And you will hand Pharaoh his wine cup again as you did when you were his cupbearer."

Joseph knows this is the explanation. And then he grasps a straw himself. For he says, "Please think of me and mention my name to Pharaoh. For I have been forcibly kidnapped from the land of the Hebrews. And again, I have done nothing for which they could throw me into this dungeon. I sit here innocent."

The baker is hopeful after the explanation of the first dream. Therefore, he also tells his dream: "I had 3 baskets of bread on my head. In the top basket were all kinds of cakes and bread for Pharaoh. But birds came and ate everything from the basket above my head." Joseph also knows what this dream means. He says, "the 3 baskets are also 3 days. You too will be exalted baker; Pharaoh will hang you on a pole and the birds will eat your flesh." And so it happens. Three days later, Pharaoh of Egypt has a birthday. He holds a feast for all his staff. He also thinks of his chief cupbearer and master baker. Therefore, he has them taken out of prison. The cupbearer gets his function back: he may again give the cup of wine to Pharaoh. Exactly as Joseph had said.

The baker is also elevated. Literally. For he is hanged, just as Joseph had predicted. Joseph is waiting anxiously in prison: will the cupbearer ensure that he will be released? Days pass. Weeks. And even years. For the cupbearer no longer thinks of Joseph; he forgot about him.

Prayer: Joseph meets two people he gets to help. And then he himself is forgotten. What a disappointment Lord for a boy innocent in a prison. Thank that Joseph could notice that You were with him and blessed everything he did. Also today we want to pray for all those people who are innocent in a prison. Would You also be with them and care for them. Help them Lord and grant that justice may prevail.

Questions

1. Do dreams of God still occur?

2. Joseph knows that God can give explanations of dreams. He makes himself available to be in God's service.

Can you make yourself available with God? Or does it always start with God?

How do you handle it when you make yourself available and God does not use you?

In what ways can you be in God's service?

2. The cupbearer forgets about Joseph. Joseph must not have understood any of this. What a disappointment it must have been when he realized that nothing was going to change his situation.

Have you forgotten someone? Is there someone close to you that you promised to pray for or visit?

Can you "make this right"? (How?)

3. Joseph has disappointment upon disappointment.

How does he deal with that?

How do you deal with disappointment?

4. God has a plan for Joseph's life. He has long known what He wants to use Joseph for. But Joseph doesn't see any of that right now. He probably thinks that precious years will be lost here in prison.

God's plan takes longer than we often want it to. In the meantime, we can develop skills. Do you recognize this? What skills have you developed in your "waiting time"?

Is it hard to stay patient? How do you keep waiting?

This Bible study was written by Carla Heuvelman and can be found at www.febebijbelstudies.nl