

NOON BIBLE STUDY: GENESIS 40

JOSEPH'S STORY IS *QUITE* THE STORY. FROM FAVORED SON TO EMPTY WELL TO POTIPHAR'S SERVANT TO PRISONER TO JAILOR'S RIGHT HAND MAN. FOR MANY OF US, JUST THE STORY WE HAVE READ WOULD CONSTITUTE A COUPLE OF LIFETIMES - NOT JUST TWO CHAPTERS! BUT AS WE CONSIDERED LAST TIME, JOSEPH'S IS THE CASE STUDY FOR ROMANS 8:28 - ALL THINGS BEING WORKED TOGETHER FOR GOOD AND GOD'S PURPOSES ON THE EARTH. EACH "BAD" THING IS ONLY A STEP TOWARDS GOD'S GOOD PLAN. WE HAVE THAT PERSPECTIVE ON JOSEPH'S LIFE AS WE READ HIS STORY AND JOSEPH IS CALLING US TO HAVE THAT PERSPECTIVE ON OUR OWN LIVES TOO.

GENESIS 39:19-23 - JOSEPH FALSELY ACCUSED, THROWN IN JAIL

"BUT THE LORD WAS WITH JOSEPH" TELLS THE STORY OF WHY JOSEPH REMAINS FAITHFUL EVEN AS HIS CIRCUMSTANCES STINK. HE IS NOW IN THE JAIL RESERVED FOR THE KING'S PRISONERS. REMEMBER POTIPHAR WAS THE CAPTAIN OF THE KING'S GUARD. WHILE IN THIS PRISON, GOD'S FAVOR EXTENDS THROUGH JOSEPH AGAIN INTO THE PLACE HE IS LIVING AND WORKING.

SO YOU HAVE A PRISONER, WHO WAS A FORMER SLAVE, NOW IN CHARGE OF ALL OF THE PRISONERS - HIMSELF A SUPERVISOR, UNSUPERVISED HIMSELF!

GENESIS 40:1-4 - CUPBEARER & CHIEF BAKER THROWN IN JOSEPH'S PRISON

TWO IMPORTANT OFFICIALS OF PHARAOH'S HOUSE ARE NOW UNDER JOSEPH'S SUPERVISION. THESE WERE TWO IMPORTANT FIGURES - NO POLITICALLY BUT PERSONALLY TO THE KING. THE BAKER WOULD HAVE BEEN A KEY PERSON IN PREPARING FOOD FOR THE PHARAOH TO EAT AND A CUP BEARER WAS A STEWARD OF THE WINE/DRINK OF THE KING WHO WOULD ALSO BE IN CHARGE OF TASTING THE WINE. BOTH OF THESE MEN WOULD HAVE HAD ACCESS TO THE PHARAOH AND ENTRUSTED TO PROTECT HIS VERY LIFE. AND YET THEY HAVE BOTH OFFENDED THE KING SOMEHOW.

GENESIS 40:5-8 - THE CUPBEARER & BAKER HAVE DREAMS

BOTH OF THESE MEN HAVE A TROUBLING DREAM THE SAME NIGHT AND AS A RESULT ARE "DEJECTED" OR TROUBLED.

"IN THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST, **DREAMS** WERE OFTEN VIEWED AS A MEDIUM OF DIVINE REVELATION. BUT BECAUSE OF THEIR IMPRISONMENT, THE CUPBEARER AND BAKER NO LONGER HAVE ACCESS TO THE "MAGICIANS" AND "WISE MEN" WHO MIGHT HAVE BEEN ABLE TO PROVIDE AN INTERPRETATION (ESV STUDY BIBLE, GENESIS 40:5-8)."

JOSEPH, CHARGED WITH THEIR CARE RECOGNIZES THAT SOMETHING IS TROUBLING THEM AND THEN INVITES THEM TO TELL THEM THEIR OWN DREAMS. REMEMBER, JOSEPH WAS MOCKED BY HIS BROTHERS AS A "DREAMER" BECAUSE OF HIS VIVID (AND PROPHETIC) DREAMS. HE HAS HAD A LOT OF TIME TO COMMUNE WITH THE LORD THE LAST NUMBER OF YEARS AND BOLDLY DECLARES: "INTERPRETING DREAMS IS GOD'S BUSINESS (40:8, NLT)."

I LOVE THE CONFIDENCE OF JOSEPH. IT REMINDS ME OF WHEN HE BOLDLY TOLD HIS BROTHERS AND PARENTS ABOUT HIS OWN DREAMS, ULTIMATELY ANGERING THEM. BUT IT SEEMED HE WAS A PURE HEARTED MAN WHO IN THE SIMPLICITY OF HIS HEART, JUST TOLD PEOPLE WHAT WAS GOING ON IN HIS HEART AND LIFE. HERE, NOT FEARING THE PAGAN-EGYPTIAN CUPBEARER OR BAKER'S REACTION, HE SAYS THAT GOD (CERTAINLY MEANING YAHWEH), IS THE ONE WHO CAN INTERPRET THEIR DREAMS!

GENESIS 40:9-15 - THE CUPBEARER'S DREAM & INTERPRETATION

THE CUPBEARER GOES FIRST. HIS DREAM IS ABOUT THREE VINE BRANCHES THAT PRODUCED GRAPES WHICH HE IN TURN SQUEEZED INTO PHARAOH'S CUP. JOSEPH TELLS THE CUPBEARER THAT THIS DREAM MEANS THAT IN THREE DAYS HE WILL BE RESTORED TO HIS POSITION AS THE CUPBEARER FOR THE KING. JOY AND RELIEF CERTAINLY ROSE IN THE ROOM AS THE CUPBEARER HEARD THIS NEWS.

JOSEPH CONCLUDES HIS WORD WITH A REQUEST TO BE REMEMBERED BY THE CUPBEARER ONCE HE IS BACK IN PHARAOH'S COURT. IN OTHER WORDS, MENTION TO PHARAOH THAT JOSEPH WAS THE ONE WHO CORRECTLY INTERPRETED THE DREAM. MAYBE THAT WOULD HELP JOSEPH GET OUT OF JAIL? NEVERTHELESS, A SIMPLE REQUEST OF A MAN WHO JUST GAVE THE CUPBEARER HOPE AGAIN!

GENESIS 40:16-19 - THE BAKER'S DREAM & INTERPRETATION

AFTER HEARING THE INTERPRETATION OF THE CUP BEARER'S DREAM, THE BAKER PROBABLY EAGERLY SHARE HIS STORY AND WAITED WITH EXCITEMENT TO HEAR WHAT HIS DREAM MEANT. BUT HE WOULD NOT BE HAPPY. IN FACT HIS DREAM (BIRDS EATING BREAD FROM A BASKET HE CARRIED) MEANT HE WAS GOING TO DIE IN THREE DAYS AND EATEN BY THE BIRDS! YIKES! THAT PROBABLY CHANGED THE MOOD PRETTY QUICKLY.

GENESIS 40:20-23 - THINGS HAPPEN, JUST AS JOSEPH HAD SAID

JUST AS JOSEPH HAD SAID, THREE DAYS LATER THE CUPBEARER RETURNS TO PHARAOH'S COURT AND THE BAKER IS KILLED. THE CHAPTER ENDS WITH A HEARTBREAKING VERSE. THE CUPBEARER DIDN'T REMEMBER TO HONOR JOSEPH OR HIS REQUEST. SOMETIMES IN OUR EXCITEMENT WE CAN FORGET THINGS. SOMETIMES WHEN THE CRISIS IS OVER, WE FORGET TO GIVE GOD THANKS. SOMETIMES WHEN WE GET BAILED OUT WE FORGET THE HELP WE RECEIVED. WE JUST MOVE ON WITH LIFE. WE FORGET SOME OF GOD'S BLESSINGS AND THE PEOPLE WHO HAVE HELPED US. IT'S A HUMAN PROBLEM AND IT'S SAD WHEN WE SEE IT PLAY OUT IN SOMEONE ELSE'S LIFE LIKE WE DO HERE WITH JOSEPH.

JUST WHEN YOU THOUGHT HIS STORY MIGHT CHANGE - AND EVEN MORE HEARTBREAKER - JUST WHEN JOSEPH HIMSELF MIGHT HAVE THOUGHT HIS STORY WOULD CHANGE - THE CUPBEARER FORGETS ABOUT JOSEPH. TO ADD TO THIS DEVASTATING REALITY, WE WILL LEARN IN THE NEXT CHAPTER THAT IT OUR STORY DOESN'T PICK UP FOR ANOTHER 2 YEARS (41:1)! I'M SURE A DAY OR TWO GOES BY AND JOSEPH EAGERLY RUNS EACH TIME SOMEONE KNOCKS ON THE DUNGEON DOOR! A WEEK OR TWO GOES BY AND HE'S WONDERING IF MAYBE THESE THINGS TAKE TIME. AND THEN MONTHS BEGIN TO PILE UP AND I'M SURE HIS EXPECTATION THAT HIS HOPES WOULD BE REALIZED THROUGH HIS OL' BUDDY THE CUPBEARER, BEGAN TO FADE. AND WITH THAT WE'LL PAUSE OUR STORY.

THERE WAS ONE KEY VERSE THAT WE DIDN'T HIGHLIGHT IN THE NOTES THAT IS WORTH TAKING A FEW MOMENTS NOW TO CONSIDER. NOTICE WHAT JOSEPH SAYS WHEN HE MAKES HIS REQUEST OF THE CUPBEARER:

GENESIS 40:15 - FOR I WAS IN FACT KIDNAPPED FROM THE LAND OF THE HEBREWS, AND EVEN HERE I HAVE DONE NOTHING THAT THEY SHOULD HAVE PUT ME INTO THE DUNGEON."

HMM...THAT'S FUNNY I DON'T REMEMBER READING THAT PART OF JOSEPH'S STORY. HE EXPLAINS TO THE CUPBEARER THAT THE REASON HE IS IN EGYPT IS BECAUSE HE WAS "KIDNAPPED". THIS MIGHT BE TROUBLING TO SOME, IF YOU THINK THAT HE'S NOT BEING HONEST OR SOMETHING BUT I LOOK AT THIS EXPLANATION BY JOSEPH OF HIS OWN JOURNEY AS REMARKABLE.

AS WE KNOW, THE REASON JOSEPH IS IN EGYPT IS BECAUSE HIS BROTHERS SOLD HIM INTO SLAVERY. YET WE GET NOT HINT OF THAT STORY WHEN WE HEAR JOSEPH SPEAK. THIS WOULD HAVE BEEN A PERFECT OPPORTUNITY TO EXPRESS HIS FRUSTRATION AND BITTERNESS TO ALL THAT HAS HAPPENED IN HIS LIFE. YET WE DON'T HEAR A PEEP FROM HIM REGARDING HOW HARD HIS LIFE HAS BEEN. HE DOES SAY THAT *"EVEN HERE I HAVE DONE NOTHING THAT THEY SHOULD HAVE PUT ME INTO THE DUNGEON"* - BUT THERE IS NO RANT ON HOW EVIL POTIPHAR'S WIFE WAS AND HOW POTIPHAR IS A POOR EXCUSE FOR A HUSBAND OR CAPTAIN.

NOPE - ALL JOSEPH SAYS, AFTER HE RIGHTLY INTERPRETS THE DREAM OF THE CUPBEARER - A MOMENT IN WHICH THE CUPBEARER WAS LIKELY IN AWE OF JOSEPH AND PRIMED TO HEAR FROM HIM - ALL JOSEPH SAYS IS "HEY, CAN YOU REMEMBER ME WHEN THINGS GO WELL FOR YOU? I'M A STRANGER IN THIS LAND AND I HAVEN'T DONE AN EVIL DEED WHICH WOULD JUSTIFY PRISON." THAT'S ALL HE SAYS.

WHAT WOULD YOU HAVE SAID? WOULD YOU HAVE MENTIONED YOUR BROTHERS BY NAME? WOULD YOU HAVE COMPLAINED ABOUT HOW MANY DAYS YOU SAID "NO" TO POTIPHAR'S WIFE? WOULD YOU HAVE VENTED ABOUT THE BROKEN EGYPTIAN JUSTICE SYSTEM? WOULD YOU HAVE BOASTED IN HOW GOOD YOU HAVE BEEN THE LAST FEW YEARS? WOULD YOU HAVE LISTED HOW GOD'S FAVOR IS UPON YOU NOW IN THE JAIL? IT'S AN INTERESTING THING TO CONSIDER.

JOSEPH REVEALS IN THIS EXCHANGE THAT HE IS A MAN OF HIGH MORAL CHARACTER AND THAT HE IS A MAN FREE FROM RESENTMENT AND BITTERNESS IN HIS HEART. IT IS LIKELY THAT HE HAS ALREADY FORGIVEN HIS BROTHERS FOR THEIR SINS AGAINST HIM. IT IS LIKELY THAT HE HOLDS NO GRUDGE AGAINST CAPTAIN POTIPHAR AND HIS DEVIOUS WIFE. IT IS ALMOST CERTAIN HE HAS NO BLAME TOWARDS GOD FOR THE WAY HIS LIFE IS TURNING OUT. AND YOU KNOW WHY IT IS SAFE FOR US TO MAKE THESE CONCLUSIONS ABOUT JOSEPH'S HEART AND LIFE - BECAUSE WE JUST READ WHAT HE SAID WHEN HE HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO TELL HIS STORY AND REVEAL HIS INNER THOUGHTS. NO HINT OF RESENTMENT, EDGE, HURT OR AGENDA.

IN FACT, A REAL TAKE AWAY HERE FROM JOSEPH'S LIFE IS THAT HE'S ACTUALLY EAGER TO SPEAK OF THE GREATNESS OF GOD MORE THAN HE IS EAGER TO HAVE A PITY PARTY ABOUT HIS OWN MISFORTUNE. WHAT A WINDOW INTO THE HEART OF A PERSON WHO IS FREE FROM RESENTMENT AND BITTERNESS - HE IS ABLE TO EXALT AND GLORIFY GOD RATHER THAN TURNING THE ATTENTION TO HIS OWN LIFE.

WE HAVE ALL BEEN THROUGH THINGS THAT HAVE BEEN DIFFICULT AND HURTFUL. THE TEMPTATION FOR BITTERNESS, RESENTMENT AND HARD-HEARTEDNESS IS STRONG AND EVEN TEMPORARILY SATISFYING. BUT THEY ARE POISONS AND SHACKLES THAT DESTROY US. JOSEPH IS HER CALLING US TO SEE THAT IT DOESN'T FIX THINGS TO BE BITTER, IT DOESN'T MAKE THE PAIN GO AWAY. KEEPING RESENTMENT DOESN'T EVEN AFFECT THE ONE(S) THAT HAVE HURT US - IT AFFECTS YOU. JOSEPH IS IN PRISON YET IN HIS HEART HE IS FREE. YOU AND I ARE FREE AND YET CAN BE HELD IN A PRISON BECAUSE WE REFUSE TO LET GO OF RESENTMENT AND BITTERNESS.

LISTEN TO WHAT YOU SAY AND THINK AND YOU'LL KNOW IF YOU ARE FREE OR NOT. WHEN PRESENTED WITH THE OPPORTUNITY TO TELL THE STORY OF WHY YOU ARE THE WAY YOU ARE - IS IT AN OPPORTUNITY TO TALK ABOUT WHAT YOU HAVE BEEN THROUGH OR WHAT GOD HAS DONE?

IS THAT REALLY HOW YOU WANT TO LIVE? GO TO GOD, TALK TO A TRUSTED FRIEND OR COUNSELOR, LET GO OF THE RESENTMENT. FIND THE FREEDOM THAT COMES FROM FORGIVENESS AND THEN LIVE YOUR LIFE AGAIN. DON'T MAKE PEACE WITH THE BROKENNESS AND HURTS IN YOUR HEART AND SOUL. THIS ISN'T EASY, BUT YOUR LIFE DOESN'T HAVE TO BE LIKE THIS. JOSEPH DOESN'T KNOW IF HE'S EVER GOING TO RETURN HOME OR SEE HIS FAMILY AGAIN. HE ALSO DOESN'T KNOW IF HE'S EVER GOING TO GET OUT OF THE DUNGEON - BUT HE IS DETERMINED NOT TO WASTE ANY MORE TIME LETTING THE BAD OR UNJUST THINGS HE HAS BEEN THROUGH DESTROY ANY MORE OF HIS LIFE.