

NOON BIBLE STUDY: GENESIS 41

GENESIS 41:1-8 - PHARAOH'S DREAM

V. 1 - WE ARE REMINDED OF THE PASSAGE OF TIME FROM CHAPTER 40 TO 41. TWO YEARS HAVE GONE BY SINCE THE CUPBEARER IS RESTORED TO HIS POSITION. TWO YEARS SINCE JOSEPH ASKED FOR HIM TO REMEMBER HIM WHEN HE WAS BACK IN PHARAOH'S HOUSE. THAT STINKS. YET, AS WE HIGHLIGHTED IN GENESIS 39, JOSEPH'S STORY IS A CASE STUDY IN ROMANS 8:28 - ALL THINGS (EVEN THE BAD STUFF, AND THE DELAY) ARE WORKING TOGETHER FOR GOOD - FOR JOSEPH BUT ALSO FOR THE LORD'S PLANS.

WE ARE TOLD THAT PHARAOH HAS A DREAM, TWO IN FACT. STRANGE DREAMS FOR SURE. SEVEN FAT AND HEALTHY COWS EATING THE GRASS OF THE MARSHES OF THE NILE RIVER. 7 LEAN AND UGLY COWS (ARE THE BEAUTIFUL COWS?) APPEAR AND EAT THE 7 FAT COWS! THAT WOULD BE A DISTURBING DREAM. PROBABLY BLOODY AND TERRIFYING IN FACT.

THE SECOND DREAM HAS A SIMILAR THEME BUT WITH DIFFERENT PLAYERS. THIS TIME WE SEE 7 HEALTHY AND PLUMP EARS OF GRAIN APPEAR FOLLOWED BY 7 DRY AND THIN EARS OF GRAIN. THE 7 DRY EARS "SWALLOW UP" THE 7 HEALTHY EARS. LESS GRAPHIC FOR SURE, BUT EQUALLY TROUBLING FOR PHARAOH'S SOUL.

PHARAOH WAKES UP, DISTURBED AND ASKS FOR HIS MAGICIANS AND DREAM-INTERPRETERS TO TELL HIM WHAT THIS MEANS. AS WE HAVE SEEN PREVIOUSLY IN OUR STORY, THE ANCIENT EGYPTIAN CULTURE LOOKED AT DREAMS, ESPECIALLY VIVID AND INTENSE DREAMS AS MESSAGES FROM THE GODS. YET NO ONE COULD INTERPRET THE DREAMS.

ISN'T THAT INTERESTING. DON'T YOU THINK THESE MAGICIANS, SURELY WORKING FOR THEMSELVES OF IDOLS (WHO HAVE NO LIFE OR POWER), WERE ACCUSTOMED TO MAKING UP THEIR INTERPRETATIONS? AND YET THEY EITHER COULDN'T THINK OF SOMETHING, OR WHAT THEY OFFERED PHARAOH DIDN'T RESONATE IN HIM AS THE REAL MEANING.

GENESIS 41:9-13 - THE CUPBEARER REMEMBERS HIS OL' CELLMATE

WHAT DO YOU KNOW, THE CUPBEARER REMEMBERS HIS OWN TESTIMONY! HE SHARES THIS NEWS WITH PHARAOH (AWKWARD).

GENESIS 41:14-24 - JOSEPH SUMMONED, PHARAOH RETELLS THE DREAM

AT LAST THE PHARAOH CALLS FOR JOSEPH - TWO YEARS LATE BUT RIGHT ON TIME. JOSEPH IS BROUGHT BEFORE PHARAOH AND IS PRESENTED WITH THE CHANCE TO INTERPRET THE DREAM. AND WHEN ON THIS GRAND STAGE WITH SPOTLIGHT LIT, WHO DOES JOSEPH POINT TO - GOD.

PHARAOH BELIEVES THAT JOSEPH CAN INTERPRET DREAMS. HE HAS NOT FOUND ANSWERS FROM HIS OWN MEN AND NOW HE IS LOOKING TO THIS PRISONER WHO HAS A REPUTATION THAT "WHEN YOU HEAR A DREAM, YOU CAN INTERPRET IT (GENESIS 41:15)". AND JOSEPH SAYS "IT IS NOT IN ME: GOD WILL GIVE PHARAOH A FAVORABLE ANSWER (41:16)." WHAT A MAN! AFTER ALL THAT HE HAS BEEN THROUGH, ALL THAT HE HAS UNJUSTLY SUFFERED AND EXPERIENCED, ANY CHANCE HE GETS TO GIVE GOD THE GLORY - HE DOES!

JOSEPH'S TRIALS DIDN'T SQUEEZE GOD OUT OF HIM, HIS TRIALS SQUEEZED HIM CLOSER TO GOD. PHARAOH THEN RETELLS HIS DREAM TO JOSEPH.

GENESIS 41:25-36 - JOSEPH INTERPRETS THE DREAM AND GIVES COUNSEL TO PHARAOH

JOSEPH NOT ONLY GIVES THE INTERPRETATION OF THE DREAM, BUT HE ALSO GIVES PRACTICAL APPLICATION TO PHARAOH AS TO WHAT PHARAOH SHOULD DO IN LIGHT OF THE DREAM! THAT'S AWESOME.

JOSEPH TELLS PHARAOH THAT THE DREAM IS GOD'S WAY OF TELLING PHARAOH THAT THERE WILL BE SEVEN YEARS OF ABUNDANCE IN THE LAND FOLLOWED BY 7 YEARS OF FAMINE. THE FAMINE WILL BE SO SEVERE THAT THE TEXT TELLS US "...THAT EVEN THE MEMORY OF THE GOOD YEARS WILL BE ERASED (41:31, NLT)." EGYPT IS NOT THE WORLD POWER THAT IT WILL BE BY THE TIME WE REACH EXODUS, AND SO JOSEPH IS GIVING PHARAOH EXACT ECONOMIC PROJECTIONS FOR THE NEXT 14 YEARS! HOW MANY WORLD LEADERS WOULDN'T WANT TO KNOW THAT!

JOSEPH THEN SHIFTS FROM INFORMANT TO COUNSELOR. HE TELLS PHARAOH THAT HE SHOULD APPOINT AN OVERSEER TO MANAGE THE RESOURCES. RATHER THAN JUST SITTING AROUND GETTING FAT DURING THE YEARS OF ABUNDANCE, THEY OUGHT TO STORE UP THE ABUNDANCE AS RESOURCES FOR THE YEARS OF FAMINE. THIS SPEAKS TO THE EXTREMITY OF THE TWO PAIRS OF 7 YEARS. THE 7 YEARS OF PLENTY WILL BE SO RICH THAT IT WILL PROVIDE ENOUGH FOOD FOR EGYPT (AND WE'LL LEARN THE NEIGHBORING NATIONS) FOR THE 7 YEARS OF SCARCITY.

THE GOAL OF JOSEPHS' PLAN IS TO SAVE EGYPT.

"THAT WAY THERE WILL BE ENOUGH TO EAT WHEN THE SEVEN YEARS OF FAMINE COME TO THE LAND OF EGYPT. OTHERWISE THIS FAMINE WILL DESTROY THE LAND (GENESIS 41:36, NLT)."

NO ONE ELSE KNOWS THIS INFORMATION BUT PHARAOH AND HIS OFFICIALS. THEY ARE IN A POSITION, IF THEY LISTEN TO FOREIGN-SLAVE-PRISONER JOSEPH, TO SURVIVE. WHAT A MOMENT.

LOOK AT THIS MATURE MAN JOSEPH STANDING BEFORE PHARAOH. EVEN AS JOSEPH GIVES THE INTERPRETATION HE'S GLORIFYING GOD. LOOK AT THE REFERENCES TO GOD THROUGHOUT HIS WORD TO PHARAOH - "GOD HAS TOLD..." V. 25, GOD HAS SHOWN...V. 28, "THE MATTER IS DETERMINED BY GOD"...AND GOD WILL QUICKLY BRING IT ABOUT..." V. 32). JOSEPH IS A MAN WHO IS TALKING UP HIS GOD. THIS IS PART OF HIS LANGUAGE BECAUSE IT IS IN HIS HEART. IT IS NOT SOMETHING FORCED "OH I BETTER SAY SOMETHING ABOUT GOD..." IT'S COMING FROM WITHIN - HE IS DEVOTED TO GOD!

GENESIS 41:37-45 - GREAT IDEA JOSEPH, YOU'RE HIRED!

WHAT A WONDERFUL RESPONSE OF PHARAOH AND HIS OFFICIALS - AND A SMART ONE TOO. "IT SEEMED GOOD TO PHARAOH AND HIS SERVANTS...(V. 37)." YEAH, I WOULD THINK SO. THIS YOUNG MAN STANDS BEFORE PHARAOH, INTERPRETS THE DREAM AND GIVES SIMPLE AND EASY TO BE ENTREATED COUNSEL TO PHARAOH, AND PHARAOH IMMEDIATELY ACTS.

HOW DOES HE ACT? HE APPOINTS THE MAN JOSEPH TO LEAD THE ENDEAVOR! THIS PHARAOH SEEMS HUMBLE AND EAGER TO DO WHAT GOD HAS SHOWN HIM THROUGH JOSEPH. IN FACT, THROUGHOUT THE REMAINING CHAPTERS OF GENESIS WE SEE THE PHARAOH ACTING LIKE THIS. HE SEEMS GRATEFUL THAT GOD WOULD BLESS HIS NATION AND PRESERVE HIS PEOPLE, THROUGH THE WORD OF JOSEPH.

AND IN A DRAMATIC MOMENT, THE KING OF EGYPT APPOINTS JOSEPH, THE GREAT GRANDSON OF ABRAHAM AS RULER OVER EGYPT.

41:41, NLT - "I HEREBY PUT YOU IN CHARGE OF THE ENTIRE LAND OF EGYPT."

41:43, NLT - AND WHEREVER JOSEPH WENT, THE COMMAND WAS SHOUTED, "KNEEL DOWN!" SO PHARAOH PUT JOSEPH IN CHARGE OF ALL EGYPT.

41:44, NLT - "I AM PHARAOH, BUT NO ONE WILL LIFT A HAND OR FOOT IN THE ENTIRE LAND OF EGYPT WITHOUT YOUR APPROVAL."

41:45, NLT - SO JOSEPH TOOK CHARGE OF THE ENTIRE LAND OF EGYPT.

WOW. PHARAOH IS PHARAOH BUT THE RULER OF EGYPT IS JOSEPH, SON OF JACOB, SON OF ISAAC, SON OF ABRAHAM. AND THROUGH JOSEPH NOW, THE NATION OF EGYPT, AND SOON THE ENTIRE WORLD WILL BE BLESSED.

FROM THE PIT TO THE PRISON TO THE PALACE. AND YET THE AMAZING STORY IS JUST BEGINNING TO UNFOLD.

SIDE NOTE: 41:45 TELLS US THAT JOSEPH IS GIVEN A NEW NAME (ZAPHENATH-PANEAH), WHICH MEANS SOMETHING LIKE "GOD SPEAKS". HE IS GIVEN A WIFE, ASENATH, WHO WAS THE DAUGHTER OF A PRIEST. THESE WOULD HAVE BEEN LEGAL, FORMAL, AND POLITICAL ACTS WHICH CONFERRED STATUS AND POSITION ON JOSEPH. REMEMBER, AT THE BEGINNING OF GENESIS 41 HE WAS A NO-NAME PRISON SLAVE. NOW HE'S GOT THE LEAD JOB IN THE NATION, A NEW TITLE/NAME AND PROBABLY FAMOUS OR AT LEAST POLITICALLY SIGNIFICANT WIFE.

GENESIS 41:46 - JOSEPH IS 30 YEARS OLD

JOSEPH IS 30 YEARS OLD WHEN HE BEGINS TO RULE EGYPT. GENESIS 37:2 TOLD US THAT WHEN JOSEPH WAS "PASTURING THE FLOCK WITH HIS BROTHERS" AND HAD HIS FIRST DREAM, HE WAS SEVENTEEN. THOUGH ONLY 5 CHAPTERS AWAY FOR US IN OUR JOURNEY, 13 YEARS IS A LONG AND SLOW TIME. THERE ARE SO MANY HIGHS AND LOWS DURING THESE 13 YEARS.

HE STARTS AS THE FAVORED SON OF HIS FATHER. HE GETS MOCKED AND RIDICULED BY HIS FAMILY. HE GETS ATTACKED AND THROWN INTO A WELL ONLY TO BE SOLD TO SLAVE-TRADERS LATER THAT DAY, BY HIS BROTHERS. HE FORTUNATELY GETS SOLD TO POTIPHAR AND HAS SUCCESS THERE, ONLY TO BE ASSAULTED BY POTIPHAR'S WIFE AND THROWN INTO JAIL. WHILE IN JAIL HE HAS SUCCESS AGAIN. HE EVEN GETS TO MEET TWO OF PHARAOH'S OFFICIALS AND INTERPRETS THEIR DREAMS. THE CUPBEARER IS RESTORED TO THE KING'S COURT AND AS HE LEAVES, HE CARRIES WITH HIM HOPE FOR JOSEPH'S RELEASE FROM PRISON AS WELL. BEING A LEADING SERVANT IN PRISON IS BETTER THAN JUST SITTING IN THE CELL, BUT PRISON IS PRISON. YET TWO YEARS PASS AND SURELY JOSEPH'S FAITH IN THE HOPE THAT MIGHT HAVE COME WITH THE CUPBEARER IS GONE.

13 YEARS. 4,745 DAYS. 113,880 HOURS. COUNTLESS MOMENTS - TO THINK, TO WAIT, TO DOUBT, TO PRAY, TO MATURE, TO MOURN.

AND YET IN TIME, IN GOD'S TIME, JOSEPH IS 30 AND NO LONGER A SLAVE, NO LONGER A PRISONER. HE'S THE PRINCE OF EGYPT.

GENESIS 41:47-57 - GOD'S WORD COMES TO PASS, 7 YEARS OF ABUNDANCE, 7 YEARS OF FAMINE

JUST AS JOSEPH HAD TOLD PHARAOH, THE FIRST 7 YEARS ARE ABUNDANTLY PLENTIFUL FOR THE LAND. THEY ACTUALLY STOPPED MEASURING THE AMOUNTS THEY WERE HARVESTING FOR IT WAS TAKING TOO LONG AND IT WAS BECOMING TOO HARD TO COUNT (V. 49).

AND SURE ENOUGH, THE FIRST SEVEN YEARS ARE FOLLOWED BY THE SECOND SEVEN WHICH SAW DEVASTATING FAMINE IN THE LAND. AS EXTREME AS THE ABUNDANCE WAS, SO WAS THE LACK.

BUT, GOD SET JOSEPH UP IN THE POSITION TO SAVE THE NATION OF EGYPT AND ALSO BEGIN TO BRING TREMENDOUS WEALTH INTO THE LAND - AS THE SURROUNDING NATIONS BEGAN TO COME TO EGYPT TO BUY OF THEIR STOREHOUSES.

AND IN THIS STORY WE HAVE AN INTERESTING FORESHADOW. GOD HAS SET UP HIS MAN IN CHARGE AND RULER OF THE LAND AND HE IS DRAWING THE NATIONS TO THIS MAN TO RECEIVE BLESSING AND THE RESOURCES THE WORLD NEEDS TO SURVIVE. THIS IS GOD'S DOING AND IT MARVELOUS IN OUR EYES!

JOSEPH IS IN A POSITION TO CARE FOR HIS OWN LIFE, THE NATION OF EGYPT, THE NATIONS AROUND EGYPT AND ULTIMATELY, AS WE WILL LEARN AS EARLY AS OUR NEXT CHAPTER - HIS OWN FAMILY. JOSEPH NOW 37 YEARS OLD, IS STEPPING INTO A NEW SEASON OF HIS LIFE THAT WILL BRING HIS LIFE FULL CIRCLE IN SOME WAYS, AS WE SEE HOW GOD IS WORKING ALL THINGS TOGETHER FOR GOOD.

AS WE FINISH FOR NOW, WE WILL CONSIDER SOME OF THE FINAL VERSES OF THIS CHAPTER. WE READ THAT JUST BEFORE THE FAMINE BEGAN, JOSEPH HAS TWO SONS. JOSEPH IS FULLY ASSIMILATED INTO EGYPTIAN LIFE. AN EGYPTIAN NAME, AN EGYPTIAN JOB, AND AN EGYPTIAN WIFE. BUT UPON THE BIRTH OF HIS TWO SONS, WE REALIZE THAT JOSEPH HAS NOT FORGOTTEN HIS PAST.

SURE, HE HAS A RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD THAT IS EVIDENT IN EACH RECORD WE HAVE READ. BUT HE ALSO, THOUGH ASSIMILATED INTO THE EGYPTIAN WORLD, IN HIS HEART HE HAS MAINTAINED HIS IDENTITY OF WHO HE *REALLY* IS. AND LIKE WE HAVE READ SO MANY OTHER TIMES, THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF LIFE AND OF HEART INFLUENCE THE NAMING OF JOSEPH'S SONS.

HIS FIRST BORN, "**MANASSEH**" HAS A MEANING ASSOCIATED WITH THE IDEA THAT "GOD HAS MADE ME FORGET ALL MY TROUBLE AND ALL MY FATHER'S HOUSEHOLD (GENESIS 41:51)." AND HIS SECOND SON, "**EPHRAIM**", SPEAKS THAT "GOD HAS MADE ME FRUITFUL IN THE LAND OF MY AFFLICTION."

THE IRONY IS THAT THROUGH THE NAMING OF BOTH HIS SONS WHICH SEEM TO PUSH AWAY THE AFFLICTION, JOSEPH'S AFFLICTION IS CENTERED IN BOTH NAMES! HE IS MINDFUL NOT JUST OF HIS AFFLICTION, BUT MORE OF HOW GOD HAS WORKED IN AND THROUGH THE AFFLICTION TO STILL CARE FOR JOSEPH. HE HASN'T LITERALLY FORGOTTEN WHAT HE HAS BEEN THROUGH OR HIS FAMILY - BUT THE GOODNESS OF GOD THAT HAS CARRIED HIM TO THIS POINT HAS GIVEN CONTEXT TO THE AFFLICTION AND SUFFERING. NOW JOSEPH IS LOOKING AT HIS LIFE AS IF THESE TRIALS HAVEN'T EVEN HAPPENED - FOR NOW, HE IS "FRUITFUL" IN THE LAND (OF MY AFFLICTION). HOW BEAUTIFUL.

AND THIS BRING US BACK TO THAT GREAT WORD FROM ROMANS 8. THIS TIME NOT THAT GOD IS WORKING ALL THINGS TOGETHER FOR GOOD (ROMANS 8:28), BECAUSE IT WOULD SEEM THAT FROM JOSEPH'S PERSPECTIVE, GOD HAS WORKED THESE THINGS FOR GOOD. BUT NOW WE MUST CONSIDER ANOTHER KEY VERSE IN ROMANS 8.

ROMANS 8:18 - FOR I CONSIDER THAT THE SUFFERINGS OF THIS PRESENT TIME ARE NOT WORTHY TO BE COMPARED WITH THE GLORY THAT IS TO BE REVEALED TO US.

THAT'S KIND OF WHERE JOSEPH IS AT WHEN HIS SONS ARE BORN. HE IS MORE AWARE THAN OTHERS ABOUT THE 7 YEARS OF TROUBLE THAT ARE TO COME. JOSEPH IS TRUSTING GOD'S WORD, BUT LET'S BE HONEST, STILL HAS TO HAVE FAITH THAT WHAT GOD SAID WILL COME TO PASS.

BUT JOSEPH FINDS HIMSELF IN A POSITION OF BLESSING AND IN A PLACE OF PEACE, FOR THE FIRST TIME IN A LONG TIME. AND HE LOOKS BACK AT HIS LIFE AND REALIZES THAT THE AFFLICTION AND SUFFERING THAT HE HAS ENDURED DOESN'T REALLY HAVE A HOLD ON HIM ANYMORE. GOD HAS MADE HIM "FORGET ALL MY TROUBLE" BECAUSE GOD HAS BROUGHT JOSEPH TO THE PLACE HE WAS CALLED TO BE. AND, AS JOSEPH REALIZES, GOD HAS BEEN WITH HIM ALL THE WHILE. HE WAS NEVER ONCE ALONE.

WE KNOW THAT BECAUSE WE HAVE READ THAT MULTIPLE TIMES "GOD WAS WITH JOSEPH..." - BUT JOSEPH IS LIVING IT, EXPERIENCING IT. AND NOW JOSEPH LOOKS BACK AND REALIZES THAT ALL OF THE TROUBLE ISN'T WORTH THINKING ABOUT ANYMORE FOR GOD HAS BROUGHT HIM OUT - AND USED THOSE TRIALS TO BRING HIM TO THIS PLACE.

HE'S NOT IN THE PALACE IF HE ISN'T IN PRISON. HE'S NOT IN PRISON IF HE DOESN'T GET THROWN INTO THE PIT. SO IN THE END, GOD IS WORKING ALL THINGS FOR HIS GOOD AND HIS GOOD PLAN AND NOW JOSEPH SEES IT COMING TOGETHER AND IS THANKFUL.

SO, YOU AND I ARE NOT IN THE PALACE TODAY. WE'RE SOMEWHERE BETWEEN THE PIT AND THE PALACE AND IT IS VERY IMPORTANT THAT WE HEAR THESE WORDS AND READ THE WHOLE STORY OF JOSEPH SO WE DON'T GET STUCK IN THE SUFFERING AND LOSE SIGHT OF THE END OF THE STORY. IF WE LOSE SIGHT, WE LOSE HOPE, AND WE'RE DONE FOR.

JUST BECAUSE WE'RE GOING THROUGH A TRIAL DOESN'T MEAN GOD ISN'T WORKING. IN FACT, COULD IT BE THAT THROUGH TRIAL, GOD IS WORKING TO BRING US SOMEWHERE FOR HIM? COULD IT BE THAT UNLESS THE TRIALS COME, WE DON'T ARRIVE WHERE GOD HAS CALLED US? COULD IT BE THAT IT IS THROUGH TRIALS, GOD IS SHAPING US TO BE MORE LIKE JESUS?

LET'S PRAY FOR THE TRIALS TO GO AWAY. BUT UNTIL THEY DO, BELIEVE THAT GOD IS AT WORK AND THAT IN THE END, WHERE GOD IS BRINGING US, THE GLORY CAN'T EVEN BE COMPARED TO WHAT YOU AND I ARE GOING THROUGH TODAY.