

FOR PERSONAL PREPARATION

1. "In what ways can I serve others wherever I am?" To what extent have you considered this question? What answers do you have?

2. Consider this as an **outline:**

- **Pharaoh's chief butler and baker thrown into prison.** Gen. 40:1-4
- **Each of them had a dream, which Joseph interpreted.** Gen. 40:5-19
- **The ingratitude of the chief butler.** Gen. 40:20-23
- **Pharaoh's dreams.** Gen. 41:1-8
- **The chief butler recommends Joseph to Pharaoh as an interpreter.** Gen. 41:9-13
- **Joseph interprets Pharaoh's dreams and gives him wise advice.** Gen. 41:14-36
- **Joseph is advanced to a place of the highest power and trust.** Gen. 41:37-45
- **Joseph's children; the beginning of the famine.** Gen. 41:46-57

3. Who's who?

- **Joseph.** Appointed prime minister of the land (Gen. 41:41) after spending at least two years in the prison; given a new name by Pharaoh;¹ God-honoring (Gen. 41:16, 51:52); a prophet (Gen. 41:38,39; 50:25; Ex 13:19²).
- **Mrs. Joseph Jacobson (Asenath).** Daughter of Potiphara, a pagan priest³; marries Joseph and thus he becomes part of the priestly class [high status]; has two sons, Manasseh [Forget] and Ephraim [Double Prosperity].
- **The butler.** Cup-bearer; wine-taster; a means of preventing the king from being poisoned, by having the butler taste everything before the king ate or drank of it. Cf. Nehemiah's position (Neh. 2:1).
- **The baker.** Baker, perhaps chef or cook, preparer of desserts, candy, or the like.⁴
- **The Pharaoh.** Supreme ruler or king of Egypt.
- **God.** Blessed Joseph with the interpretation of dreams.

4. The king's chief servants jailed. (40:1-4)

- They had probably been accused of attempting to take away the king's life, one by poisoning his drink, the other by poisoning his bread or confectioneries.⁵

5. Interpretations belong to God (40:8; cf. 41:16)



▶▶ • "... partly to observe the remarkable steps in Providence, though secret, towards Joseph's advancement in Pharaoh's court."⁶

- "... may imply a critique of divination practices prominent in the ancient world. The contrast between Joseph, with his God-given talent for dream interpretation, and the bankruptcy of the Egyptian magicians is more pronounced in chapter 41."⁷
- "... expresses his great modesty, that he did not usurp such skill and wisdom to himself, declaring that he had no such ... abilities in and of himself. ... What he had was a Gift of God, and wholly depended upon His influence, and the Revelation He was pleased to make to him of such things. ..."⁸

6. Magicians and wise men [sages] (41:8)

- These were "... common in the palaces of ancient rulers. Their job description included studying sacred arts and sciences, reading the stars, interpreting dreams, predicting the future, and performing magic. These men had power but their power was satanic."⁹

7. Joseph was "... brought hastily from the dungeon" (41:14).

- "The Hebrew word for *dungeon* is the same as that for the 'pit' into which Joseph's brothers threw him in Gen. 27:20 ff."¹⁰
- "For the fourth time, Joseph's clothes are changed (cf. 37:3, 23; 39:12), this time ... as a sign of elevation."¹¹
- "He had no warning that he would be suddenly pulled from prison and questioned by the king. Yet Joseph was ready for almost anything because of his right relationship with God."¹²

8. A famine. (41:27ff.)

- "Famine was a catastrophe in ancient times, just as it still is in many parts of the world today. Almost perfect conditions were needed to produce good crops because there were no chemical fertilizers or pesticides. Any variances in rainfall or insect activity could cause crop failure and great hunger because the people relied almost exclusively on their own crops for food. Lack of storage, refrigeration, or transportation turned a moderate famine into a desperate situation. The famine Joseph prepared for was severe. Without God's

¹ Zaphnath-paaneah, is probably the Egyptian *Zaf-nti-pa-ankh*, 'nourisher of the living one,' i.e., of the Pharaoh. [*On-Line Bible*]

² Ex. 13:19 ... He had said, "God will surely come to your aid, and then you must carry my bones up with you from this place."

³ "A prominent Egyptian official." *Life Application Bible*, page 76.

⁴ "... one of each who was over the rest (*chief*, see vs. 2); and as their business was to see that those under them did their work well. When they were faulty, the principal officers were answerable ... wherefore, if in this case they had not been guilty of any thing criminal themselves personally, yet they might have neglected to look after those that were under them, and so were culpable, and drew upon them the wrath ... of their ... sovereign." [*On-Line Bible*].

⁵ *On-Line Bible*.

⁶ *On-Line Bible*.

⁷ *The Jewish Study Bible*, page 80.

⁸ *On-Line Bible*.

⁹ *Life Application Bible*, page 74.

¹⁰ *The Jewish Study Bible*, page 81.

¹¹ *The Jewish Study Bible*, page 81.

¹² *Life Application Bible*, page 75.

intervention the Egyptian nation would have crumbled."¹³

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**QUESTIONS TO USE IN GROUP¹⁴
OR INDIVIDUAL STUDY**

Passage: Genesis 40-41

LAUNCHING

1. "Wha

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UNDERSTANDING Genesis 40-41

1. Read

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MUSING on Genesis 40-41

1. Hum

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FURTHER MUSING (on your own)

- **Ponder this:** "Joseph rose quickly to the top, from prison walls to Pharaoh's palace. His training for this important position involved being first a slave and then a prisoner. In each situation he learned the importance of serving God and others. Whatever your situation, no matter how undesirable, consider it part of your training program for serving God."¹⁵

Have feedback? Tell Dan at: NananDrDan@aol.com

¹³*Life Application Bible*, page 76.

¹⁴The leader duplicates page 2 for easier application by group members, passing out pencils to those who need them.

¹⁵*Life Application Bible*, page 75.

