



If we doubted it before we are now being told that Joseph really does have a real relationship with God. He trusts God and acts accordingly.

He also takes an opportunity that is presented to him.

*Be wise in the way you act towards outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Colossians 4:5*

The two dreams were similar but the interpretations quite different.



### Read Genesis 40:18-23

**What did the dreams mean? - notice the symbolic interpretation.**

**Why was the baker keen to have his dream interpreted?** v16

These were prophetic dreams they foretold the future

*Remember the former things, those of long ago; I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me. I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say: My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please. Isaiah 46:9-10*



**How were the dreams fulfilled?**

**For what other purposes might God send a dream?**



<b>Matthew 2:12</b>	Warning	Joseph about Herod
<b>Acts 16:9</b>	Guidance	Paul to go to Macedonia
<b>Genesis 28:12</b>	Encouragement	Jacobs ladder
<b>Judges 7:13</b>	Conformation	Gideon loaf of bread
<b>1 Kings 3:5</b>	Communication	Solomon asks for wisdom
<b>Joel 2:28</b>	Inspiration	Holy Spirit.



**Is there a difference between a dream and a vision?**

**Do you have to be asleep to dream?**

**How are you going to go about interpreting a dream?**

When God does speak through a dream or a vision, often the meaning is far from clear and we must be careful we do not put our own interpretation on it.

**What effect must interpreting these dreams have had on Joseph?**

He must have thought of his own unfulfilled dreams. Will they ever come true?



**What request does Joseph make of the cup-bearer?**

**What did the cup-bearer do?** v23

You might put 'forgot' here in inverted commas. He probably 'forgot' because it was politically expedient to do so.



Joseph thought this dream was going to be his deliverance from prison. Often we think we can see how God is going to answer a prayer, we are usually wrong! But Joseph was right that this was no coincidence. God planned to use it in a way Joseph never even dreamt about.

The Bible says we must be faithful in small things if God is to use us in big things.

**How did that apply to Joseph?**

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## Joseph II - The Dream vs The Empire



**In Prison**

**Read Genesis 39:20-23**

The roller coaster of Joseph's life and call continues. Joseph is at the wrong end of a crime that calls out to God for justice. All the more so since he had been so careful. This was a truly unjust situation.



In prison he has found favour with the prison warden. He is still a prisoner but makes him responsible to run the prison. This promotion is more remarkable than the first. Joseph must have been a remarkable man.



Now at this point, bible scholars smell a rat. Prisons did not exist in the Ancient Near East as a punishment. If you read the law codes of the bible, prison is never given as a sentence. This is because they are expensive, risky and labour intensive. Prison only existed as a holding cell until guilt or punishment was decided. If you read on in this passage this is exactly how this prison is described. Added to this, while adultery in our society is not even illegal, in the Ancient Near East it was very serious, in fact right up there with murder. The adultery that is described in this passage is the worst-case scenario. No one expects Joseph to even make it to prison let alone stay there for a couple of years, everyone in the know, expects Joseph to be very dead very quickly. Not only is the crime he is accused of really serious, but he is also a major embarrassment of Potiphar who has the power to summarily execute him. The bible tells us that he burned with anger but does not say who this anger was aimed at.

**So why is Joseph not executed?**

The obvious answer is that the story can't end here. God is protecting Joseph and moulding circumstances to achieve the end He wants. But some of us suspect that Potiphar had a pretty good idea about what had happened. Potiphar likes Joseph and is protecting him. Even if Potiphar suspects something Joseph would have to go to jail to save face. Perhaps there is a hidden message here, Potiphar is telling the palace that he knows what is going on.

Both in the success of Potiphar's house and the failure of the jail, the scripture tells us that the Lord was with Joseph and prospered him, 39:2; 23. (Hebrew same word for prosper/succeed = מצליח matzleah) To succeed is the flip side of God's blessing. God was not there in the good times and gone in the bad, He was there the whole way through.




**What is going to cause you to succeed?**

Joseph is patient, faithful, hard working and has a good attitude. He puts God at the centre of what he does. It is just possible that the same things might work for us.



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 This phrase at the beginning and the end of the passage forms what is called an inclusio. Inclusions are used to tell us what is important in a passage. Here is the roller-coaster of Joseph's life. God's favour is a determinant fixture. We are being told that whatever situation Joseph finds himself in, he is able to succeed.

**Is this true of us?**

**What did the warden do?**

The jailer has the same reaction to Joseph as Potiphar has. This forms another part of the inclusio. We are also being told about Joseph's integrity and reliability



**Do you think God uses bad times?**

**Do you think we grow more when times are hard?**

Imagine for a moment that you are sitting in an Egyptian prison cell, being punished for what you did not do.

**What possible reactions are there to being in prison?**

**Where do they lead?**



**How would you react?**

**How would you feel?**

**What would you do?**

**How did Joseph react?**

**What traits do we see in Joseph?**



The passage does not tell us in detail. But there are several things that we can conclude from it: Joseph kept his faith in God. He made the best of the situation he was in. He did not wallow in self-pity. There is no hint of bitterness about him instead he makes the best of a bad lot. He does not just mark time waiting to be released so he can get on with being called. He was active where he was. He served God where he was.

Consequently, we read: *the LORD was with him; he showed him kindness and granted him favour in the eyes of the prison warden. Genesis 39:21*



**How has Joseph been tested so far in this passage?**

**What is going to happen if Joseph responds badly to this test?**

This time in prison was the key phase in Joseph's life. He stood at a crossroads. This was 'make or break' for the promises God had given him. How he reacted now would determine his future. The fulfilment of the dreams hangs on his actions.



**Does God still test us?**

**Do we always recognise the tests?**

Did you notice in both places people were watching Joseph and what he did?



There is a persistent undercurrent among Christians that says:

If I was... or if I wasn't... then I could serve the Lord.

Joseph tells us that we serve the Lord where and as we are. Joseph even prospered in prison.



**What kind of prisons might we find ourselves in?**

**How do we prosper in prison?**

There are different kinds of prisons. We need to remind ourselves that in Joseph's life the road to the palace ran through the prison. Many of the 'prisons' we find ourselves in are of our own creation, our disobedience, our unforgiveness and the enemy's tricks and deceptions which we fall for. God wants us free from these. Other 'prisons' are things we cannot avoid, but we can prosper in.



*We have escaped like a bird out of the fowler's snare; the snare has been broken, and we have escaped. Psalm 124:7*

You get the distinct impression that Joseph was free even in prison.

**What do you think God was achieving in Joseph's life through these years?**



**Read Genesis 40:1-8**

**What happens next?**

The passage says 'some time later'. It is not possible to say how long Joseph was a slave in Potiphar's house and how long he was in prison. We do know that these two episodes together covered 13 years. He was 17 when he was put in the pit and 30 when he is set free.



It is widely believed that behind the word 'offended' is the possibility that there had been an assassination attempt on Pharaoh's life. The cupbearer and the baker are the two prime suspects. Both are put in prison until their guilt can be assessed. We assume that the "Captain of the guard" mentioned in verse 3 is Potiphar, cf Genesis 39:1. That Joseph is made responsible for the care of such important prisoners tells us his status.

The Egyptians were into dreams in a big way. We know this from their existing literature. They believed dreams told the future. We also know dreams had a social function in Egypt, i.e. you sat around and had your dream interpreted among your family and friends. It was an occasion.



**Do all dreams have meanings?**

**What does the teacher attribute dreams to?** Ecclesiastes 5:3

*For God does speak - now one way, now another - though a person may not perceive it. In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falls on men as they slumber in their beds, Job 33:14-15*



There are many times recorded in Scripture where God spoke through a dream, Jacob and his ladder, Gideon and the loaf of bread, in the New Testament, An Angel spoke to Joseph twice in a dream. God also specifically says He will speak through dreams; Numbers 12:6, Acts 2:17

**How do you recognise a dream that comes from God?**



**Read Genesis 40:9-17**

**What were the two dreams?**

**What elements are the same in both dreams?**

**Are they difficult dreams to interpret?**

*When Joseph came to them the next morning, he saw that they were dejected. So he asked Pharaoh's officials who were in custody with him in his master's house, 'Why do you look so sad today?' Genesis 40:6-7*

This is one of the bible's great one-liners. "Why do you think we are downcast? We are in prison and we could be put to death at any moment. Why are you not downcast?"



It is likely that the reason they were downcast on this particular day is not that the situation had caught up on them, or that they considered the dreams ominous. It is probably that the dreams could not be interpreted and therefore would be voided. (And yes they are upset because interpretation was a social event, which reminds them of their predicament.)



**What does Joseph mean by 'do not interpretations belong to God?'**

**When Joseph says this, what claim is he making?**

**What risks is he taking?**

**Why is he so bold?**