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GENESIS 40/41

X111. Yahweh exalts Joseph in Egypt and the rest of the world would know it (Gen. 41).

A. Pharaoh's dreams require an interpreter, extraordinaire. Dreams were never taken lightly by people of Ancient Near East. They saw dreams as a means of communicating with gods and those who have passed on to the next life. Dreams for them is the bridge to the nether world.

1. Since the incident regarding the cupbearer and the baker, two years have Passed. Now, Pharaoh has two dreams also.

a. Back home in the land of the Hebrews when Joseph was a boy he had **two dreams** also.

b. While he was in Potiphar's prison he interpreted **two dreams** for two of Pharaoh's servants.

c. Pharaoh is overcome by **two dreams** he had in the night and he is troubled by both dreams.

a. There is one other pagan king who had a visual dream like Pharaoh and his dream had to be interpreted by a captive belonging to the God of Israel - Daniel in the Babylonian captivity (Dan. 2).

(1). In both situations, the dreams elude the wise men and magicians of Egypt and Babylon. The symbols of the fat and lean cow prove impossible to interpret.

(2). Nothing is too impossible for the God of Israel.

(3). Where Pharaoh's wise men and magician fail to help their king, Joseph will come out as gold. Divine radiance shines through him. Finally, God opens the door that has been closed on Joseph for these many years.

b. The cupbearer remembers Joseph, tells Pharaoh of his and the baker's situation while they were in the house prison and how both of them became the fulfillment of this man's interpretations of their dreams. One must not overlook the courtly language of the servant when addressing Pharaoh king of Egypt. The cupbearer deliberately uses the third person singular instead of **you, me, us** verbiages when he speaks to Pharaoh. But when speaking of his encounter with Joseph the language changes - "we told him and he told us." This would be true for Egyptians in the presence of their king since the Pharaohs were looked upon as gods.

c. There is urgency in getting Joseph to stand before the most powerful man in all the world. The ritual of courtly appearance must be followed however:

(1). In Ancient Near East cultic law regarding shaving and a change of clothes were required before one could enter the presence of a god.

(2). When Yahweh called on Israel to meet Him at the foothill of Mount Sinai, Israel was to wash themselves and change their clothes before they come up to God (Exo. 19:10, 14; Lev. 14:8-11).

(3). Semites would rather keep their beard; Egyptians wear a clean-shave.

(4). Joseph, to have an audience with Pharaoh, was rush-groomed for the head of Egypt.

d. Again the use of the courtly language is to be adopted by Joseph; he speaks to Pharaoh in the third person, "It is not I who will... for **the Pharaoh**, God will." While Pharaoh addresses Joseph in the second person, "I heard **you** can interpret dreams." Joseph reply, "apart from God, one will not be answered."

1. The symbols of the dreams - grain and livestock - are representative of what Egypt is known for.

a. **The Psychological effect the dream has on Pharaoh:**

(1). Because of Egypt's abundance with these items, they were called the "**breadbasket for the rest of the world**." Even Abraham fled to Egypt when he experienced famine in the land of his sojourning. Pharaoh had to be bothered because if what he thinks he saw in his dreams are true, then Egypt and the rest of the world need to be afraid.

(2). The Nile depicts life and prosperity, but what came from the Nile are most disturbing.

(a). Seven fat-fleshed cows... but these were eaten by the lean-fleshed, but the lean-flesh did not grow any bigger (this is cannibalism of the worst kind).

(b). Seven lush ears of grain grew on a single stalk, but seven ears of grain shriveled by the east wind sprouted behind them swallow up the seven fat and full ears.

(c). Each of the seven represents a full cycle of event - seven is regarded as a sacred number; seven also depicts the fate of a situation.

(ii). By the next morning the king felt like someone who has been thrust through, impaled (the Hebrew word is **pa'am**), with a sword. The dream caused him great distress.

(d). Because Pharaoh saw the dream twice, then it is from God, and it is certain (v. 32).

(e). Pharaoh cannot divorce himself from these two dreams, "**I have never seen anything like this in all of Egypt,**" he summons his wise men to tell him the interpretation.

1. God interprets dreams.

a. The dreams are one - they mean the same things. It is repeated, the duplicity of the dream is to confirm the certainty of it. Joseph in Pharaoh eyes is both an:

(1). Oneiromancer, from the Greek **Oneiros**, meaning "a dream." This refers to a person who gets divination by means of dreams (Gen. 41:38-

39).

(2). Prophet - in his interpretation he makes known the future.

(3). A Hebrew whose wisdom, **divine wisdom**, impresses Pharaoh and the entire court.

1. God's Spirit that hovers over the watery mass of Genesis 1:2 is residing in Joseph (Gen. 41:38).

a. This takes us to another time in the life of another Hebrew, Daniel, of whom Belshazzar says, "I have heard of you, that the Spirit of God is in you" (Dan. 5:13-16).

b. The king's palace is going to be Joseph's third house since he came to Egypt.

(1). First, he lived in Potiphar's house

(2). From there he was placed in the prison house adjoined to Potiphar's house.

(3). He is going to take up residence in Pharaoh's house.

B. Joseph becomes the second most powerful man in the land of Egypt.

1. Pharaoh summons Joseph to the following tasks:

a. "You shall be ruler over my kingdom and over my house.

(1). Because of what the king of Egypt sees in Joseph, a God who is more powerful than all the gods of Egypt, may that God - the God of the Hebrew - continue to guide you as you guide all of Egypt Joseph will be head over Pharaoh's personal/immediate family.

(2). A ring on Joseph's finger does not speak only of his investiture, but a transferring of power or the giving of freedom to determine the future of Egypt as far as surviving is concerned.

(3). The ride in the king's chariot is a sign for the people to show homage to the new ruler: "Attention, make way for..."

(4). No activity will be carried out in all the land without an approval coming first from Joseph.

(5). A new name is conferred upon Joseph - Zaphenath - paneah - probably more of a title than an actual replacing of the name "Joseph" (see 41:55 Where Pharaoh makes reference to "Joseph" by name and not "Zaphenath" as the source for food.

(6). Pharaoh chooses a bride for Joseph. Or better yet, this might be a personal reward from the king of Egypt to Joseph. Asenath by name connotes one who belongs to the goddess Neith.