

Cindy Cottone

The Bible Corner



Joseph the dreamer

"I am most displeased!" Pharaoh's voice echoed throughout the palace. "This will certainly never do! I will permit only the finest for my guests!"

All of the palace servants busied themselves with the tasks at hand and hoped for the best. Pharaoh had come to inspect the preparations for this evening's celebration and had not found the array of food and drink to his liking. But, despite these outbursts, he was the king of Egypt, after all, and not to be trifled with. The only possible answer to his whims of temper was silence. A servant's very life hung in the balance at such times, and the wrong words would be enough cause for swift and terrible punishment.

The chief baker and the chief wine taster waited anxiously for Pharaoh's angry words to subside. They were both the king's most trusted servants, but, during these fits, they, too, had cause for concern.

"It's so hard to understand this king," complained the wine taster. "The very wine he dislikes today is the same one that was the subject of royal praise at his last party."

"I know," the baker answered grimly. "But, like it or not, as king of Egypt, his decisions are law."

And so it came as no surprise to any of the other servants when Pharaoh suddenly ordered, "Throw the chief baker and the chief wine taster into prison!"

Once in prison, Potiphar, the captain of Pharaoh's guard, appointed a Hebrew slave, Joseph, to wait on them. Joseph was himself a victim of unfortunate circumstances. A short time before, he had been in charge of all of the affairs of Potiphar's own household until Potiphar's wife had told a lie about

Joseph. Although Joseph had done nothing wrong, he, too, was now a prisoner in this very jail. Despite this latest misfortune, Joseph continued to trust God and pray that some day he would see his family again.

One day, Joseph brought breakfast to the baker and wine taster, who seemed very downcast. "Why so sad this morning?" he inquired.

"Both of us had strange dreams last night and don't know what they mean," the baker told him.

"God has given me the power to explain dreams," Joseph replied. "Tell me your dreams and I will try to help you understand them."

The wine taster spoke first. "In my dream, I saw a vine with three branches of sweet, ripe grapes. I squeezed these grapes into Pharaoh's wine cup and gave it to him to drink. What does it mean?"

"Your dream is good news of what is going to happen to you," Joseph advised. "In three days time, you will be released from this prison and given your old job back. When you are back at the palace, tell Pharaoh that I have done nothing wrong so that I can be released, too."

Encouraged by Joseph's interpretation of the wine taster's dream, the chief baker said anxiously, "Now tell me the meaning of my dream. I dreamed I carried on my head three baskets filled with the kinds of delicious pastries that only a chief baker to the king could create," he boasted. "I walked along a road, bringing them to Pharaoh's table. But, before I got there, the birds flew down and ate all of the pastries."

Joseph hesitated for a long time and frowned visibly until the baker coaxed, "Well, tell me, what does my dream mean?"

"I am sorry to say that your dream is not good news for you," Joseph answered slowly. "Three days from now, you will be sentenced to death."

Three days later, on Pharaoh's birthday, he threw a party for all his household staff. Everyone was there, including the chief wine taster, who had been released from prison, and a new chief baker.

"More wine! Such delicious wine!" Pharaoh said happily. The chief wine taster quickly brought it. He was so glad to be waiting on the king again that he promptly forgot all about Joseph. Joseph continued to pray to God for his release and for a reunion with his family.

Early one morning two years later, Pharaoh's voice boomed throughout the palace halls. "I am not well this morning! I've had a most dreadful night's sleep indeed," he complained. "And such strange dreams! What can they ever mean?"

All of Pharaoh's servants tried to calm him, but on and on he moaned. "I must know the meaning of my dreams. Bring all of the court magicians to me! Command all of the wise men in Egypt to come to the palace at once!"

Soon all of the magicians and wise men from the entire country of Egypt were assembled before the king. But not even one of them was able to explain Pharaoh's dreams. It was only then that the chief wine taster remembered about Joseph and told the king about him. Pharaoh ordered, "Bring this young man to me immediately!"

When Joseph finally stood before Pharaoh, he said, "It is not by my own power, but through God's power that I will interpret your dreams."

So Pharaoh began to recount the strange story to Joseph: "I was standing by the bank of the Nile River, when seven fat cows came up from the river and began grazing along the banks. Suddenly, seven skinny cows came out of the river

and ate the fat ones. It was really quite upsetting to me," Pharaoh said, and all of his servants nodded in agreement.

"And then," Pharaoh continued, "if that wasn't enough for one king to bear, I had a second dream that was just as distressing as the first one. This time, there were seven plump heads of grain on one stalk. All at once, seven withered heads grew from the stalk and swallowed the plump heads. Not one of the magicians or wise men in all of Egypt can explain these dreams. Can you?"

"Yes, I can," Joseph nodded. "God is trying to tell you what will happen in Egypt, so that you can prepare for it. Both dreams mean exactly the same thing. The seven fat cows and seven plump heads of grain foretell seven years of prosperity ahead in Egypt. After these seven good years, the seven skinny cows and seven withered heads of grain mean seven years of famine."

Pharaoh listened intently and when Joseph paused, he said, "Please continue."

"Because God has shown you the same thing twice, it will surely come to pass soon. My suggestion is to appoint someone as an overseer of all of the crops. During the seven good years, the excess crops should be carefully stored. When the famine comes, this food can be used to prevent a disaster."

"Well said, well said," Pharaoh stood as he spoke. "You have given sound advice. And now I appoint you my prime minister in charge of this entire project. I alone will outrank you," Pharaoh proclaimed.

Joseph was 30 years old when the king commanded him into his service. He traveled all over Egypt and instructed the farmers about the preservation of the extra crops. He became famous throughout the entire country. God had blessed Joseph in a foreign country far from his own home.

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