

COASTAL NOTES | GENESIS 40 | JULY 26, 2026

What Faithfulness Looks Like When the Door Doesn't Open

BIG IDEA: Being Faithful in God's Waiting Room is a Long-Term Investment

INTRODUCTION

Genesis 40 finds Joseph still in prison — no door has opened, no rescue has come. Chapter 39 ended with "the LORD was with Joseph." Chapter 40 never repeats that phrase. And yet God is working. Two officials of Pharaoh — a cupbearer and a baker — offend the king and land in the same prison.

POINT 1 — SERVE OTHERS WHILE YOU WAIT (Genesis 40:1–8)

Then it came about after these things,
the **cupbearer** and the **baker of the king of Egypt** offended their lord,
the **king of Egypt**.

Pharaoh was furious with his two officials,
the **chief cupbearer** and the **chief baker**.
So he put them in confinement in the house of the **captain of the bodyguard**,
in the **jail**, the same place where **Joseph** was imprisoned.

The **captain of the bodyguard** put Joseph in charge of them,
and he took care of them;
and they were in confinement for some time.

Then the **cupbearer** and the **baker** for the **king of Egypt**,
who were confined in jail,
both had a dream the same night, each man with his own dream
and each dream with its own interpretation.

When **Joseph** came to them in the morning and **observed them**,
behold, they were dejected.

He asked Pharaoh's officials who were with him in confinement in his master's house, "Why are your faces so sad today?"

They said to **him**,

"We have had a dream and there is no one to interpret it."

Then **Joseph** said to them,

"Do not interpretations belong to God?"

Tell it to me, please."

1. Joseph was put in _____ over Pharaoh's two officials in prison.

2. Both men had a dream the _____ night.

3. Joseph noticed they were _____ and asked why.

4. "Do not _____ belong to God?"

Note: Joseph had every reason to be consumed by his own situation. Instead, he looked outward. He noticed two troubled men. He asked why. And when they needed help, his first move was not to claim ability — it was to point to God. The waiting room had not shrunk his world. It had enlarged his compassion.

POINT 2 — TELL THE TRUTH WHILE YOU WAIT (Genesis 40:9–19)

So the chief cupbearer told his dream to **Joseph**:

"In my dream, there was a vine in front of me;

and on the vine were three branches.

As it was budding, its blossoms came out,

and its clusters produced ripe grapes.

Pharaoh's cup was in my hand; so I took the grapes

and squeezed them into Pharaoh's cup, and I put the cup into Pharaoh's hand."

Then **Joseph** said to him, "This is the interpretation:

the three branches are three days;

within three more days **Pharaoh** will lift up your head and restore you to your office;

and you will put Pharaoh's cup into his hand

according to your former custom when you were his cupbearer."

"Only keep me in mind when it goes well for you,

and please do me a kindness by mentioning me to **Pharaoh**,

and get me out of this house.

For I was in fact kidnapped from the land of the Hebrews,

and even here I have done nothing that they should have put me in the dungeon."

When the chief baker saw that he had interpreted favorably,

he said to **Joseph**, "I also saw in my dream, and behold, there were

three baskets of white bread on my head;

and in the top basket there were some of all sorts of baked food for **Pharaoh**,

and the birds were eating them out of the basket on my head."

Then **Joseph** answered, "This is the interpretation:
the **three baskets are three days**;
within **three more days** **Pharaoh** will lift up your head from you
and will hang you on a tree,
and the birds will eat your flesh off you."

1. The three branches in the cupbearer's dream = _____ days.
2. Joseph asked the cupbearer to _____ him to Pharaoh and get him out.
3. "I was in fact _____ from the land of the Hebrews."
4. Joseph gave the baker a _____ sentence. Same three days. Different outcome.
5. Integrity has no _____.

Note: Joseph told the cupbearer good news. Then he named his own pain honestly — "I was kidnapped. I did nothing wrong." Then the baker heard the positive interpretation and offered his dream. And Joseph told the truth to him too, even though it cost him any chance of that relationship helping him. In the waiting room, where desperation makes liars out of people, Joseph stayed honest in every direction.

POINT 3 — FORGOTTEN BY MAN, BUT GOD NEVER FORGETS (Genesis 40:20–23)

Thus it came about on the third day,
which was Pharaoh's birthday,
that he made a feast for all his servants;
and he lifted up the head of the chief cupbearer
and the head of the chief baker among his servants.

He restored the chief cupbearer to his office,
and he put the cup into Pharaoh's hand.

But he hanged the chief baker,
just as Joseph had interpreted to them.

Yet the chief cupbearer
did not remember Joseph but forgot him.

1. The interpretations were fulfilled on Pharaoh's _____.
2. The cupbearer was _____ to his position exactly as Joseph said.

3. The chief cupbearer did not _____ Joseph, but forgot him.
4. Joseph said "_____ me" to the cupbearer — who forgot him.
5. The thief on the cross said "_____ me" to Jesus — who never does.

Note: The cupbearer forgot. Two more years passed. But God did not forget. What looked like abandonment was actually positioning. Pharaoh had not had his dream yet. The cupbearer's forgetting was not an obstacle to Joseph's story — it was the mechanism of perfect timing. The chapter that ends with, “but he forgot him” is the setup for a throne room scene that will change everything.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Joseph noticed two troubled men when he had every reason to be consumed by his own pain. Is there someone in your current waiting room you've overlooked because your own situation feels too pressing? What might it look like to ask "why do you look so sad today?"

Joseph told the baker the truth even though it cost him any chance of that relationship helping him. Is there a hard truth you've been softening or avoiding because of what it might cost you? What would it look like to tell it anyway?

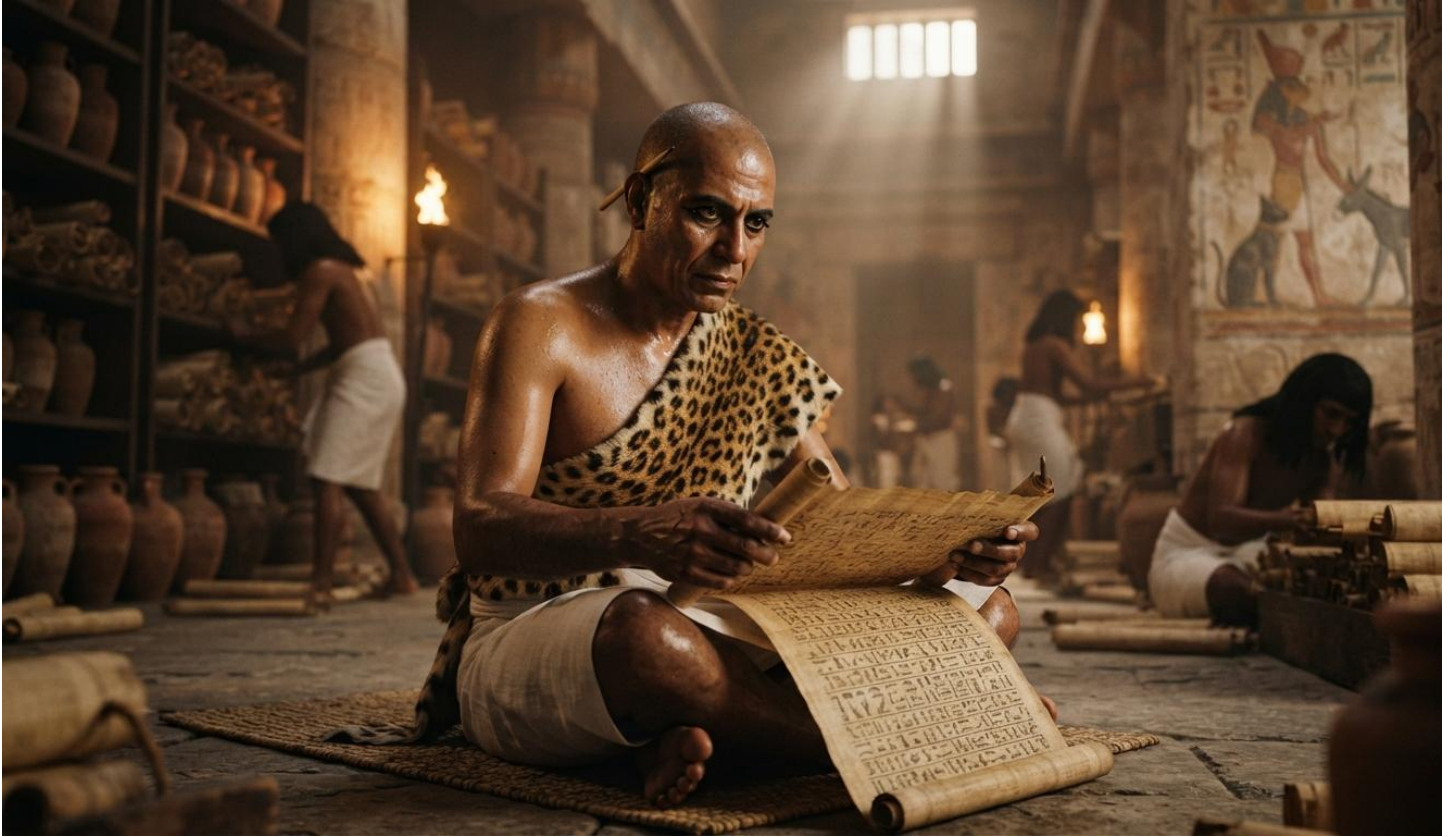
For the first time in the story, Joseph names his own pain out loud: "I was in fact kidnapped." Not with rage — honestly. Is there a pain or injustice you've been carrying silently that deserves to be named? Would you bring it honestly before God or person?

The cupbearer forgot. Have you ever made a request — to a person, or to God — and felt like it fell into silence? How did that experience shape your faith?

Jesus said to the thief on the cross "today you shall be with Me in Paradise." He didn't say "I'll try." He remembered completely and immediately. What would change for you today if you actually believed that God remembers you in the same way?

BIBLE NERDS ONLY

The Guild Joseph Never Joined: Dream Interpretation in Ancient Egypt



Egypt didn't leave dreams to guesswork. It had textbooks. The best-preserved is Papyrus Chester Beatty III — the Ramesside Dream Book — roughly 200 stock dreams listed in a fixed formula: "If a man sees himself in a dream doing this — good, it means this. Bad, it means that." 139 good omens, 83 bad ones. Catalogued. Codified. This was a profession, not folklore.

The Guild Had a Name

The men who ran it were the chief lector priests, trained in Egypt's "House of Life," part university, part scriptorium. Here's the payoff: the Hebrew word for Pharaoh's dream-readers in Genesis 41:8 — ḥarṭummîm — is a straight loanword from that Egyptian title. Same word for Pharaoh's magicians facing off with Moses in Exodus 7. Same word for Nebuchadnezzar's wise men in Daniel 1–2. Genesis isn't being vague when it says the professionals came up empty. It's naming the guild.

Cracking the Code

Their method ran on wordplay, not intuition. Dream about a cat (miw)? Good omen — sounds like the word for a large harvest (smw). Dream about eating donkey meat? Good omen — "donkey" and "great" were spelled the same way. None of it is symbolic in any obvious sense. It's a cipher. You needed years of training just to know which sound unlocked which meaning.

And Genesis 40 knows this code. The baker "carries" a basket on his head; Pharaoh will "lift" his head off him — same Hebrew root, same trick the Egyptian manuals ran constantly. The narrator is fluent in the genre.

The Line That Wrecks the System

Which is what makes verse 8 hit so hard. Joseph doesn't out-technique the guild.

- No manual.
- No training.
- No wordplay.

One sentence, and it cuts the legs out from under Egypt's entire dream-interpreting priesthood: **"Do not interpretations belong to God?"**

The insight in one line: Egypt spent centuries building a guild to crack dreams by code. Joseph **CRACKED** two of them by **REFUSING** to use one — and he was right **BOTH TIMES**.

ANSWER KEY

POINT 1 — SEE OTHERS WHILE YOU WAIT

1. Joseph was put in **CHARGE**
2. Both men had a dream the **SAME**
3. Joseph noticed they were **DEJECTED**
4. "Do not **INTERPRETATIONS**

POINT 2 — TELL THE TRUTH WHILE YOU WAIT

1. The three branches = **THREE**
2. Joseph asked the cupbearer to **MENTION**
3. "I was in fact **KIDNAPPED**
4. Joseph gave the baker a **DEATH**
5. Integrity has no **OFF-SEASON**

POINT 3 — FORGOTTEN BY MAN, BUT GOD NEVER FORGETS

1. Fulfilled on Pharaoh's **BIRTHDAY**
2. The cupbearer was **RESTORED**
3. The cupbearer did not **REMEMBER**
4. Joseph said "**REMEMBER**
5. The thief said "**REMEMBER**