

(c)Dr Russell Jay Hendel; Jun 2026

VERSES: *Gn40-23a, Gn40-23b, Gn41-12a, Gn41-12b, Gn41-12c, Gn41-12d*

BIBLICAL TEXT:

- A. (Joseph interpreted the dreams of the Kings master chef and wine butler. We cite excerpts from the dialog). *Joseph came to them in the morning and saw they were worn out*
- B (They then told him they were concerned about dreams they had; Joseph responded) *Interpretation belongs to God; tell me (they then told him their dream and Joseph interpreted them. *
- C. (Joseph Continues) *Perhaps you will remember me to Pharoh when the occasion arises, and you will please do me a favor: I will leave this prison. Because I was kidnapped from the land of the Hebrews and here also, I did no crime that they put me in the pit.*
- D. (The text continues) *But the master butler did not remember Joseph and forgot him.*
- E. (Statement of the Kings master wine butler to Pharoh who was inquiring about the interpretation of dreams). *And there with us [in prison] was a Hebrew, Kid, A Slave of the Master Chef, and we told to him [our dream] and he interpreted them, each person, according to his dream he interpreted*

NOTE: We classify this as a paragraph Rashi since Rashi asks, "paragraph questions." *What is the theme and motif behind the narrative? What values does this narrative imply?* First, we state the Rashi text with my comments and then we present a holistic explanation.

RASHI TEXT:

(Rashi on C,D) *Rashi blames the 2 years extra stay of Joseph in prison on his asking for help and states, "He should have relied on God"* [My comments on this Rashi: But there is nothing morally wrong, or even morally non-preferable if, while relying on God, you ask people for help]

(Rashi on E) The master butler was a wicked person. Rather than acknowledge the good Joseph did he insults him as much as possible calling him a kid (immature), a Hebrew (a foreigner), and a slave (someone who has no business before kings). [My comments on this Rashi:] But the master butler had been thrown into prison because of one of Pharoh's temper tantrums and was in fact exonerated. He was legitimately concerned that if he brought an immature person with slave like character before Pharoh, Pharoh would lose his temper again? Doesn't this justify his behavior? Why insult him?

SOME FURTHER JUSTIFICATION OF CALLING JOSEPH IMMATURE and SLAVE

We bring two comparisons of statements of Joseph *before* and *after* his prison stay. These comparisons show that Joseph was indeed immature and slave like and had to grow up before appearing to Pharoh.

Comparison #1:

While in prison: *"Doesn't interpretation belong to God, tell me"*

2 years later: *Without me you will get your interpretation. It is God who answers and restores peace of mind to Pharaoh/*

My comment: Notice the immaturity in prison: God gives interpretations so tell me. The emphasis is on the self. Here we see self-centered concerns

Notice the maturity two years later: *It is not from me but from God.* A deemphasis on the self.

Comparison #2:

While in prison: Perhaps you will remember me to Pharaoh when it is appropriate for you and get me out of this prison....

2 years later: (After Joseph interpreted Pharaoh's dream). Pharaoh should select a wise insightful person and appoint him over Egypt.

My comment: Joseph, in asking for help, was speaking *to* the chief butler instead of speaking *with him*. Joseph states what he wants without asking for participation on the Chief Butler's part. His request is framed as a personal favor, an act of kindness

Contrastively, 2 years later, Joseph does not tell Pharaoh to appoint him. He also does not speak about doing favors. Rather, he frames his remarks by acknowledging that it is Pharaoh's decision and appeals to the skills (wise and understanding) needed for the job. In other words, Joseph no longer lived in a world of connections and favors as he did in prison; he lived in a world of experience and skills with recognition that final decisions are not the result exclusively of logic but of the person who owns the decisions.

FINAL ANALYSIS:

- Joseph, while in prison, was both immature (self-centered), slave-like (not performing best practices of good teamwork (e.g. soliciting feedback when making requests), power-based (people did favors if they felt like it) versus skill and experienced based
- Thus, before appearing to Pharaoh, he had to *grow up*.
- Rashi appears to *blame* this on his asking the chief butler. What Rashi really is saying is *he asked him without dialoging with him for example, asking Is the dream interpretation satisfactory, allowing the Chief Butler to spontaneously offer to do Joseph a favor.* This Joseph's error is not *that* he asked but *how* he asked
- The Chief butler had every right to forget Joseph and ignore his memories when they popped up since he was concerned about his safety. But Rashi notices that *besides* calling Joseph *immature* and *slave like* he also called him *a Hebrew, a foreigner*. Rashi correctly reads into this that the Chief Butler was prejudiced and biased against Joseph and hence interprets all his characterization (*immature* and *slave like*) as pejorative.

FURTHER COMMENTS

Gn40-23a,b states

- A) The Master Butler did not remember Joseph
- B) He forgot him (every time the memory came back)

Rashi literally says: Did not remember Joseph: *That day*; He forgot him: *After a while*.
But consistent with other Rashi comments, I interpret B, as the habitual as indicated in the translation. In other words, now and then, Joseph's image popped up in his mind and he forgot him.
