

# Genesis 40:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And they dreamed a dream both of them, each man his dream in one night, each man according to the interpretation of his dream, the butler and the baker of the king of Egypt, which were bound in the prison.

## Analysis

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**And they dreamed a dream both of them, each man his dream in one night, each man according to the in...** This passage is part of the Joseph narrative, a masterfully crafted account demonstrating God's sovereign providence working through human choices and circumstances to accomplish His redemptive purposes. The Joseph cycle shows how God transforms evil intentions into instruments of salvation.

Central themes include divine providence orchestrating events toward redemptive ends, the testing and refinement of character through suffering and success, forgiveness overcoming betrayal and injustice, and the preservation of God's covenant people through famine. Joseph's rise from slavery to second-in-command of Egypt illustrates how God exalts the humble and uses seeming disasters for ultimate good.

Theologically, these chapters reveal:

1. God's meticulous sovereignty over all events, even evil human actions
2. suffering as preparation for future service rather than punishment
3. forgiveness as reflecting divine character and enabling reconciliation
4. God's covenant faithfulness across generations ensuring the survival and blessing of His people

5. how present suffering gains meaning when viewed from the perspective of God's larger purposes.

Joseph's words "you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good" (50:20) epitomize biblical theodicy and providence.

## Historical Context

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The patriarchal narratives (Genesis 12-50) reflect the cultural, social, and legal customs of the ancient Near East during the Middle Bronze Age (2000-1500 BCE). Archaeological discoveries including the Mari tablets, Nuzi tablets, and Egyptian records confirm many details: nomadic pastoralism, covenant-making ceremonies, marriage customs, property laws, and international travel patterns described in Genesis.

The cultural practices reflected include: treaty/covenant forms (Genesis 15), bride-price customs (Genesis 24, 29), inheritance laws favoring firstborn sons (Genesis 25, 27), adoption practices (Genesis 15, 30), levirate-type arrangements (Genesis 38), and Egyptian administrative systems (Genesis 41, 47). These parallels confirm Genesis's historical reliability while showing how God worked within ancient cultural frameworks to accomplish His purposes.

For later Israelites, these narratives established their identity as Abraham's descendants, explained their claim to Canaan, justified their possession of Joseph's bones (Exodus 13:19), and provided models of faith despite imperfection. The patriarchs' failures and God's faithfulness encouraged Israel that covenant relationship depended on God's grace rather than human merit. The movement from Mesopotamia to Canaan to Egypt set the stage for the Exodus and conquest narratives.

## Related Passages

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**Ephesians 2:8** — Salvation by grace through faith

**John 3:16** — God's love and salvation

**1 Corinthians 13:4** — Characteristics of love

**1 John 4:8** — God is love

## Study Questions

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1. What theological truths about Dreams in Prison emerge from this passage?
2. How does this passage challenge modern cultural assumptions about identity, purpose, or morality?
3. How does this verse fit into the broader biblical story culminating in Christ?

## Interlinear Text

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אַךְ	דְּבָרִים	בְּלִילָה	סְלִימָן	וְאַיִשְׁ	שְׁנִיתָה	מִן	סְלִימָן	וְאַיִשְׁ	יְמִלְמָדָו
<b>And they dreamed</b>	<b>a dream</b>	<b>both of them</b>		H582	<b>a dream</b>		<b>night</b>		<b>in one</b>
H2492	H2472	H8147			H2472		H3915		H259
אַיִשְׁ	וְאַיִשְׁ	כְּפֹתְרָה	סְלִימָן	וְאַיִשְׁ	הַמְּשִׁקָּה	סְלִימָן	וְאַיִשְׁ	וְקָאָפָה	הַבָּקָרָה
H582	according to the interpretation	H6623		H2472	H4945			and the baker	H644
H4428									
אַשְׁר	לְמִן	רַמְצָבָה	אַשְׁר	יְמִנְצָבָה	אַסְוָרִים	יְמִנְצָבָה	בְּבֵית		
H834	of the king	H4714	H834	H631	which were bound	in the prison	H1004		
בְּסֶהָרָה									
H5470									

## Additional Cross-References

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**Genesis 41:11** (Parallel theme): And we dreamed a dream in one night, I and he; we dreamed each man according to the interpretation of his dream.