

Some sayings you have that speak of people like me: Born with a silver spoon in my mouth. Born on third base and thought I'd hit a triple. Privileged bloodline, or as they say, trust fund baby. That was me. Born wealthy. Favorite son of a rich daddy. I had everything. Except one thing. Humility. God would grant me that gift through mistreatment by my family and the long years as a slave and prisoner that followed.

My first big break came when my brothers threw me into an empty well. My second big break came when, instead of killing me, they sold me as a slave to a caravan of foreign traders. My lasting memory of my brothers is watching them eat lunch while I was hauled off in copper chains.

I guess that makes them sound like a bad bunch of guys. But truth be told, they'd endured nearly twenty years of me as the insufferable, favored child of our father. I made their lives unbearable, lording my privileges over them, tattling on them, my special clothes. I even told them of my dreams where they would someday bow down to me. Of course, those dreams were to come true, but did I need to throw that in their faces?

So, there I was at the bottom of the well. I prayed to God for two things... that I would remain faithful to him, and that I would be the method by which God would fulfill his promises to my forefathers... Abraham, Isaac, and Israel. God granted me those prayers, but not necessarily in the way I meant them, or with the timing I hoped for. This is something you may have experienced in your own life.

God did allow me to remain faithful to him by unexpectedly giving me some incredibly useful spiritual gifts, and by placing me in some unique situations. The first promise that God fulfilled through me was not one that came to mind at the bottom of the well. One of God's first promises to Abraham was that for four hundred years his descendants would be strangers in a land in which they would be mistreated and enslaved. At the end of that time, they would come out of that country with great possessions.<sup>1</sup> I was the first step in the fulfillment of that promise.

What I prayed for at the bottom of the well was God's promise to my forefathers that their descendants would become a great nation. In my prayer, I meant for my descendants to be a

<sup>1</sup> Genesis 15:13-14

great nation. Instead, God meant for that promise to be fulfilled primarily through my brother, Judah. My important role was to protect Judah and make his family prosperous.

Walking a couple of hundred miles in copper chains with little food and water was the jump start I needed to gain some needed humility and trust in God. I gained more humility in Egypt. They examined me like a donkey in the public square. Fortunately, Potiphar, the captain of the guard for Pharaoh, purchased me. Funny, thinking your new owner is a lucky break, but that's what happens when you've been cut down to size.

No matter what the assignment, God gave me great favor to be successful. Potiphar soon noticed that and chose me to be his personal attendant. He put me in charge of his household and entrusted everything he owned to me. The more Potiphar entrusted to me, the more God blessed him. With me in charge, Potiphar only concerned himself with what was on the menu for his next meal.

With all due humility, I was well-built and handsome. Servant girls vied for my attention, but I had no interest in them. Unfortunately, my master's wife also vied for my attention. She bluntly invited me to her bed... day after day. Not only did I refuse, I refused to even be alone with her.

One day, I was in the house to do my work, none of the other servants were inside, and she accosted me when I wasn't looking. She grabbed my coat and demanded I take her to bed. I ran out of the house, leaving my coat behind. I guess that was the last straw for her. As they say, Hell has no fury as a woman scorned.

She called the servants in to her room, showed them my coat, accused me of trying to rape her. Later, she told Potiphar the same story. He was furious and put me in prison where the king's prisoners were held. Down on my luck... is that the phrase?

Once again, the Lord gave me great favor, I eventually became the warden's attendant in charge of the jail. Two of the king's prisoners were his cupbearer and the baker. They both had a dream. Rather interesting dream, both of them, and they were anxious to have them interpreted. I said that God had the power to interpret dreams. When those words came out of my mouth, I may not have fully realized how my whole world would change. But from then on, I would forever give credit to God instead of making myself the center of attention!

I listened to their dreams, and interpreted them accurately. I asked the cupbearer that when he was released from prison and restored to his position as the dream predicted, to please remember me to Pharaoh. I did not ask the baker for anything because his dream portended that he would soon die. He did die, and the cupbearer was released... and promptly forgot his obligation to me. Back to square one.

Two years later, Pharaoh had two troubling dreams, to put it mildly. None of the wise men or magicians could interpret the dreams. Pharaoh was getting angry, a disaster in the making,

when the cupbearer finally remembered me. Pharaoh called for me to be brought from the dungeon... after I was shaved and bathed.

Pharaoh said that he heard I had the ability to interpret dreams. Just as I told the baker and cupbearer, I said, "I cannot but God can, and will!" When you read that verse in the Bible, it sounds almost cutesy. However, if I made that claim and it didn't happen, I would have been executed, and who knows how God would have fulfilled his promises to Abraham.

Pharaoh proceeded to tell me two dreams. In the first, he is standing by the Nile River when seven fat cows come out of the river and graze. After them, seven ugly and skinny cows come out and eat the fat cows, but they remain ugly and skinny. In the second dream, Pharaoh sees seven perfect heads of grain on one stalk. After them, seven thin and withered heads sprouted and ate the first seven perfect heads.

Through me, God revealed to Pharaoh that the two dreams meant the same thing. God was about to provide seven years of excellent harvest, followed by seven years of severe famine that will overcome the first seven years. The message was provided in two dreams to emphasize that God would do it, and do it soon.

Before Pharaoh could respond, I continued with wise advice from God. I advised him to find a wise and discerning man to take charge of the land, and commissioners under him. They should take 20% of the harvest in the first seven years, and store it up in designated cities. That grain was to be used to sustain the country in the following seven years.

It was risky giving Pharaoh that advice, because it insinuated that he wasn't capable of executing that plan himself. He was humble enough to realize he was not the right person. Looking around the room, he realized that I was right person—the most wise and discerning person in the room because God endowed me with those characteristics.

Pharaoh put me in charge of the plan. I was second only to him in the whole country. He gave me his ring, robes of fine linen, a gold chain, and rode with me in a chariot to impart that power in front of the people. He gave me a wife who was the daughter of, the priest. I go from being in the dankest dungeon to the second most powerful person in Egypt... in the world. And I'm only 30. I knew it was not through my own power, but from God's grace. I had finally learned the humility that eluded me in my childhood.

For the next seven years, I executed the plan just as God told me. I stored up grain in all of the cities of Egypt. We stored so much that we could not keep track of it all, it was like the sand of the sea. It wasn't all work and no play during this time though. My wife and I had two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. Those names reminded me of my family.

My family. Not a day went by that I didn't think of my family back in Canaan. I thought of my father, and how he loved me so much. I thought of the robe he gave me, it was magnificent. It would pale in comparison to any one of my every day robes in Egypt. It meant so much

because, I thought of my brothers. Some days, I wanted revenge for what they did to me. Other days I wanted to reward them for what they did. Some days, I just wanted to be with them and just be... brothers.

Every day, every single day, I thought of the promises God had made to my forefathers. I had two sons, would they become great nations? I had fabulous wealth and armies at my disposal. Should I conquer Canaan and give it to my father and brothers? That was certainly within my power.

Every day, I asked God to reveal to me what I should do to remain faithful to him. With my power, there were so many possibilities. But no big revelations came to me. No big dreams. Just this message – keep doing what you are supposed to do. Okay.

The good times flew by, and then the famine hit. Not only in Egypt but in many other countries. As the people of Egypt began to get hungry, they came to me, and I sold them grain. When people from other countries came, I sold them grain, too, but at a much higher price. People over the world learned— you can't eat silver and gold.

By the time the famine was over, Pharaoh owned the vast majority of everything in Egypt. Through God's guidance and my diligence, he prospered greatly. He wanted to reward me, and I knew just how he could do it.