**The Dreams in Joseph's Story**

Dreams play a major role in Joseph's story. There are three pairs of dreams:

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_dreams,
2. the dreams of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_,
3. and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ dreams.

In each pair, the links between the two dreams are very strong.

Joseph's story can be seen as a "dream and its meaning" the two Joseph dreams are:

1. ­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

As the narrative unfolds – the dreams are **realized** when,

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

One can also see each of the three pairs of dreams as a turning-point that drives the narrative forward.

1. Joseph’s dreams (result in this happening, once interpreted): \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. The ministers' dreams (result in this happening, once interpreted): \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. Pharaoh's dreams allow Joseph the opportunity to, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

The dreamers in Joseph's story experience dreams that are highly relevant to their own future:

1. Joseph's dreams represent this future: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. the ministers have dreams about their immediate fate: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. and Pharaoh, who, as ruler, identifies himself with both his people and his land, has a dream about \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

***The dream as a divine message***

In Joseph's story, we encounter the concept that a dream is a divine message that reveals to us, through various allusions, what will happen to us in the future. This point is presented in the clearest possible manner through the explicit explanation Joseph gives to Pharaoh:

"God's intentions have been conveyed to Pharaoh" (Genesis 41: 25).

This element can be seen throughout the narrative. As we can see from the reactions of both the dreamers and those who hear the dreams, dreams are not taken lightly in Joseph's story. Joseph relates every detail of his dreams and calls upon his brothers and his father to note their future significance. The brothers and Jacob relate in two ways to Joseph's dream:

1. First,\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. Later,\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Not only do the dreams reveal the future, they sometimes have an impact on future events. Joseph's dreams and Pharaoh's dreams are warnings of what will happen in the future. Because of his dreams, Joseph's brothers try to prevent their realization; at first,

1. the brothers \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. but, they decide to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

By means of Joseph's interpretation, Pharaoh understands that his dreams were warnings; furthermore, Pharaoh accepts Joseph's counsel that an individual be appointed to gather produce for the years of famine to come. The divine message revealed in Pharaoh's dreams is not direct, but is rather a camouflaged communication that is concealed within a strange dream narrative requiring a special interpretation.

With regard to the special skills needed to interpret dreams, various approaches are offered in Joseph's dreams. His brothers and his father interpret his dreams by themselves, in a simple and natural manner. From their immediate reaction, it is clear that, according to Joseph's brothers and Jacob, Joseph's dreams have a clear message. Furthermore, Jacob and his other sons believe that this message can be easily understood and that no special skills are required to decode it. In contrast with Joseph's dreams, Pharaoh's imprisoned ministers do not regard that their dreams contain an easily understandable message; the two individuals are worried and confused, as can be sensed in their statement, "we have each had a dream, but we do not know what it means" (Gen. 40:8). Thus, the ministers seek an individual capable of interpreting their dreams. In Pharaoh's view, dream interpretation requires special skills, and he therefore calls upon his mystics and counselors to provide him with answers (Gen. 41:8).

**Joseph has a different view**: the ability to interpret dreams comes from \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. This difference in viewpoint between the ministers, Pharaoh and Joseph is expressed in the following dialogues:

**The ministers**: We have each had a dream, but we do not know what it means.

Joseph: Only God can provide the answers. Please tell your dreams to me (Gen. 40:8).

**Pharaoh**: I have had a dream, but I do not know what it means. But I have heard that, once you hear a dream, you can interpret it (Gen. 41:15).

**Joseph:** You need not rely on my interpretation. God Himself will answer your majesty (Gen. 41:16).

If we see dreams as riddles offered to us by God, it is natural to assume that the only truly accurate interpretation of a dream will be one provided by God.

Thus, according to what we read in his story, Joseph, who receives his answers directly from God, is the ideal dream interpreter.

***Joseph, the Master of Dreams***

Dreams have a critical impact on the course of Joseph's life, and he becomes increasingly involved with dreams as the narrative unfolds. At first, he himself is a dreamer, then he interprets the dreams of others, and, finally, he provides counsel on the basis of the dreams he interprets, thereby determining the fate of both his family and Egypt as a whole. As demonstrated above, Joseph believes that dreams contain a divine message: God conveys that message to the dreamer, while the interpreter conveys to the dreamer what God informs the interpreter.

It is interesting to consider Joseph's mode of interpreting dreams. When Joseph listens to the dreamer's depiction of the dream, Joseph relates to two elements in that dream: the objects and the events. He interprets the objects as symbols and the dream narrative as an allusion to a future event. Since Joseph's basic assumption is that the dream conveys a divine message about a future event, he interprets the number of units per object in the dream as the number of time units until the occurrence of the event: thus, the three branches in the grapevine and the three baskets symbolize three days, and the seven cows and the seven ears of wheat represent seven years.

Joseph also makes use of verbal hints provided by the dreamer. When the baker describes how the birds eat the baked goods in the basket he holds on his head, Joseph interprets the dream by switching the words in the Hebrew phrase uttered by the baker,

"above my head" (Gen. 40:17) and by creating a new phrase, "[lifting off] your head from your body" (Gen. 40:19). Thus, Joseph arrives at the idea that, within three days, Pharaoh will lift off the baker's head from his body, that is, execute him by decapitation, and will then hang him from the branch of a tree. Pharaoh describes his dream to Joseph, adding, "Looking at the cows, you could not possibly know that anything had been consumed by them" (Gen. 41:21). Joseph uses this comment as an important element in the interpretation: "Observing the effect of the famine when it comes, you could not possibly know that years of plenty had been experienced in the land previously" (Gen. 41:31).

Joseph also relates to the fact that Pharaoh experiences two consecutive dreams: "the repetition of Pharaoh's dream signifies that God's decision is final and that God will carry out his will without delay" (Gen. 41:32). This line of interpretation can be applied to the other pairs of dreams.

To sum up, in his method of interpretation, Joseph uses the following rules:

1. Objects are regarded as \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and, sometimes, also as \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ units.

2. The dream narrative is read as an allusion to a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ event.

3. The words used by the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ in the depiction of the dream are significant and the interpretation of the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ is based, in part, on these words.

4. The repetition of the dream indicates that \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ is firmly resolved to carry out his will without delay.

When we speak of Joseph as the Master of Dreams, we should distinguish between Joseph the dreamer and Joseph the interpreter of dreams. The Joseph we encounter in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ is vastly different from the Joseph whom we encountered in the Land of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Before he reaches Dotan, Joseph is an innocent young boy who has never experienced fear, who is concerned chiefly with himself, and who displays a considerable degree of insensitivity regarding the feelings of his brothers (as we can see when he tells his dreams to his brothers and when he again recounts his dreams to his brothers and his father). The horrendous event at Dotan quickly transforms Joseph into a responsible, careful, reliable, successful adult who is sensitive to the fate and feelings of others (as we can see from the functions he fulfills in Potiphar's home). Thanks to these qualities of maturity, Joseph becomes a popular figure in Egyptian society, gains the confidence of those surrounding him, and develops his skills as an interpreter of dreams. The depiction of Joseph's success in interpersonal relationships is paralleled in the depiction of his ***relationship with God***.

God protects him (Gen. 39:2, 3, 5, 21, 23) and he is protected by God. The name of God is constantly on Joseph's lips (Gen. 39:9; 40:8; 40:16; 32:18; 43:23, 29; 45:5, 7, 8; 40:20, 24, 25). Joseph acknowledges God as ruler of the world and recognizes the total dependence of mortal beings on God. Joseph's beliefs are articulated most dramatically in his noble behavior towards his astonished and frightened brothers, who have discovered his true identity and whom he seeks to comfort: "You need not be in the least bit frightened nor should you feel any sorrow over the fact of your selling me. As you can see, God has appointed me to provide for your physical well-being" (Gen. 45:5). Joseph emphasizes a central point: "You were not the ones who sent me here; God sent me here . . . ." (Gen. 45:8)

As a dreamer, Joseph is an egocentric individual who arouses the anger and hatred of his brothers. However, as an interpreter of dreams, Joseph shows deep concern for others and is loved by all.