



Studies for families in Belonging, Becoming, and going Beyond

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MAKING LEMONADE

"IN GOD'S WAITING ROOM"
GENESIS 40-41

This Week's Core Competency

Patience – I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life. Proverbs 14:29

A patient man has great understanding, But a quick-tempered man displays folly.

Perhaps we should speak of "the patience of Joseph" rather than "the patience of Job." According to Genesis 37:5-11, God revealed that Joseph would one day rule his family. The revelation, contained in separate dreams with a single sense, seemed so preposterous that Jacob rebuked his presumptuous young son asking, "What is this dream you had? Will your mother and I and your brothers actually come and bow down to the ground before you" (Ge 37:10). The very question prepares readers to look forward to Joseph's future rule—even if it's not for some time. The story is not about whether he will rule over his family or not, but where and when he will rule and how he will come to power.

During the years following his dreams, the downs and ups of life whipsaw Jacob's favorite son. After his brothers sell him to Midianite merchants, the Ishmaelites take him to Egypt where they in turn sell him to one of Pharaoh's officials. The LORD is with Joseph, and Potiphar puts him in charge of his household. But after being charged with sexual assault by Potiphar's wife, the official puts him in the king's prison where history repeats itself so to speak. The LORD is again with him, and the warden puts Joseph in charge of all those held in custody. He interprets the dreams of Pharaoh's cupbearer and baker, but when restored to his duties, the cupbearer betrays Joseph and does not make any mention of him to the king (40:23). Joseph languishes in prison for two more years before the cupbearer recommends him to Pharaoh (41:9-13). Joseph is seventeen when he receives his dreams and is thirty when he interprets Pharaoh's dreams. During the

intervening years, he continues to believe what God had revealed and continues to trust God to fulfill his dreams. One commentator writes: "The question to be answered was whether or not he had abandoned his dreams. That Joseph did not lose faith is proven by his willingness to interpret the dreams of the cupbearer and the baker. After all that had happened, he was still convinced of his ability to understand dreams and therefore of the meaning of his own" (Allen P. Ross, *Creation and Blessing*, 629).

The comments of another writer on the patience of Joseph are worth repeating: "The fact that the birthday decrees of the king coincided with the interpretation of Joseph confirmed his confidence in God as the interpreter of dreams, but his strangely long wait for the answer to his prayers was a severe test of patience and faith. It was as if he alone had been abandoned by God. But experiences like this were often part of the training of those whom God was going to use in outstanding roles. Abraham and Sarah had to wait until old age for the birth of Isaac; Moses was exiled for much of his life in an inhospitable desert; David lived under threat of death at the hand of Saul, and was on the run for months, if not years. Yet in every case the purpose of God was being worked out and in due course came to fruition. Indeed it has been said that only those with faith in God experience his testing, which after all is selfevident, for it is designed to put steel into faith so that it becomes steadfast and mature (Jas 1:2-4), and can testify to the tender love of the Lord in designing the suffering. This was to be outstandingly true of Joseph, who was fully aware of his brothers' hatred but who saw that God had meant it for good (50:20). That is the kind of conviction that results from patient, enduring trust in the loving intentions of God, when outward circumstances seem to belie that love" (Joyce G. Baldwin, The Message of Genesis 12-50, BST, 171).



ENCOUNTER – read God's word to put yourself in touch with him.

Read Genesis 40-41

40:8-23 8 "We both had dreams," they answered, "but there is no one to interpret them."

Then Joseph said to them, "Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell me your dreams."

- 9 So the chief cupbearer told Joseph his dream. He said to him, "In my dream I saw a vine in front of me, 10 and on the vine were three branches. As soon as it budded, it blossomed, and its clusters ripened into grapes. 11 Pharaoh's cup was in my hand, and I took the grapes, squeezed them into Pharaoh's cup and put the cup in his hand."
- 12 "This is what it means," Joseph said to him. "The three branches are three days. 13 Within three days Pharaoh will lift up your head and restore you to your position, and you will put Pharaoh's cup in his hand, just as you used to do when you were his cupbearer. 14 But when all goes well with you, remember me and show me kindness; mention me to Pharaoh and get me out of this prison. 15 I was forcibly carried off from the land of the Hebrews, and even here I have done nothing to deserve being put in a dungeon."
- 16 When the chief baker saw that Joseph had given a favorable interpretation, he said to Joseph, "I too had a dream: On my head were three baskets of bread. 17 In the top basket were all kinds of baked goods for Pharaoh, but the birds were eating them out of the basket on my head."
- 18 "This is what it means," Joseph said. "The three baskets are three days. 19 Within three days Pharaoh will lift off your head and impale your body on a pole. And the birds will eat away your flesh."
- 20 Now the third day was Pharaoh's birthday, and he gave a feast for all his officials. He lifted up the heads of the chief cupbearer and the chief baker in the presence of his officials: 21 He restored the chief cupbearer to his position, so that he once again put the cup into Pharaoh's hand—22 but he impaled the chief baker, just as Joseph had said to them in his interpretation.
- 23 The chief cupbearer, however, did not remember *Joseph*; he forgot him.
- **41:15-40** 15 Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I had a dream, and no one can interpret it. But I have heard it said of you that when you hear a dream you can interpret it."
- 16 "I cannot do it," Joseph replied to Pharaoh, "but God will give Pharaoh the answer he desires."
- 17 Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "In my dream I was standing on the bank of the Nile, 18 when out of the river there came up seven cows, fat and sleek, and they grazed

- among the reeds. 19 After them, seven other cows came up—scrawny and very ugly and lean. I had never seen such ugly cows in all the land of Egypt. 20 The lean, ugly cows ate up the seven fat cows that came up first. 21 But even after they ate them, no one could tell that they had done so; they looked just as ugly as before. Then I woke up.
- 22 "In my dream I saw seven heads of grain, full and good, growing on a single stalk. 23 After them, seven other heads sprouted—withered and thin and scorched by the east wind. 24 The thin heads of grain swallowed up the seven good heads. I told this to the magicians, but none of them could explain it to me."
- 25 Then Joseph said to Pharaoh, "The dreams of Pharaoh are one and the same. God has revealed to Pharaoh what he is about to do. 26 The seven good cows are seven years, and the seven good heads of grain are seven years; it is one and the same dream. 27 The seven lean, ugly cows that came up afterward are seven years, and so are the seven worthless heads of grain scorched by the east wind: They are seven years of famine.
- 28 "It is just as I said to Pharaoh: God has shown Pharaoh what he is about to do. 29 Seven years of great abundance are coming throughout the land of Egypt, 30 but seven years of famine will follow them. Then all the abundance in Egypt will be forgotten, and the famine will ravage the land. 31 The abundance in the land will not be remembered, because the famine that follows it will be so severe. 32 The reason the dream was given to Pharaoh in two forms is that the matter has been firmly decided by God, and God will do it soon.
- 33 "And now let Pharaoh look for a discerning and wise man and put him in charge of the land of Egypt. 34 Let Pharaoh appoint commissioners over the land to take a fifth of the harvest of Egypt during the seven years of abundance. 35 They should collect all the food of these good years that are coming and store up the grain under the authority of Pharaoh, to be kept in the cities for food. 36 This food should be held in reserve for the country, to be used during the seven years of famine that will come upon Egypt, so that the country may not be ruined by the famine."
- 37 The plan seemed good to Pharaoh and to all his officials. 38 So Pharaoh asked them, "Can we find anyone like this man, one in whom is the spirit of God?"
- 39 Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Since God has made all this known to you, there is no one so discerning and wise as you. 40 You shall be in charge of my palace, and all my people are to submit to your orders. Only with respect to the throne will I be greater than you."

EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

- * Bracket the rhetorical question in 40:8.
- * Circle "three" in vv. 10, 12, 13, 16, 18, 19.
- * Underline "lift up" in vv. 13, 20.
- * Highlight v. 15.
- * Underline "lift off" in v. 19.

- * Bracket v. 23.
- * Box "but" indicating contrast in 41:16.
- * Circle "seven" in vv. 18, 19, 20, 22, 23, 24, 26, 27, 29, 30, 34, 36.
- * Underline "in charge of my palace" in v. 40.



EXPLORE – the answer to these questions to better

ady Z	understand what the passage means.
	It the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help. he cupbearer and baker had in common have landed them both in prison?

2. What was it about their two dreams that left the cupbearer and baker so down in the mouth?

- 3. The two dreams were so similar yet their interpretations were so different. Explain.
- 4. What do you infer about Joseph from verses 14-15?
- 5. What do references to the passing of time (40:1, 4; 41:1, 46) contribute to the story?
- 6. Identify the elements in Pharaoh's twofold dream key to its interpretation.
- 7. Joseph's proposed plan (vv. 33-36) advances the plot of the story. How so?
- 8. Explain the significance of Joseph's new name and new wife (v. 45).
- 9. Explain why the narrator describes the implementation of Joseph's plan in such great detail (vv. 46-49, 53-57).
- 10. **Discussion:** Talk about what the naming of Joseph's sons (vv. 50-52) suggests.



EXAMINE – an explanation of its message to clarify your understanding of the passage.

The interpretation of dream episodes in the Joseph story (Ge 40-41) link Joseph in prison at the end of chapter 39 to Joseph in power at the beginning of chapter 42. Put differently, the episodes in the story that portray Joseph as an interpreter of dreams, link the episode that portrays Joseph in charge of Pharaoh's prison to the episode that portrays him in charge of Pharaoh's palace. Throughout the course of intervening events, the narrator's literary portrayal spotlights divine providence at work to fulfill patriarchal promises. Clearly, God brings to pass future events in accordance with his covenant purposes. One commentator writes: "Throughout the narrative this theme is kept alive by a continuous return to the pattern of twos. In the previous chapter, the 'two' (40:2) officials of the king each had a dream. One dream was good and the other was bad. The dreams and their interpretations are repeated twice, once by the writer in the narrative of chapter 40 and then again by the cupbearer before Pharaoh in 41:9-13. After 'two years', the king himself had 'two' dreams; one part of each dream was good ('years of plenty') and the other was bad ('years of famine'). Within the narrative, each of the two dreams is repeated twice, once by the writer (vv. 1-7) and once by Pharaoh (vv. 17-24). When the dream is 'repeated,' it is to show that the matter is certain and swift (v. 32). The point of the narrative is that such symmetry in human evens is evidence of a divine work. The writer, along with Joseph, is able to see the handiwork of God in the events which he recounts, and he passes them along to the readers in these subtle interplays within the text itself" (John H. Sailhamer, The Pentateuch as Narrative, 213).

In chapter 40, Joseph interprets two dreams correctly, which leads to his advancement-but not immediately. Pharaoh's cupbearer and chief baker are put in prison by their angry master-perhaps for dereliction of duty or worse-and while in custody, both are put in Joseph's care. Sometime later, both have dreams that trouble them, no doubt because their dreams are eerily similar and occur on the same night. Joseph, believing that the one who gives revelatory dreams is also the one who interprets them, invites his glum wards to tell him their dreams. They do, and he interprets the cupbearer's dream first. In three days, Pharaoh will restore him to his former position, and when all goes well, Joseph asks that he intercede with Pharaoh on his behalf. After all, the wrongly accused cupbearer should be able to identify with Joseph in his wrongful detention.

When the chief baker hears Joseph's favorable interpretation, he shares his dream. According to one

commentator, his reluctance suggests his guilt: "The willingness of the cupbearer to share his dream suggests his innocence; he has nothing to hide. By contrast, the guilty baker will not share his until he hears a favorable interpretation for the cupbearer" (Bruce K. Waltke, *Genesis*, 527). Joseph interprets the baker's dream second. In three days, Pharaoh will "lift off" his head and impale him on a pole. And the birds he saw eating away at the basket of baked goods in his dream will be eating away at his flesh. The same commentator adds: "The severe punishment of an ignominious and defiling death, rather than a decent burial, probably entails that, unlike the cupbearer, he has committed a grave crime that demands public censure" (527).

When things turn out exactly as Joseph interpreted them, the cupbearer forgets to mention him to Pharaoh. Ironically, God uses this "unfortunate" lapse in memory for Joseph's good. Had the cupbearer told Pharaoh about Joseph, at best he might have released him, but because he didn't, two years later Pharaoh summons Joseph to interpret his two puzzling dreams, which then leads to him being put in charge of the whole land of Egypt (41:43).

Chapter 41, which can be divided into three parts: Pharaoh's dreams (vv. 1-13); their interpretation (vv. 14-46); and finally, their fulfillment (vv. 47-57), is by literary design significantly longer than chapter 40. The repetition of Pharaoh's dreams and the extended treatment of Joseph's interpretation in effect slow the pace of the plot and build suspense in the readers, leading up to Joseph being made second-in-command in Egypt. It's actually quite surprising that the interpretation of the dreams should create such consternation among Pharaoh's magicians seeing that the meaning is more or less obvious. As one commentator says: "Once Joseph's interpretation is known it seems incredible that the Pharaoh did not see it for himself, so clear and fitting is the meaning" (Baldwin, 175). The seven fat/gaunt cows and seven full/thin heads of grain represent seven years; seven years of plenty would thus be followed by seven years of famine that would consume the plenty.

Not only does Joseph interpret Pharaoh's dreams, but he also proposes a simple and effective plan to address what God is about to do. An organizer should be appointed to be responsible to the king; overseers should enforce a 20% tax during the good years; this grain should be stored and protected until it is needed; at which time, it should be sold to the Egyptians and to others. Pharaoh immediately recognizes the plan's genius: "Joseph's advice commended itself for its sheer

good sense, and the king decided on the spot that he would never find anyone better to take the new appointment than the one who had proposed it, *in whom is the Spirit of God* (38)" (175). With great pomp and circumstance, Pharaoh makes Joseph his second-incommand, gives him an Egyptian name and an Egyptian wife, and commissions him to implement the plan. Joseph is thirty years old at this stage in the fulfillment of the dreams God gave him thirteen years earlier.

As far as the message of the dream episodes is

concerned, clearly God orchestrates the circumstances surrounding Joseph's life to bring him to power and thereby prepare for the migration of Jacob's family to Egypt where they would be saved from the coming famine to grow into a great nation. That's the *upper story*. At the same time, Joseph serves as a timeless model of patience and faithfulness. Knowing and believing God's revelation, he perseveres through adversity to boldly declare that revelation to Pharaoh. That's the *lower story*.

The Message of the Passage

Your sovereign God is providentially at work to accomplish his purposes in your life and in the world, so never lose heart but patiently endure the hardships of life knowing he will do what he promised.



EMBRACE – how God spoke to you through his word.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James teaches in James 1:22. Reflect on the three "living questions" below to apply what you have learned this week.

- Journal your answers to the following living questions:
 - -How is God making himself known to you?

-How does God want to change you?

-How is God calling you to change your world?

notes STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

- 40:1 some time later "By this point Joseph has been in slavery and then prison for over ten years. The total period of slavery and imprisonment will be thirteen years (see 37:2; 41:46)" (Waltke, 525). "The 'cupbearer' and the 'baker' were responsible for Pharaoh's drink and v. 2 angry food (vv. 1-4). Nehemiah, much later, occupied a similar position to this cupbearer in the Persian court (cf. Neh. 1:11-2:8). Perhaps both food-service employees were in prison because someone had tried to poison Pharaoh, or so it seemed, and Pharaoh could not determine immediately which of the two men was responsible" (Thomas L. Constable, "Notes on Genesis," 2016 ed., 274, www.soniclight.com).
- v. 4 captain "If Potiphar did still hold this position, it could explain why the captain of the guard appointed Joseph to be the personal servant of these two palace official, for he had occupied this role in Potiphar's household (39:4)" (Gordon Wenham, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 2, Genesis 16-50, 382).
- v. 8 dreams "It is not simply that they dreamed that raised the apprehension of the cupbearer and baker, but that they both had a different dream the same night and that they were imprisoned alarms them . . . while a dreamer might have a hunch whether a dream was auspicious or not, he had to rely on expert for a detailed explanation. In prison they had no access to such expertise; yet being prisoners they were most anxious to know their fate-hence, their despondency" (382).
- v. 9 three The number "three" in the two dreams, i.e., "three branches" and "three baskets," refers to the number of days (vv. 12, 13) until the Pharaoh's birthday or perhaps anniversary when he would send for both men. "Egyptian texts mention granting amnesties on these days" (Waltke, 527). The number "seven" in Pharaoh's dream-pair, i.e., seven fat/gaunt cows and seven healthy/thin heads of grain, refers to the number of years of abundance followed by famine (41:26-27).
- "The operative difference between the interpretations given for the two men v. 13 lift up your turns on the phrase, 'Pharaoh will lift up/off your head' (40:13, 19). In Hebrew the phrase is exactly the same, but the surrounding context gives each a different meaning. For the cupbearer, the king will lift up his head (i.e., give favor and forgiveness) and restore him. For the baker, the king will lift up his head also, but the added prepositional phrase 'from upon you' changes the idiom from one of favor to one of execution. In the ancient world hanging was not typically a form of execution but a way to dishonor the corpse of an executed person. In this case the baker would have been beheaded and then 'hung'-usually by having his body impaled on a stake (see NIV footnote)-in public view for birds and insects to devour" (John H. Walton, The NIV Application Commentary: Genesis, 673).
- "Though he had all kinds of delicacies on his head, he amazingly does vv. 17, 19 **birds** nothing to protect them (contrast Abraham's action in 15:11) . . . Does his unclean conscience render him immobile? Does it symbolize his failure to protect the Pharaoh's table?" (Waltke, 527).
- 41:1-7 cows "Pharaoh's dreams of 'cows,' 'reed beds,' and 'grain' 'are all natural symbols of food" (529). "Egypt, breadbasket of the Roman Empire, was as famous for its grain as for its cattle" (Wenham, 391).
- v. 9 reminded God's providence "is highlighted in the fact that, though the cupbearer did forget Joseph at the time, he remembered just at the right moment and thus served as the means for Joseph's ultimate rise to power" (Sailhamer, 214).
- vv. 25, 28 about to do "God sovereignly rules the nations, controlling their economies and very life" (Waltke, 532).
- v. 39 charge of my "Among modern Egyptologists, Vergote (Joseph en Egypte, 102-14) and Kitchen (NBD, 658) agree that Joseph appears to be the vizier . . . So in calling Joseph 'master of the palace,' Genesis is thus using the correct Hebrew equivalent for the office of vizier in Egypt" (Wenham, 395).
- v. 45 Zaphenath-Paneah "To signify his new status, Pharaoh gave Joseph a new name, which has generally been interpreted to mean, 'God speaks and lives.' He also gave him a wife, the daughter of a priest of On" (Ross, 643).
- v. 50 two sons "The notation of the birth of Joseph's sons is, of course, very significant-in view of God's purposes concerning Abraham's family (vv. 50-52). Joseph acknowledged God's goodness to him in the naming of both his sons: 'God has made me forget all my trouble' and 'God has made me fruitful" (Constable, 278).



Connect the **FAMILY**. Kids Kindergarten thru 6th grade receive Kid Pix tokens for discipleship activities completed during the week.

Family Talk

Encouragement from one parent's heart to another

At this point in the Joseph narrative, we see the tide begin to turn. After facing years of mistreatment, Joseph is exalted to a place of honor in Pharaoh's household. God is placing Joseph exactly where he needs to be to accomplish His purpose and preserve His people. Often times we travel through hard seasons in our lives and we don't understand God's plan. When my second child was born, my mom was diagnosed with a rare form of Multiple Sclerosis. Her health quickly deteriorated. Her treatment included a form of chemotherapy that didn't allow her to be around my son because he was receiving vaccines. Those were hard days. With a toddler and a newborn, I needed my mom. In addition to that, I wanted to be there for her but was so busy with my own growing family. The Lord taught me so much about depending on Him during those days. I didn't see the big picture but I knew He had a plan. It's important for us to see past our present circumstances and trust that when we only see one piece of the puzzle, God sees the completed work. Joseph's future was about to change. Yours may be too. God may be on the brink of doing a new and wonderful thing in you and your family. Hang on and trust Him. The Author of your story loves you and He will make a way!

What Does The Bible Say

Weekly Verse: Read Genesis 40-41

- 1. How long had Joseph been in prison when Pharaoh had his dream?
- 2. Who did Joseph say would help him interpret the dream?
- 3. What happened to Joseph (41:41)?

What Do You Think

- 1. Why do you think Pharaoh gave Joseph so much control?
- 2. What character traits has Joseph shown so far in this story?
- 3. How do you show those character traits?

What R U Going To Do

Proverbs 3:5-6 are great verses for us to remember when we are going through challenging times and need to trust the Lord. Write them on a card and put them on your bathroom mirror to remind you to always trust the Lord.

Core Comp

Patience - I don't get mad quickly when things don't go my way.

Memory Verse

Romans 8:37 - No, in all things we are more that conquerors through him who loved us.

KIDPIX COUPON	
I memorized my verse, completed Scrolls, brought Bible, brought a friend	
Series Discipleship Challenge located in KidPix Store.	
Child's name Grade Parent's signature	
Earn 1 token by completing the PantegoKids Bible study and another token by reciting the memory verse. Questions: Kids@pantego.org	

CORE COMPETENCIES

10 CORE BELIEFS

Trinity 2 Corinthians 13:14 I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Salvation By Grace *Ephesians* 2:8-9 I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Authority of the Bible 2 *Timothy* 3:16-17

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Personal God Psalm 121:1-2 I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Identity in Christ John 1:12 I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Church *Ephesians* 4:15-16 I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Humanity *John 3:16* I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Compassion Psalm 82:3-4

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

Eternity John 14:1-4

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

Stewardship 1 Timothy 6:17-19 I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

10 CORE PRACTICES

Worship Psalm 95:1-7 I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Prayer *Psalm* 66:16-20

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Bible Study Hebrews 4:12

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-mindedness *Matthew* 6:33 I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts Romans 12:4-6 I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Biblical Community *Acts* 2:44-47 I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world. Giving Away My Time Colossians

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Money

2 Corinthians 8:7

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Faith Ephesians 6:19-20

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Life Romans 12:1 I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

10 CORE VIRTUES

Joy John 15:11

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace *Philippians* 4:6-7

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

Faithfulness *Proverbs* 3:3-4 I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Self-Control Titus 2:11-13 I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Humility Philippians 2:3, 4 I choose to esteem others above myself.

Love 1 John 4:10-12 I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Patience Proverbs 14:29

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness 1 Thess. 5:15 I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Gentleness Philippians 4:5 I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Hope *Hebrews* 6:19-20

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

About the Authors

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The mission of THE SCROLLS is to help you develop the beliefs, practices, and virtues of a follower of Jesus Christ called The 30 Core Competencies through your own active reading of the Bible. Send any questions or comments you may have about this lesson to Tom Bulick. His e-mail address is tbulick@pantego.org.