

Genesis 41:1-40. Part one

When two full years had passed, Pharaoh had a dream: He was standing by the Nile,² when out of the river there came up seven cows, sleek and fat, and they grazed among the reeds.³ After them, seven other cows, ugly and gaunt, came up out of the Nile and stood beside those on the riverbank.⁴ And the cows that were ugly and gaunt ate up the seven sleek, fat cows. Then Pharaoh woke up.

⁵ He fell asleep again and had a second dream: Seven heads of grain, healthy and good, were growing on a single stalk.⁶ After them, seven other heads of grain sprouted—thin and scorched by the east wind.⁷ The thin heads of grain swallowed up the seven healthy, full heads. Then Pharaoh woke up; it had been a dream.

⁸ In the morning his mind was troubled, so he sent for all the magicians and wise men of Egypt. Pharaoh told them his dreams, but no one could interpret them for him.⁹ Then the chief cupbearer said to Pharaoh, “Today I am reminded of my shortcomings.¹⁰ Pharaoh was once angry with his servants, and he imprisoned me and the chief baker in the house of the captain of the guard.¹¹ Each of us had a dream the same night, and each dream had a meaning of its own.

¹² Now a young Hebrew was there with us, a servant of the captain of the guard. We told him our dreams, and he interpreted them for us, giving each man the interpretation of his dream.¹³ And things turned out exactly as he interpreted them to us: I was restored to my position, and the other man was impaled.”

¹⁴ So Pharaoh sent for Joseph, and he was quickly brought from the dungeon. When he had shaved and changed his clothes, he came before Pharaoh.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^[a]?”

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.”

We will use five tools on our expedition that are built around five questions

What questions were provoked within you?

Did anything confuse you?

Did anything move you emotionally?

Did God instruct you to do something?

Did you gain any insight into God’s character?

- The cupbearer failed to remember Joseph completely
- Consequently, Joseph remained in prison for two more years.
- Have you ever done something good for somebody that was completely forgotten about? How would that make you feel?
- Two years is a long time to feel rejected and forgotten. Can we assume he continued to trust God through this time?
- Do you think God’s hand was in the timing of this event?
- The next few verses describe Pharaoh’s dream. What would you have made of it?
- The dream sounds very ‘lifelike’ and very disturbing
- Have you ever had any really bad dreams or nightmares?
- We are told that Pharaoh’s mind was very troubled by the dream.
- Do you think he knew there was something very important about this dream?
- Is God’s hand in this? Was he speaking to Pharaoh through a dream?
- Pharaoh sends for all the magicians and wise men of Egypt to interpret the dream.
- What kind of people do you think these magicians and wise men may have been? Priests? Physicians? Occultists?
- But none of them could interpret the dream. Why not?
- Finally, the cupbearer remembers Joseph and tells Pharaoh about him.
- Pharaoh tells Joseph that nobody has been able to interpret the dream, but he’d heard Joseph can interpret dreams!! No pressure then!!!!
- Joseph sounds very humble and gives God the glory
- He tells Pharaoh that he can’t interpret the dream but God will give him the answer. Do you think this was a brave statement to make?
- Joseph tells Pharaoh the meaning of the dream. Seven years of abundance followed by seven years of famine
- He tells Pharaoh the reason his dream was in two parts was that God had ‘firmly decided’ the matter and that it would happen soon. What do you make of this?
- Joseph goes on to give advice to Pharaoh as to how to manage the problem.
- He told Pharaoh that he would need to put a wise and discerning man in charge of the land of Egypt
- Was this solution also given to him by God?
- Pharaoh and all his officials are happy with the plan.
- Pharaoh asks if they can find this wise and discerning man, one in whom is the Spirit of God. What might this have meant to Him?
- Joseph is appointed by Pharaoh to oversee his palace and all the people in Egypt. Second only to Pharaoh himself.
- An incredible situation to be in after having just been in Pharaoh’s prison for many years
- Is this yet another time in Joseph’s life where God’s favour was clearly seen all over him?