

Genesis

Chapter 41



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Jewish Study Bible Introduction:

Joseph interprets Pharaoh's dreams and becomes Prime Minister. Vv. 1-32 deal with the last of the three pairs of dreams in the Joseph story, the dreams of Pharaoh. Vv. 33-57 detail Joseph's unsolicited recommendation of a course to enable Egypt to survive the crisis, and then report the king's enthusiastic appointment of the young Hebrew man to implement his own policy.¹

Torah Class Introduction:

I told you something earlier that may have caught some of you off guard: that at the time of Joseph, Egypt was ruled by Semites...descendants from Shem, son of Noah. That in fact, the Pharaoh of Egypt at the time Joseph was made ruler of the land, was NOT an Egyptian. And, that during about a 150 year period, official Egyptian government records regarding Egypt's history suddenly ceased.

And, the reason for this is that Kings and Pharaohs tended not to write down defeats and times of being subjugated. Understanding this helps to understand how Joseph became so powerful, and how Israel was, at first, so free to grow and prosper; but, later, how it became the brunt of Egypt's rage, and the Israelites eventually became slaves. I mentioned that there were several records of that time, however, that were written down and preserved by private Egyptian citizens, and they tell the story of these foreign rulers, the Hyksos rulers.

I would like to read to you a short account as taken from the Egyptian historian Manetho, who compiled several of these records and left them for us to ponder. "We had a king called Tutimaeus. In his reign, it happened. I do not know why God was displeased with us. Unexpectedly from the regions of the East, came men of unknown race. Confident of victory they marched against our land. By force they took it, easily, without a single battle. Having overpowered our rulers they burned our cities without compassion, and destroyed the temples of the gods. All the natives were treated with great cruelty for they slew some and carried off the wives and children of others into slavery. Finally they appointed one of themselves as king. His name was Salitis and he lived in Memphis and made Upper and Lower Egypt pay tribute to him...and when he found a city in the province of Sais which suited his purpose (it lay east of the Bubasite branch of the Nile and was called Avaris) he rebuilt it and made it very strong by erecting walls and installing a force of 240,000 men to hold it. Salitis went there every summer partly to collect his corn and pay men their wages, and partly to train his armed troops and terrify foreigners."

Here we have a very emotional, and condensed, recounting of the conquering of Egypt by the Semites from Asia. We even have the name, an Arabic name, of the conquering king... Salitis. How it must have stuck in the craw of the Egyptian people to be overrun so easily and swiftly by these (to their minds) uncivilized hords.

Yet, in God's unfathomable Divine Providence, this set the stage for Joseph to assume a powerful position, and for Israel to be held hostage in Egypt for over 4 centuries. Now, I would like you to take note of a name that is mentioned by Manetho: Avaris. For, in Exodus, we shall spend some time talking about this city. Avaris is the large city that became home to the Hebrews, the Israelites, in the land of Goshen, Egypt. The very place most secular archaeologists say doesn't exist: a place where an enormous population of

¹ The Jewish Study Bible, Tanakh Translation, Berlin & Brettler, Jewish Publication Society, Oxford Press

Hebrews existed after Joseph's time. And, note what a large place it was, for this Salitis, the new foreign Pharaoh, stationed almost a quarter of a million troops there just to secure it.

One last thing: a little earlier I used some terms... Bedouin, Semite, and Oriental... Kind of interchangeably. Let me explain it: the overall continental landmass that contains what we today call the Middle East is Asia. So, it is proper to call people who hail from the Middle East then, as now, Asians, or Asiatics.... people of Asia. Orientals refer not to people from the entire continent of Asia, but to Middle Easterners, and people extending to China. Orientals are a subgroup of Asians. Semites are people who descended from Shem. Descendants from Abraham are Semites because Abraham was a Semite.

Therefore Arabs and Hebrews are both Semitic people. Bedouins were a certain branch of Semitic peoples that tended to be desert dwellers, and wanderers. So, it is proper to say that the people who invaded and conquered Egypt were a) Bedouins, because they were desert dwellers.... b) Semites, because they were descendants of Shem, c) Orientals, because they were part of a Middle Eastern Culture, and d) Asians or Asiatics because they were from the continent of Asia.²

Gleanings in Genesis – Arthur Pink; Introduction

Our present chapter opens by presenting to us the king of Egypt dreaming two dreams, and awaking with his spirit troubled. The court magicians and wise men were summoned, and Pharaoh told them his dreams, but “there was none that could interpret them to Pharaoh.” Then it was that the chief butler recalled his experience in prison. He remembers how *he* had a dream, and that a Hebrew slave had interpreted aright its significance. He recounts this now to the king, and Pharaoh sends at once for Joseph, who explains to him the meaning of his own dreams. There are several important truths which here receive a striking exemplification:

First, we are shown that “*The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of waters. He turneth it whithersoever He will*” (Prov. 21:1). It was no accident that Pharaoh dreamed as he did, and when he did. God's time had come for Joseph to be delivered from prison and exalted to a position of high honor and responsibility, and these dreams were but the instrument employed by God to accomplish this end. Similarly, He used, long afterwards, the sleeplessness of another king to lead to the deliverance of Mordecai and his fellows. This truth has been expressed so forcefully and ably by C. H. M. in his “Notes on Genesis,” we cannot refrain from quoting him:

“The most trivial and the most important, the most likely and the most unlikely circumstances are made to minister to the development of God's purposes. In chapter 39 Satan uses Potiphar's wife, and in chapter 40 he uses Pharaoh's chief butler. The former he used to put Joseph into the dungeon; and the latter he used to keep him there, through his ungrateful negligence; but all in vain. God was behind the scenes. His finger was guiding all the springs of the vast machine of circumstances, and when the due time was come, he brought forth the man of His purpose, and set his feet in a large room. Now, this is ever God's prerogative. *He is above all*, and can use all for the accomplishment of His grand and unsearchable designs. It is sweet to be able thus to trace our Father's hand and counsel in everything. Sweet to know that all sorts of agents are at His sovereign disposal; angels, men and devils—*all are under His omnipotent hand*, and all are made to

² Torahclass.com/index.html, Thomas Bradford, Merritt Island, Florida

carry out His purposes” (p. 307: italics are ours). How rarely one finds such faith strengthening sentiments such as these set forth, plainly, by writers of today!

Second, we are shown in the early part of Genesis 41 how that *the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God*. As it is well known, Egypt stands in Scripture as a figure of this world. In Joseph’s time, the land of the Pharaoh’s was the center of learning and culture, the proud leader of the ancient civilizations. But the people were idolaters. They knew not God, and only in His light can we see light. Apart from Him, all is darkness, morally and spiritually. So we see it in the chapter before us. The magicians were impotent, the wise men displayed their ignorance, and Pharaoh was made to feel the powerlessness of all human resources and the worthlessness of all human wisdom.

Third, the *man of God* was the only one that had true wisdom and light. How true it is that “the *secret* of the Lord is with them that fear Him!” These dreams of Pharaoh had a prophetic significance: they respected the future of Egypt (typically, the world), and no Gentile, as such, had intelligence in the purpose of God respecting the earth. God was pleased to make known His counsels to a Gentile, as here, a *Jew* had to be called, each time, as interpreter. It was thus with Nebuchadnezzar. The wise men of Chaldea were as helpless as the magicians of Egypt; Daniel, alone, had understanding. So, too, with Belshazzar and all his companions—the aged prophet had to be called in to decipher the message upon the wall. Well would it be if leaders of the world today turned to the inspired writings of the Hebrew prophets of the things which must shortly come to pass.

Fourth: that “all things *work together for good* to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose,” is writ large across our lesson. And well for us if we take this to heart. But the trouble is, we grow so impatient under the process, while God is taking the tangled threads of our lives and *making them* “work together for good.” We become so occupied with present circumstances that hope is no longer exercised, and the brighter and better future is blotted from our view. Let us bear in mind that Scripture declares, “*Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof*” (Ecc. 7:8). Be of good cheer, faint heart; sorrow may endure for a night, but joy *cometh in the morning*. So it was with Joseph. For a season he suffered wrongfully, but at the last God vindicated and rewarded him. Remember Joseph then, troubled reader, and “let patience have her perfect work.” But we must turn from these moralizings and consider the typical bearings of our chapter. We continue our previous enumeration.³

³Pink, A. W. (2005). *Gleanings in Genesis* (372). Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

Genesis 41:1

And it came to pass at the end of two full years, that Pharaoh dreamed: and, behold, he stood by the river.

[**two full years**] *shenathayim yamim*, “two years of days”, two complete solar revolutions, after the events mentioned in the preceding chapter. Eleven years passed from the time Joseph was sold as a slave to when he interpreted the butler's dream. He stayed in prison two more years, tested in his faith (Psalm 105:17-20). Thirteen years would be a long time for any man to be tested (Genesis 37:2; Genesis 41:1,46).⁴

[**river**] The Nile River on which Egypt depended for good crops. Little rain falls in Egypt but tropical rains in central Africa cause the Nile to rise in the middle of June. It overflows two months later and then recedes, leaving the land very fertile. It rises about 27 feet at Cairo. A few feet more could cause a destructive flood; a few feet less could cause famine.

the identity of Pharaoh. The name of the Pharaoh of the Joseph story is unknown. Elements of the story have suggested to some a setting in either the Hyksos period (1750-1550 B.C.) or the Amarna Age (fourteenth century B.C.), when large numbers of Semites were either settled in Egypt or mentioned in Egyptian sources as serving in government positions. Our current knowledge of Egyptian history and practice would support this as the most logical and feasible choice. Biblical chronological information, however, suggests to some an earlier time in the Middle Kingdom Twelfth Dynasty (1963-1786). Without specific, historical references in the story it is impossible to associate the narrative with a particular reigning king. It is the practice of the author(s) of the book of Genesis to not mention any Pharaoh by name. This may have been intentional, since the Pharaoh was considered by his people to be a god and the Israelites did not wish to invoke that name.⁵

Pharaoh dreamed—“Pharaoh,” from an Egyptian word *Phre*, signifying the “sun,” was the official title of the kings of that country. The prince, who occupied the throne of Egypt, was Aphophis, one of the Memphite kings, whose capital was On or Heliopolis, and who is universally acknowledged to have been a patriot king. Between the arrival of Abraham and the appearance of Joseph in that country, somewhat more than two centuries had elapsed. Kings sleep and dream, as well as their subjects. And this Pharaoh had two dreams in one night so singular and so similar, so distinct and so apparently significant, so coherent and vividly impressed on his memory, that his spirit was troubled.⁶

⁴ Dake's Study Notes, Dake's Study Bible

⁵ Bible Background Commentary

⁶ JFB Commentary

Word Focus

Pharaoh

(Heb. Par ʾoh) (41:1; Ex. 1:11) H6547: The name Pharaoh comes from the Egyptian word *pr-ʾo*, which means “the great house.” Originally the word Pharaoh was not a designation for the king of Egypt, but a reference to his palace. The ancient Egyptians believed that Pharaoh was the living representation of the god Horus in Egyptian religion, identified with the cult of the sun god and symbolized by the falcon. The plagues against the Egyptians prior to the Israelite exodus from Egypt were cosmic in nature, a kind of spiritual warfare between the living God and the false gods of Egypt (Ex. 12:12; 15:11). The tenth plague, resulting in the death of the firstborn among the Egyptians (including Pharaoh’s), was divine judgment upon Pharaoh’s claim to deity (Ex. 12:29, 30; 18:11, 12).

Genesis 41:2

And, behold, there came up out of the river seven well favoured kine and fattleshed; and they fed in a meadow.

[**kine**] Cattle were Egyptian emblems of agriculture and prosperity.

cows stood half-submerged in the Nile as protection from the sun and flies.

[**fed in a meadow**] On marsh grass growing abundantly on the Nile.

Ramban: (Nachmanides) “And behold, there came up out of the river.” Since the land of Egypt is irrigated by the river, and it is from the river that abundance or famine befalls them, the king saw the cows coming up out of the river. The cows symbolize plowing, and the ears of corn symbolize the harvest, just as Joseph said, *in which there shall be neither plowing nor harvest*. He saw that the river rose only slightly and there would thus be no plowing, and the little which will be planted in moist places, *a wind blowing from the east, a wind from the Eternal* would burn them, even as he saw the ears of corn *parched with the east wind*.

It would appear to be implied in the verses that the abundance was only in the land of Egypt, even as it said, *Seven years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt*; likewise the verse, *and he stored up all the food of the seven years which was in the land of Egypt*. But the famine, on the other hand, was in all the lands. And so did Joseph interpret it when he said, *And there shall arise after them seven years of famine*, and did not mention the land of Egypt. It was for this reason that in the other countries they were unable to store up food even if they had heard about it, as they undoubtedly did, for the matter was well known throughout their lands. Perhaps this was alluded to in the dream since with respect to the fat cows, it mentions, *And they fed in the reed-grass*, for it was there in Egypt that they fed and stood, but the lean ones, after they consumed the fat ones, *walked to and fro through the earth*, and Pharaoh did not know where they had gone.⁷

⁷ Ramban, Nachmanides, Commentary on the Torah, Genesis, Rabbi C. Chavel, Shilo Publishing House

Genesis 41:3

And, behold, seven other kine came up after them out of the river, ill favoured and leanfleshed; and stood by the *other* kine upon the brink of the river.

Pharaoh's two dreams caused him great distress, especially since none of the wise men of Egypt could explain them. God used an Israelite slave to confound the wisdom of Egypt. Later in the days of Moses another Pharaoh would be at the mercy of God's power.

Ramban: (Nachmanides) "And they stood beside the cows." I.e., by their side and near them. This was a sign that there would be no lapse of time between the years of plenty and the years of famine even though Pharaoh did not relate this to Joseph. But perhaps the vision which Pharaoh saw and the relating of the dream to Joseph were really alike, except that Scripture did not concern itself [with mentioning all the details Pharaoh told Joseph], just as it added into the story [details not mentioned in the actual dream, as for example], *And it could not be known that they had eaten them up*, and also, *the ears of corn came up on one stalk*, which was a sign that the seven years will occur consecutively.⁸

Genesis 41:4

And the ill favoured and leanfleshed kine did eat up the seven well favoured and fat kine. So Pharaoh awoke.

Genesis 41:5

And he slept and dreamed the second time: and, behold, seven ears of corn came up upon one stalk, rank and good.

[**corn**] A kind of wheat with strong stalk and a number of ears.

[**rank and good**] Full ears.

Genesis 41:6

And, behold, seven thin ears and blasted with the east wind sprung up after them.

[**east wind**] The east wind in Egypt is dry and parching. It prevents the dew, hardens the earth, and shrivels the grain.

Blasted with the east wind—It has been very properly observed that all the mischief done to corn or fruit, by blasting, smutting, mildews, locusts, etc., is attributed to the east wind. See Exodus 10:13; 14:21; Psalm 78:26; Ezekiel 17:10; Jon 4:8. In Egypt it is peculiarly destructive, because it comes through the parched deserts of Arabia, often

⁸ Ramban, Nachmanides, Commentary on the Torah, Genesis, Rabbi C. Chavel, Shilo Publishing House

destroying vast numbers of men and women. The destructive nature of the *simoom* or *sloom* is mentioned by almost all travelers. Mr. Bruce speaks of it in his Travels in Egypt. On their way to Syene, Idris their guide, seeing one of these destroying blasts coming, cried out with a loud voice to the company, “Fall upon your faces, for here is the simoom! I saw,” says Mr. B., “from the S. E. a haze come, in color like the purple part of the rainbow, but not so compressed or thick. It did not occupy twenty yards in breadth, and was about twelve feet high from the ground. It was a kind of blush upon the air, and it moved very rapidly, for I scarce could turn to fall upon the ground, with my head northward, when I felt the heat of its current plainly upon my face. We all lay flat upon the ground, as if dead, till Idris told us it was blown over. The meteor or purple haze which I saw was indeed passed, but the light air that still blew was of a heat to threaten suffocation. for my part, I found distinctly in my breast that I had imbibed a part of it; nor was I free from an asthmatic sensation till I had been some months in Italy, at the bathe of Poretta, near two years afterwards.”—Travels, vol. vi., p. 462. On another occasion the whole company were made ill by one of these pestilential blasts, so that they had scarcely strength to load their camels—*ibid.*, p. 484. The action of this destructive wind is referred to by the Prophet Hosea 13:15: Though he be fruitful among his brethren, an EAST WIND shall come, the wind of the Lord shall come up FROM THE WILDERNESS, and his spring shall BECOME DRY, and his fountain shall be DRIED up: he shall spoil the treasure of all pleasant vessels.⁹

Genesis 41:7

And the seven thin ears devoured the seven rank and full ears. And Pharaoh awoke, and, behold, *it was a dream.*

double dreams. In the ancient Near East, dreams were generally assumed to be communications from the gods. Some were quite simple and straightforward (see Jacob’s dream at Bethel, Genesis 28:10-22), but in cases where the king or Pharaoh was involved special emphasis was sometimes added through the experience of a double dream. Thus here Pharaoh has two visions that warn of the coming famine in Egypt. Similarly, the Sumerian king Gudea is said to have had a double dream in which he was instructed to build a temple. In both cases their dreams were interpreted by magicians or representatives of a god.¹⁰

Pharaoh’s dreams revert to the pattern of the first pair, Joseph’s own (37:5-11), in that they both mean the same thing (v.32) and deal with the triumph of the weak over the strong. And like the intervening pair, those of the chief cupbearer and chief baker (40:9-22), each of the two dreams deals with themes of good fortune and ill, in that order.¹¹

⁹ Adam Clarke’s Commentary

¹⁰ Bible Background Commentary

¹¹ The Jewish Study Bible, Tanakh Translation, Berlin & Brettler, Jewish Publication Society, Oxford Press

Genesis 41:8

And it came to pass in the morning that his spirit was troubled; and he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt, and all the wise men thereof: and Pharaoh told them his dream; but *there was none that could interpret them unto Pharaoh.*

The magicians (*hòartummým*) belonged to a guild expert in handling the ritual books of occult and priestcraft. However, they could not interpret Pharaoh's dreams. A later guild of wise men in Babylon also would be unable to interpret a king's dream, and God would use another Hebrew slave, Daniel, to show that no matter how powerful a nation might be, it is still not beyond God's sovereign control.¹²

[magicians of Egypt] They were the Egyptian priests who understood the sacred hieroglyphic writings. They had a knowledge of art and science, pretended to reveal secrets, interpret hidden things, and foretell what the future held. They accomplished many strange feats by trickery and the power of Satan (Exodus 7:11,22; Exodus 8:7,18). They were divided into four classes, and five men taken from them were the king's counselors.

Called for all the magicians—חַרְטֻמִּים *chartummim*. The word here used may probably mean no more than interpreters of abstruse and difficult subjects; and especially of the Egyptian hieroglyphics, an art which is now entirely lost. It is most likely that the term is Egyptian, and consequently its etymology must remain unknown to us. If Hebrew, Mr. Parkhurst's definition may be as good as any: "חֶרֶט *cheret*, a pen or instrument to write or draw with, and תָּמַם *tam*, to perfect or accomplish; those who were perfect in drawing their sacred, astrological, and hieroglyphical figures or characters, and who, by means of them, pretended to extraordinary feats, among which was the interpretation of dreams. They seem to have been such persons as Josephus (Ant., lib. ii., c. 9, s. 2) calls Ἱερογραμματῆς sacred scribes, or professors of sacred learning."¹³

Wise men—חַכְמֵי־הַיָּדְוָה *chacameyha*, the persons who, according to Porphyry, "addicted themselves to the worship of God and the study of wisdom, passing their whole life in the contemplation of Divine things. Contemplation of the stars, self-purification, arithmetic, and geometry, and singing hymns in honor of their gods, was their continual employment."—See Dodd. It was probably among these that Pythagoras conversed, and from whom he borrowed that modest name by which he wished his countrymen to distinguish him, viz., φιλοσοφος, a philosopher, simply, a lover of wisdom.¹⁴

[his spirit was troubled] God was causing this to reveal Joseph, as in the case of Daniel and Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 2).

¹² Chuck Missler, Notes on Book of Genesis Commentary, Genesis Study, KHouse.org

¹³ Adam Clarke's Commentary

¹⁴ Adam Clarke's Commentary

[none that could interpret] See Daniel 2:10-11; Daniel 4:7; Daniel 5:8.

magicians and wise men. Egypt, as well as the Mesopotamian and Hittite kingdoms, developed guilds of magicians whose task was to interpret signs and dreams and to concoct remedies for various types of medical problems through magical means. These specialists used exorcism to frighten away demons and gods and incantations and curses to transmit evil into some one or some place (seen in the Egyptian execration texts and Jeremiah 19:10-13). Thousands of texts have been discovered throughout the ancient Near East which contain protection spells as well as recipes for the manufacture of amulets to ward off evil and for the construction of dolls, incantation bowls and miniature figures designed to bring destruction on one's enemies. Mesopotamian magic distinguished between black and white magic, and thus practitioners were divided into sorcerers and magicians or wise men. Egypt, however, did not draw this distinction among its guild of magicians. Although their major task was medical, Egyptian magicians seemed to have employed a less respectful manner toward the gods, including providing spells for souls to escape punishment in the underworld (Book of the Dead). It is very unusual in Egypt for the Pharaoh to be in need of an interpreter of his dreams. Since the Pharaoh was considered divine, the gods would communicate to him through dreams, and the meaning was typically presented as transparent to him. The Hebrew word used to describe the specialists Pharaoh sends for is from a technical Egyptian term sometimes thought to describe dream interpreters. It is used to describe the famous official Imhotep in a late inscription (second century B.C.) where he is portrayed giving advice to Pharaoh concerning a seven-year famine.¹⁵

Magicians and wise men were common in the palaces of ancient rulers. Their job description included studying sacred arts and sciences, reading the stars, interpreting dreams, predicting the future, and performing magic. These men had power (see Exodus 7:11-12), but their power was satanic. They were unable to interpret Pharaoh's dream, but God had revealed it to Joseph in prison.¹⁶

See 40:8 n. The inability of the pagan magicians to interpret dreams and accurately predict the future is developed at greater length in Dan. Ch 2, a narrative influenced by the Joseph story. Cf. Isa. 41:21-24.¹⁷

Torah Class: The Pharaoh has two dreams, and they are disturbing to him. Why so disturbing? Because they seemed so real, that after he awoke V7 says that he was relieved to realize they were just dreams. Yet the content was such, that they seemed more than a dream...more like a vision...so he felt he must pursue the meaning. He calls all of his "magicians" and "wise men" to tell him the meaning of these dreams. These two groups of men the Pharaoh summoned were his brain trust, his governmental cabinet; they represented the spiritual and the intellectual elite of Egypt...and they were stymied.

¹⁵ Bible Background Commentary

¹⁶ Life Application Notes

¹⁷ The Jewish Study Bible, Tanakh Translation, Berlin & Brettler, Jewish Publication Society, Oxford Press

The religion of Egypt, the spiritual, consisted of much magic and sorcery to go with the many gods and goddesses. The Pharaoh, as all his of subjects, believed strongly in the ancient Mystery Babylon styled religion of Egypt, so it was an integral part of life. Christians could learn much from the unwavering commitment these pagans had to their religion (even though it was false), for they considered it the center of their lives. Every facet of their existence was tied to their belief system, unaware that it was a counterfeit system designed by Satan; so the Pharaoh naturally had these experts in religion, these spiritualists, as part of his group of close advisers.

Conversely, the “wise men” were not representatives of the spiritual, they were the Egyptian intellectuals; they represented the worldly knowledge and science that had been developed to such a high level in Egypt.

Pharaoh tells these men about his dreams; but they stood silent, having no understanding as to their meaning. The chief cupbearer, who had been imprisoned by Pharaoh two years past, now reluctantly steps forward. He tells Pharaoh about this Joseph who accurately interpreted his, and the chief baker’s, dreams. Pharaoh immediately orders Joseph to be brought before him.¹⁸

Genesis 41:9

Then spake the chief butler unto Pharaoh, saying, I do remember my faults this day:

[my faults] His fault was forgetting Joseph (Genesis 40:14-15,23). It may not have done any good to remember him before it was God's time. There is providence in both forgetting and remembering his fault (Genesis 40:23).

I do remember my faults—It is not possible he could have forgotten the circumstance to which he here alludes; it was too intimately connected with all that was dear to him, to permit him ever to forget it. But it was not convenient for him to remember this before; and probably he would not have remembered it now, had he not seen, that giving this information in such a case was likely to serve his own interest. We are justified in thinking evil of this man because of his scandalous neglect of a person who foretold the rescue of his life from imminent destruction, and who, being unjustly confined, prayed to have his case fairly represented to the king that justice might be done him; but this courtier, though then in the same circumstances himself, found it convenient to forget the poor, friendless Hebrew slave!¹⁹

then spake the chief butler unto Pharaoh, saying, I do remember my faults—This public acknowledgment of the merits of the young Hebrew would, tardy though it was, have reflected credit on the butler had it not been obviously made to ingratiate himself with his royal master. It is right to confess our faults against God, and against our fellow men when that confession is made in the spirit of godly sorrow and penitence. But this man was not much impressed with a sense of the fault he had committed against Joseph; he never thought of God, to whose goodness he was indebted for the prophetic

¹⁸ Torahclass.com/index.html, Thomas Bradford, Merritt Island, Florida

¹⁹ Adam Clarke’s Commentary

announcement of his release, and in acknowledging his former fault against the king, he was practising the courtly art of pleasing his master.²⁰

Chrysostom; “God’s Wonderful Design:

See God’s wonderful design. First he let him have recourse to all those considered wise in those parts so that, when their ignorance was demonstrated, then this prisoner, this captive, this slave, this Hebrew, might be brought forward and unravel what was a mystery to so many, and thus Joseph might make clear to everyone the grace that had descended on him from above. So when all the wise men arrived and were unable to say anything or even open their mouths, then the chief cupbearer’s memory returned, and he informed Pharaoh of what had happened to him, saying, “Today I’m going to bring to light my fault.” (*Homilies on Genesis 63:13*)²¹

Genesis 41:10

Pharaoh was wroth with his servants, and put me in ward in the captain of the guard’s house, *both* me and the chief baker:

Genesis 41:11

And we dreamed a dream in one night, I and he; we dreamed each man according to the interpretation of his dream.

Genesis 41:12

And *there was* there with us a young man, an Hebrew, servant to the captain of the guard; and we told him, and he interpreted to us our dreams; to each man according to his dream he did interpret.

Genesis 41:13

And it came to pass, as he interpreted to us, so it was; me he restored unto mine office, and him he hanged.

Genesis 41:14

Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they brought him hastily out of the dungeon: and he shaved *himself*, and changed his raiment, and came in unto Pharaoh.

[**hastily**] Hebrew: *ruwts* (H7323), made him run. Joseph often prayed for and expected this deliverance.

²⁰ JFB Commentary

²¹ Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, Genesis, Thomas C. Oden, Intervarsity Press

[shaved himself] Shaving was a disgrace in Palestine and many other Eastern nations, but a strict custom of Egyptians who detested long beards. Joseph conformed to the prevailing custom and did all he could to be accepted by Pharaoh. Hebrews shaved as a sign of mourning. Egyptians let their beards grow only when mourning and had a custom of using false beards of plaited hair and of different sizes, according to the rank of the wearer.²²

shaved. As a way of making himself more presentable to the Pharaoh, Joseph shaves. This may have involved shaving the head (Numbers 6:9) as well as the face (Jeremiah 41:5). He would have thereby changed his appearance to look more like an Egyptian. Egyptian wall paintings demonstrate that the Egyptians were typically clean-shaven.

Our most important opportunities may come when we least expect them. Joseph was brought hastily from the dungeon and pushed before Pharaoh. Did he have time to prepare? Yes and no. He had no warning that he would be suddenly pulled from prison and questioned by the king. Yet Joseph was ready for almost anything because of his right relationship with God. It was not Joseph's knowledge of dreams that helped him interpret their meaning. It was his knowledge of God. Be ready for opportunities by getting to know more about God. Then you will be ready to call on him when opportunities come your way.²³

The Heb word for dungeon (also in 40:15) is the same as that for the "pit" into which Joseph's brothers threw him in 37:20, 22, 24, 28. The chief cupbearer's belated act of remembrance has suddenly reversed Joseph's repeated descents – into the pit, into Egypt, into prison. The pattern is familiar from prayers of thanksgiving (e.g., Ps 30, esp. vv. 4, 10). For the fourth time, Joseph's clothes are changed (the previous instances are in 37:3, 23; 39:12), this time (like the first) as a sign of elevation.²⁴

Genesis 41:15

And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I have dreamed a dream, and *there is none that can interpret it:* and I have heard say of thee, *that thou canst understand a dream to interpret it.*

Genesis 41:16

And Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, *It is not in me: God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace.*

When Joseph stood before Pharaoh he declared that the interpretation was with God alone.

²² Dake's Study Notes, Dakes's Study Bible

²³ Life Application Notes

²⁴ The Jewish Study Bible, Tanakh Translation, Berlin & Brettler, Jewish Publication Society, Oxford Press

[It is not in me: God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace] As always he spoke of the God of Israel, giving glory to Him and expressing absolute faith in His power and faithfulness (cp. Daniel 2:27-28; Daniel 4:8-9; Daniel 5:18-23).

It is not in me, etc.—בלעדִי biladai, without or independently of me—I am not essential to thy comfort, God himself has thee under his care. And he will send thee, or answer thee, peace; thou shalt have prosperity (שְׁלוֹם shelom) howsoever ominous thy dreams may appear. By this answer he not only conciliated the mind of the king, but led him to expect his help from that GOD from whom alone all comfort, protection, and prosperity, must proceed.²⁵

Joseph made sure that he gave the credit to God. We should be careful to do the same. To take the honor for ourselves is a form of stealing God's honor. Don't be silent when you know you should be giving glory and credit to God.

Genesis 41:17

And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, In my dream, behold, I stood upon the bank of the river:

Genesis 41:18

And, behold, there came up out of the river seven kine, fatfleshed and well favoured; and they fed in a meadow:

[out of the river seven kine, fatfleshed and well favored] Both the kine and the ears of wheat were dependent upon the Nile for life.

Seven kine, fat-fleshed Observe that the seven fat and the seven lean kine coming out of the same river plainly show, at once, the cause both of the plenty and the dearth. It is well known that there is scarcely any rain in Egypt; and that the country depends for its fertility on the overflowing of the Nile; and that the fertility is in proportion to the duration and quantity of the overflow. We may therefore safely conclude that the seven years of plenty were owing to an extraordinary overflowing of the Nile; and that the seven years of dearth were occasioned by a very partial, or total want of this essentially necessary inundation. Thus then the two sorts of cattle, signifying years of plenty and want, might be said to come out of the same river, as the inundation was either complete, partial, or wholly restrained.

there came up out of the river seven kine—Cows now, of the buffalo kind, are seen daily plunging into the Nile; when their huge form is gradually emerging, they seem as if rising "out of the river."

²⁵ Adam Clarke's Commentary

and they fed in a meadow—Nile grass, the aquatic plants that grow on the marshy banks of that river, particularly the lotus kind, on which cattle were usually fattened.

Genesis 41:19

And, behold, seven other kine came up after them, poor and very ill favoured and leanfleshed, such as I never saw in all the land of Egypt for badness:

Genesis 41:20

And the lean and the ill favoured kine did eat up the first seven fat kine:

Genesis 41:21

And when they had eaten them up, it could not be known that they had eaten them; but they *were* still ill favoured, as at the beginning. So I awoke.

Nothing can more powerfully mark the excess and severity of the famine than creatures of the kine eating each other, and yet without any effect; remaining as lean and as wretched as they were before. A sense of want increases the appetite, and stimulates the digestive powers to unusual action; hence the concoction of the food becomes very rapid, and it is hurried through the intestines before its nutritive particles can be sufficiently absorbed; and thus, though much is eaten, very little nourishment is derived from it. And when they had eaten them up, it could not be known that they had eaten them; but they were still ill favored, as at the beginning. A most nervous and physically correct description.²⁶

Genesis 41:22

And I saw in my dream, and, behold, seven ears came up in one stalk, full and good:

Genesis 41:23

And, behold, seven ears, withered, thin, *and* blasted with the east wind, sprung up after them:

Genesis 41:24

And the thin ears devoured the seven good ears: and I told *this* unto the magicians; but *there was* none that could declare *it* to me.

²⁶ Adam Clarke's Commentary

the thin ears devoured the seven good ears—*devoured* is a different word from that used in Genesis 41:4 and conveys the idea of destroying, by absorbing to themselves all the nutritious virtue of the soil around them.

[magicians of Egypt] They were the Egyptian priests who understood the sacred hieroglyphic writings. They had a knowledge of art and science, pretended to reveal secrets, interpret hidden things, and foretell what the future held. They accomplished many strange feats by trickery and the power of Satan (Exodus 7:11,22; Exodus 8:7,18). They were divided into four classes, and five men taken from them were the king's counselors.

Genesis 41:25

And Joseph said unto Pharaoh, The dream of Pharaoh is one: God hath showed Pharaoh what he is about to do.

[one] Both dreams signified the same thing. They were repeated to emphasize the truth of what was to happen (2 Cor. 13:1).

[God hath shewed Pharaoh what he is about to do] Joseph directed the king to God as the author of these events, since such famine did not come from natural causes but from providence which governed the flow of the Nile. God brings about conditions on earth to fulfill His own will, especially when dealing with His chosen people. God told Abraham many years before that Israel would go into Egypt and come out again with great substance (Genesis 15:12-16). He has even made known His future dealing to pagan rulers whom He has used many times to further the divine plan (Genesis 41:28; Daniel 2:28,37-38; Daniel 4:17,25-27; Isaiah 44:28; Isaiah 45:1-4).²⁷

God hath showed Pharaoh what he is about to do—Joseph thus shows the Egyptian king that though the ordinary cause of plenty or want is the river Nile, yet its inundations are under the direction of God: the dreams are sent by him, not only to signify beforehand the plenty and want, but to show also that all these circumstances, however fortuitous they may appear to man, are under the direction of an overruling Providence.²⁸

Joseph said, . . . The dream . . . is one—They both pointed to the same event—a remarkable dispensation of seven years of unexampled abundance, to be followed by a similar period of unparalleled dearth. The repetition of the dream in two different forms was designed to show the absolute certainty and speedy arrival of this public crisis; the interpretation was accompanied by several suggestions of practical wisdom for meeting so great an emergency as was impending.²⁹

²⁷ Dake's Study Notes, Dake's Study Bible

²⁸ Adam Clarke's Commentary

²⁹ JFB Commentary

Genesis 41:26

The seven good kine *are* seven years; and the seven good ears *are* seven years: the dream *is* one.

Genesis 41:27

And the seven thin and ill favoured kine that came up after them *are* seven years; and the seven empty ears blasted with the east wind shall be seven years of famine.

Genesis 41:28

This *is* the thing which I have spoken unto Pharaoh: What God *is* about to do he showeth unto Pharaoh.

Genesis 41:29

Behold, there come seven years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt:

Genesis 41:30

And there shall arise after them seven years of famine; and all the plenty shall be forgotten in the land of Egypt; and the famine shall consume the land;

famine in Egypt. Although Egypt was one of the most consistent grain-producing areas in the ancient Near East because of the regularity of the Nile floods, it was occasionally plagued with famine. Such a disaster is mentioned in *Visions of Neferti*, an Egyptian document dating to the reign of Amenemhet I (1991-1962 B.C.). Here, as in Joseph's narration, a vision is interpreted and a national calamity predicted.³⁰

Genesis 41:31

And the plenty shall not be known in the land by reason of that famine following; for it *shall be* very grievous.

The plenty shall not be known in the land by reason of that famine following—As Egypt depends for its fertility on the flowing of the Nile, and this flowing is not always equal, there must be a point to which it must rise to saturate the land sufficiently, in order to produce grain sufficient for the support of its inhabitants. Pliny, *Hist. Nat.*, lib. v., cap. 9, has given us a scale by which the plenty and dearth may be ascertained; and, from what I have been able to collect from modern travelers, this scale may be yet considered as perfectly correct.

³⁰ Bible Background Commentary

“The ordinary height of the inundations is sixteen cubits. When the waters are lower than this standard they do not overflow the whole ground; when above this standard, they are too long in running off. In the first case the ground is not saturated: by the second, the waters are detained so long on the ground that seed-time is lost. The province marks both. If it rise only twelve cubits, a famine is the consequence. Even at thirteen cubits hunger prevails; fourteen cubits produces general rejoicing; fifteen, perfect security; and sixteen, all the luxuries of life.”³¹

Genesis 41:32

And for that the dream was doubled unto Pharaoh twice; *it is* because the thing is established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass.

[plenty shall not be known in the land by reason of the famine following] As if there had been no plenty.

[grievous] Hebrew: means heavy to bear. *kabed*, (H3515) *kaw-bade'*; from Hebrew 3513 (*kabad*); *heavy*; figurative in a good sense (*numerous*) or in a bad sense (*severe, difficult, stupid*) :- (so) great, grievous, hard (-ened), (too) heavy (-ier), laden, much, slow, sore, thick.

God, Sovereignty—God has many ways of making Himself known to people. In this case God, in His sovereignty over all of life, spoke to Pharaoh through his dream as interpreted by Joseph. God sometimes speaks through the strong feelings of the heart, the words spoken by a faithful prophet or preacher, the reading of a written message (Scripture or otherwise), or through dreams. Just as not all spoken or written words are a message from God, not all dreams are a word from God.³²

Genesis 41:33

Now therefore let Pharaoh look out a man discreet and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt.

Joseph explained that because the dream came in two versions it signified that it was of God, and would be carried out soon. During God’s dealings with him several things must have been on Joseph’s mind: his own *two dreams*, his *two imprisonments* (37:36; 39:20), the *two dreamers* in prison, and now Pharaoh’s *two dreams*.³³

Torah Class: Pharaoh tells Joseph that he has had dreams, which his brightest and best not could interpret; but that he was told that Joseph could. Joseph answers completely truthfully: “It isn’t in me. God will give Pharaoh his answer.....”

³¹ Adam Clarke’s Commentary

³² Disciple’s Study Bible

³³ Chuck Missler, Notes on Book of Genesis Commentary, Genesis Study, KHouse.org

And, so here stands the Hebrew slave, Joseph, in the company of Pharaoh and the most admired religious leaders and the intellectual elite in all of Egypt, being asked to do what they couldn't possibly do, for they were not equipped to do it. Since indeed these were prophetic dreams of Holy truth given by God to Pharaoh, how could the simple, wholly inadequate, employment of worldly knowledge and false, though sincere, religion possibly fathom their meaning? It can NEVER be so; but it forever will be that **only** the children of God, in spiritual union with the Father, can know the truth. And, Joseph is about to announce the truth to Pharaoh.

First, Joseph makes it clear that these dreams are from God. Next, he informs Pharaoh that both of these dreams are concerning the same matter: a coming time of great famine. The first dream was about cows; first 7 healthy ones, then 7 sickly ones. The second dream was about corn; first 7 healthy stalks of corn, then 7 sickly ones. It was important that there were two dreams because one concerned the livestock, and the other the field crops; that is, both major elements of the food supply were going to be effected by what was coming.

As is God's way, He does not bring judgment without sufficient warning for those who pay heed to Him. So, God says He will see to it that there will be 7 wonderfully, unusually, abundant years of food growth and harvest, before 7 years...not of less than normal production... but of TERRIBLE famine.³⁴

Ephrem the Syrian; "Joseph's modesty."

When Joseph said, "Let Pharaoh select a man," he spoke about himself. Joseph, out of modesty, did not say it openly in his own name, but he would not give it to another, for he knew that no one else would be able to make suitable provision for the great scourge that was coming upon them. Joseph became great in the eyes of Pharaoh through his interpretation of Pharaoh's dreams but even more through the beneficial counsel that his mind had devised. (*Commentary on Genesis 35:5*)³⁵

Ramban (Nachmanides): "Now therefore let Pharaoh find a man understanding and wise." Joseph told Pharaoh that he will need an understanding and wise man who will be appointed to administer the entire land, and he in turn will appoint overseers under him who will go through the land and gather all the food since the ruler cannot travel throughout the entire land. He told him that the man must be understanding and wise. Understanding, in order to know how to support the people of Egypt from his hand with bread, in accordance with their family requirements, to supply them with their sustenance, and sell the balance to other countries in order to accumulate wealth and money for Pharaoh. Wise, in order to know how to preserve the produce so that it should not rot by mixing with each kind some natural preservative such as the salty substances used for the preservation of wheat, which our Rabbis have mentioned, and some raw silver dust, which prevents the grain from getting mothy, and similar things. Thus the Sages said in Bereshith Rabbah: "He mixed the grain with earth and sawdust, things which preserve the grain." Joseph mentioned all this so that they should choose him for this task for the wise man's eyes are in his head.³⁶

³⁴ Torahclass.com/index.html, Thomas Bradford, Merritt Island, Florida

³⁵ Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, Genesis, Thomas C. Oden, Intervarsity Press

³⁶ Ramban, Nachmanides, Commentary on the Torah, Genesis, Rabbi C. Chavel, Shilo Publishing House

Chumash: The Last Word: Joseph, a righteous person, dreamed about working in the field with his brothers, binding sheaves. Pharaoh, a wicked man had a dream with involved no effort on his part at all.

This highlights the fact that that all matters of holiness require effort, ensuring that what we receive from God in return should not be unearned “bread of shame” (Jerusalem Talmud, Oriah 1:3).

When a person dedicates himself to serious work, he has the promise of success that, “you labored (and therefore) you discovered” (Megillah 6b). In fact, a person is capable of achieving success far beyond the proportion of effort invented – following the pattern of, “always ascending when dealing with matters of holiness.”³⁷

Genesis 41:34

Let Pharaoh do *this*, and let him appoint officers over the land, and take up the fifth part of the land of Egypt in the seven plenteous years.

[fifth part of the land] It was customary for landowners to pay a tenth to the king, so doubling this during the good years was not too great a burden.

A man discreet and wise—As it is impossible that Joseph could have foreseen his own elevation, consequently he gave this advice without any reference to himself. The counsel therefore was either immediately inspired by God, or was dictated by policy, prudence, and sound sense.³⁸

Now therefore let Pharaoh look out a man—The explanation given, when the key to the dreams was supplied, appears to have been satisfactory to the king and his courtiers; and we may suppose that much and anxious conversation arose, in the course of which Joseph might have been asked whether he had anything further to say. No doubt the providence of God provided the opportunity of his suggesting what was necessary.

Take up the fifth part of the land—What is still called the meery, or that part of the produce which is claimed by the king by way of tax. It is probable that in Joseph’s time it was not so much as a fifth part, most likely a tenth: but as this was an extraordinary occasion, and the earth brought forth by handfuls, Genesis 41:47, the king would be justified in requiring a fifth; and from the great abundance, the people could pay this increased tax without feeling it to be oppressive.³⁹

³⁷ Chumash, The Gutnick Edition, Genesis, Rabbi Chaim Miller, Published by Kol Menachem

³⁸ Adam Clarke’s Commentary

³⁹ Adam Clarke’s Commentary

Genesis 41:35

And let them gather all the food of those good years that come, and lay up corn under the hand of Pharaoh, and let them keep food in the cities.

Joseph advised Pharaoh to choose a wise man who would oversee storing 20 percent of the grain during each of the years of plenty for the coming years of famine. Wisely planning ahead is a basic principle of practical living.

[under the hand of Pharaoh] Under the appointment of Pharaoh, to be completely at the disposal of the king.

storage cities. Egypt's management of the Nile River and its predictability made that land a breadbasket for the rest of the ancient Near East. Storage cities were a hallmark of a prosperous people who thought in terms of the long run and realized that famine was always a possibility that needed to be planned for. There would typically be storage cities centrally located in each geographical region.

Genesis 41:36

And that food shall be for store to the land against the seven years of famine, which shall be in the land of Egypt; that the land perish not through the famine.

After interpreting Pharaoh's dream, Joseph gave the king a survival plan for the next 14 years. The only way to prevent starvation was through careful planning; without a famine plan Egypt would have turned from prosperity to ruin. Many find detailed planning boring and unnecessary. But planning is a responsibility, not an option. Joseph was able to save a nation by translating God's plan for Egypt into practical actions (implementation). We must take time to translate God's plan for us into practical actions too.⁴⁰

Unlike the implication of Joseph's own two dreams (37:5-11), the domination of the weak over the strong is not the last word. Foresight and prudence, Joseph tells Pharaoh, can enable the land to survive catastrophe. As things turn out, the survival of Egypt will have a more particular meaning as well: It foreshadows and enables the healing of the rift between Joseph and his brothers.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Life Application Notes

⁴¹ The Jewish Study Bible, Tanakh Translation, Berlin & Brettler, Jewish Publication Society, Oxford Press

Genesis 41:37

And the thing was good in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of all his servants.

[And the thing was good in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of all his servants]

Joseph spoke by inspiration and faith, remembering the dreams he had told his brothers. God had already revealed a great destiny for him, enabling him to speak with freedom and authority in recommending to Pharaoh what would save the nation (especially Joseph's own people) from famine. Pharaoh was prepared by the vivid revelation of God to hear and adopt Joseph's plan.

The thing was good—Pharaoh and his courtiers saw that the counsel was prudent, and should be carefully followed.

Torah Class: What comes next is wisdom from Joseph about what to do about the coming trial. Of course, the nature of the wisdom is such that we can have no doubt as to its source: the Creator of all. Joseph says, in paraphrase: Pharaoh, during the next seven years, make it a law that all throughout Egypt, 20% of all produce will be stored away for that day, 7 years into the future, when it will be needed for the lean times. Rather than living especially high during the 7 years of unusual plenty, be wise, and use that time to prepare. I suspect that the people were not too thrilled at this ruling. After all, as they looked around all they saw was prosperity. The future seemed bright, without a cloud on the horizon. Why this negativity? No doubt, many saw it as a conspiracy of these detested foreign Hyksos rulers to simply confiscate food from the people and somehow enrich themselves. How difficult it is to believe God, instead of our eyes, especially when things are going well. But, one has to give the Pharaoh a lot of credit for taking Joseph seriously...and ACTING on it, and not just pondering it.

I wonder: would we have the faith to do what this heathen Pharaoh was about to do? Would we have the faith to hear from God that a time of terrible tribulation was nearing, and that we needed to prepare by putting aside some of our time, our riches, our labors, our interests, ourselves? Could we intentionally deprive ourselves when we were in the midst of abundance, when life was good? Could we do it on FAITH, and not by what we see with our eyes? Could we do it when the best and brightest minds, and our most prestigious religious leaders, tell us that the future is unknowable...except as they can discern it from their positions of authority?

Beloved, I sure hope we can; because we HAVE been told. We are right now in that time of relative abundance and plenty, just before the onset of the greatest trial mankind has ever, or will ever, experience. How do I know this? God has revealed it to us. He has shown us in his Word what signs to look for; and they have happened, and are happening.

He has told us unequivocally that when Jerusalem is back in the hands of the Jews, that that generation will see the coming of the Lord. He has also told us that a few months before Jesus once again sets His feet on the Mt. of Olives, there will be a time so terrible that we cannot possibly comprehend it. He has told us to prepare; prepare by giving over our lives to Him. By following the wisdom that comes from God: living within our means, getting out of debt, seeking Him instead of personal pleasures, learning to rely on Him and nothing else. Trusting Him, believing Him, and not what our fleshly senses and

corrupted intellect tells us. For, those of us in our time who do not prepare will experience devastation many fold more than what Egypt was about to experience.

It doesn't matter that most of our religious leaders are blind to it. It doesn't matter that our academic elite scoff at it. It doesn't matter that our government sees everything in terms of geo-political realities, and our lawmakers see things in terms of attaining and maintaining personal power. For most of our secular and religious leaders are as oblivious to reality as were Pharaoh's wise men and magicians. You see, God has not entrusted the truth to them: He has entrusted it to US...His true Church. Not the façade of Church institution, with its bureaucracies and man-made doctrines; rather His people, His followers, sanctified through the blood of Christ.⁴²

Genesis 41:38

And Pharaoh said unto his servants, Can we find *such a one* as *this is*, a man in whom the Spirit of God *is*?

Pharaoh said unto his servants—The kings of ancient Egypt were assisted in the management of state affairs by the advice of the most distinguished members of the priestly order; and, accordingly, before admitting Joseph to the new and extraordinary office that was to be created, those ministers were consulted as to the expediency and propriety of the appointment.⁴³

[in whom the spirit of God is] It was evident to Pharaoh and his servants that Joseph had divine wisdom by the Spirit of God (Genesis 41:37-39). This doesn't mean they renounced all idolatry. They could remain idolaters and still recognize 'Elohiym (HSN-430) as the God of the Hebrews.

In whom the Spirit of God is?—רוח אלהים ruach Elohim, the identical words used Genesis 1:2; and certainly to be understood here as in the preceding place. If the Egyptians were idolaters, they acknowledged Joseph's God; and it is not to be supposed that they only became acquainted with him on this occasion. The knowledge of the true God was in Egypt long before; but it is very likely that though they acknowledged his influence with respect to Joseph, as they saw most clearly that he acted under an influence far beyond that of their magicians, for he interpreted dreams which they could not; yet they might, notwithstanding, have their gods many and their lords many at this time, for we know that in religious matters they were exceedingly corrupt afterwards.⁴⁴

Pharaoh recognized that Joseph was a man "in whom is the spirit of God." You probably won't get to interpret dreams for a king, but those who know you should be able to see God in you, through your kind words, merciful acts, and wise advice. Do your relatives, neighbors, and coworkers see you as a person in whom the Spirit of God lives?

⁴² Torahclass.com/index.html, Thomas Bradford, Merritt Island, Florida

⁴³ JFB Commentary

⁴⁴ Adam Clarke's Commentary

Genesis 41:39

And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Forasmuch as God hath showed thee all this, *there is none so discreet and wise as thou art*:

Genesis 41:40

Thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou.

Joseph had been faithful over all the little things God sent him; now he would become ruler over all the land of Egypt under Pharaoh.

According unto thy word shall all my people be ruled—Literally, At thy mouth shall all my people kiss. In the eastern countries it is customary to kiss any thing that comes from a superior, and this is done by way of testifying respect and submission. In this sense the words in the text are to be understood: All the people shall pay the profoundest respect and obedience to all thy orders and commands.⁴⁵

according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled—literally, "kiss." This refers to the edict granting official power to Joseph, to be issued in the form of a firman, as in all Oriental countries; and all who should receive that order would kiss it, according to the usual Eastern mode of acknowledging obedience and respect for the sovereign.⁴⁶

second to Pharaoh. Many Egyptian nobles could make the claim of being second only to Pharaoh, and several different titles imply this position: "Great Favorite of the Lord of the Two Lands," and "Foremost among his Courtiers" are two that have been identified from inscriptions.

Joseph rose quickly to the top, from prison walls to Pharaoh's palace. His training for this important position involved being first a slave and then a prisoner. In each situation he learned the importance of serving God and others. Whatever your situation, no matter how undesirable, consider it part of your training program for serving God.⁴⁷

Joseph is once again second in rank. See 39:19-23 n. Joseph will indeed rely, just as his brothers feared (37:8, 10-11), but with this crucial qualification: His rule will be rooted not in sheer power, but in the benefit he provides to the less fortunate. This corresponds to an ideal of kingship widespread in the ancient Near East, in which the king is the rescuer and servant of the people (cf. Judg. 11:4-11).⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Adam Clarke's Commentary

⁴⁶ JFB Commentary

⁴⁷ Life Application Notes

⁴⁸ The Jewish Study Bible, Tanakh Translation, Berlin & Brettler, Jewish Publication Society, Oxford Press

Chrysostom; “Endurance gave Joseph character.”

See how all of a sudden the prisoner is made king of the whole of Egypt; the one sent to prison by the chief steward was raised by the king to the highest rank; his former master suddenly saw that the man whom he had cast into prison as an adulterer was awarded authority over the whole of Egypt. Do you see how important it is to bear trials thankfully? Hence Paul also said, “Distress promotes endurance, endurance promotes character, character promotes hope, and hope does not disappoint.” So take note: Joseph bore distress with endurance, endurance gave him character, having such character he acted in hope, and hope did not disappoint him. (*Homilies on Genesis 63:17*)⁴⁹

Genesis 41:41

And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, See, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt.

[all the land of Egypt] According to the monuments, Apepi had only recently become king, having reigned with his father and grandfather for a time.

Notice the significance of this. At the beginning this boy had been in the back of the prison, forgotten, forsaken, and forlorn. Now he is brought out at the right psychological moment because nobody else can interpret the dream of Pharaoh. Not only does he interpret it, but in his enthusiasm and because he is a man of ability, he suggests what Pharaoh should do. God is leading him in all of this, of course.

There is to be a worldwide famine, a famine so severe that even Egypt will be affected. Because Egypt is an irrigated land, it is not dependent upon rainfall. The Upper Nile, the Blue Nile, comes down from central Africa and furnishes the water upon which Egypt depends. Egypt gets about an inch of rainfall in a good year; so it is famine all the time as far as rainfall is concerned. But the Nile overflows the land every year, bringing not only water, but sediment which fertilizes the soil. However, God has warned that there will be seven years of famine which will affect Egypt, also.

As Pharaoh listens to Joseph, what he says makes sense. It is too bad that in my own nation there have not been men in our government who have had some sense of the future. Our foreign policy since the years before World War II, even from the days of Hitler’s rise to power, has been more or less a first-aid program, something rushed in as an emergency measure. Someone once asked Gladstone what is the measure of a great statesman. He said it is the man who knows the direction God is going for the next fifty years. Well, here in Genesis, Pharaoh is told what is going to happen for the next fourteen years. Our nation could use a man like this, also.

Now, who could take over better than Joseph? Pharaoh recognized that he was a man of ability. Now don’t you see how God had been training him in the home of Potiphar? We may wonder why in the world God ever let him go into that home in the first place. Now we realize that he had received quite a bit of training in the home of Potiphar where he had charge of everything the man owned. Now he is going to have charge of

⁴⁹ Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, Genesis, Thomas C. Oden, Intervarsity Press

everything in the land of Egypt. This is a tremendous transition in his life. He went all the way from the back of the jail to the throne next to that of Pharaoh.⁵⁰

Genesis 41:42

And Pharaoh took off his ring from his hand, and put it upon Joseph's hand, and arrayed him in vestures of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck;

[his ring] A ring with the king's seal and name on it, by which he could transact all business for Pharaoh (Genesis 41:42).

And Pharaoh took off his ring—and put it upon Joseph's hand—In this ring was probably set the king's signet, by which the royal instruments were sealed; and thus Joseph was constituted what we would call Lord Chancellor, or Lord Keeper of the Privy Seal.

signet ring. Kings and royal administrators used a signet ring to seal official documents. This ring would have been distinctive and would have contained the name (cartouche in Egypt) of the king. Anyone using it thus acted in the name of the king (see Numbers 31:50; Esther 3:10; Tobit 1:20; 1 Macc. 6:15). The chains and linen garment are given in a ceremony of investiture providing him with the accessories that will signify his status, rank and office.⁵¹

[fine linen] Or silk, worn by the Egyptian priesthood, to which the king himself belonged.

Vestures of fine linen—שש shesh. Whether this means linen or cotton is not known. It seems to have been a term by which both were denominated; or it may be some other substance or cloth with which we are unacquainted. If the fine linen of Egypt was such as that which invests the bodies of the mummies, and these in general were persons of the first distinction, and consequently were enveloped in cloth of the finest quality, it was only fine comparatively speaking, Egypt being the only place at that time where such cloth was manufactured. I have often examined the cloth about the bodies of the most splendidly ornamented mummies, and found it sackcloth when compared with the fine Irish linens. As this shesh appears to have been a part of the royal clothing, it was probably both scarce and costly. "By comparing," says Parkhurst, "Exodus 25:4, 26:1, with 2 Chronicles 2:14, and Exodus 26:31, with 2 Chronicles 3:14, it appears that בוץ buts, cotton, is called שש shesh; and by comparing Exodus 28:42, with Exodus 39:28, that בד bad, linen, is also called שש shesh; so that shesh seems a name expressive of either of these, from their cheerful vivid whiteness."⁵²

⁵⁰ McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (1:166). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁵¹ Bible Background Commentary

⁵² Adam Clarke's Commentary

[gold chain about his neck] A symbol of dignity and honor worn by all rulers and people of high rank.

Put a gold chain about his neck—This was not merely a badge of office. The chain might be intended to point out the union which should subsist between all parts of the government—the king, his ministers, and the people; as also that necessary dependence which they had reciprocally on each other, as well as the connection which must be preserved between the different members of the body politic, and the laws and institutions by which they were to be governed. Its being of gold might be intended to show the excellence, utility, and permanence of a government constituted on wise, just, and equal laws. We are justified in drawing such inferences as these, because in ancient times, in all nations, every thing was made an emblem or representation of some spiritual or moral subject it is strange that, probably without adverting to the reasons, the chain of gold worn about the neck is in different nations an emblem of civil authority.⁵³

This is Joseph's fifth and final change of clothes.

Ramban (Nachmanides): "And pharaoh took off his ring from his hand."

The giving of the king's ring is a sign that the person to whom he hands it is to be second to him in rank. This the language of Rashi.

The correct interpretation is that the king's ring contains his seal, just as it is said, *And sealed with the king's ring*. The king thus gave Joseph his seal so that he should be a *leader and commander* of the entire government, and seal with the king's ring whatever he desires.⁵⁴

Genesis 41:43

And he made him to ride in the second chariot which he had; and they cried before him, Bow the knee: and he made him ruler over all the land of Egypt.

The challenging words of Mordecai to Esther might well have been spoken to Joseph: "Who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" (Est 4:14).

(Esther 4:14) *For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?*

[Bow the knee] An act of prostration before royalty.

they cried before him, Bow the knee—*abrech*, an Egyptian term, not referring to prostration, but signifying, according to some, "father" (compare Genesis 45:8);

⁵³ Adam Clarke's Commentary

⁵⁴ Ramban, Nachmanides, Commentary on the Torah, Genesis, Rabbi C. Chavel, Shilo Publishing House

according to others, "native prince"—that is, proclaimed him naturalized, in order to remove all popular dislike to him as a foreigner.⁵⁵

Genesis 41:44

And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I am Pharaoh, and without thee shall no man lift up his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt.

[I am Pharaoh, and without thee shall no man lift up his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt] As surely as I am king you will have absolute authority in all Egypt.

Joseph's perquisites. Riding in a chariot with a set of guardsmen to clear his path and proclaim his position as "second in command" gave Joseph extremely high status (see 2 Samuel 15:1; Esther 6:7-9). The title of second only to Pharaoh, or viceroy (Akkadian *terdennu*; Isaiah 20:1 *tartan*), gave Joseph extraordinary powers and would have required all but the king to bow to him. Furthermore, since Joseph had been given the king's favor or protection, no one was permitted to "raise a hand or foot" against him or oppose his orders (compare the powers granted in Ezra 7:21-26).⁵⁶

Genesis 41:45

And Pharaoh called Joseph's name Zaphnathpaaneah; and he gave him to wife Asenath the daughter of Potipherah priest of On. And Joseph went out over all the land of Egypt.

Zaphnathpaaneah, in the Coptic, according to some scholars = "A revealer of secrets," or, "The man to whom secrets are revealed." As a token of Joseph's new status, Pharaoh gave him a wife, Asenath, from the priestly family of On (a city which was a center of sun worship 7 miles north of Cairo and also known as Heliopolis).⁵⁷

[Zaphnath-paaneah] Originally, an Egyptian word meaning "abundance of life." Jerome translates it "Savior of the world."

Zaphnath-paaneah—The meaning of this title is as little known as that of *abrech* in the preceding verse. Some translate it, The revealer of secrets; others, The treasury of glorious comfort. St. Jerome translates the whole verse in the most arbitrary manner. *Vertitque nomen ejus, et vocavit eum, lingua Aegyptiaca, Salvatorem mundi.* "And he changed his name, and called him in the Egyptian language, The savior of the world." None of the Asiatic versions acknowledge this extraordinary gloss, and it is certainly worthy of no regard. The Anglo-Saxon nearly copies the Vulgate: And named him in Egyptian, The healer of the world. All the etymologies hitherto given of this word are, to say the least of them, doubtful. I believe it

⁵⁵ JFB Commentary

⁵⁶ Bible Background Commentary

⁵⁷ Chuck Missler, Notes on Book of Genesis Commentary, Genesis Study, KHouse.org

also to be an Egyptian epithet, designating the office to which he was now raised; and similar to our compound terms, Prime-Minister, Lord Chancellor, High-Treasurer, Chief Justice, etc.⁵⁸

Egyptian name. The intent of giving Joseph an Egyptian name is to complete the transformation process of the investiture ceremony. Egyptianized, he is more likely to be accepted at court and by the Egyptian people (see the Egyptian tale of Sinuhe's return to Egypt and his consignment of his barbarian clothing to the "sand crawlers"). This practice of renaming a Semite official is also found in the reign of Pharaoh Merneptah (1224-1208 B.C.). The meaning of Joseph's Egyptian name is uncertain, but may be "the God has spoken and he will live" or "the one who knows."⁵⁹

[Asenath] An Egyptian word meaning "belonging to Neith," the Egyptian Minerva and goddess of handicraft.

[Poti-pherah] An Egyptian word meaning "belonging to the sun." On was the city of the sun god, identical with the Syrian Baal. Joseph married into one of the most influential and noble families in Egypt. The chief priest's power was great and his office hereditary. The priests were the wealthy landowners, the aristocracy whose statues were in the temples of the gods like those of the Pharaohs. There is no likelihood that the Poti-pherah mentioned here is the same as the Potiphar who had purchased Joseph, and, on the false accusations of his wife, cast him into prison. The Scripture gives no intimation that they were one and the same person.

Joseph's position. The job description and investiture ceremony detailed here give Joseph a position in Egyptian government comparable to "Grand Vizier" or "Overseer of the Royal Estates," both of which appear in Egyptian documents (see 1 Kings 16:9; Isaiah 22:15, 19-21, for use of this latter title in Israel's bureaucracy). Such a position is detailed in Egyptian tomb paintings, showing the entire sequence of events from the granting of the title to the placing of robes and rings on the appointee by the Pharaoh. Joseph functions much the same as the "Overseer of the Granaries of Upper and Lower Egypt" would have done. Such a position for a non-Egyptian is uncommon prior to the Hyksos period (1750-1550 B.C.), when a greater number of Semites served in Egypt. From the El Amarna reign of Akhenaten comes a tomb of the Semitic official Tutu, who was appointed "highest mouth in the whole country," a position with powers comparable to Joseph's. Biographies in Egyptian tombs and literature from Egypt such as the *Story of Sinuhe* give us ample information about the details of the life of officials of Pharaoh. It is not unusual to find accounts of officials who were elevated from lowly status to high positions of authority. In Sinuhe's story he fled the royal court and lived in exile for many years, finally returning and being honored. As a result the description of Joseph's elevation and honors can be seen as typical against the Egyptian background of the time.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Adam Clarke's Commentary

⁵⁹ Bible Background Commentary

⁶⁰ Bible Background Commentary

priest of On. The marriage arranged for Joseph allied him with one of the most powerful priestly families in Egypt. During the period from 1600 to 1100 B.C., only the priests of Ptah of Memphis were more influential. The priest of On officiated at all major festivals and supervised lesser priests who served the sun god Re in the temple city of Heliopolis (ten miles northeast of Cairo).

On—called Aven (Ezekiel 30:17) and also Beth-shemesh (Jeremiah 43:13). In looking at this profusion of honors heaped suddenly upon Joseph, it cannot be doubted that he would humbly yet thankfully acknowledge the hand of a special Providence in conducting him through all his checkered course to almost royal power; and we, who know more than Joseph did, cannot only see that his advancement was subservient to the most important purposes relative to the Church of God, but learn the great lesson that a Providence directs the minutest events of human life.⁶¹

In Egyptian, Asenath means “the one who belongs to (the goddess) Neith.” Since Jewish law does not recognize any marriage between a Jew and a Gentile (see 26:34-35 n.), Jewish tradition came to interpret Asenath as the prototypical convert to Judaism. Her powerful story is told at length in an important Hellenistic novella, “Joseph and Asenath.” Rabbinic tradition identifies her father, Potiphera, with the Potiphar of ch 39, but this is unlikely.⁶²

The question is raised concerning the reason for Joseph’s marriage to the daughter of a pagan priest (24:3; 28:1; 34:16; Deut 7:3). It is possible that Asenath adopted the faith of Joseph. Also, the passages forbidding marriages to idolaters up to this time refer to the accursed Canaanites, not to the Egyptians.⁶³

In order to “Egyptianize” Joseph, Pharaoh gave him an Egyptian name and an Egyptian wife. The meaning of his Egyptian name is uncertain. *Asenath* means “she belongs to Neith” (a goddess of the Egyptians). *On* is the city of Heliopolis, a center for the worship of the sun god, Ra.

Genesis 41:46

And Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh king of Egypt. And Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh, and went throughout all the land of Egypt.

From the prison to the palace in one day! Joseph was 30 at the time of his installment; 13 years after he was sold by his brothers (cf. 37:2). Joseph’s position gave him opportunity to travel extensively across Egypt.

⁶¹ JFB Commentary

⁶² The Jewish Study Bible, Tanakh Translation, Berlin & Brettler, Jewish Publication Society, Oxford Press

⁶³ Believers’s Study Bible

(Numbers 4:3) *From thirty years old and upward even until fifty years old, all that enter into the host, to do the work in the tabernacle of the congregation.*

[thirty years old] Having been in Egypt thirteen years (Genesis 37:2).

Stood before Pharaoh—This phrase always means admission to the immediate presence of the sovereign, and having the honor of his most unlimited confidence. Among the Asiatic princes, the privilege of coming even to their seat, of standing before them, etc., was granted only to the highest favorites.⁶⁴

[Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh, and went throughout all the land of Egypt] In the tombs of Beni-Hassan in the cliffs on the Nile between Cairo and Thebes, illustrations are etched in the rock of the acts of Joseph and of Israel going into Egypt.

McGee: We are told Joseph's age here, and we see that he has been in the land of Egypt for thirteen years. We know that two of those years were spent in prison after the episode with the butler and the baker. He probably had been in the prison a year or so before that. So he may have been in the house of Potiphar close to ten years. This gives us some idea of how his life was divided into time periods while he was in the land of Egypt.

After these thirteen years in Egypt, Joseph finds himself in a position which would correspond, I believe, to prime minister. He was second only to Pharaoh in the land of Egypt. Have you ever wondered why Pharaoh was so willing to accept him? Primarily, of course, the answer is that God was with him. All the way along we have been seeing that. The hand of God, by His providence, was leading this man. Joseph says himself that the brothers meant it for evil but that God meant it for good. It is wonderful to know that.

There may be another very practical reason for Pharaoh's accepting Joseph so readily. Many scholars hold that the Pharaoh at this particular time in history was one of the Hyksos kings. The Hyksos were not native Egyptians but were Bedouins from the Arabian Desert. They were a nomadic group, and for a period they came in and took over the throne of Egypt. If this is true (and I think it is), Pharaoh was actually closer in nationality to Joseph than to the Egyptians, and this gave him confidence in Joseph. Actually, these Hyksos kings found it a little difficult to find someone in Egypt who would be loyal and faithful to them. Faithfulness was certainly characteristic of Joseph. His confidence that God was moving in his life produced in him a faithfulness to whomever he was attached. He was faithful to his task because he knew that God was in it. A racial bond with Pharaoh may well be a reason that Joseph found such a ready reception with him at this time, and he certainly proved to be faithful to him, as we shall see.

By the way, the Hyksos kings were later expelled from Egypt, which I believe to be the reason that in Exodus 1:8 we read: "Now there arose up a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph." The Pharaoh of the oppression certainly had no fellow-feeling with the Hebrews!

⁶⁴ Adam Clarke's Commentary

Note that Pharaoh placed a chain about Joseph's neck, which gave him the same authority that Pharaoh had. Also, Pharaoh gave him for a bride the daughter of the priest of On. Her name, *Asepath*, means "dedicated to Neith (the Egyptian Minerva)." Evidently, she came right out of heathenism.

This event in Joseph's life furnishes another parallel with the life of the Lord Jesus. Joseph had a gentile bride, and the Lord Jesus Christ is presently calling out of this world a gentile bride, which we call the church.

And in this same verse there is still another parallel; Joseph stood before Pharaoh when he was thirty years old, and the Lord Jesus began His ministry when He was thirty years of age. So at thirty, Joseph takes up his work in Egypt. During these seven years of plenty, he is gathering into storehouses the abundant produce of the land.⁶⁵

Genesis 41:47

And in the seven plenteous years the earth brought forth by handfuls.

[handfuls] Plentifully, in heaps.

Genesis 41:48

And he gathered up all the food of the seven years, which were in the land of Egypt, and laid up the food in the cities: the food of the field, which *was* round about every city, laid he up in the same.

[all the food] The fifth part of the land (Genesis 41:34).

he gathered up all the food of the seven years—It gives a striking idea of the exuberant fertility of this land, that, from the superabundance of the seven plenteous years, corn enough was laid up for the subsistence, not only of its home population, but of the neighboring countries, during the seven years of dearth.

Genesis 41:49

And Joseph gathered corn as the sand of the sea, very much, until he left numbering; for *it was* without number.

Psalm 105:16-22 speaks of Joseph's imprisonment, release, and rise to power...

(Psalm 105:16-22) ¹⁶*Moreover he called for a famine upon the land: he brake the whole staff of bread.* ¹⁷*He sent a man before them, even Joseph, who was sold for a servant:* ¹⁸*Whose feet they hurt with fetters: he was laid*

⁶⁵McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (1:167). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

in iron: ¹⁹Until the time that his word came: the word of the LORD tried him. ²⁰The king sent and loosed him; even the ruler of the people, and let him go free. ²¹He made him lord of his house, and ruler of all his substance: ²²To bind his princes at his pleasure; and teach his senators wisdom.

Genesis 41:50

And unto Joseph were born two sons before the years of famine came, which Asenath the daughter of Potipherah priest of On bare unto him.

Asenath Mother of Manasseh and Ephraim; belonging to Neith; goddess of handicraft

Genesis 41:51

And Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh: For God, said he, hath made me forget all my toil, and all my father's house.

[**Manasseh**] Meaning to forget. (Amnesia)

Saved by the cupbearer's act of remembrance (vv. 9-13), Joseph nonetheless gives his first-born son a name that celebrates forgetfulness. The family history that he has repressed will, however, return to confront him with great force in the next chapter (42:8-9).⁶⁶

Genesis 41:52

And the name of the second called he Ephraim: For God hath caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction.

[**Ephraim**] Meaning to be fruitful. (Ambrosia)

In spite of his success, he did not abandon his Israelite heritage. He gave his two sons characteristically Hebrew names. *Manasseh* (forget) signified that God had made him forget the misery of his separation from his family. *Ephraim* (fruitful) signified that God had made him fruitful in the land of Egypt.⁶⁷

Fertility in the land of affliction will eventually prove a mixed blessing. "When the Israelites were fertile and prolific, a new king arose over Egypt who did not know Joseph" (Exod. 1:7-8) and sought to inflict upon them the fate decided for Joseph in Gen. ch. 37: enslavement and death (Exod. 1:9-12, 15-22).⁶⁸

⁶⁶ The Jewish Study Bible, Tanakh Translation, Berlin & Brettler, Jewish Publication Society, Oxford Press

⁶⁷ Chuck Missler, Notes on Book of Genesis Commentary, Genesis Study, KHouse.org

⁶⁸ The Jewish Study Bible, Tanakh Translation, Berlin & Brettler, Jewish Publication Society, Oxford Press

Genesis 41:53

And the seven years of plenteousness, that was in the land of Egypt, were ended.

Genesis 41:54

And the seven years of dearth began to come, according as Joseph had said: and the dearth was in all lands; but in all the land of Egypt there was bread.

[all lands] All lands surrounding Egypt which was the center of civilization at that time.

The seven years of dearth began to come—Owing in Egypt to the Nile not rising more than twelve or thirteen cubits; but there must have been other causes which affected other countries, not immediately dependent on the Nile, though remotely connected with Egypt and Canaan.

The dearth was in all lands—All the countries dependent on the Nile. And it appears that a general drought had taken place, at least through all Egypt and Canaan; for it is said, Genesis 41:57, that the famine was sore in all lands—Egypt and Canaan, and their respective dependencies.

Famine was a catastrophe in ancient times, just as it still is in many parts of the world today. Almost perfect conditions were needed to produce good crops because there were no chemical fertilizers or pesticides. Any variances in rainfall or insect activity could cause crop failure and great hunger because the people relied almost exclusively on their own crops for food. Lack of storage, refrigeration, or transportation turned a moderate famine into a desperate situation. The famine Joseph prepared for was severe. Without God's intervention, the Egyptian nation would have crumbled.

Ramban (Nachmanides): “And he sold grain unto the Egyptians, and the famine was severe in the Land of Egypt.” The verse states that Joseph did not throw open the contents of the storehouses until the famine had become severe in the land, but not as soon as they cried to Pharaoh, as people would cry even when they have a small amount of sustenance, and it was his desire that nothing remain to them before he opened the granaries. This is the meaning of the verse, *And the famine was over all the face of the earth*, meaning that before he had opened his storehouses the famine was over the entire face of the earth and then the verse precedes to explain that he did not sell them food until the famine had become severe upon them. Perhaps it is possible that the verse is magnifying the famine by stating that it was a “famine accompanied by panic.”⁶⁹

⁶⁹ Ramban, Nachmanides, Commentary on the Torah, Genesis, Rabbi C. Chavel, Shilo Publishing House

Genesis 41:55

And when all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread: and Pharaoh said unto all the Egyptians, Go unto Joseph; what he saith to you, do.

When all the land of Egypt was famished—As Pharaoh, by the advice of Joseph, had exacted a fifth part of all the grain during the seven years of plenty, it is very likely that no more was left than what was merely necessary to supply the ordinary demand both in the way of home consumption, and for the purpose of barter or sale to neighboring countries.

A peasant described the famine in Russia in 1932–33 as follows: “We’ve eaten everything we could lay our hands on—cats, dogs, field-mice, birds. When it’s light tomorrow you will see the trees stripped of their bark ... And the horse manure has been eaten. Sometimes there are whole grains in it.”⁷⁰

Genesis 41:56

And the famine was over all the face of the earth: And Joseph opened all the storehouses, and sold unto the Egyptians; and the famine waxed sore in the land of Egypt.

[all the face of the earth] These expressions, "all the face of the earth," "all countries," and "all lands," (Genesis 41:56-57) must be understood in a limited sense, as when we say, "the whole city," or "everybody in the country," referring to a great crowd. These are examples of synecdoche, the figure of speech wherein the whole is used when only a part is meant. There are several uses of synecdoche in the Bible. All the world as we know it couldn't have gone to Egypt, for there were peoples on continents separated by oceans which hadn't been crossed at that time. See the references in the note on **Luke 2:1**.⁷¹

(Luke 2:1) *And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed.*

Famines were judgments of God. They are mentioned elsewhere in connection with judgments (2 Samuel 24:13; Psalm 105:16; Isaiah 51:19; Jeremiah 14:15; Jeremiah 15:2; Jeremiah 24:10; Jeremiah 27:8; Ezekiel 5:12; Ezekiel 12:16), and foretold as a sign of the second coming of Christ (Matthew 24:7; Luke 21:11). Promises during famine (2 Chron. 32:11; Psalm 33:19; Psalm 37:19; Romans 8:35).

⁷⁰Tan, P. L. (1996, c1979). *Encyclopedia of 7700 illustrations : A treasury of illustrations, anecdotes, facts and quotations for pastors, teachers and Christian workers*. Garland TX: Bible Communications.

⁷¹ Dake's Study Notes, Dake's Study Bible

Thirteen Famines in Scripture - Dake

1. In Canaan in Abraham's day (Genesis 12:10)
2. In Canaan in Isaac's day (Genesis 26:1)
3. In Canaan in Jacob's day (Genesis 41:54-57)
4. In Canaan during the judges (Ruth 1:1)
5. In Canaan in David's day (2 Samuel 21:1)
6. In Canaan in Elijah's day (1 Kings 17:1)
7. In Canaan in Elisha's day (2 Kings 4:38)
8. In Samaria in Elisha's day (2 Kings 6:25)
9. In Canaan in Elisha's day (2 Kings 8:1)
10. In Jerusalem in Zedekiah's day (2 Kings 25:3; Jeremiah 14)
11. In Canaan in Nehemiah's day (Neh. 5:3)
12. In an unknown land (Luke 15:14)
13. In the Roman Empire in Paul's day (Acts 11:28)

Genesis 41:57

And all countries came into Egypt to Joseph for to buy *corn*; because that the famine was *so* sore in all lands.

The famine was sore in all lands—that is, the lands contiguous to Egypt—Canaan, Syria, and Arabia.

Torah Class: be done is done? The answer was obvious. The man God chose to deliver the message should be the one to carry out the preparations: Joseph. In one of the most unlikely events, the Hebrew slave is removed from the dungeon and anointed the ruler of all Egypt. Joseph goes from the outhouse to the penthouse, and the only higher authority is Pharaoh himself.

A ceremony was held, so that all Egypt would know Joseph's position over them. As part of this ceremony, Pharaoh gave Joseph a new name: Zaphenath-panea. The form we have Joseph's name in today seems to be a hybrid Egyptian and Hebrew word. Scholars say it means either "God speaks, he lives", or it means "the creator and sustainer of life". More recent scholarship draws that into doubt. It would make more sense that this name is purely Egyptian and indeed, we find that there is a common word used in naming Egyptians, "zat-en-aph"; and it means, "he who is called". The second word of Joseph's new name, panea, is also fairly easily identifiable in the Egyptian language. Aneah was a usual word for "life" in Egypt. So the Egyptian meaning of his name was likely something along the lines of "he who is called life".

In our day a name is simply a way to identify a person; but in ancient times a name was far more than that. A name was a person's reputation. It was a statement of one's character and attributes, or perhaps even status in society. Thus, when Joseph went from house-slave, to prisoner, Vizier of Egypt, a new name was necessary; one, which reflected the Pharaoh's view of Joseph's position and purpose. And, to seal Joseph's appointment and make it permanent...and, without doubt, to achieve Joseph's

loyalty...Pharaoh gave to Joseph a wife: Asenath, daughter of a Priest. This was no small thing. This priest was of the Temple of On...the city of the Sun God. At the time, this temple was to honor the god Re, later called Atum-Re; Re was the highest Egyptian deity. Later, the city of On...about 7 or 8 miles north of Cairo.... would come to be known as Heliopolis, city of the sun. So, Joseph married the daughter of the priest of the Sun God, Re.

Once the ceremonies were concluded, Joseph set about traveling throughout Egypt, setting up a system and seeing to it that an enormous amount of grain was saved and stored. We're told that the 6 years before the family were abundant...the Bible term meaning there were 6 years of bumper crops.

Six years pass; it's one-year before the onset of the famine. Joseph now has two sons by his Egyptian wife, the first-born being Manesseh, and the younger being Ephraim. BTW, these are Hebrew names, not Egyptian. However, due to the customs of those days, that remains the same to this day for Hebrews and many other cultures, the mother's nationality and genealogy determined that of the children. So, despite their Hebrew names, these two boys were without question Egyptian children. Now, the foreign mother of an Israeli could renounce her nationality and gods and become a member of Israel; if that happened, then the mother was not considered foreign, anymore (despite her genealogy), but Hebrew. That did NOT happen in this case. Asenath, mother of Joseph's children, was Egyptian and there is no evidence that she gave up her Egyptian-ness. In fact, it would have been unthinkable, given her position as the daughter of the Sun god's priest, and as a princess of Egypt, to become a Hebrew. Tuck this important fact about Asenath, Manesseh and Ephraim away in your memories. We've talked about this in a number of ways before: but remember, these two grandchildren that Jacob is not yet even aware he has, Ephraim and Manesseh, these two children of Joseph, born of his Egyptian wife, are by all accounts Egyptians...gentiles. Notice also that the Torah is clear on two important points in verses 51 and 52: first, Ephraim means "fertile", in the sense of abundant. We'll see this carry over into Jacob's prophetic blessing of Ephraim later in Genesis. But, also note that Joseph in no way viewed Egypt as an enemy. Rather, he sees Egypt as a friend, even a place of comfort. He even refers to it as a sort of replacement home. So, while we'll eventually see the Hebrews become Egyptian slaves, we'll also find in the Bible a certain favor of God towards Egypt, especially in the last days of the last days.

Well, the famine hits just as God said it would. But, we're also told something here that is often overlooked: this famine was widespread. Now, many Bibles say that the famine was severe throughout the world, but that's not really what the Hebrew says. It says that the famine spread over the "panim of the eretz"..... "the face of the land". This is a very general term, not one that seeks to indicate all land masses, known and unknown, of the entire planet earth. However, as we'll find out in a little while, not just Egypt, but the whole of the Middle East was also affected.

And, notice how the distribution of the stored up grain occurred. It was rationed, or sold. The grain was not given away. Egyptian records of that time, describing the famine and how the grain distribution was handled, have been found, and they completely vindicate the Biblical record, which we will shortly encounter. What we know is that as people ran out of money, they gave up their starving cattle to Pharaoh in exchange for grain, the staple food. When they ran out of cattle, they gave up their land. And, when

they had nothing else to sell, they sold themselves into bond-servitude to the Pharaoh. In this way, Pharaoh eventually owned all the land and all the wealth of Egypt. It also allowed him to build up an enormous slave-class workforce to construct magnificent Temples, roadways, and cities. As cynical and hardhearted as this was, God used the situation to save lives: and to assure the survival of Israel.

One final thought and we'll move on: I wonder what the Egyptian people thought of Joseph during this time of famine? Do you suppose he got thanked for forcing them to save up grain...do with less during a time of plenty..... thereby allowing them to survive later on? Or, did he get the blame and their hatred when so many had to sell themselves into slavery in order to obtain that grain? After all, Pharaoh had made Joseph the front man; Joseph was the supreme administrator of this program, and as we saw the Pharaoh had a large public ceremony to make it clear to all just what Joseph's position was. All cunning politicians put someone between them and the people, to act both as a buffer and a lightening rod. When things go well, the politician jumps to the front to accept the credit and the adoration of the people. But, when something goes wrong, or is unpopular, the politician becomes silent and invisible and the front man catches the flak. Something tells me that the left-over bitterness from this event surrounding the confiscation of grain from the Egyptian people's private land, and then the selling of what should have been their own grain back to them.... often at the cost of their own freedom..... had much to do with how things went some time later. For it was after Joseph died, and new Pharaohs were in place, and Joseph's family, the Hebrews, had grown and prospered, that the dispossessed people of Egypt turned on them. Matters like this famine situation are not easily forgotten, and its unthinkable that this didn't have much to do with Egypt eventually turning the tables on Joseph's family, by enslaving them.⁷²

Adam Clarke Summary:

All countries came into Egypt—to buy—As there had not been a sufficiency of rains, vapours, etc., to swell the Nile, to effect a proper inundation in Egypt, the same cause would produce drought, and consequently scarcity, in all the neighboring countries; and this may be all that is intended in the text.

1. As the providence of God evidently led the butler and baker of Pharaoh, as well as the king himself, to dream the prophetic dreams mentioned in this and the preceding chapter, so his Spirit in Joseph led to the true interpretation of them. What a proof do all these things give us of a providence that is so general as to extend its influence to every part, and so particular as to notice, influence, and direct the most minute circumstances! Surely God “has way every where, and all things serve his will.”
2. Dreams have been on one hand superstitiously regarded, and on the other skeptically disregarded. That some are prophetic there can be no doubt; that others are idle none can hesitate to believe. Dreams may be divided into the six following kinds:
 1. Those which are the mere nightly result of the mind's reflections and perplexities during the business of the day.

⁷² Torahclass.com/index.html, Thomas Bradford, Merritt Island, Florida

2. Those which spring from a diseased state of the body, occasioning startings, terrors, etc.
3. Those which spring from an impure state of the heart, mental repetitions of those acts or images of illicit pleasure, riot, and excess, which form the business of a profligate life.
4. Those which proceed from a diseased mind, occupied with schemes of pride, ambition, grandeur, etc. These, as forming the characteristic conduct of the life, are repeatedly reacted in the deep watches of the night, and strongly agitate the soul with illusive enjoyments and disappointments.
5. Those which come immediately from Satan, which instill thoughts and principles opposed to truth and righteousness, leaving strong impressions on the mind suited to its natural bent and turn, which, in the course of the day, by favoring circumstances, may be called into action.
6. Those which come from God, and which necessarily lead to him, whether prophetic of future good or evil, or impressing holy purposes and heavenly resolutions. Whatever leads away from God, truth, and righteousness, must be from the source of evil; whatever leads to obedience to God, and to acts of benevolence to man, must be from the source of goodness and truth. Reader, there is often as much superstition in disregarding as in attending to dreams; and he who fears God will escape it in both.⁷³

Book of Jasher: CHAPTER 48

1 In those days, after the death of Isaac, the Lord commanded and caused a famine upon the whole earth. 2 At that time Pharaoh king of Egypt was sitting upon his throne in the land of Egypt, and lay in his bed and dreamed dreams, and Pharaoh saw in his dream that he was standing by the side of the river of Egypt. 3 And whilst he was standing he saw and behold seven fat fleshed and well favored kine came up out of the river. 4 And seven other kine, lean fleshed and ill favored, came up after them, and the seven ill favored ones swallowed up the well favored ones, and still their appearance was ill as at first. 5 And he awoke, and he slept again and he dreamed a second time, and he saw and behold seven ears of corn came up upon one stalk, rank and good, and seven thin ears blasted with the east wind sprang, up after them, and the thin ears swallowed up the full ones, and Pharaoh awoke out of his dream. 6 And in the morning the king remembered his dreams, and his spirit was sadly troubled on account of his dreams, and the king hastened and sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt, and the wise men, and they came and stood before Pharaoh. 7 And the king said unto them, I have dreamed dreams, and there is none to interpret them; and they said unto the king, relate thy dreams to thy servants and let us hear them. 8 And the king related his dreams to them, and they all answered and said with one voice to the king, may the king live forever; and this is the interpretation of thy dreams. 9 The seven good kine which thou didst see denote seven daughters that will be born unto thee in the latter days, and the seven kine which thou

⁷³ Adam Clarke's Commentary

sawest come up after them, and swallowed them up, are for a sign that the daughters which will be born unto thee will all die in the life-time of the king. 10 And that which thou didst see in the second dream of seven full good ears of corn coming up upon one stalk, this is their interpretation, that thou wilt build unto thyself in the latter days seven cities throughout the land of Egypt; and that which thou sawest of the seven blasted ears of corn springing up after them and swallowing them up whilst thou didst behold them with thine eyes, is for a sign that the cities which thou wilt build will all be destroyed in the latter days, in the life-time of the king. 11 And when they spoke these words the king did not incline his ear to their words, neither did he fix his heart upon them, for the king knew in his wisdom that they did not give a proper interpretation of the dreams; and when they had finished speaking before the king, the king answered them, saying, What is this thing that you have spoken unto me? surely you have uttered falsehood and spoken lies; therefore now give the proper interpretation of my dreams, that you may not die. 12 And the king commanded after this, and he sent and called again for other wise men, and they came and stood before the king, and the king related his dreams to them, and they all answered him according to the first interpretation, and the king's anger was kindled and he was very wroth, and the king said unto them, Surely you speak lies and utter falsehood in what you have said. 13 And the king commanded that a proclamation should be issued throughout the land of Egypt, saying, It is resolved by the king and his great men, that any wise man who knoweth and understandeth the interpretation of dreams, and will not come this day before the king, shall die. 14 And the man that will declare unto the king the proper interpretation of his dreams, there shall be given unto him all that he will require from the king. And all the wise men of the land of Egypt came before the king, together with all the magicians and sorcerers that were in Egypt and in Goshen, in Rameses, in Tachpanches, in Zoar, and in all the places on the borders of Egypt, and they all stood before the king. 15 And all the nobles and the princes, and the attendants belonging to the king, came together from all the cities of Egypt, and they all sat before the king, and the king related his dreams before the wise men, and the princes, and all that sat before the king were astonished at the vision. 16 And all the wise men who were before the king were greatly divided in their interpretation of his dreams; some of them interpreted them to the king, saying, The seven good kine are seven kings, who from the king's issue will be raised over Egypt. 17 And the seven bad kine are seven princes, who will stand up against them in the latter days and destroy them; and the seven ears of corn are the seven great princes belonging to Egypt, who will fall in the hands of the seven less powerful princes of their enemies, in the wars of our lord the king. 18 And some of them interpreted to the king in this manner, saying, The seven good kine are the strong cities of Egypt, and the seven bad kine are the seven nations of the land of Canaan, who will come against the seven cities of Egypt in the latter days and destroy them. 19 And that which thou sawest in the second dream, of seven good and bad ears of corn, is a sign that the government of Egypt will again return to thy seed as at first. 20 And in his reign the people of the cities of Egypt will turn against the seven cities of Canaan who are stronger than they are, and will destroy them, and the government of Egypt will return to thy seed. 21 And some of them said unto the king, This is the interpretation of thy dreams; the seven good kine are seven queens, whom thou wilt take for wives in the latter days, and the seven bad kine denote that those women will all die in the lifetime of the king. 22 And the seven good and bad ears of corn which thou didst

see in the second dream are fourteen children, and it will be in the latter days that they will stand up and fight amongst themselves, and seven of them will smite the seven that are more powerful. 23 And some of them said these words unto the king, saying, The seven good kine denote that seven children will be born to thee, and they will slay seven of thy children's children in the latter days; and the seven good ears of corn which thou didst see in the second dream, are those princes against whom seven other less powerful princes will fight and destroy them in the latter days, and avenge thy children's cause, and the government will again return to thy seed. 24 And the king heard all the words of the wise men of Egypt and their interpretation of his dreams, and none of them pleased the king. 25 And the king knew in his wisdom that they did not altogether speak correctly in all these words, for this was from the Lord to frustrate the words of the wise men of Egypt, in order that Joseph might go forth from the house of confinement, and in order that he should become great in Egypt. 26 And the king saw that none amongst all the wise men and magicians of Egypt spoke correctly to him, and the king's wrath was kindled, and his anger burned within him. 27 And the king commanded that all the wise men and magicians should go out from before him, and they all went out from before the king with shame and disgrace. 28 And the king commanded that a proclamation be sent throughout Egypt to slay all the magicians that were in Egypt, and not one of them should be suffered to live. 29 And the captains of the guards belonging to the king rose up, and each man drew his sword, and they began to smite the magicians of Egypt, and the wise men. 30 And after this Merod, chief butler to the king, came and bowed down before the king and sat before him. 31 And the butler said unto the king, May the king live forever, and his government be exalted in the land. 32 Thou wast angry with thy servant in those days, now two years past, and didst place me in the ward, and I was for some time in the ward, I and the chief of the bakers. 33 And there was with us a Hebrew servant belonging to the captain of the guard, his name was Joseph, for his master had been angry with him and placed him in the house of confinement, and he attended us there. 34 And in some time after when we were in the ward, we dreamed dreams in one night, I and the chief of the bakers; we dreamed, each man according to the interpretation of his dream. 35 And we came in the morning and told them to that servant, and he interpreted to us our dreams, to each man according to his dream, did he correctly interpret. 36 And it came to pass as he interpreted to us, so was the event; there fell not to the ground any of his words. 37 And now therefore my lord and king do not slay the people of Egypt for naught; behold that slave is still confined in the house by the captain of the guard his master, in the house of confinement. 38 If it pleaseth the king let him send for him that he may come before thee and he will make known to thee, the correct interpretation of the dream which thou didst dream. 39 And the king heard the words of the chief butler, and the king ordered that the wise men of Egypt should not be slain. 40 And the king ordered his servants to bring Joseph before him, and the king said unto them, Go to him and do not terrify him lest he be confused and will not know to speak properly. 41 And the servants of the king went to Joseph, and they brought him hastily out of the dungeon, and the king's servants shaved him, and he changed his prison garment and he came before the king. 42 And the king was sitting upon his royal throne in a princely dress girt around with a golden ephod, and the fine gold which was upon it sparkled, and the carbuncle and the ruby and the emerald, together with all the precious stones that were upon the king's head, dazzled the eye, and Joseph wondered greatly at

the king. 43 And the throne upon which the king sat was covered with gold and silver, and with onyx stones, and it had seventy steps. 44 And it was their custom throughout the land of Egypt, that every man who came to speak to the king, if he was a prince or one that was estimable in the sight of the king, he ascended to the king's throne as far as the thirty-first step, and the king would descend to the thirty-sixth step, and speak with him. 45 If he was one of the common people, he ascended to the third step, and the king would descend to the fourth and speak to him, and their custom was, moreover, that any man who understood to speak in all the seventy languages, he ascended the seventy steps, and went up and spoke till he reached the king. 46 And any man who could not complete the seventy, he ascended as many steps as the languages which he knew to speak in. 47 And it was customary in those days in Egypt that no one should reign over them, but who understood to speak in the seventy languages. 48 And when Joseph came before the king he bowed down to the ground before the king, and he ascended to the third step, and the king sat upon the fourth step and spoke with Joseph. 49 And the king said unto Joseph, I dreamed a dream, and there is no interpreter to interpret it properly, and I commanded this day that all the magicians of Egypt and the wise men thereof, should come before me, and I related my dreams to them, and no one has properly interpreted them to me. 50 And after this I this day heard concerning thee, that thou art a wise man, and canst correctly interpret every dream that thou hearest. 51 And Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, Let Pharaoh relate his dreams that he dreamed; surely the interpretations belong to God; and Pharaoh related his dreams to Joseph, the dream of the kine, and the dream of the ears of corn, and the king left off speaking. 52 And Joseph was then clothed with the spirit of God before the king, and he knew all the things that would befall the king from that day forward, and he knew the proper interpretation of the king's dream, and he spoke before the king. 53 And Joseph found favor in the sight of the king, and the king inclined his ears and his heart, and he heard all the words of Joseph. And Joseph said unto the king, Do not imagine that they are two dreams, for it is only one dream, for that which God has chosen to do throughout the land he has shown to the king in his dream, and this is the proper interpretation of thy dream: 54 The seven good kine and ears of corn are seven years, and the seven bad kine and ears of corn are also seven years; it is one dream. 55 Behold the seven years that are coming there will be a great plenty throughout the land, and after that the seven years of famine will follow them, a very grievous famine; and all the plenty will be forgotten from the land, and the famine will consume the inhabitants of the land. 56 The king dreamed one dream, and the dream was therefore repeated unto Pharaoh because the thing is established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass. 57 Now therefore I will give thee counsel and deliver thy soul and the souls of the inhabitants of the land from the evil of the famine, that thou seek throughout thy kingdom for a man very discreet and wise, who knoweth all the affairs of government, and appoint him to superintend over the land of Egypt. 58 And let the man whom thou placest over Egypt appoint officers under him, that they gather in all the food of the good years that are coming, and let them lay up corn and deposit it in thy appointed stores. 59 And let them keep that food for the seven years of famine, that it may be found for thee and thy people and thy whole land, and that thou and thy land be not cut off by the famine. 60 Let all the inhabitants of the land be also ordered that they gather in, every man the produce of his field, of all sorts of food, during the seven good years, and that they place it in their stores, that it may be found for them in the days of the famine

and that they may live upon it. 61 This is the proper interpretation of thy dream, and this is the counsel given to save thy soul and the souls of all thy subjects. 62 And the king answered and said unto Joseph, Who sayeth and who knoweth that thy words are correct? And he said unto the king, This shall be a sign for thee respecting all my words, that they are true and that my advice is good for thee. 63 Behold thy wife sitteth this day upon the stool of delivery, and she will bear thee a son and thou wilt rejoice with him; when thy child shall have gone forth from his mother's womb, thy first born son that has been born these two years back shall die, and thou wilt be comforted in the child that will be born unto thee this day. 64 And Joseph finished speaking these words to the king, and he bowed down to the king and he went out, and when Joseph had gone out from the king's presence, those signs which Joseph had spoken unto the king came to pass on that day. 65 And the queen bare a son on that day and the king heard the glad tidings about his son, and he rejoiced, and when the reporter had gone forth from the king's presence, the king's servants found the first born son of the king fallen dead upon the ground. 66 And there was great lamentation and noise in the king's house, and the king heard it, and he said, What is the noise and lamentation that I have heard in the house? and they told the king that his first born son had died; then the king knew that all Joseph's words that he had spoken were correct, and the king was consoled for his son by the child that was born to him on that day as Joseph had spoken.

CHAPTER 49

1 After these things the king sent and assembled all his officers and servants, and all the princes and nobles belonging to the king, and they all came before the king. 2 And the king said unto them, Behold you have seen and heard all the words of this Hebrew man, and all the signs which he declared would come to pass, and not any of his words have fallen to the ground. 3 You know that he has given a proper interpretation of the dream, and it will surely come to pass, now therefore take counsel, and know what you will do and how the land will be delivered from the famine. 4 Seek now and see whether the like can be found, in whose heart there is wisdom and knowledge, and I will appoint him over the land. 5 For you have heard what the Hebrew man has advised concerning this to save the land therewith from the famine, and I know that the land will not be delivered from the famine but with the advice of the Hebrew man, him that advised me. 6 And they all answered the king and said, The counsel which the Hebrew has given concerning this is good; now therefore, our lord and king, behold the whole land is in thy hand, do that which seemeth good in thy sight. 7 Him whom thou chooses, and whom thou in thy wisdom knowest to be wise and capable of delivering the land with his wisdom, him shall the king appoint to be under him over the land. 8 And the king said to all the officers: I have thought that since God has made known to the Hebrew man all that he has spoken, there is none so discreet and wise in the whole land as he is; if it seem good in your sight I will place him over the land, for he will save the land with his wisdom. 9 And all the officers answered the king and said, But surely it is written in the laws of Egypt, and it should not be violated, that no man shall reign over Egypt, nor be the second to the king, but one who has knowledge in all the languages of the sons of men. 10 Now therefore our lord and king, behold this Hebrew man can only speak the Hebrew language, and how then can he be over us the second under government, a man who not even knoweth

our language? 11 Now we pray thee send for him, and let him come before thee, and prove him in all things, and do as thou see fit. 12 And the king said, It shall be done tomorrow, and the thing that you have spoken is good; and all the officers came on that day before the king. 13 And on that night the Lord sent one of his ministering angels, and he came into the land of Egypt unto Joseph, and the angel of the Lord stood over Joseph, and behold Joseph was lying in the bed at night in his master's house in the dungeon, for his master had put him back into the dungeon on account of his wife. 14 And the angel roused him from his sleep, and Joseph rose up and stood upon his legs, and behold the angel of the Lord was standing opposite to him; and the angel of the Lord spoke with Joseph, and he taught him all the languages of man in that night, and he called his name Jehoseph. 15 And the angel of the Lord went from him, and Joseph returned and lay upon his bed, and Joseph was astonished at the vision which he saw. 16 And it came to pass in the morning that the king sent for all his officers and servants, and they all came and sat before the king, and the king ordered Joseph to be brought, and the king's servants went and brought Joseph before Pharaoh. 17 And the king came forth and ascended the steps of the throne, and Joseph spoke unto the king in all languages, and Joseph went up to him and spoke unto the king until he arrived before the king in the seventieth step, and he sat before the king. 18 And the king greatly rejoiced on account of Joseph, and all the king's officers rejoiced greatly with the king when they heard all the words of Joseph. 19 And the thing seemed good in the sight of the king and the officers, to appoint Joseph to be second to the king over the whole land of Egypt, and the king spoke to Joseph, saying, 20 Now thou didst give me counsel to appoint a wise man over the land of Egypt, in order with his wisdom to save the land from the famine; now therefore, since God has made all this known to thee, and all the words which thou hast spoken, there is not throughout the land a discreet and wise man like unto thee. 21 And thy name no more shall be called Joseph, but Zaphnath Paaneah shall be thy name; thou shalt be second to me, and according to thy word shall be all the affairs of my government, and at thy word shall my people go out and come in. 22 Also from under thy hand shall my servants and officers receive their salary which is given to them monthly, and to thee shall all the people of the land bow down; only in my throne will I be greater than thou. 23 And the king took off his ring from his hand and put it upon the hand of Joseph, and the king dressed Joseph in a princely garment, and he put a golden crown upon his head, and he put a golden chain upon his neck. 24 And the king commanded his servants, and they made him ride in the second chariot belonging to the king, that went opposite to the king's chariot, and he caused him to ride upon a great and strong horse from the king's horses, and to be conducted through the streets of the land of Egypt. 25 And the king commanded that all those that played upon timbrels, harps and other musical instruments should go forth with Joseph; one thousand timbrels, one thousand mecholoth, and one thousand nebalim went after him. 26 And five thousand men, with drawn swords glittering in their hands, and they went marching and playing before Joseph, and twenty thousand of the great men of the king girt with girdles of skin covered with gold, marched at the right hand of Joseph, and twenty thousand at his left, and all the women and damsels went upon the roofs or stood in the streets playing and rejoicing at Joseph, and gazed at the appearance of Joseph and at his beauty. 27 And the king's people went before him and behind him, perfuming the road with frankincense and with cassia, and with all sorts of fine perfume, and scattered myrrh and aloes along the

road, and twenty men proclaimed these words before him throughout the land in a loud voice: 28 Do you see this man whom the king has chosen to be his second? all the affairs of government shall be regulated by him, and he that transgresses his orders, or that does not bow down before him to the ground, shall die, for he rebels against the king and his second. 29 And when the heralds had ceased proclaiming, all the people of Egypt bowed down to the ground before Joseph and said, May the king live, also may his second live; and all the inhabitants of Egypt bowed down along the road, and when the heralds approached them, they bowed down, and they rejoiced with all sorts of timbrels, mechol and nebal before Joseph. 30 And Joseph upon his horse lifted up his eyes to heaven, and called out and said, He raiseth the poor man from the dust, He lifteth up the needy from the dunghill. O Lord of Hosts, happy is the man who trusteth in thee. 31 And Joseph passed throughout the land of Egypt with Pharaoh's servants and officers, and they showed him the whole land of Egypt and all the king's treasures. 32 And Joseph returned and came on that day before Pharaoh, and the king gave unto Joseph a possession in the land of Egypt, a possession of fields and vineyards, and the king gave unto Joseph three thousand talents of silver and one thousand talents of gold, and onyx stones and bdellium and many gifts. 33 And on the next day the king commanded all the people of Egypt to bring unto Joseph offerings and gifts, and that he that violated the command of the king should die; and they made a high place in the street of the city, and they spread out garments there, and whoever brought anything to Joseph put it into the high place. 34 And all the people of Egypt cast something into the high place, one man a golden earring, and the other rings and ear-rings, and different vessels of gold and silver work, and onyx stones and bdellium did he cast upon the high place; every one gave something of what he possessed. 35 And Joseph took all these and placed them in his treasuries, and all the officers and nobles belonging to the king exalted Joseph, and they gave him many gifts, seeing that the king had chosen him to be his second. 36 And the king sent to Potiphera, the son of Ahiram priest of On, and he took his young daughter Osnath and gave her unto Joseph for a wife. 37 And the damsel was very comely, a virgin, one whom man had not known, and Joseph took her for a wife; and the king said unto Joseph, I am Pharaoh, and beside thee none shall dare to lift up his hand or his foot to regulate my people throughout the land of Egypt. 38 And Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh, and Joseph went out from before the king, and he became the king's second in Egypt. 39 And the king gave Joseph a hundred servants to attend him in his house, and Joseph also sent and purchased many servants and they remained in the house of Joseph. 40 Joseph then built for himself a very magnificent house like unto the houses of kings, before the court of the king's palace, and he made in the house a large temple, very elegant in appearance and convenient for his residence; three years was Joseph in erecting his house. 41 And Joseph made unto himself a very elegant throne of abundance of gold and silver, and he covered it with onyx stones and bdellium, and he made upon it the likeness of the whole land of Egypt, and the likeness of the river of Egypt that watereth the whole land of Egypt; and Joseph sat securely upon his throne in his house and the Lord increased Joseph's wisdom. 42 And all the inhabitants of Egypt and Pharaoh's servants and his princes loved Joseph exceedingly, for this thing was from the Lord to Joseph. 43 And Joseph had an army that made war, going out in hosts and troops to the number of forty thousand six hundred men, capable of bearing arms to assist the king and Joseph against the enemy, besides the king's officers and his servants and

inhabitants of Egypt without number. 44 And Joseph gave unto his mighty men, and to all his host, shields and javelins, and caps and coats of mail and stones for slinging.

CHAPTER 50

1 At that time the children of Tarshish came against the sons of Ishmael, and made war with them, and the children of Tarshish spoiled the Ishmaelites for a long time. 2 And the children of Ishmael were small in number in those days, and they could not prevail over the children of Tarshish, and they were sorely oppressed. 3 And the old men of the Ishmaelites sent a record to the king of Egypt, saying, Send I pray thee unto thy servants officers and hosts to help us to fight against the children of Tarshish, for we have been consuming away for a long time. 4 And Pharaoh sent Joseph with the mighty men and host which were with him, and also his mighty men from the king's house. 5 And they went to the land of Havilah to the children of Ishmael, to assist them against the children of Tarshish, and the children of Ishmael fought with the children of Tarshish, and Joseph smote the Tarshishites and he subdued all their land, and the children of Ishmael dwell therein unto this day. 6 And when the land of Tarshish was subdued, all the Tarshishites ran away, and came on the border of their brethren the children of Javan, and Joseph with all his mighty men and host returned to Egypt, not one man of them missing. 7 And at the revolution of the year, in the second year of Joseph's reigning over Egypt, the Lord gave great plenty throughout the land for seven years as Joseph had spoken, for the Lord blessed all the produce of the earth in those days for seven years, and they ate and were greatly satisfied. 8 And Joseph at that time had officers under him, and they collected all the food of the good years, and heaped corn year by year, and they placed it in the treasuries of Joseph. 9 And at any time when they gathered the food Joseph commanded that they should bring the corn in the ears, and also bring with it some of the soil of the field, that it should not spoil. 10 And Joseph did according to this year by year, and he heaped up corn like the sand of the sea for abundance, for his stores were immense and could not be numbered for abundance. 11 And also all the inhabitants of Egypt gathered all sorts of food in their stores in great abundance during the seven good years, but they did not do unto it as Joseph did. 12 And all the food which Joseph and the Egyptians had gathered during the seven years of plenty, was secured for the land in stores for the seven years of famine, for the support of the whole land. 13 And the inhabitants of Egypt filled each man his store and his concealed place with corn, to be for support during the famine. 14 And Joseph placed all the food that he had gathered in all the cities of Egypt, and he closed all the stores and placed sentinels over them. 15 And Joseph's wife Osnath the daughter of Potiphera bare him two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, and Joseph was thirty-four years old when he begat them. 16 And the lads grew up and they went in his ways and in his instructions, they did not deviate from the way which their father taught them, either to the right or left. 17 And the Lord was with the lads, and they grew up and had understanding and skill in all wisdom and in all the affairs of government, and all the king's officers and his great men of the inhabitants of Egypt exalted the lads, and they were brought up amongst the king's children. 18 And the seven years of plenty that were throughout the land were at an end, and the seven years of famine came after them as Joseph had spoken, and the famine was throughout the land. 19 And all the people of Egypt saw that the famine had commenced in the land of Egypt, and all the people of Egypt opened their stores of corn for the famine prevailed over them. 20 And they found

all the food that was in their stores, full of vermin and not fit to eat, and the famine prevailed throughout the land, and all the inhabitants of Egypt came and cried before Pharaoh, for the famine was heavy upon them. 21 And they said unto Pharaoh, Give food unto thy servants, and wherefore shall we die through hunger before thy eyes, even we and our little ones? 22 And Pharaoh answered them, saying, And wherefore do you cry unto me? did not Joseph command that the corn should be laid up during the seven years of plenty for the years of famine? and wherefore did you not hearken to his voice? 23 And the people of Egypt answered the king, saying, As thy soul liveth, our lord, thy servants have done all that Joseph ordered, for thy servants also gathered in all the produce of their fields during the seven years of plenty and laid it in the stores unto this day. 24 And when the famine prevailed over thy servants we opened our stores, and behold all our produce was filled with vermin and was not fit for food. 25 And when the king heard all that had befallen the inhabitants of Egypt, the king was greatly afraid on account of the famine, and he was much terrified; and the king answered the people of Egypt, saying, Since all this has happened unto you, go unto Joseph, do whatever he shall say unto you, transgress not his commands. 26 And all the people of Egypt went forth and came unto Joseph, and said unto him, Give unto us food, and wherefore shall we die before thee through hunger? for we gathered in our produce during the seven years as thou didst command, and we put it in store, and thus has it befallen us. 27 And when Joseph heard all the words of the people of Egypt and what had befallen them, Joseph opened all his stores of the produce and he sold it unto the people of Egypt. 28 And the famine prevailed throughout the land, and the famine was in all countries, but in the land of Egypt there was produce for sale. 29 And all the inhabitants of Egypt came unto Joseph to buy corn, for the famine prevailed over them, and all their corn was spoiled, and Joseph daily sold it to all the people of Egypt. 30 And all the inhabitants of the land of Canaan and the Philistines, and those beyond the Jordan, and the children of the east and all the cities of the lands far and nigh heard that there was corn in Egypt, and they all came to Egypt to buy corn, for the famine prevailed over them. 31 And Joseph opened the stores of corn and placed officers over them, and they daily stood and sold to all that came. 32 And Joseph knew that his brethren also would come to Egypt to buy corn, for the famine prevailed throughout the earth. And Joseph commanded all his people that they should cause it to be proclaimed throughout the land of Egypt, saying, 33 It is the pleasure of the king, of his second and of their great men, that any person who wishes to buy corn in Egypt shall not send his servants to Egypt to purchase, but his sons, and also any Egyptian or Canaanite, who shall come from any of the stores from buying corn in Egypt, and shall go and sell it throughout the land, he shall die, for no one shall buy but for the support of his household. 34 And any man leading two or three beasts shall die, for a man shall only lead his own beast. 35 And Joseph placed sentinels at the gates of Egypt, and commanded them, saying, Any person who may come to buy corn, suffer him not to enter until his name, and the name of his father, and the name of his father's father be written down, and whatever is written by day, send their names unto me in the evening that I may know their names. 36 And Joseph placed officers throughout the land of Egypt, and he commanded them to do all these things. 37 And Joseph did all these things, and made these statutes, in order that he might know when his brethren should come to Egypt to buy corn; and Joseph's people caused it daily to be proclaimed in Egypt according to these words and statutes which Joseph had commanded. 38 And all the

inhabitants of the east and west country, and of all the earth, heard of the statutes and regulations which Joseph had enacted in Egypt, and the inhabitants of the extreme parts of the earth came and they bought corn in Egypt day after day, and then went away. 39 And all the officers of Egypt did as Joseph had commanded, and all that came to Egypt to buy corn, the gate keepers would write their names, and their fathers' names, and daily bring them in the evening before Joseph.⁷⁴

Account from Manetho:

I would like to read to you a short account as taken from the Egyptian historian Manetho, who compiled several of these records and left them for us to ponder. “We had a king called Tutimaecus. In his reign, it happened. I do not know why God was displeased with us. Unexpectedly from the regions of the East, came men of unknown race. Confident of victory they marched against our land. By force they took it, easily, without a single battle. Having overpowered our rulers they burned our cities without compassion, and destroyed the temples of the gods. All the natives were treated with great cruelty for they slew some and carried off the wives and children of others into slavery. Finally they appointed one of themselves as king. His name was Salitis and he lived in Memphis and made Upper and Lower Egypt pay tribute to him...and when he found a city in the province of Sais which suited his purpose (it lay east of the Bubasite branch of the Nile and was called Avaris) he rebuilt it and made it very strong by erecting walls and installing a force of 240,000 men to hold it. Salitis went there every summer partly to collect his corn and pay men their wages, and partly to train his armed troops and terrify foreigners.”

⁷⁴ The Book of Jasher, Faithfully Translated 1840, Hebrew to English, J.H.Perry & Co, Salt Lake City UT