



Genesis – 41:1-36
From the Pit, to Potiphar’s House,
to the Prison, to the Palace, to the Place of Preeminence!
(Part #1) (Lesson #50)

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Joseph’s Timeline

Event	Joseph’s Age	Genesis
Joseph’s father moves family from Haran	6	31:17-21
Joseph is sold into slavery	17 / Jac 108	37:12-36
Joseph interprets the dreams of cupbearer and baker while in prison	28	41:1
Joseph’s grandfather Isaac dies	29 / Jac 120	35:28-29
Joseph interprets Pharaoh’s dreams and is released from prison	30	41:46
Seven years of plenty, Manasseh and Ephraim born during this time	30-37	41:47-52
Seven years of famine	37-44	41:47-52
Joseph and Jacob reunite (2 years into famine), and entire family moves to Egypt	39 / Jac 130	45:6, 47:9, 28
Jacob dies	56 / Jac 147	47:28
Jospeh dies	110	50:22-26

Outline for this:

- I.** Pharaoh has two dreams (41:1-8)
- II.** The Chief Cupbearer remembers his fault (41:9-13)
- III.** Pharaoh sends for Joseph (41:14)
- IV.** Pharaoh shares both dreams with Joseph (41:15-24)
- V.** Joseph interprets Pharaoh’s dreams (41:25-32)
- VI.** Joseph then tells Pharaoh what he should do (41:33-36)
- VII.** Pharaoh elevates Joseph to second in command in Egypt (41:37-44)
- VIII.** Pharaoh gives Joseph a wife (41:45)
- IX.** Joseph sets out to gather the food during the times of great plenty (41:46-49)
- X.** God gives Joseph two sons by his wife Asenath (41:50-52)
- XI.** The famine begins and all Egypt as well as he surrounding nations go to Joseph for grain (41:53-57)

41:1 After two whole years, Pharaoh dreamed that he was standing by the Nile, 2 and behold, there came up out of the Nile seven cows attractive and plump, and they fed in the reed grass. 3 And behold, seven other cows, ugly and thin, came up out of the Nile after them, and stood by the other cows on the bank of the Nile. 4 And the ugly, thin cows ate up the seven attractive, plump cows. And Pharaoh awoke.

Vs 1 - Then after two full years after the chief butler had been released, after two full years since Joseph interpreted the chief butler’s dream, after two years elapse, Moses tells us that the king of Egypt, the Pharaoh had a dream. In this dream he (the Pharaoh) was standing by the Nile River.

Now before we advance, let’s be reminded of what has occurred in the life of Joseph:

- 1) At 17 he was sold into slavery by his brothers (yet he did not become bitter and continued to believe in and trust God).
- 2) He spent years as a household slave, probably between 7-9 years in Potiphar’s house (yet he did not become bitter and continued to believe in and trust God).

- 3) His master's wife tried in every way imaginable to have sex with him, yet he maintained his integrity and that ultimately resulted in him getting thrown into Pharaoh's prison (yet he did not become bitter and continued to believe in and trust God).
- 4) In prison, God was with him and God continued to bless him. While in prison, God enabled him to interpret two men's dreams. When he was set free, the chief cupbearer failed to mention him to Pharaoh. It appears the chief cupbearer forgot about Joseph. (yet he did not become bitter and continued to believe in and trust God).
- 5) Two additional years have elapsed with Joseph languishing in Pharaoh's jail (yet Joseph did not become bitter and continued to believe in and trust God).

APPLICATION: Is there a lesson here for us about walking with God, about suffering, about faith, or about trusting God?

Joseph has suffered years upon years of unfair treatment and through all of this Joseph trusted the Lord.

Faith is a muscle and it has to be exercised to grow, James tells us how God exercises faith:

"2 Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, 3 for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness." (Jas 1:2-3 ESV)

God allows things to come into our lives that within themselves may not be pleasing, in fact they may be quite difficult, and God does this to grow our faith.

Hebrews tells us without faith it is?

So, faith is a muscle that grows under adverse conditions as we trust God during those times, and without faith we cannot please God!

Here is Joseph, and we see a man's faith who is **being tested** and a man who is **trusting God!**

Vs 2-4 - Here is Pharaoh's dream. Pharaoh is standing by the Nile, he is watching the Nile, and then all of a sudden, seven good looking, properly fed and healthy cows come up out of the Nile and begin feeding on the reed grass along the edge of the Nile.

UNDERSTAND: Pharaoh is the leader of Egypt and the Nile is the lifeblood for Egypt.

Now the Egyptians did not worship the Nile, but its religious significance cannot be understated.

The Nile was associated with the false god Osiris (**god of fertility, agriculture, and the dead**), who Egyptians believed infused the waters of the Nile with life giving properties.

The Nile was associated with the false god Hapi, who as the (**god of the annual flooding**) inundation, when the Nile would flood its banks and carry life giving fertile silt and moisture further inland to add to farming.

The Egyptians believed the Pharaoh was himself a god and could control the Nile.

It is worth noting that the Egyptians divided the year into **three seasons**:

Akhet – Inundation, the Nile flooded (early September – early January)

Peret – Growing season as land emerged from flooding (moist and nutrient rich (early January – early May)

Shemu – The harvest when the water was short (early May to early September)

This dream is coming to the leader Egypt, and it involves the **Nile River** which is critical to their economy and their annual food production.

Egypt has very little rainfall throughout the year and thus Egypt's livelihood is dependent upon the annual period of flooding (**Akhet**).

In this dream, Pharaoh is standing by the Nile and he watches as these seven beautiful cows come out of the Nile and feed on the grasses at the edge of the Nile.

BUT THEN, in verse 3 – seven other cows come up out of the Nile (after the first ones), these cows are **ugly** and **thin**, they moved over and stood next to the healthy plump cows.

For a moment there are 14 cows standing on the bank of the Nile, seven that are healthy and fat and of a good appearance and seven that are thin and ugly and they are all there together on the bank of the Nile.

Then **all of a sudden**, the **skinny, ugly** cows eat up the seven plump, fat, healthy cows. Now we will see this in a moment, but not only did the skinny cows gobble up the thin, but they were not better for it!

They were still skinny and ugly, it was like they had not eaten anything. And then the Pharaoh awoke from his sleep. **He knows this dream involves Egypt, but he has no idea what it means!**

5 And he fell asleep and dreamed a second time. And behold, seven ears of grain, plump and good, were growing on one stalk. 6 And behold, after them sprouted seven ears, thin and blighted by the east wind. 7 And the thin ears swallowed up the seven plump, full ears. And Pharaoh awoke, and behold, it was a dream. 8 So in the morning his spirit was troubled, and he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt and all its wise men. Pharaoh told them his dreams, but there was none who could interpret them to Pharaoh.

Vs 5-7 - So that same night the **Pharaoh fell back to sleep**, and **he dreamed a second dream**. This time, he sees a stalk of grain and on the stalk of grain were seven ears of grain, they were plump, healthy and good in appearance.

Now again, to the modern reader, we would miss the connection to the Nile, but it was the Nile that flooded each (**Akhet** – Inundation) that provided the nutrients and moisture that would result in a successful growing season (during **Peret**). Pharaoh sees this stalk of grain that has seven ears, seven heads that are plump and good growing on it.

But then, he saw **seven ears sprout up**, likely on the same stalk of grain. You can picture this, for a second, there are **14 ears of grain**, seven healthy, fat, and good and **seven that are thin and blighted by the east wind**.

The “**east wind**” was a reality in this area that appears periodically and creates extreme dryness.

Easton bible Dictionary: In Palestine this east wind blows from a burning desert, and hence is destitute of moisture necessary for vegetation.

In **Exodus 10**, **Exodus 14**, and **Jon 4:8**, we see the east wind. In the Old Testament the east wind is often used as a **symbol of judgment**. One example is in Eze 27:25-26.

Back to the dream: **You can imagine** seven beautiful heads of grains and seven scraggly weed like heads. **But then**, all of a sudden, the **seven thin ears swallow up the seven plump ears** and once again Pharaoh awakes.

Why two dreams that seem the same? Great question, first my short answer this is a Biblical principle we see this principle in both the Old and New Testaments (examples Deut 19:15 and IICor 13:1).

Here we see **Pharoah is given two dreams**, we would admit that they appear to be **very similar in their content**.

Also, we will see what Joseph makes of the fact that God sent two dreams, so keep your eye out for that!

Vs 8 - So the morning finally comes, his spirit is troubled. This dream is bothering him, he cannot shake it. It does not fade from his memory as dreams often do, but instead it sticks and it is very concerning,

The most powerful man in Egypt is troubled by this dream. He calls for the magicians **חֲרָטָם (chartom)** and all the wise men **חַכְמֵי (chakam)**.

Moses runs into Egyptian magicians, who opposed him in Exodus 7.

Pharoah brings out all the **supposed experts**, all the **heavy hitters**, the **brain trust** of his day, in his kingdom. He is concerned about this dream and wants to understand what this dream meant.

Pharoah tells his two dreams to the magicians and wise men, but they cannot provide an interpretation. It does not appear that they even tried to fake it, they simply said we are not able to provide an interpretation.

9 Then the chief cupbearer said to Pharaoh, "I remember my offenses today. 10 When Pharaoh was angry with his servants and put me and the chief baker in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, 11 we dreamed on the same night, he and I, each having a dream with its own interpretation.

Vs 9-11 - The chief cupbearer who is likely simply executing his duties, he is watching and listening to all that is transpiring and then **all of a sudden it clicks**.

For the first time since he was in Pharaoh's prison two years ago, he now remembers Joseph, he all of a sudden **remembers the dreams** that both he and the chief baker had while in prison, all of a sudden heremembers how Joseph had interpreted both dreams and he remembers how **Joseph's interpretations** were perfectly fulfilled in the exact way and time that Joseph had predicted.

Vs 9b – I remember my fault; I remember my sin. To Potiphar he says; remember when you were angry with the chief baker and I and you threw us into prison.

Notice they were placed in custody: *in the house of the captain of the guard...*

Again, we see that the common prison house fell under the **responsibilities** of the **captain of the guard (Potiphar)**.

It was there in the prison that they each had a dream. Although they dreamed the dreams the same night **the dreams themselves were different**, and each dream had **its own interpretation**.

12 A young Hebrew was there with us, a servant of the captain of the guard. When we told him, he interpreted our dreams to us, giving an interpretation to each man according to his dream. 13 And as he interpreted to us, so it came about. I was restored to my office, and the baker was hanged."

Vs 12 - There in the prison, was a young Hebrew man. They knew that Joseph was a Hebrew, if you remember Potiphar's wife referred to Joseph as a Hebrew.

This young Hebrew was a **"servant" or a "slave"** of the **"captain of the guard."**

This is interesting, by the time the chief cupbearer and the chief baker are thrown into prison, what they see is not Joseph serving the “**keeper of the prison**”, as we read in Gen 39:21-22, but they saw him as a servant of the captain of the guard.

As he continues to unfold this story to Pharaoh, we each told him (Joseph) our dreams and he provided us each with a **unique interpretation** each according to our **unique dream**.

So, this young Hebrew slave provided each of us an independent interpretation. **But even more than that!**

Vs 13 - And the **events unfolded exactly** as he had **interpreted our dreams**. I was restored, as he interpreted my dream and the chief baker was hanged, as this young Hebrew slave had interpreted his dream.

Now, what do you think is about to happen?

14 Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they quickly brought him out of the pit. And when he had shaved himself and changed his clothes, he came in before Pharaoh. 15 And Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I have had a dream, and there is no one who can interpret it. I have heard it said of you that when you hear a dream you can interpret it." 16 Joseph answered Pharaoh, "It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer."

Vs 14 - Then Pharaoh sent word to the prison, to have Joseph sent to the palace to speak with Pharaoh.

Notice, they quickly brought him up out of the **pit**. Pharaoh’s prison that Joseph has been incarcerated in for the last two years (or more) is nothing like being in Potiphar’s house.

He was provided with an opportunity to shave and to change his clothes.

Please keep in mind at this time most Semitic men wore beards while most of the Egyptians did not. The Egyptian men, for the most part were clean shaven.

APPLICATION: On the subject of being properly clothed before you enter into the presence of a king. You and I must be properly clothed when we meet our Lord and maker!

“and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith — ” (Php 3:9 ESV)

But, do not miss the point, life in **Pharaoh’s prison** was likely very difficult.

Vs 15 - Pharaoh wastes not time with small talk. He cuts right to the chase. You can picture him on this throne, explaining his conundrum, I had a dream, I brought in the greatest minds in Egypt (the magicians and the wise men), but no one is able to provide me with the interpretation.

I have heard it said that you have the ability to listen to a dream and provide an interpretation.

There is of course some level of irony here. If you remember, as Joseph was approaching Dothan, his brothers saw him coming and do you remember what they said? It is recorded in Gen 37:19.

If you remember I told you the Hebrew gives the idea, here comes the master of dreams. They mocked him, they made fun of him, and in violence they seized him and threw him into a pit!

Now he is standing before Pharaoh and what Pharaoh seems to be saying is I have heard you are the “**dream master**” when you hear a dream you can interpret it.

What will Joseph say here?

Vs 16 - Joseph, in spite of the fact he was in prison just a second ago and in spite of the fact he surely recognizes this might be his ticket out of the pit, **takes no glory for himself**. NONE!

Joseph responds that interpreting dreams is “**altogether apart from me!**” It is not in me, I do not have that ability, sorry I cannot do that. **BUT**, there is a **God in heaven**, the creator God, he will give Pharaoh a favorable answer.

The word translated “**favorable**” is the Hebrew word **שָׁלוֹם (shalom)**. He is likely saying that Eloheem, the mighty God will give you a **complete (Shalom) or full answer**.

17 ¶ Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Behold, in my dream I was standing on the banks of the Nile. 18 Seven cows, plump and attractive, came up out of the Nile and fed in the reed grass. 19 Seven other cows came up after them, poor and very ugly and thin, such as I had never seen in all the land of Egypt. 20 And the thin, ugly cows ate up the first seven plump cows, 21 but when they had eaten them no one would have known that they had eaten them, for they were still as ugly as at the beginning. Then I awoke.

Vs 17-21 - Pharaoh immediately begins to walk Joseph through his dreams. We have discussed this already, so I will highlight only new information.

The second set of thin cows were so **skinny and ugly**. In his retelling to Joseph, Pharaoh provides a **new piece of information**, namely: **I have never seen cows like them in all the land of Egypt**.

The **second** set **ate** the first set! But the thin ugly cows eating the fat cows **did not improve their looks** at all, like we would imagine would happen.

Then Pharaoh says: **I awoke from the dream**.

22 I also saw in my dream seven ears growing on one stalk, full and good. 23 Seven ears, withered, thin, and blighted by the east wind, sprouted after them, 24 and the thin ears swallowed up the seven good ears. And I told it to the magicians, but there was no one who could explain it to me."

Vs 22-24 – Pharaoh falls back asleep, but another dream, as vivid as the first occurs. He now outlines the seven ears on one stalk, first the full, fat, and good, but then the seven ears sprouted on the same stalk that were withered, thin, and blighted.

Then (like the cows) the thin ears ate up the seven ears.

I told my magicians (and although not stated here wisemen as well) but no one could explain these two dreams. We can imagine these similar vivid dreams, that seem to involve Egypt, would trouble the leader of Egypt. This is Pharaoh’s predicament!

25 Then Joseph said to Pharaoh, "The dreams of Pharaoh are one; God has revealed to Pharaoh what he is about to do. 26 The seven good cows are seven years, and the seven good ears are seven years; the dreams are one. 27 The seven lean and ugly cows that came up after them are seven years, and the seven

empty ears blighted by the east wind are also seven years of famine. 28 It is as I told Pharaoh; God has shown to Pharaoh what he is about to do.

Vs 25 - Before we begin unpacking verse 25, in verse 16 Joseph had told Pharaoh that God could give Pharaoh the full meaning of the dream. Now Joseph is going to make **four points**.

You see the first three points immediately:

FIRST, these two dreams (unlike the chief cupbearer and the chief baker) are **one dream**. They are **different**, but they are **teaching one thing**, they are the **same story**.

SECOND, The dreams are **divine in their origin. The origin of these dreams is God!**

THIRD, in this dream **God has revealed** to Pharaoh **what He (God) is about to do**. This is a **prophetic** dream that is **outlining future events**.

APPLICATION: We live in a day and age when people are making all types of interpretations around events occurring during our days.

Many are saying that God has revealed these things to them. Never forget the standard of someone who claims to be a prophet is crystal clear in (Deut 18:20-22).

This means if a man says, thus saith the Lord about a future event that he (God) has revealed to that person, and it does not come pass, that person is a **false prophet**.

But, next comes the interpretation. It is interesting that Joseph does not try to work a deal. He does not say, I will tell you what this means, if... Rather Joseph simply explains to Pharaoh what the dreams mean.

Vs 26-27 - Here is the interpretation of both dreams. The seven good cows and the seven good ears are the same thing, in two different dreams, they are both representing seven years.

The seven lean and ugly cows and the seven empty and blighted ears and they are the same thing and they represent seven years of famine.

Vs 28 - Then Joseph reiterates his **third point**, God has show you what **he is about to do**.

29 There will come seven years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt, 30 but after them there will arise seven years of famine, and all the plenty will be forgotten in the land of Egypt. The famine will consume the land, 31 and the plenty will be unknown in the land by reason of the famine that will follow, for it will be very severe. 32 And the doubling of Pharaoh's dream means that the thing is fixed by God, and God will shortly bring it about.

Vs 29-30 - Joseph then begins to fully explain:

- 1) There will be seven years of plenty throughout all the land of Egypt.
- 2) After those seven years of plenty, there will be seven years of famine.
- 3) The years of famine will be so severe, that they will erase the seven years of plenty.
- 4) The famine will "consume" the land.

Vs 31 - He stresses, that the famine will be so severe that the years of plenty will be unknown, they will be forgotten, they will not be remembered, for the famine that follows will be very severe. The famine will be exceedingly grievous, it will be very hard, it will be extremely difficult!

Joseph has held nothing back and he has worked hard to ensure that Pharaoh understands the severity of the famine that is coming upon the land!

Vs 32 – Now please pay careful attention to the **fourth point** that Jacobs makes outside the interpretation of the dream.

Fourth, God has **doubled this dream** because it means this thing is **fixed by God** and God is going to shortly bring about the 14-year prophecy.

Now, Joseph just exposed something he believes to be true that is **extremely important**. Notice God has doubled this dream, **because it is sure**.

Joseph believes, that the doubling of this dream is like a validation from God that this is **certain in its fulfillment** it is surely going to happen.

Let's go back 13 years ago, when Joseph had a doubled dream (Gen 37:6-10).

What does this tell us that Joseph believed about his own doubled dream?

What does this tell us about faith and trusting God?

33 Now therefore let Pharaoh select a discerning and wise man, and set him over the land of Egypt 34 Let Pharaoh proceed to appoint overseers over the land and take one-fifth of the produce of the land of Egypt during the seven plentiful years. 35 And let them gather all the food of these good years that are coming and store up grain under the authority of Pharaoh for food in the cities, and let them keep it. 36 That food shall be a reserve for the land against the seven years of famine that are to occur in the land of Egypt, so that the land may not perish through the famine."

Vs 33-36 - Joseph now provides a **three-point outline of the steps** that the Pharaoh needs to take to save his nation.

- 1) Find a wise and discerning man to put in charge of the land.
 - a. Wise -
 - b. Discerning - This is normally translated understanding
 - c. To use modern vernacular, you need to appoint an Economic Czar who will oversee this entire project and it must be the right person (wise and discerning)
- 2) Assign various **overseers** (officers) over the land, who will work for and report to your new **Economic Czar**. They should **collect 1/5 of the produce** of the land during the seven years of plenty.
 - a. We are not clearly told if this is a tax or if the state will be buying grain to place into the national reserve. Likely this is a tax.
 - b. They were to collect 1/5 of all that was produced.
- 3) These reserves can then be used as a reserve during the seven years of famine. By doing this, the surplus collected during the seven years of plenty will ensure the nation does not perish through this horrible famine.

Joseph lays out an **easy-to-understand plan**, a **clear three-point plan** that Pharaoh should execute that starts with finding this wise and discerning administrator (Economic Czar) who will oversee the whole program.
