

Genesis 41:1-36

Genesis 41:1-8

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. 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.

1. The cupbearer did not remember Joseph for two years
2. Dreams were considered important and it would be common to employ in the house of Pharaoh dream specialists to interpret and offer advice on how to proceed.
3. Dreams that came in twos or as a pair were recognized as being significant.
 - a. Gudea king of Lagash (200 BC) had a double dream about building a temple
 - b. The Mari letters (1700-1800 BC) record that a king is warned twice from someone else having double dream on consecutive nights that he should NOT build a temple
 - c. In tablet 1 of the Gilgamesh Epic (2100 BC), Gilgamesh has a double dream about an upcoming encounter with Enkidu
 - i. In tablet 4 Gilgamesh has a sequence of five dreams concerning an encounter coming with the guardian
 - d. In an ancient Babylonian "Poem of the Righteous Sufferer" (1700 BC) the man receives three dreams informing him that he has been cleansed.
4. It is hard to imagine that none of Pharaoh's magicians or wise men could not come up with some interpretation.
 - a. The dreams have clear detail
 - b. Anyone could take a shot at interpreting them
 - c. For some reason Pharaoh decided none of the explanations were sufficient, possibly due to:
 - i. Pharaoh's desired interpretation
 - ii. The inconsistency of the magician's interpretation
 - iii. The manipulative, political direction the magicians took the dreams

Genesis 41:9-13

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. 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.”

Genesis 41:14-24

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.” 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. 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.”

1. The cupbearer was not merely a host bringing drinks from the kitchen.
 - a. The cupbearer was a trusted advisor with insight and wisdom concerning many things
 - b. The cupbearer had, apparently, been in prison with accusations of conspiracy against the Pharaoh when it was uncovered that the baker had been the villain
 - c. The cupbearer is now even more trusted
2. Pharaoh was easily convinced by the Cupbearer to call upon Joseph.
3. Joseph had to be cleaned up and, most likely, Egyptianized in his dress, hair and appearance.
 - a. Joseph would have to look (as his brothers would see) like an Egyptian
 - b. In this ancient Near East it was ONLY the Egyptian culture that had clean shaven heads, or, another unique Egyptian practice, close-cropping.
 - c. Clean shaven included ALL body hair. The head was included, but at times it was left close-cropped.
 - i. There were wigs made of human hair that were worn.
4. Joseph and Elohim
 - a. As before, Joseph gave God credit for interpretations
 - b. As always, when speaking to people outside the Abrahamic covenant, God is identified as “God” or ELOHIM, and not “LORD” or YHWH.

430 [e] 'ē-lō-hīm אלהים God N-mp	1107 [e] bil-'ā-gāy; בלעדי [it is] not in me Prep 1cs	559 [e] lē-mōr לאמר saying Prep-I V-Qal-Inf	6547 [e] par-'ōh פרעה Pharaoh N-proper-ms	853 [e] 'et- את- - DirObjM	3130 [e] yō-w-sēp יוסף Joseph N-proper-ms	6030 [e] way-ya-'an ויען So answered Conj-w V-Qal-ConseclImperf-3ms
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6547 [e] par-'ōh. פרעה: Pharaoh N-proper-ms	7965 [e] še-lō-wm שלום of peace N-msc	853 [e] 'et- את- - DirObjM	6030 [e] ya-'ā-neh יענה will give an answer V-Qal-Imperf-3ms
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5. Pharaoh is agitated by the scrawny cows and almost provides an impression similar to an interpretation.

41:19 -

3966 [e] me-'ōd מאד very Adv	8389 [e] tō-'ar תאר favored N-ms	7451 [e] we-rā-'ō-wt ורעות and ill Conj-w Adj-fpc	1803 [e] dal-lō-wt דלות poor Adj-fp	310 [e] 'a-hā-rê-hen, אחריהן after them Prep 3fp	5927 [e] 'ō-lō-wt עלות came up V-Qal-Prtcpl-fp	312 [e] 'ā-hê-rō-wt אחרות other Adj-fp	6510 [e] pā-rō-wt פרות cows N-fp	7651 [e] še-ba'- שבע- seven Number-fs	2009 [e] we-hin-nêh והנה and behold Conj-w Interjection
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7455 [e] lā-rō-a'. לרע: for ugliness Prep-I, Art N-ms	4714 [e] miš-ṣa-yim מצרים of Egypt N-proper-fs	776 [e] 'e-reš ארץ the land N-fsc	3605 [e] be-kāl בכל- in all Prep-b N-msc	2007 [e] kā-hên-nāh כהנה such as these Prep-k Pro-3fp	7200 [e] rā-'ī-ū ראיתי I have seen V-Qal-Perf-1cs	3808 [e] lō- לא- Never Adv-NegPrt	1320 [e] bā-šār; בשר gaunt N-ms	7534 [e] we-raq-qō-wt ורקות and Conj-w Adj-fpc
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AND, 41:21 -

413 [e] 'el- אל- - they had devoured Prep	935 [e] bā-'ū באו V-Qal-Perf-3cp	3588 [e] ki- כי- that Conj	3045 [e] nō-w-da' בודעו would have known V-Nifal-Perf-3ms	3808 [e] we-lō ולא and no one Conj-w Adv-NegPrt	7130 [e] qir-be-nāh, קרבנה among them N-msc 3fp	413 [e] 'el- אל- - Prep	935 [e] wat-tā-bō-nāh ותבאנה And they had devoured Conj-w V-Qal-ConseclImperf-3fp
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3364 [e] wā-'ī-qāṣ. ואיקץ: Then I awoke Conj-w V-Qal-ConseclImperf-1cs	8462 [e] bat-te-ḥil-lāh; בתחלה as at the beginning Prep-b, Art N-fs	834 [e] ka-'ā-šer כאשר just as Prep-k Pro-r	7451 [e] ra', רע ugly Adj-ms	4758 [e] ū-mar-'ē-hen ומראיהו for they [were] Conj-w N-mpc 3fp	7130 [e] qir-be-nāh, קרבנה among them N-msc 3fp
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6. When Pharaoh says, “*but there was no one who could explain it to me*” means they did not give an acceptable, reasonable, logical, believable explanation.

Genesis 41:25-36

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. 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. 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.”

- In verse 33 Joseph shifts from interpretation (mystical, spiritual) right into offering advice (practical, physical, implementable).
 - Joseph is confident
 - Joseph sees himself as a leader, problem solver, worthy of being taken seriously
 - Joseph response is quick and does not need “research” or a “search committee”
- Remember, the Pharaoh is considered by his culture a “GOD-king”
Joseph goes from giving the GOD-king an interpretation from ELOHIM, to now advising the GOD-king with advice from ELOHIM: *“that the thing is fixed by God, and God.”*

6213 [e]	430 [e]	4116 [e]	430 [e]
la·‘ă·śō·tōw.	hā·’ē·lō·hîm	ū·mē·ma·hêr	hā·’ē·lō·hîm,
לְעָשׂוֹ:	הָאֱלֹהִים	וּמִמָּחֵר	הָאֱלֹהִים
bring it to pass	God	and will shortly	God
Prep-I V-Qal-Inf 3ms	Art N-mp	Conj-w V-Piel-Prtcpl-ms	Art N-mp

- Pharaoh is impressed with Joseph just like:
 - Jacob, his father was
 - Potiphar was
 - Potiphar’s wife WAS!!
 - The keeper of the prison was
 - NOW, PHARAOH, doesn’t just stop with the interpretation and go to the “experts”,
Pharaoh now lets Joseph tell him what Pharaoh should do to solving these issues
- Interestingly Pharaoh accepts the interpretation that the dreams were about his nation and his people, and NOT about PHARAOH himself.

- a. It is possible the magicians' interpretations were totally focused on the man Pharaoh and his importance and his personal fate instead of Pharaoh's responsibility to his people.

5. The Famine Inscription on Sehel Island

- a. The Famine Stela, located on Sehel Island in Egypt, is a Ptolemaic-era inscription from 250 BC that recounts a seven-year famine during the Old Kingdom reign of Pharaoh Djoser (Third Dynasty, 2686–2649 BC) due to the Nile's failure to flood. The stela

describes Djoser's desperation, the advice of his vizier Imhotep, and a dream where the god Khnum promises to restore the Nile's flow if his temple is repaired and honored.

