

5) Where Can We Find A Wise Man...?

- A) God, speaking through Joseph, tells Pharaoh to seek a wise man who can be set over the land of Egypt (41:33).
- B) Joseph goes on to present God's plan for saving 20% of the food in all the land of Egypt for the seven years of abundance (41:34).
- C) The food was to be stored in the cities (for easier distribution later) for when the famine would devastate the country. This gigantic reserve of food would save Pharaoh's empire (41:35-36).
- D) Pharaoh liked Joseph's bold proposal (41:37). Pharaoh had called all the magicians, scientists, wise men and scholars in all the land of Egypt to advise him on his dreams. But none of them could give him any help.
- E) Joseph, who was a prisoner and a foreigner (cf. 46:34), but he possessed what no one else in Egypt had. Joseph was a single man whose life was submitted to God's leading. Joseph revealed God to the god (Pharaoh) of Egypt!
- F) Pharaoh was so impressed with Joseph's "divine spirit" (note the parallel with the Spirit of God (cf. John 14:26), that he commanded that Joseph be the wise man who would rule over every other person in Egypt (41:38-41).
- G) Pharaoh gives Joseph his signet ring (authority) and clothes him in a coat/tunic (another coat!), and places a gold necklace around his neck (recalling the story of Judah's identity -- cf. Genesis 38:25).
- H) Joseph, who woke that morning a prisoner, is elevated to the role of "Vice Pharaoh," the Prime Minister of all of Egypt. Every knee would bow (foreshadowing) to Joseph (41:43).

From Prison To Prime Minister

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THE PATRIARCHS BECAME JEALOUS OF JOSEPH AND SOLD HIM INTO EGYPT. YET GOD WAS WITH HIM, AND RESCUED HIM FROM ALL HIS AFFLICTIONS, AND GRANTED HIM FAVOR AND WISDOM IN THE SIGHT OF PHARAOH, KING OF EGYPT, AND HE MADE HIM GOVERNOR OVER EGYPT AND ALL HIS HOUSEHOLD.

~ACTS 7:9-10 (NASB)

1) A Pair Of Nightmares For Pharaoh

- A) Two full years* after Joseph had accurately interpreted the dreams of the chief cupbearer and chief baker (who was killed), Pharaoh has a dream where he is standing by the Nile (Genesis 41:1).
- B) Pharaoh's first dream is about two sets of seven cows (41:2-4). The dream is so grotesque and disturbing, Pharaoh wakes up, as though startled from a nightmare.
- C) Pharaoh, it would seem, settles his startled spirit, and falls back into sleep. When he does, he has a second dream†, this time about two sets of seven ears of corn (41:5-7). The second dream is equally grotesque and shocking, and

* The precision in the text (two full years) is related to Pharaoh's birthday (cf. Genesis 40:20). This would have been a clear marker for Joseph, and is another textual way for Moses (the writer) to communicate, "two years later, around the time of his birthday, Pharaoh had a dream..."

awakens Pharaoh again from his nightmare.

2) A Diagnosis With No Prognosis?

- A) As with the cupbearer and baker (Genesis 40), Pharaoh is caught on the horns of a dilemma. He has what he believes is a message from the gods, but no interpretation.
- B) Pharaoh is so troubled, he calls "all" of the magicians and wise men of Egypt (the scientists and philosophers of the empire) to interpret his dream. But no one can help Pharaoh understand the message (41:8).
- C) The chief cupbearer, who by virtue of his position in Pharaoh's court, would have seen all of these events taking place, suddenly remembers a long forgotten (cf. 40:23) episode in his own life (41:9ff).
- D) The chief cupbearer relates the story of how he was thrown in jail for infuriating Pharaoh and how a "Hebrew youth" who was serving Potiphar accurately interpreted the dreams of the baker and himself (41:9-13).

3) Joseph Pulled Out Of The Pit (Again)

- A) Joseph is summoned from Potiphar's jail (the hole/pit, cf. 40:15, 37:24 & 28). He is immediately "Egyptianized" for presentation[†] to Pharaoh (41:14).
- B) Imagine the transition from the prison to the palace of Pharaoh! From dirty squalor where men were without hope,

† As we discussed last week, Ancient Egyptians placed great significance on the content of dreams because they believed that sleep put them into contact with another world where not only the dead, but also the gods, dwelt. Dreams were gifts from the gods to them. Remember (also) that a pair of dreams indicated certainty of fulfillment in Egyptian dreamology (the science of interpreting dreams). (Collected from various sources, esp. *Genesis*, by Gordon Wenham, pgs. 382-383 & *Genesis*, by John Walton, pgs. 672-673).

to the halls of power, where a single man was worshiped as though he were a god.

- C) Into this spectacle, Joseph is placed in front of Pharaoh. The Pharaoh (probably Sesostris I), tells Joseph he has heard of his dream-interpreting abilities -- and asks him if he can interpret his own disturbing dreams (41:15).

4) The Interpretation Of Pharaoh's Dreams

- A) Joseph's reply to Pharaoh is emphatic -- "it is not in me!" His answer is only a single word in Hebrew -- like a reactive cry of "NO" (41:16).
- B) Rather than take any credit, Joseph makes clear that God is the one who could give Pharaoh an interpretation (41:16). The people of the land may have thought that Pharaoh was a god, but Joseph (and Pharaoh) knew better!
- C) Without argument or hesitation, Pharaoh dramatically (note the emphatic "behold/Lo" statements) describes the content of his dreams to Joseph (41:17-24).
- D) With the same calm confidence he displayed with the cupbearer and baker, Joseph delivers the meaning of Pharaoh's dreams to him without hesitation (41:25-31).
- E) Pharaoh's dreams reveal seven years of abundance followed by seven years of famine. Further, Joseph assures Pharaoh that God will do what He has revealed (41:32). Joseph relays God's advice in the face of this dilemma...

‡ "Hebrew men, in contrast to Egyptians, wore beards. So in a flash Joseph was shaved, sanitized, Egyptianized, and presented to Pharaoh. The young Hebrew (now 30 years old) had gone from the pit to the palace in an instant. There handsome, well-built Joseph stood, looking more like an Egyptian than a Hebrew." *Genesis*, by R. Kent Hughes, pg. 477).