

Genesis Chapter 41

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."

"And it came to pass at the end of two full years":

It is not a clear case, as Aben Ezra observes, from whence these years are to be reckoned, whether from the time of Joseph's being put into prison, or from the time that the chief butler was taken out of it.

The latter seems more probable, and better connects this and the preceding chapter.

"That Pharaoh dreamed, and, behold, he stood by the river":

It seemed to him, in his dream, as if he stood near the river Nile, or some canal or flow of water cut out of that river.

"The Nile":

This is the River that dominated Egyptian life.

Genesis 41:2 "And, behold, there came up out of the river seven well favored kine and fat-fleshed; and they fed in a meadow."

"And, behold, there came up out of the river seven well favored kine, and fat-fleshed":

Seven cows or heifers, sleek, fat, and plump, goodly to look at.

These seemed in the dream, as if they came out of the river, because they were fed with the fruits of the earth, which the overflowing of the river Nile, and its canals, produced.

"And they fed in a meadow":

Adjoining to the river, where there was good pasture for them, and gives a reason of their being in so good a condition.

Genesis 41:3 "And, behold, seven other kine came up after them out of the river, ill favored and lean-fleshed; and stood by the [other] kine upon the brink of the river."

"And, behold, seven other kine came up after them out of the river, ill favored, and lean-fleshed":

Thin and haggard, their bones stuck out, having scarcely any flesh upon them, and made a wretched figure.

"And stood by the other kine":

And looked so much the worse, when compared with them.

"Upon the brink of the river":

It had not overflowed, so that there was no grass to be had, but just upon the bank, where these kept for that purpose.

For the fruitfulness of Egypt was owing to the river Nile; as that overflowed or did not, there was plenty or famine.

Hence both these sorts of creatures came up out of that.

Genesis 41:4 "And the ill favored and lean-fleshed kine did eat up the seven well favored and fat kine. So Pharaoh awoke."

"And the ill favored and lean-fleshed kine did eat up the seven well favored and fat kine":

So it seemed in the dream as if this was done, which was very strange and surprising that animals should devour one another.

Especially that tame ones, cows or heifers, should eat those of their own species, which was never known to happen.

"So Pharaoh awoke":

He was surprised at the strange sight he had in his dream.

This was the fifth dream of Joseph's life.

It would play an important part in Joseph's history.

What a shame Pharaoh's servant waited two years to tell the Pharaoh of Joseph.

The Nile River was worshipped in Egypt.

Life was believed by the Egyptians to be controlled by the Nile.

Cows were also, an object of worship.

It was no wonder that this was what this Egyptian Pharaoh dreamed.

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."

"And he slept, and dreamed the second time":

He fell asleep again quickly, and dreamed another dream the same night, and to the same purpose, being much of the like kind as was the former.

"And, behold, seven ears of corn came up upon one stalk, rank and good":

Which were very uncommon even in those fruitful countries.

Dr. Shaw observes of Barbary, which vied with Egypt for fruitfulness, that it sometimes happens that one stalk of wheat will bear two ears, while each of these ears will as often shoot out into a number of lesser ones, thereby affording a most plentiful increase.

Genesis 41:6 "And, behold, seven thin ears and blasted with the east wind sprung up after them."

"And, behold, seven thin ears, and blasted with the east wind":

Which is very fatal to corn, to dry, burn, smite, or blast it; and especially to the corn in Egypt, whither it blew from the desert of Arabia.

"Sprung up after them":

After the seven full ears, in the same place the other did, or near unto them.

Genesis 41:7 "And the seven thin ears devoured the seven rank and full ears. And Pharaoh awoke, and, behold, [it was] a dream."

"And the seven thin ears devoured the seven rank and full ears":

So it appeared to Pharaoh in his dream, which must be very amazing to behold, and unaccountable how it should be.

"And Pharaoh awoke, and, behold, it was a dream":

Not a real fact, but a dream.

Yet not a common dream, but had some important signification in it.

It wasn't vanishing from his mind, but dwelled upon it, which made him conclude there was something more than common in it, and made him very desirous to have the meaning of it.

Having this second dream was verification of the severity and certainty of the dream then coming true.

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."

"And it came to pass in the morning that his spirit was troubled":

With the thoughts of his dreams; as they were uppermost in his mind.

He was continually thinking of them.

It was as if he always had the same images before him whether awake or when asleep and therefore could not be at ease without getting to know the meaning of them.

"And he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt, and all the wise men thereof":

Who pretended to have great skill in the things of nature, and in astrology and other sciences.

By which they pretended to know future events, and to interpret dreams among other things.

Then show what they signaled, and what things would happen for the accomplishment of them.

"And Pharaoh told them his dream":

Both his dreams, which for the similarity of them, and there being so little time passing between them, are represented as one dream; for that both were told them appears by what follows:

"But there was none that could interpret them unto Pharaoh":

They were surprised and confounded, and did not know what to say.

The things were so strange and surprising that he told, that they could not offer any conjectures about them, or, if they did, they were very unsatisfactory to Pharaoh.

The combined expertise of a full council of Pharaoh's advisers and dream experts, all of whom had been summoned into his presence, and they had failed to provide an interpretation of the two disturbing dreams.

Without their knowing it, they had just set the stage for Joseph's entrance on the scene of Egyptian history.

Here again, the dreamer was troubled because he did not know the meaning of the dream.

Pharaoh first tries the world, but the world cannot give an answer to God's business.

Genesis 41:9 "Then spake the chief butler unto Pharaoh, saying, I do remember my faults this day:"

“Then spake the chief butler unto Pharaoh”:

With memory suitably prompted, the butler apologized for his neglect (“my own offenses”), and told Pharaoh of the Hebrew prisoner and his accurate interpretation of dreams two years earlier (verses 10-13).

"Saying, I do remember my faults this day":

Which some interpret of his forgetfulness of Joseph and his afflictions, and of his ingratitude to him, and breach of promise in not making mention of him to Pharaoh before this time.

But they seem rather to be faults he had committed against Pharaoh, and were the reason of his being wroth with him (as in Genesis 41:10).

And these were either real faults, which the king had pardoned, or however such as he had been charged with, and cleared from.

And which he now in a courtly manner takes to himself, and owns them, that the king's goodness and clemency to him might appear, and lest he should seem to charge the king with injustice in casting him into prison.

Which circumstance he could not avoid relating in the story he was about to tell.

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:"

"Pharaoh was wroth with his servants":

Not with all of them, but with the butler and the baker.

Aben Ezra observes here, that Pharaoh was not the proper name of this king, but a title of office, and signifies the king.

For it cannot be thought that the butler would use such freedom in his presence as to call him by his name.

"And put me in ward in the captain of the guard's house":

In consequence of his wrath and displeasure, for those crimes really or supposed to be committed by him.

The captain of the guard's house was a prison, or at least there was a prison in it for such sort of offenders; and this was Potiphar's, Joseph's master's, house.

"Both me and the chief baker":

Which explains who the officers were Pharaoh was wroth with, and who were for their offences committed to prison.

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."

"And we dreamed a dream in one night, I and he":

Both on the same night.

"We dreamed each man according to the interpretation of his dream":

They both dreamed exactly what should befall them, as it was interpreted to them.

The dreams, the interpretation of them, and the events, answered to each other.

Genesis 41:12 "And [there was] there with us a young man, a 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."

"And there was there with us a young man":

Who was in the prison with them, had the care of them, and waited upon them.

He was then about twenty eight years of age; for it was two years ago he speaks of, and Joseph was thirty when he stood before Pharaoh (Genesis 41:46).

"A Hebrew servant to the captain of the guard":

He first describes him by his age, a young man, then by his descent, a Hebrew, and by his state and condition, a servant.

Neither of them tended much to recommend him to the king.

"And we told him":

That is, they told him their dreams.

"And he interpreted to us our dream, to each man according to his dream did he interpret":

Told them what their dreams meant, what the events would be they warned.

The interpretation was different according to their dreams.

Suddenly the butler remembered.

He told Pharaoh about the dreams he and the baker had.

Also about Joseph, the Hebrew boy, who interpreted their dreams.

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."

"And it came to pass, as he interpreted to us, so it was":

The event answered to the interpretation, and showed it to be right.

This is frequently hinted and repeated, to show the exactness and certainty of the interpretation given, in order to recommend Joseph to Pharaoh the more.

"Me he restored unto my office, and him he hanged":

That is, Joseph interpreted the butler's dream to such a sense, that he should be restored to his butlership, and accordingly he was.

The baker's dream was that he should be hanged, and so he was.

Aben Ezra and Jarchi interpret this of Pharaoh, that he restored the one, and hanged the other, or ordered these things to be done, which answered to Joseph's interpretation of the dreams.

But the former sense seems best, for Joseph is the person that is immediately spoken of in the preceding clause.

Nor would it have been so decent for the butler, in the presence of Pharaoh, to have spoken of him without naming him, and which would have been contrary to his usage before.

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."

"Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph":

Sent messengers to him to come to him directly, ordered the captain of the guard, or keeper of prison, to let him loose and set him free (see Psalm 105:20).

The urgent summons had Joseph in front of Pharaoh with minimum delay, in prized, clean-shaven Egyptian style for a proper appearance.

"And they brought him hastily out of the dungeon":

That is, out of the prison house.

Which, as Jarchi says, was made like a ditch or dungeon, or in which the dungeon was where Joseph was first put when he was brought to prison.

Though it cannot be thought that he continued there when he had so much respect shown him by the keeper, and had other prisoners committed to his care.

However, he was fetched in great haste from his place of confinement, by the messengers that were sent for him; or "they made him to run", from the prison to the palace, the king being so eager to have his dream interpreted to him.

"And he shaved himself":

Or the barber shaved him, as Aben Ezra; his beard had not been shaved, nor the hair of his head cut very probably for a considerable time as it was usual for persons in such circumstances to neglect such things.

"And changed his raiment":

His prison garments being such as were not fit to appear in before a king, and put on others, which either the king sent him, or the captain of the guard his master furnished him with.

"And came in unto Pharaoh":

Into his palace, and his presence.

What city it was in which this Pharaoh kept his palace, is nowhere said.

Very probably it was which the Scriptures call Zoan, that being the ancient city of Egypt (Numbers 13:22).

God had accomplished what He set out to do.

Joseph was out of jail.

He must have been filthy, so he had to be cleaned up before he faced the Pharaoh.

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."

"And Pharaoh said unto Joseph":

Immediately, upon his being introduced to him.

"I have dreamed a dream, and there is none that can interpret it":

That he could yet meet with; none of his magicians or wise men, who made great pretensions to skill in such matters.

"And I have heard say of thee, that thou canst understand a dream to interpret it":

It had been reported to him, particularly by the chief butler, that when he heard a dream told him, he had such knowledge and understanding, that he could interpret it.

Tell the meaning of it, what it meant, and what would be the events signified by it.

Genesis 41:16 "And Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, [It is] not in me: God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace."

"It is not in me: God shall ... answer":

Declaring any innate ability, Joseph advised at the very outset that the answer Pharaoh desired could only come from God.

Expressing his modesty that he did not claim such skill and wisdom himself.

Declaring that he had no such power and abilities in and of himself, to interpret dreams; what he had was a gift of God, and wholly depended upon his influence, and the revelation he was pleased to make to him of such things.

"God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace":

Such an answer to his request in the interpretation of his dream, as shall give him full content, and make his mind quiet and easy, and which shall tend to the welfare of him and his kingdom.

Some render the words as a prayer or wish, "may God give Pharaoh", etc.

So as it were addressing his God that he would be pleased to make known to him his interpretation of the dream to the satisfaction of Pharaoh.

But the other sense seems best, which expresses his faith in God, that he would do it, and to whom it should be ascribed, and not unto himself.

Pharaoh was desperate to find out what these dreams meant.

Joseph did not take any credit within himself.

He quickly gave God the credit.

He told Pharaoh that God would bring him peace.

Genesis 41:17 "And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, In my dream, behold, I stood upon the bank of the river:"

"And Pharaoh said unto Joseph":

Relating both his dreams in a more ample manner, though to the same purpose, than before related.

"In my dream, behold, I stood upon the bank of the river":

The river Nile, where he could have a full sight of what were after presented to his view.

Genesis 41:18 "And, behold, there came up out of the river seven kine, fat-fleshed and well favored; and they fed in a meadow:"

"And, behold, there came up out of the river seven kine":

Cows or heifers; (see note on 41:2).

The account of them is the same here as there, and of the place where they fed, only the words are transposed.

Genesis 41:19 "And, behold, seven other kine came up after them, poor and very ill favored and lean-fleshed, such as I never saw in all the land of Egypt for badness:"

And, behold, seven other kine":

Here some addition is made: these are said not only to be very ill favored, and lean-fleshed (see note on Genesis 41:3), but poor, thin, puny, exhausted of their flesh and strength through some disease upon them, or want of food.

And it follows, what was not before expressed:

"Such as I never saw in all the land of Egypt, for badness":

So poor, so lean, and so ill favored.

For whatever might be seen in other countries, never were such seen in Egypt, which was famous for good cattle.

Genesis 41:20 "And the lean and the ill favored kine did eat up the first seven fat kine:"

"And the lean and the ill favored kine":

The same that was previously described; (see note on Gen. 41:4).

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 favored, as at the beginning. So I awoke."

"And when they had eaten them up":

Or "were come into their bowels", into their inward parts, their bellies, being swallowed and devoured by them.

"It could not be known that they had eaten them":

Or were in their bellies, they seemed never the fuller nor the fatter for them.

"But they were still ill favored as at the beginning":

Looked as thin and as meager as they did when they first came out of the river, or were first seen by Pharaoh.

"So I awoke":

Surprised at what he had seen; this was his first dream.

Genesis 41:22 "And I saw in my dream, and, behold, seven ears came up in one stalk, full and good:"

"And I saw in my dream":

Falling asleep again quickly, he dreamed a second time; and this dream being of a like kind with the former.

With so small a space between them, they are represented as one, and this is the continuation of it: and, behold, seven ears, etc. (See note on Genesis 41:5).

Genesis 41:23 "And, behold, seven ears, withered, thin, [and] blasted with the east wind, sprung up after them:"

"And, behold, seven ears withered":

Here a new epithet of the bad ears is given, and expressed by a word nowhere else used, which Ben Melech interprets, small, little, according to the use of the word in the Misnah.

Aben Ezra states void, empty, such as had no grains of corn in them.

Nothing but husk or chaff, and observes that some render it images; for the word is so used in the Arabic language, and may signify that these ears were only mere shadows or images of ears, which had no substance in them.

Jarchi says the word, in the Syriac language signifies a rock, and so it denotes that these ears were dry as a rock, and had no moisture in them, laid dried, burnt up, and then blasted with the east wind.

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."

"And the thin ears devoured the seven good ears" (see note on Genesis 41:7).

"And I told this unto the magicians":

Just in the same manner as he had to Joseph.

"But there was none that could declare it unto me":

The meaning of it; what all this should signify or portend.

He had gone into detail, and told both dreams to Joseph.

His magicians and wise men were worldly, and could not interpret dreams given by God.

Joseph was his only hope.

Genesis 41:25 "And Joseph said unto Pharaoh, The dream of Pharaoh [is] one: God hath showed Pharaoh what he [is] about to do."

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

Both his dreams have the same message.

"God hath showed":

Joseph's interpretation kept the focus fixed upon what God had determined for Egypt (see verses 28, 32).

Genesis 41:26 "The seven good kine [are] seven years; and the seven good ears [are] seven years: the dream [is] one."

"The seven good kine are seven years":

Signify seven years, and these years of plenty, as appears from the antithesis (in Genesis 41:26).

"And the seven good ears are seven years", signify the same.

"The dream is one":

For though the seven good kine were seen in one dream, the seven good ears in another, yet both dreams were one as to signification.

Genesis 41:27 "And the seven thin and ill favored 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."

"And the seven thin and ill favored kine that came up after them are seven years":

Signify other seven years, and these different from the former, as follows:

"And the seven empty ears blasted with the east wind shall be seven years of famine":

Or there will be seven years of famine that will answer to them, and are signified by them.

Genesis 41:28 "This [is] the thing which I have spoken unto Pharaoh: What God [is] about to do he sheweth unto Pharaoh."

"This is the thing which I have spoken unto Pharaoh":

As an interpretation of his dreams.

"What God is about to do, he sheweth unto Pharaoh":

The events of fourteen years with respect to plenty and sterility.

Genesis 41:29 "Behold, there come seven years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt:"

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

Not only a sufficiency but an abundance, even to luxury, as when the Nile rose to sixteen cubits, as Pliny observes; which, though a natural cause, was owing to God, and that it should thus overflow for seven years successively, and cause such a continued plenty, which can be ascribed to no other.

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;"

"And there shall arise after them seven years of famine":

Which might be occasioned by the river Nile not rising so high as to overflow its banks, as when it did not rise to more than twelve cubits, and then a famine ensued, as the above writer tells us; and it must be owing to the overruling providence of God that this should be the case for seven years running.

"And all the plenty shall be forgotten in the land of Egypt":

The seven years of plenty being all spent, it should be as if it never was.

The minds of men would be so intent upon their present distressed case and circumstances, that they should wholly forget how it had been with them in time past.

Or it would be as if they had never enjoyed it, or were never the better for it.

This answers to and explains how it was with the ill favored kine, when they had eaten up the fat kine; that they seemed never the better, nor could it be known by their appearance that they had so done.

"And the famine shall consume the land":

The inhabitants of it, and all the fruits and increase of it the former years produced.

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."

"And the plenty shall not be known in the land, by reason of that famine following":

That is, before it would be over; otherwise the former plenty was in some measure known by the stores of provisions laid up in the seven years of it, and which were brought forth when the famine became very pressing.

But by that time, and before the seven years of it were ended, there were no traces of the foregoing plenty to be observed.

"For it shall be very grievous":

As it was both in Egypt and in all the countries round about.

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."

"And for that the dream was doubled unto Pharaoh twice":

Or was repeated to him under different figures and images.

"It is because the thing is established by God":

By a firm decree of his, and is sure, and will most certainly be accomplished.

Of which Pharaoh might then be assured, and then to assure him of it was the repetition of the dream made.

"And God will shortly bring it to pass":

Or "make haste to do it", that is, would soon begin to accomplish these events.

As Bishop Usher observes, from the harvest of this (the then present), year, the seven years of plenty are reckoned.

Joseph stressed over and over that God was the author of these dreams.

Anyone hearing this interpretation would know that this was a true interpretation.

The fact that this would happen soon was established by two dreams.

This famine would be grievous.

"Seven":

This means spiritually complete.

I believe for our day the message is clear.

If God tells one of His servants to prepare for a problem, do it.

Just as God told Noah to build the ark, He told Joseph ahead of this famine, so Joseph would start to prepare.

God will help His people get through the tribulation.

We must listen and follow God's instructions.

There is a way out for every problem.

We must follow God's instructions exactly and do whatever He tells us to do, no matter how silly it might seem at the time.

Just as God made a way for Noah and Joseph, He will make a way for us.

Notice the seven years of famine will be like seven years of tribulation.

Verses 33-36

After interpreting the dream, Joseph told Pharaoh how to survive the next 14 years.

Not in agreement with normal principals, Joseph, a slave and a prisoner, added to the interpretation a long-term strategy for establishing reserves to meet the future need, and included advice on the quality of the man to head up the project.

Famines had ravaged Egypt before, but this time divine warning permitted serious and sustained advance planning.

Genesis 41:33 "Now therefore let Pharaoh look out a man discreet and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt."

"Now therefore let Pharaoh look out a man discreet and wise":

Of good judgment and conduct, and of abilities equal to the execution of a scheme that was hereafter proposed.

It can scarcely be thought consistent with the great modesty of Joseph that he meant himself, or that indeed, he ventured to give any advice at all, until it was first asked of him by the king.

Who being so well satisfied with the interpretation of his dreams, thought him a proper person to consult with what to be done in this case.

Who, as a true father of his country, as every king should be, was concerned for the good of it, and to provide against the worst for them.

"And set him over the land of Egypt":

Not to be governor of it in general, but with a particular respect to the present case, to take care of provision for it.

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."

"Let Pharaoh do this":

Appoint such a person; who as a sovereign prince could do it of himself.

"And let him appoint officers over the land":

Not Pharaoh, but the wise and discreet governor he should set over the land, who should have a power of appointing officers or overseers under him to manage things according to his direction.

"And take up the fifth part of the land of Egypt in the seven plenteous years":

Not the officers appointed, but the appointer of them, the chief governor under Pharaoh, for the word is singular.

It is proposed that he should, in Pharaoh's name, and by his order, take a fifth part of all the corn in the land of Egypt during seven years of plenty.

Not by force, which so good a man as Joseph would never advise to, whatever power Pharaoh might have, and could exercise if he pleased.

But by making a purchase of it, which in such time of plenty would be bought cheap, and which so great a prince as Pharaoh was capable of.

It is commonly asked why a half part was not ordered to be taken up, since there were to be as many years of famine as of plenty?

And to this it is usually replied, that besides this fifth part taken up, as there might be an old stock of former years, so there would be something considerable remain of these seven years of plenty, which men of substance would lay up, as Pharaoh did.

Besides, a fifth part might be equal to the crop of an ordinary year, or near it.

To which may be added, that in times of famine men live more sparingly, as they are obliged, and therefore such a quantity would go the further; as well as it may be considered.

That notwithstanding the barrenness of the land in general, yet in some places, especially on the banks of the Nile, some corn might be produced; so that upon the whole a fifth part might be judged sufficient to answer the extremity of the seven years of famine, and even to allow a distribution to other countries.

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."

"And let them, gather all the food of those good years that come":

That is, let the under officers collect together the fifth part of all fruits of the land during the seven years of plenty.

"And lay up corn under the hand of Pharaoh":

As his property, and only to be disposed of by his orders.

For as it was to be purchased with his money, it was right that it should be in his hands, or in the hands of his officers appointed by him, as the Targum of Jonathan.

"And let them keep food in the cities":

Reserve it in the several cities throughout the land, against the years of famine.

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."

"And that food shall be for store to the land":

A deposit in the said cities, to be brought forth and used in a time of public distress.

The Targum of Jonathan says it "shall be hidden in a cave in the earth".

"Against the seven years of famine which shall be in the land of Egypt":

And so be a supply to the inhabitants of the land, when they should be sore pressed with a famine, and know not what to do, or where to go for food.

"That the land perish not through the famine":

That is, that the people of the land perish not, as the above Targum, which, without such a provision, they would have been in great danger of perishing.

Joseph told him of problems about to come when he interpreted his dreams.

It is no good to tell of problems, unless we have a solution to offer.

We are telling people now of the terrible seven years of tribulation about to come on the earth.

We must, also, offer some answers to the problems.

Joseph did just that.

God had given Joseph a plan, and he had passed it on to Pharaoh.

Joseph did not ask Pharaoh for the job.

In verse 33, there is a play on words.

Pharaoh had already called Egypt's wisest man.

They did not have an answer to the problem.

They were not even smart enough to know that there was a problem.

Pharaoh would have to recognize Joseph's plan as a good one.

If he was smart enough to be Pharaoh, he had to be smart enough to realize this was a good plan.

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":

He approved of the advice Joseph gave, and of the scheme and plan which he proposed.

"And in the eyes of all his servants":

His nobles, ministers of state and courtiers, all highly commended and applauded it.

It was with the general and unanimous consent of all agreed that it should be put into execution.

But then the next question, and the thing to be considered, was who was a person fit to be engaged in such an affair?

Verses 37-41

To Pharaoh and his royal retinue, no other candidate but Joseph qualified for the task of working out this good plan, because they recognized that he spoke God-given revelation and insight (see verse 39).

Joseph's focus on his LORD had taken him from prison to the palace quickly (verse 41).

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]?"

"And Pharaoh said unto his servants":

That were about him, and with whom he was consulting about a proper person to be over this affair of gathering in the fruits of the earth in the time of plenty, and laying them up against a time of famine.

"Can we find such a one as this is, in whom the Spirit of God is?"

If we search among all the ranks and degrees of men throughout the kingdom, let them be of what character they will, we shall never find a man like this, who appears to have the Spirit of God, or "of the gods".

As he in his Heathenish way spoke, and which he concluded from his vast knowledge of things.

Especially of things future, hence the Targums of Onkelos and Jonathan interpret it, the spirit of prophecy from the LORD.

The Egyptians did not understand about the third person of the triune Godhead.

They merely meant that God had assisted Joseph.

This was an interesting statement.

Not only did Pharaoh agree, but his servants as well.

The world can see the LORD in us, even if He is not their LORD.

Spirit is capitalized, so this is the Holy Spirit.

Spirit filled Christians are ridiculed and put down by the world.

When a crisis arises in their lives, these worldly people, who have made fun of them, will cry for help from spirit filled Christians.

They know where the power is.

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]:"

"And Pharaoh said unto Joseph":

After his servants had agreed to his being the man.

At least Pharaoh had declared his mind that he should be the person.

Which if any of them disliked, as probably might be the case of some through envy, and as desirous of the post themselves, yet dared not make any opposition to it.

"Forasmuch as God hath showed thee all this":

The interpretation of his dreams, what would be hereafter for fourteen years to come, what was advisable to be done for the good of the nation, and then had proposed a plan so well contrived and formed.

"There is none so discreet and wise as thou art":

And consequently, none so fit for this business, since he was so divinely qualified.

Justin, the Heathen writer, observes that he had such knowledge and experience of things that his answers seemed to be given not from men, but from God.

Verses 40-4

There has been some question as to the exact position Joseph held in the royal court.

Some think he was merely an important official with considerable power.

Others believe he was a vizier or prime minister.

He was set as chief steward over Pharaoh's house.

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."

"Thou shalt be over my house":

Have the care of his domestic affairs, and be the principal man in his palace and court.

"And according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled":

Not only in his family, but in his whole kingdom.

Whatever he ordered and commanded them to do, they should it, or "all my people shall kiss", that is, either their hand at the sight of him, or meeting him, in token of respect and veneration shall yield a ready and cheerful obedience to him, of which the kiss was a sign (see Psalm 2:12).

The Targum of Onkelos renders it, "shall be fed", supplied with corn, and with all necessary provisions, and so Jarchi interprets it; which is restraining it to that part of his office which concerned the gathering and laying up their stores for time to come.

"Only in the throne will I be greater than thou":

That is, he alone would be king, wear the crown sit upon the throne, and have all the ensigns of royal majesty, in which Joseph was to have no share.

Otherwise he was to have an executive power and authority over all his subjects in the land, even to bind his princes at pleasure, and to teach, instruct, and direct his senators (Psalm 105:21).

Genesis 41:41 "And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, See, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt."

"Set thee over all the land of Egypt":

The country-wide jurisdiction accorded to Joseph receives frequent mention in the narrative (verses 43-44, 46, 55; 42:6; 45:8).

Joseph was in command over "all the land of Egypt" (verses 41, 43-44, 55, 42:6; 45:8); and he was directly responsible and subordinate only to Pharaoh (verse 40).

Other Asiatics were known to have achieved similar eminence in Egypt's government in the second millennium B.C.

God had raised Joseph from prison to being number two man in all of Egypt.

Here again, Pharaoh realized that God was directing Joseph in all that he did.

Genesis Chapter 41 Questions

1. How many years after Joseph interpreted the butler's dream, did Pharaoh dream?
2. How many fat-fleshed kine did Pharaoh dream of?
3. How many lean-fleshed kine did he dream of?
4. The second dream was about what?
5. How many dreams affected Joseph, before Pharaoh's dream about the corn?
6. What river was worshipped in Egypt?
7. What was Pharaoh's second dream verification of?
8. What happened to Pharaoh that had happened to the butler and baker after the dreams?
9. What did the butler confess to Pharaoh?
10. Who had interpreted their dreams?
11. What did Pharaoh do when he heard this?
12. What did Joseph do before coming before Pharaoh?
13. Who had Pharaoh tried to get answers from?
14. When Pharaoh told Joseph he heard he could interpret dreams, what did Joseph say?
15. What did Joseph say about the two dreams?
16. The seven kine and the seven ears were what?
17. Where was the first mention of the famine?
18. What lesson can we learn from this today?
19. Joseph stresses what over and over?
20. Even if seems silly at times, what must we do when God tells us something?
21. When we tell people of tribulations about to come on the earth, we must, also, offer what?
22. Egypt's wisest men did not have an answer to the problem, they are not even smart enough for what?
23. How did Pharaoh accept Joseph's suggestion?

24. What did Pharaoh realize Joseph had within?
25. Who did Pharaoh choose to carry out the plans?
26. What position did Joseph have now?