

**Dreams and
Surprises**
Genesis 41

Dreams and Surprises

Begin with prayer

Read: Genesis 41

Listen: THRU the BIBLE: [Genesis 41](#)

Dear God,

Develop in us faithful character in the hidden seasons,
so that when You open doors, we are ready. All
promotion comes from You alone.

Amen.



Genesis 41

Two years is a long time to wait. That's how long Joseph sat in prison, hoping to be released. But he was a foreigner, kidnapped from his homeland, sold into slavery, and unfairly imprisoned with no one to defend him. And he was forgotten. But not by God. All this was happening to Joseph for God's purpose in his life and in God's bigger picture of redemption. Wouldn't it be great if we could recognize God's hand in our lives? It would give us a totally different outlook on life.

Joseph's story is one that shows poverty to riches. Truth is better than fiction, after all, and that's the case in this thrilling episode from Joseph's life.

God was developing Joseph's character and patience through these days of adversity. (See Romans 5:3)

Pharaoh Has A Dream

Two years after the butler's release from prison, his master, the Pharaoh, had a dream. This was his dream: He saw seven healthy cows grazing in a meadow on the banks of the Nile. Then, seven scrawny, gaunt cows swallowed the seven fat cows. Pharaoh woke up from the dream, wondered if that dream meant something, but then went back to sleep. Again, he had a second, similar dream: Seven healthy ears of grain grew out of a stalk, followed by seven scorched ears that swallowed the first seven. Pharaoh again woke up and realized this, too, was a dream, but he knows it's important and symbolic. He was upset by these two dreams and called together all the magicians and wise men of Egypt. He told them his dreams, but no one could explain their meaning. As it happens, the butler was in the room listening, and he remembered Joseph had explained his dream when he was with him in prison. So the butler spoke up and said, "I know a guy"

The butler explained his backstory to Pharaoh, but also mentioned that this young man was a Hebrew and servant to the captain of the guard, but he correctly explained both his dream and the baker's dream. Pharaoh conceded, "We've tried everybody else, let's give this young man a chance to explain my dreams. I have the feeling they are significant."



From Prison to the Palace

With the directive straight from the palace, Joseph was quickly snatched from his cell, given appropriate court clothes, and he shaved. If you notice in Egyptian artwork, all the men are clean-shaven, with no facial hair. **This is a sign of new life before Joseph; like a resurrection, he was raised up.**

Joseph was brought before Pharaoh and told why he had been summoned. Can he interpret these two dreams? **Right away, Joseph gave God the glory.** He said, "It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh an answer of peace." (Genesis 41:16)

Pharaoh repeated the dream to Joseph, one dream of two parts. The way the same message was repeated, given to Pharaoh twice, adds to its importance. **God is showing you what He is about to do, Pharaoh.**

Dream's Interpretation is God's Revelation

Here is Joseph's interpretation: The seven healthy cows represent seven years, the same as the seven good ears: the dream is one. The seven thin and ugly cows (and seven empty heads), which came up after them, are seven years of famine. Seven years of great plenty will come for all the land of Egypt and will be followed by seven years of famine. All the land will be depleted by this severe famine.

Joseph repeated the meaning to Pharaoh twice. **"God will soon bring this to pass."** Then Joseph advised Pharaoh how to collect all the surplus during the seven years of plenty and how to store it for survival during the lean years.

Pharaoh Promotes Joseph

Not only did Joseph interpret the dream, but in his enthusiasm and discernment, he suggested what Pharaoh should do. **God was leading him in all of this, of course.** God was giving them notice that there will be a famine so severe that even Egypt will be affected. Because Egypt is an irrigated land, they don't rely on rainfall. The Nile overflows the land every year, bringing not only water, but sediment, which fertilizes the soil.

However, God was warning them that the seven years of famine would impact Egypt, too. As Pharaoh listened to Joseph, what he said made sense. **Who better than Joseph to administer the details? Where did Joseph get this training? Likely from his time in Potiphar's house when he had charge of his estate. Now he will have charge over everything in Egypt.**

Pharaoh was impressed by Joseph, not just for his ability to interpret dreams, but for his godly attitude. No one was wiser than Joseph, and Pharaoh recognized it. The greatest ruler in their corner of the world promoted Joseph to be his second in command.

"You shall be over my house, and all my people shall be ruled according to your word; only in regard to the throne will I be greater than you." And Pharaoh said to Joseph, "See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt." Genesis 41:40-41

What a tremendous transition this was in Joseph's life. From the back of a prison cell to the throne next to Pharaoh. Pharaoh also took off his signet ring and put it on Joseph's hand (equal to having Pharaoh's signature). He gave him a royal wardrobe and a necklace that gave him the same authority as the Pharaoh.

Pharaoh also gave him the "second chariot," which meant that everyone bowed before him as he passed by. With these new privileges, Pharaoh also gave 30-year-old Joseph an Egyptian name, Zaphnath Paaneah, which meant "the revealer of secret things," and a wife named Asenath, who was the daughter of the priest of On.



Joseph is now the Prime Minister!

After these 13 years in Egypt, Joseph is now the prime minister, second only to Pharaoh in the whole country. This begs the question, why was Pharaoh so willing to accept him? **Primarily, of course, the answer is that God was with Joseph.** But there may also be another practical reason.

Many scholars think the Pharaoh at this era in Egyptian history was one of the Hyksos kings, who were not native Egyptians but were Bedouins from the Arabian desert. This nomadic group took over the throne of Egypt for an era. If this is true, Pharaoh was actually closer in nationality to Joseph than to the Egyptians. This racial bond with Pharaoh would have helped him build confidence in Joseph. Hyksos kings found it difficult to find someone loyal and faithful to them in Egypt. **He was faithful to whomever he served, as he will be to this Pharaoh.** The Hyksos kings were later expelled from Egypt, which helps us understand why in *Exodus 1:8* we read that “there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph.”

So at 30 years old, Joseph took up his work in Egypt. During these first seven years of plenty, he gathered the abundant produce of the land into storehouses. He stored the grain in cities with a plan for easy distribution. He gathered so much corn that it was “as the sand of the sea,” until he stopped counting, for it was immeasurable. **Under Joseph’s management, Egypt was the breadbasket of the world.**

Joseph’s Two Sons

During those days of plenty, Joseph became a father. He named his first son Manasseh, which loosely means “amnesia,” because it means “**God made me forget.**” He was so involved, doing so much good, that he was not homesick anymore. He now dressed like an Egyptian, talked like an Egyptian, and lived like an Egyptian.

He named his second son Ephraim, meaning “**fruitful.**” **God had made him forget his father’s house and had made him fruitful in the land of Egypt.** Then the seven years of bountiful crops ended, and the famine began.

Joseph is 37 years old. **The famine is worldwide.** Joseph opened all the storehouses, and all the countries came to Egypt to buy corn from Joseph. Including a family from the land of Canaan.



The measure of a great statesman is the man who knows the direction God is going for the next fifty years.

”



God's Eternal Truths

Relevant to us from Genesis 41

1

God is sovereignly at work even when He seems absent:

Thirteen years of silence, yet God was working every single day. The pit, Potiphar's house, and the prison were all steps in a divinely ordered journey. God's sovereignty means He governs all things - including evil done to His people - for ultimate good. (*Romans 8:28; Proverbs 19:21; Isaiah 46:10; Acts 7:9-10*)



2

God honors faithful character, not just favorable circumstances:

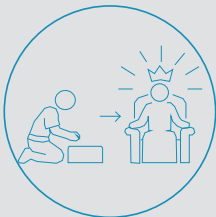
Joseph did not become trustworthy when he was elevated. He was trustworthy as a slave and in prison. God develops character in the furnace so it can be trusted in the palace. God does not look for the most qualified; He looks for the most faithful. (*Luke 16:10; Psalm 75:6-7; Luke 14:11; James 4:10*)



3

Giving God the glory is the posture of the godly:

Three times Joseph deflected credit to God. He lived a God-centered life, not a self-centered one. In every age, in every culture, the man or woman who gives God the glory walks in favor. (*Genesis 41:16, 25, 28; James 4:6*)



Reflection Questions

Question 1

On Prison Seasons: Are you in a season of waiting, suffering, or unfair treatment right now? Do you believe God is actively at work in it? Write down a "prison season" from your past - what did God produce in you during that time that could not have come any other way?

Question 2

On Giving God Glory: When was the last time you said, "It isn't me - it's God"? In your workplace, your family, your ministry? Make it a daily discipline: when something goes well, pause and verbally acknowledge God before receiving any praise.

Question 3

On Faithfulness Where You Are: Are you waiting for better conditions before you commit to serving faithfully? Joseph was faithful as a slave, as a prisoner, and as a statesman. What does faithfulness look like in your current role or situation, however small or overlooked?



Access Our Resources



Download THRU the BIBLE app and listen to audio bible teachings available in over 200 languages.

Visit ttb.bible



Discover our interactive digital flip book of more volumes in the Scripture Engagement book series on our website.

Visit ttbsa.org