

The literary form known as a chiasm (X) occurs in verses 25-32. Ancients sometimes used it to highlight their main points. Notice that "dreams" occurs in A and A'. Now the reader knows what is most important in these verses. Chiasms provide a wonderful watermark that is translated into whatever language is chosen.

- A. Joseph responded, "Both of Pharaoh's dreams mean the same thing. God is telling Pharaoh in advance what He is about to do." 41:25
- B. The seven healthy cows and the seven healthy heads of grain both represent seven years of prosperity. The seven thin, scrawny cows that came up later and the seven thin heads of grain, withered by the east wind, represent seven years of famine. 41:26-27
- X. This will happen just as I have described it, for God has revealed to Pharaoh in advance what He is about to do.** 41:28
- B'. The next seven years will be a period of great prosperity throughout the land of Egypt. But afterward there will be seven years of famine so great that all the prosperity will be forgotten in Egypt. Famine will destroy the land. This famine will be so severe that even the memory of the good years will be erased. 41:29-31
- A'. As for having two similar dreams, it means that these events have been decreed by God, and He will soon make them happen. 41:32

## GENESIS CHAPTER 41

41 Gen NLT-C

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Genesis Previously		
Mankind Created	Nations Formed	Abram Covenanted
Abram at War, is Honored, Land Boundaries Specified		
Sarai substituted, then Rejected Hagar; the Lord supported Her Expanded Names given to Sarai and Abram.		
Abraham was Visited and Warned about Sodom Sodom Was Destroyed, but Lot and Daughters Were Saved.		
King Abimelech takes and quickly returns Sarah		
Isaac is born, then Hagar and Ishmael are dismissed		
The near-sacrifice of Isaac and the death of Sarah.		
Isaac Marries Rebecca		
Isaac prays for a son and received two. God blessed Isaac.		
Jacob acquired both the family birthright and family blessing.		
Then Jacob left Canaan to marry. He saw a stairway to heaven.		
Jacob married Leah, then Rachel. He acquired property.		
Jacob returns to Canaan, Laban pursues, but makes agreement		
Jacob reconciles with his brother Esau.		
The Dinah incident, Jacob renamed Israel, Rachel dies.		
Joseph sold into Egypt. Tamar outwits Judah.		
Joseph imprisoned, interprets dreams for inmates.		

We are watching the story as God moves his key man Joseph to Egypt and in this chapter elevates him to a key place in the government. God is active in the affairs of earth.

### PHARAOH'S TWO DREAMS

**(41:1)** Two full years later, Pharaoh dreamed that he was standing on the bank of the Nile River. **(2)** In his dream he saw seven fat, healthy cows come up out of the river and begin grazing in the marsh grass. **(3)** Then he saw seven more cows come up behind them from the Nile, but these

were scrawny and thin. These cows stood beside the fat cows on the riverbank. (4) Then the scrawny, thin cows ate the seven healthy, fat cows! At this point in the dream, Pharaoh woke up.

- **Pharaoh** (a title, not a personal name) had a **dream** that he knew foretold the future, but he could not understand it.
- The Lord occasionally used **dreams** to communicate with unbelievers. The case of Nebuchadnezzar was like this during Daniel's time. Daniel 2:28.

(5) But he fell asleep again and had a second dream. This time he saw seven heads of grain, plump and beautiful, growing on a single stalk. (6) Then seven more heads of grain appeared, but these were shriveled and withered by the east wind. (7) And these thin heads swallowed up the seven plump, well-formed heads! Then Pharaoh woke up again and realized it was a dream. (8) The next morning Pharaoh was very disturbed by the dreams. So he called for all the magicians and wise men of Egypt. When Pharaoh told them his dreams, not one of them could tell him what they meant.

- In case **Pharaoh** missed the importance of the first **dream**, there was another one. When the Lord has first spoken with Joseph through **dreams** when he was back in his own home, there were two dreams that pointed to the same event in the future. **Pharaoh** called in his regular advisers but they did not know the meaning. **Pharaoh** wanted to know about this communication. It came from a deity he did not worship.

### THE CUP BEARER REMEMBERED JOSEPH

(9) Finally, the king's chief cup-bearer spoke up. "Today I have been reminded of my failure," he told Pharaoh. (10) "Some time ago, you were angry with the chief baker and me, and you imprisoned us in the palace of the captain of the guard. (11) One night the chief baker and I each had a

- The government began selling grain from its guarded **storehouses**. **Joseph** sold to people from other nations as well, bringing their wealth to **Egypt** and especially the **Egyptian** government. This world-wide famine set the stage for moving Jacob's family to Egypt.

### Conclusions:

1. It was the providence of God that brought Joseph to Egypt to save his people from famine.
2. God also saved the Egyptians. Remember the Lord's promise to Abraham:  
**I will bless those who bless you and curse those who treat you with contempt. All the families on earth will be blessed through you.** Genesis 12:3
3. Moving the family to Egypt also isolated them from the moral pollution of the land of Canaan. The stories of the rape of Dinah and Judah with Tamar show some were leading marginal lives.
4. God's remedy was to move the family to Egypt, where they would be virtually cut off from the heathen influence.  
**The waiters served Joseph at his own table, and his brothers were served at a separate table. The Egyptians who ate with Joseph sat at their own table, because Egyptians despise Hebrews and refuse to eat with them.** Genesis 43:32.

in life. There is a movement in the United States that encourages recovery of childhood memories. This may actually lead to further alienation from family and friends.

- The **second** son was **Ephraim** meaning "**fruitful.**" *Forgetting* the wrongs committed against him, Joseph became *fruitful*. **Joseph** considered the evil that had happened to him, such as false accusations and jailing, as **grief**.

### JOSEPH'S PLAN FOR THE BAD YEARS WORKS

**(53) At last the seven years of bumper crops throughout the land of Egypt came to an end. (54) Then the seven years of famine began, just as Joseph had predicted. The famine also struck all the surrounding countries, but throughout Egypt there was plenty of food. (55) Eventually, however, the famine spread throughout the land of Egypt as well. And when the people cried out to Pharaoh for food, he told them, "Go to Joseph, and do whatever he tells you."**

- The famine was pretty universal but there was stored grain in **Egypt**.
- There wasn't rain anywhere Only about 3.5% of Egypt can be cultivated. The rest is sand. When citizens asked for relief, **Pharaoh** sent them to **Joseph**. Notice that **Pharaoh** used his Hebrew name and not Zaphenath-paneah, the name he had assigned to **Joseph**.



**(56) So with severe famine everywhere, Joseph opened up the storehouses and distributed grain to the Egyptians, for the famine was severe throughout the land of Egypt. (57) And people from all around came to Egypt to buy grain from Joseph because the famine was severe throughout the world.**

**dream, and each dream had its own meaning. (12) There was a young Hebrew man with us in the prison who was a slave of the captain of the guard. We told him our dreams, and he told us what each of our dreams meant. (13) And everything happened just as he had predicted. I was restored to my position as cup-bearer, and the chief baker was executed and impaled on a pole."**

- **Pharaoh** heard the experience of one of his staff members. **The cup-bearer** had experienced a prophetic **dream** in prison and a **young Hebrew** had explained it. At age 30, Joseph was still called a youth. The cup-carrier was an unappreciative person and that is demonstrated by his forgetting about Joseph. The **cup-bearer** could vouch for the truth of the interpretation because he had experienced the accurate outcome of Joseph's interpretation of his **dream**.

**(14) Pharaoh sent for Joseph at once, and he was quickly brought from the prison. After he shaved and changed his clothes, he went in and stood before Pharaoh. (15) Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I had a dream last night, and no one here can tell me what it means. But I have heard that when you hear about a dream you can interpret it." (16) "It is beyond my power to do this," Joseph replied. "But God can tell you what it means and set you at ease."**

- With executive action, the disturbed **Pharaoh** had **Joseph** brought in and cleaned up suitable for appearing before the king. The king's court had a dress code! However, Hebrew men word beards. The opportunity to clean up must have been a great relief to Joseph. When the **dream** was repeated, **Joseph** quickly gave the glory to the **God** of heaven. **Pharaoh** worshiped many idols.

**(17) So Pharaoh told Joseph his dream. "In my dream," he said, "I was standing on the bank of the Nile River, (18) and I saw seven fat, healthy cows come up out of the river and**

begin grazing in the marsh grass. (19) But then I saw seven sick-looking cows, scrawny and thin, come up after them. I've never seen such sorry-looking animals in all the land of Egypt. (20) These thin, scrawny cows ate the seven fat cows. (21) But afterward you wouldn't have known it, for they were still as thin and scrawny as before! Then I woke up. (22) "Then I fell asleep again, and I had another dream. This time I saw seven heads of grain, full and beautiful, growing on a single stalk. (23) Then seven more heads of grain appeared, but these were blighted, shriveled, and withered by the east wind. (24) And the shriveled heads swallowed the seven healthy heads. I told these dreams to the magicians, but no one could tell me what they mean."

- **Pharaoh** repeated the **dream** in detail for **Joseph**. The king expressed his disappointment with his own advisers. **C. C. Crawford** points out that in Egyptian hieroglyphics, the ox is the emblem of agriculture and that appears to fit this dream.

### JOSEPH EXPLAINS THE DREAMS AND ADVISES

(25) Joseph responded, "Both of Pharaoh's dreams mean the same thing. God is telling Pharaoh in advance what He is about to do. (26) The seven healthy cows and the seven healthy heads of grain both represent seven years of prosperity. (27) The seven thin, scrawny cows that came up later and the seven thin heads of grain, withered by the east wind, represent seven years of famine. (28) "This will happen just as I have described it, for God has revealed to Pharaoh in advance what He is about to do.

- The **God** of heaven has revealed the future **to Pharaoh**. Again, **Joseph** gives the glory to **God**. It is this humility that made it possible for the Lord to entrust **Joseph** with tremendous responsibility without concern that it would corrupt him.

deity. This was a radical overnight change from being in prison to being in a position of power. God had moved his man into a place where he could save Jacob's family and move them to Egypt.

### JOSEPH SURVEYS EGYPT AND PLANS FOR A SURPLUS

(46) He was thirty years old when he began serving in the court of Pharaoh, the king of Egypt. And when Joseph left Pharaoh's presence, he inspected the entire land of Egypt. (47) As predicted, for seven years the land produced bumper crops. (48) During those years, Joseph gathered all the crops grown in Egypt and stored the grain from the surrounding fields in the cities. (49) He piled up huge amounts of grain like sand on the seashore. Finally, he stopped keeping records because there was too much to measure.

- This was quite an elevation for a **thirty-year-old** slave from Canaan. It had been 13 years since he was sold to the traders. Joseph traveled throughout **Egypt** to acquaint himself with the special needs of the localities. Grain export was not allowed.
- The **seven** good **years** came right on schedule. This program was so successful that the recording people lost track of the quantities.

(50) During this time, before the first of the famine years, two sons were born to Joseph and his wife, Asenath, the daughter of Potiphera, the priest of On. (51) Joseph named his older son **Manasseh**, for he said, "God has made me forget all my troubles and everyone in my father's family." (52) Joseph named his second son **Ephraim**, for he said, "God has made me fruitful in this land of my grief."

- During the good years, **Joseph** had **two sons**.
- **The older son** was **Manasseh** meaning "causing to forget." Joseph had consciously forgotten the pains of his youth. He didn't hold a grudge, he simply moved on to better things

believe this took place during the time of the Shepherd (Hyksos) Kings.

### JOSEPH IS WELL-PAID

**(42) Then Pharaoh removed his signet ring from his hand and placed it on Joseph's finger. He dressed him in fine linen clothing and hung a gold chain around his neck. (43) Then he had Joseph ride in the chariot reserved for his second-in-command. And wherever Joseph went, the command was shouted, "Kneel down!" So Pharaoh put Joseph in charge of all Egypt. (44) And Pharaoh said to him, "I am Pharaoh, but no one will lift a hand or foot in the entire land of Egypt without your approval." (45) Then Pharaoh gave Joseph a new Egyptian name, Zaphenath-paneah. He also gave him a wife, whose name was Asenath. She was the daughter of Potiphera, the priest of On. So Joseph took charge of the entire land of Egypt.**

- There were perks to go with the office:
  - A signet **ring**. Used to stamp a document rather than signing it. Signet **rings** were common in **Egypt**, but this was **Pharaoh's** signet, the highest authority in the land. Photo of Egyptian signet **ring** is at the right.
  - Fine linen clothes. "The Egyptians were especially famous for their fine linen." —*Unger's Bible Dictionary*.
  - **Gold chain**.
  - A personal chariot. This is the first mention of chariots in Scripture.
  - Runners to tell the people to **kneel down**.
  - **Joseph** received an Egyptian name meaning "savior of the world." He was given the **daughter** of a prominent Egyptian family as a **wife**. **Aseneth** means "who belongs to Neith," an Egyptian



- **Burton Coffman:** "Only God could have given the proper interpretation of this remarkable dream. Here, as in the case of the dreams of the butler and the baker, the revelation of what the numbers meant was the key to it. The sevens were not daughters, or provinces, as the wise men believed, but they were years. Also, the application of the dream was not to Pharaoh but to Egypt. That was important."



**(29) The next seven years will be a period of great prosperity throughout the land of Egypt. (30) But afterward there will be seven years of famine so great that all the prosperity will be forgotten in Egypt. Famine will destroy the land. (31) This famine will be so severe that even the memory of the good years will be erased. (32) As for having two similar dreams, it means that these events have been decreed by God, and He will soon make them happen.**

- Joseph spells out the precise details for Pharaoh. There will be **seven years** of abundance followed by such a severe **famine** that everyone will forget about the abundance. The repeating of the dream meant that God would act quickly. The fact that Pharaoh was even warned is a statement about the *grace* of God. God used the **dream** to move Joseph into a key role.

**(33) "Therefore, Pharaoh should find an intelligent and wise man and put him in charge of the entire land of Egypt. (34) Then Pharaoh should appoint supervisors over the land and let them collect one-fifth of all the crops during the seven good years. (35) Have them gather all the food produced in the good years that are just ahead and bring it to Pharaoh's storehouses. Store it away, and guard it so**

there will be food in the cities. (36) That way there will be enough to eat when the seven years of famine come to the land of Egypt. Otherwise this famine will destroy the land."

- Joseph shifted from interpreting the dreams to offering advice. Clearly, Joseph was now a man of great confidence. He was just released from prison and was already comfortable advising the **Pharaoh**. His confidence was a testament to his certainty that his interpretations and advice came from God.
- Joseph advised the **Pharaoh** on what moves to make to minimize the impact of the coming **famine**.
- The government must store 20% of the harvest in each the coming good years. While that would be quite a tax, it would maintain the market price. **Guard** the grain.



### PHARAOH APPOINTS JOSEPH OVER EGYPT

(37) Joseph's suggestions were well received by Pharaoh and his officials. (38) So Pharaoh asked his officials, "Can we find anyone else like this man so obviously filled with the spirit of God?" (39) Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Since God has revealed the meaning of the dreams to you, clearly no one else is as intelligent or wise as you are. (40) You will be in charge of my court, and all my people will take orders from you. Only I, sitting on my throne, will have a rank higher than yours." (41) Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I hereby put you in charge of the entire land of Egypt."

- The recommendations were received by **Pharaoh's** staff. The **Pharaoh** recognized that **God** worked through **Joseph**. He elevated **Joseph** to second in command of the nation.

**Crawford** writes: "... the miraculous power of God is to be seen in the fact, that God endowed Joseph with the gift of infallible interpretation, and so ordered the circumstances that this gift paved the way for him to occupy that position in which he became the preserver, not of Egypt alone, but of his own family."

- How could **Pharaoh** be free to make such a radical change in the Egyptian government? Because the Pharaoh was not an Egyptian himself. Notice that when Joseph was sold to Potiphar, the man was called an Egyptian:  
**When Joseph was taken to Egypt by the Ishmaelite traders, he was purchased by Potiphar, an Egyptian officer. Potiphar was captain of the guard for Pharaoh, the king of Egypt.** Genesis 39:1
- Egyptians held positions in their own government, but did not have the top spot. **Tom Bradford** studied Archaeology and Egyptology in a university before becoming a business major. **Tom Bradford** develops this important theme:  
 "... at the time of Joseph, Egypt was ruled by Semites . . . descendants from Shem, son of Noah. That in fact, the Pharaoh of Egypt at the time Joseph was made ruler of the land, was NOT an Egyptian. And, that during about a 150 year period, official Egyptian government records regarding Egypt's history suddenly ceased.  
 "And, the reason for this is that Kings and Pharaohs tended not to write down defeats and times of being subjugated. Understanding this helps to understand how Joseph became so powerful, and how Israel was, at first, so free to grow and prosper; but, later, how it became the brunt of Egypt's rage, and the Israelites eventually became slaves." (End of Bradford quotation).

So we conclude that the Pharaoh himself was not Egyptian, but an outsider. He was not under the control of the Egyptian ruling class and could make decisions as he saw best. Many