

## Genesis Chapter 41 - Commentary By Mike Wells

### Overview of Genesis 41:

The story of Joseph continues with Pharaoh's dream in verses 1-13 and then Joseph's interpretation of the dream and his promotion in verses 14-44; followed by Joseph getting married and having children in the final verses

***Genesis 41 : 1-4 - 1 And it came to pass at the end of two full years, that Pharaoh dreamed: and, behold, he stood by the river. 2 And, behold, there came up out of the river seven well favoured kine and fatfleshed; and they fed in a meadow. 3 And, behold, seven other kine came up after them out of the river, ill favoured and leanfleshed; and stood by the other kine upon the brink of the river. 4 And the ill favoured and leanfleshed kine did eat up the seven well favoured and fat kine. So Pharaoh awoke.***

- Two full years passed after which Pharaoh himself had troubling dreams.
- In the first dream, there came up out of the Nile River, seven “*well favoured kine and fatfleshed; and they fed in a meadow.*”
- These were followed by seven other *kine* (**cattle**) coming up out of the river.
- Yet these were “*ill favoured and leanfleshed.*”
- They stood on the bank of the river.
- “*Well favoured and fatfleshed*” literally means good looking and well fed.
- The “*ill favoured and leanfleshed*” cattle literally were bad looking and skinny.
- The skinny cattle proceeded to eat the seven well fed cows at which point Pharaoh awoke from his dream.

***Genesis 41 : 5-7 - 5 And he slept and dreamed the second time: and, behold, seven ears of corn came up upon one stalk, rank and good. 6 And, behold, seven thin ears and blasted with the east wind sprung up after them. 7 And the seven thin ears devoured the seven rank and full ears. And Pharaoh awoke, and, behold, it was a dream.***

- Pharaoh went back to sleep and dreamed a second troubling dream.
- Seven **ears of corn** (the word thus translated {*shibbol*} literally means ‘heads of grain’) appeared on one stalk “*rank and good.*”
- The word translated as **rank** (*bawree*—is the same as translated ‘fatfleshed’ in verse 2) and has the sense of robust.
- Then “*seven thin ears and blasted with the east wind sprung up after them.*”
- The seven heads of grain were small and poor and scorched by a hot east wind from the Sinai desert.
- These seven thin ears devoured the robust heads of grain.
- Once again Pharaoh awoke, realizing it was a dream.

***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.***

- The king woke in the morning and was troubled in his spirit.
- He sent for the magicians and wise men of Egypt.
- Yet, none could interpret his dream.
- The word translated as **magicians** (*chartom*) has the sense of ‘astrologers, or ‘psychics.’

**Genesis 41 : 9-13** - *9 Then spake the chief butler unto Pharaoh, saying, I do remember my faults this day: 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: 11 And we dreamed a dream in one night, I and he; we dreamed each man according to the interpretation of his dream. 12 And there was there with us a young man, an 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. 13 And it came to pass, as he interpreted to us, so it was; me he restored unto mine office, and him he hanged.*

- The butler remembered Joseph in prison and how he had interpreted his dreams.
- He reminded Pharaoh that he and his cohort the baker had been in jail several years ago.
- He went on to tell him that they both had troubling dreams.
- “*And there was with us a young man, an 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.*”
- He went on to tell Pharaoh that Joseph’s interpretation came true for each of them.

**Genesis 41 : 14-16** - *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. 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. 16 And Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, It is not in me: God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace.*

- So Pharaoh sent for Joseph. “*And they brought him hastily out of the dungeon.*”
- Note that before brought before royalty, Joseph therefore “*shaved himself, and changed his raiment, and came in unto Pharaoh.*”
- In coming before the king, he presented himself clean and in appropriate clothing.
- The spiritual application should not be missed.
- In coming before the King to this day in church, it is important that we come clean.
- Pharaoh informed him that he had dreamed a dream and no one could interpret it for him.
- But that he had heard that Joseph could interpret dreams

**Genesis 41 : 17-24** - *17 And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, In my dream, behold, I stood upon the bank of the river: 18 And, behold, there came up out of the river seven kine, fatfleshed and well favoured; and they fed in a meadow: 19 And, behold, seven other kine came up after them, poor and very ill favoured and leanfleshed, such as I never saw in all the land of Egypt for badness: 20 And the lean and the ill favoured kine did eat up the first seven fat kine: 21 And when they had eaten them up, it could not be known that they had eaten them; but they were still ill favoured, as at the beginning. So I awoke. 22 And I saw in my dream, and,*

*behold, seven ears came up in one stalk, full and good: 23 And, behold, seven ears, withered, thin, and blasted with the east wind, sprung up after them: 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.*

- Pharaoh repeated his dream to Joseph
- He added how he had never seen such unfavorable cattle in Egypt as the second group of seven in his dream.
- Also, after the lean and ill favored cattle ate the seven good cows, *“it could not be known that they had eaten them, but the were still ill favoured, as at the beginning.”*
- He then recounted his second dream of the two sets of grain stalks.
- He also noted that the magicians of the land could not *“declare it to me”*.

**Genesis 41 : 25-31** - *25 And Joseph said unto Pharaoh, The dream of Pharaoh is one: God hath shewed Pharaoh what he is about to do. 26 The seven good kine are seven years; and the seven good ears are seven years: the dream is one. 27 And the seven thin and ill favoured 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. 28 This is the thing which I have spoken unto Pharaoh: What God is about to do he sheweth unto Pharaoh. 29 Behold, there come seven years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt: 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; 31 And the plenty shall not be known in the land by reason of that famine following; for it shall be very grievous.*

- Joseph began his reply by noting that both dreams carried the same significance.
- They both meant the same thing.
- It was God (*Elohim*) who was about to show Pharaoh what He was going to do.
- Both the seven good kine and the seven good ears signified seven good years.
- Both the seven skinny cattle and the seven scorched empty ears of grain signified seven years of famine to follow.
- The interpretation was that there would come *“seven years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt: and there shall arise after them seven years of famine.”*
- The famine would be so severe the preceding seven years of plenty would be forgotten.
- The famine would consume the land.

**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.*

- Joseph again noted that God had given him two similar dreams to emphasize the importance of it and to draw attention that it was about to happen soon.

**Genesis 41 : 33-36** - *33 Now therefore let Pharaoh look out a man discreet and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt. 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. 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. 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.*

- Joseph advised Pharaoh to seek for a man “*discreet and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt.*”
- He also told him to appoint officers across the land to “*take up the fifth part of the land of Egypt in the seven plenteous years.*”
- They should set aside that food “*under the hand of Pharaoh*” in preparation for the coming years of famine—“*that the land perish not through the famine.*”

**Genesis 41 : 37-38** - *37 And the thing was good in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of all his servants. 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?*

- The advice pleased Pharaoh and he wondered where he could find such a wise man “*in whom the Spirit of God is?*”

**Genesis 41 : 39-44** - *39 And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Forasmuch as God hath shewed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art: 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. 41 And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, See, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt. 42 And Pharaoh took off his ring from his hand, and put it upon Joseph’s hand, and arrayed him in vestures of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck; 43 And he made him to ride in the second chariot which he had; and they cried before him, Bow the knee: and he made him ruler over all the land of Egypt. 44 And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I am Pharaoh, and without thee shall no man lift up his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt.*

- It suddenly occurred to Pharaoh that man was standing before him in Joseph.
- Because God had so revealed this through Joseph, “*there is none so discreet and wise as thou art?*”
- So Pharaoh appointed Joseph to what amounted to becoming the prime minister of Egypt.
- He gave him authority over the people and land, being second only to Pharaoh himself.
- God now highly exalted him and gave him a name above every name in Egypt, second only to Pharaoh.
- The foreshadow of Christ is only too obvious. (**Phillipians 2:9** - *Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name*)
- Pharaoh also gave him royal jewelry, clothing and even Pharaoh’s second chariot.
- He then directed Joseph to bow his knee and granted him to be “*ruler over all the land of Egypt.*”
- Joseph was basically now the most powerful man in all of Egypt and therefore the world
- All business in Egypt came under his approval.

**Genesis 41 : 45-46** - *45 And Pharaoh called Joseph’s name Zaphnath- paaneah; and he gave him to wife Asenath the daughter of Potipherah priest of On. And Joseph went out over all the land of Egypt. 46 And Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh king of*

*Egypt. And Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh, and went throughout all the land of Egypt.*

- Even as God has provided a gentile bride for Christ in the church, Pharaoh gave to Joseph a gentile bride in “*Asenath the daughter of Poti-pherah priest of On.*”
- Pharaoh also gave Joseph the name *Zaphnath-paaneah* which has the sense of ‘**revealer of secrets**’ or ‘**revealer of truth.**’
- Also note that Joseph was thirty years old when he was highly exalted – What age did Christ start His ministry?
- Thirteen years had now passed since Joseph had been sold into slavery by his brothers.
- He was seventeen years old when he was sent out by his father to find his brothers.
- He began his oversight of Egypt by touring the land.

**Genesis 41 : 47-49** - *47 And in the seven plenteous years the earth brought forth by handfuls. 48 And he gathered up all the food of the seven years, which were in the land of Egypt, and laid up the food in the cities: the food of the field, which was round about every city, laid he up in the same. 49 And Joseph gathered corn as the sand of the sea, very much, until he left numbering; for it was without number.*

- As God had revealed to him, there were seven years of great plenty.
- He gathered food in Egypt and laid it up in cities throughout the country.
- God richly blessed as the gathering was as “*the sand of the sea.*”
- Again, God was providentially working in providing for His people for
- Indeed, all things work together for good for God’s people.

**Genesis 41 : 50-52** - *50 And unto Joseph were born two sons before the years of famine came, which Asenath the daughter of Potipherah priest of On bare unto him. 51 And Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh: For God, said he, hath made me forget all my toil, and all my father’s house. 52 And the name of the second called he Ephraim: For God hath caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction.*

- Meanwhile, God gave Joseph two sons *Manasseh* which has the idea that God had caused him to forget his troubled years and the heartache of his family.
- He named his second son *Ephraim* which literally meant to be ‘**doubly fruitful.**’
- God had indeed blessed him, even in the land of his affliction.

**Genesis 41 : 53-57** - *53 And the seven years of plenteousness, that was in the land of Egypt, were ended. 54 And the seven years of dearth began to come, according as Joseph had said: and the dearth was in all lands; but in all the land of Egypt there was bread. 55 And when all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread: and Pharaoh said unto all the Egyptians, Go unto Joseph; what he saith to you, do. 56 And the famine was over all the face of the earth: And Joseph opened all the storehouses, and sold unto the Egyptians; and the famine waxed sore in the land of Egypt. 57 And all countries came into Egypt to Joseph for to buy corn; because that the famine was so sore in all lands.*

- As God had revealed through him, the seven plenteous years came to their end and the seven years of famine began.
- The *dearth* (**the famine**) was throughout the entire region.
- As times became hard, the people of Egypt cried out to their king, Pharaoh, who in turn directed them to Joseph.
- Joseph now *sold* the food which had been laid up during the years of plenty.
- The money went into the treasuries of Pharaoh.
- As the famine deepened, other countries came to Egypt and to Joseph to buy food.
- The stage was set for God not only sustaining his people, but for furtherance of His plan to bring them to Egypt.