

GENESIS

PHARAOH'S DREAMS AND SEARCH FOR INTERPRETATION

EXEGESIS VERSES 1 – 8:

וַיְהִי מִקֵּץ שְׁנַתִּים יָמִים וּפְרָעָה חֹלֵם וְהִנֵּה עֹמֵד
עַל-הַיָּאֵר: WTT Genesis 41:1

NAS Genesis 41:1 Now it happened at the end of two full years that Pharaoh had a dream, and behold, he was standing by the Nile. (ו חלם פרעה ו יום שנה קץ מן היה ו) וַיְהִי מִקֵּץ שְׁנַתִּים יָמִים וּפְרָעָה חֹלֵם וְהִנֵּה עֹמֵד עַל-הַיָּאֵר [waw consec. + v/qal/IPF/3ms: hayah; "Now it happened/came about"; + prep: men + n/com/m/s/constr: qets; "at the end of"; + n/com/f/d/abs: shanah; "two years of"; + n/com/m/pl/abs: yom: "days"; + waw conj. + proper n: "that Pharaoh"; + v/qal/ptc/m/s/abs: chalam; "was dreaming"; + waw conj. + interj.part: hinneh; "and behold!"; + v/qal/ptc/m/s/abs: -amad; "he was standing"; + prep: -al + d.a. + n/com/m/s: ye'or {river, canal, stream}; "by the Nile"])

וּבְרִיאַת בָּשָׂר וַתִּרְעִינָה בְּאָחוּ: WTT Genesis 41:2

NAS Genesis 41:2 And lo, from the Nile there came up seven cows, sleek and fat; and they grazed in the marsh grass. (ו מראה יפה פרה שבע עלה יאר ה מן הנה ו) וּבְרִיאַת בָּשָׂר וַתִּרְעִינָה בְּאָחוּ [waw conj. + interj.part: hinneh; "and behold!"; + prep: min + d.a. + n/com/m/s: ye'or; "from the Nile"; + v/qal/ptc/f/pl/abs: -alah; "they were ascending/coming up"; + adj/f/s/abs: sheba-; "seven"; + n/com/f/pl/abs: parah; "heifers/cows"; + adj/f/pl/constr: yapheh {lit. fair, beautiful}; "sleek of"; + n/com/m/s/abs: mare'eh; "appearance"; + waw conj. + adj/f/pl/constr: bariy'; "fat of"; + n/com/m/s/abs: basar; "flesh/body"; + waw consec. + v/qal/IPF/3fpl: ra-ah; "and they grazed/pastured"; + prep: bet + d.a. + n/com/m/s/abs: 'achu; "in the reeds/marshes"])

וְהִנֵּה שִׁבְעַת אַחֲרוֹת עֹלֹת אַחֲרֵיהֶן מִן-הַיָּאֵר
רַעוֹת מְרֹאָה וְדַקּוֹת בָּשָׂר וַתַּעֲמֹדְנָה אֶצֶל הַפָּרוֹת עַל-שֵׁפֶת
הַיָּאֵר: WTT Genesis 41:3

NAS Genesis 41:3 Then behold, seven other cows came up after them from the Nile, ugly and gaunt, and they stood by the other cows on the bank of the Nile. (ו פרה שבע הנה ו) וְהִנֵּה שִׁבְעַת אַחֲרוֹת עֹלֹת אַחֲרֵיהֶן מִן-הַיָּאֵר רַעוֹת מְרֹאָה וְדַקּוֹת בָּשָׂר וַתַּעֲמֹדְנָה אֶצֶל הַפָּרוֹת עַל-שֵׁפֶת הַיָּאֵר [waw conj. + interj.part: hinneh; "then behold!"; + adj/f/s/abs: sheba-; "seven";

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+ *n/com/f/pl/abs*: parah; "heifers/cows"; + *adj/f/pl/abs*: 'acher; "after"; " v/qal/ptc/f/pl/abs: -alah; "ascending/going up"; + *prep. w/3fpl*: 'acharely; "after them" {ref. other cows}; + *prep: min + d.a.* + *n/com/m/s*: ye'or; "from the Nile"; + *adj/f/pl/constr*: ra-; "bad/ugly of"; + *n/com/m/s/abs*: mare'eh; "appearance"; + *waw conj.* + *adj/f/pl/constr*: daq; "thin, gaunt of"; + *n/com/m/s/abs*: basar; "flesh/body"; + *waw consec.* + *v/qal/IPF/3fpl*: -amad; "and they stood"; + *prep*: 'etsel; "beside"; + *d.a.* + *n/com/f/pl/abs*: parah; "the heifers/cows"; + *prep*: -al + *n/com/f/s/constr*: saphah; "on the lip/edge of"; + *d.a.* + *n/com/m/s*: ye'or; "the Nile"])

וְהֵאכְלָנָה הַפְּרוֹת רְעוֹת הַמְּרֵאָה וּרְקַת הַבֶּשֶׂר אֶת שִׁבְעַת הַפְּרוֹת יִפֹּת הַמְּרֵאָה וְהִבְרִיאת וַיִּקֶּץ פְּרָעָה: WTT Genesis 41:4

NAS Genesis 41:4 And the ugly and gaunt cows ate up the seven sleek and fat cows. Then Pharaoh awoke. (וְהֵאכְלָנָה הַפְּרוֹת רְעוֹת הַמְּרֵאָה וּרְקַת הַבֶּשֶׂר אֶת שִׁבְעַת הַפְּרוֹת יִפֹּת הַמְּרֵאָה וְהִבְרִיאת וַיִּקֶּץ פְּרָעָה [waw consec. + *v/qal/IPF/3fpl*: 'akal; "then they consumed/devoured/ate up"; + *d.a.* + *n/com/f/pl/abs*: parah; "the heifers/cows"; + *adj/f/pl/constr*: ra-; "ugly of"; + *d.a.* + *n/com/m/s/abs*: mare'eh; "the appearance"; + *waw conj.* + *adj/f/pl/constr*: daq; "and thin/gaunt of"; + *d.a.* + *n/com/m/s/abs*: basar; "the flesh"; + *sign of d.o.* + *adj/f/s/abs*: sheba-; "the seven"; + *d.a.* + *n/com/f/pl/abs*: parah; "heifers"; + *adj/f/pl/constr*: yapheh; "fair/sleek of"; + *d.a.* + *n/com/m/s/abs*: mare'eh; "the appearance"; + *waw conj.* + *d.a.* + *adj/f/pl/abs*: bariy'; "the fat ones"; + *waw consec.* + *v/qal/IPF/3ms*: yaqats; "and he awoke"; + *proper n*: "Pharaoh"])

וַיִּשָּׁן וַיִּחְלֶם שְׁנִית וְהִנֵּה שִׁבְעַת שְׂבָלִים עָלוּת בְּקִנְיָה אֶחָד בְּרִיאוֹת וְטֹבוֹת: WTT Genesis 41:5

NAS Genesis 41:5 And he fell asleep and dreamed a second time; and behold, seven ears of grain came up on a single stalk, plump and good. (וַיִּשָּׁן וַיִּחְלֶם שְׁנִית וְהִנֵּה שִׁבְעַת הַגָּנֶה וְשְׁנֵי חָלֶם וַיִּשָּׁן וַיִּחְלֶם שְׁנִית וְהִנֵּה שִׁבְעַת שְׂבָלֹת עָלוּת בְּקִנְיָה אֶחָד בְּרִיאוֹת וְטֹבוֹת [waw consec. + *v/qal/IPF/3ms*: yashan; "and he fell asleep"; + *waw consec.* + *v/qal/IPF/3ms*: chalom; "and dreamed"; + *adj/f/s/constr*: sheniy; "a second time"; + *waw conj.* + *interj.part*: hinneh; "and behold!"; + *adj/f/s/abs*: sheba-; "seven"; + *n/com/f/pl/abs*: shibboleth {lit. heads of grain}; "ears of grain"; + *v/qal/ptc/f/pl/abs*: -alah; "came up"; + *prep*: bet + *n/com/m/s/abs*: qaneh; "on a stalk"; + *adj/m/s/abs*: 'echad; "a single one"; + *adj/f/pl/abs*: bariy'; "fat/plump"; + *waw conj.* + *adj/f/pl/abs*: tob; "and good ones"])

וְהִנֵּה שִׁבְעַת שְׂבָלִים עָלוּת בְּקִנְיָה אֶחָד וַיִּשָּׁן וַיִּחְלֶם שְׁנִית וְהִנֵּה שִׁבְעַת שְׂבָלִים עָלוּת בְּקִנְיָה אֶחָד: WTT Genesis 41:6

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^{NAS} Genesis 41:6 **Then behold, seven ears, thin and scorched by the east wind, sprouted up after them.** (וְאַחֲרַי צִמְחָה קָדִים שְׂדֵף וּ דְקָ שִׁבְלֵת שִׁבְעַ הַנְּהָ וּ) [*waw conj. + interj.part: hinneh; "and behold!"; + adj/f/s/abs: sheba-; "seven"; + n/com/f/pl/abs: shibboleth; "heads/ears of grain"; + adj/f/pl/abs: daq; "thin"; + waw conj. + v/qal/pass/ptc/f/pl/constr: shadaph; "and scorched of"; + n/com/m/s/abs: qadiym; "the east wind"; + v/qal/ptc/f/pl/abs: tsamach; "sprouted/grew up"; + prep. w/3fpl suff: 'acherey; "after them"])*

וְתִבְלַעְנָה הַשִּׁבְלִים הַדְּקוֹת אֶת שִׁבְעַ הַשִּׁבְלִים
וְהַבְּרִיאוֹת וְהַמְּלֵאוֹת וַיִּקְצַן פְּרַעֲהַ וְהִנֵּה חֲלוֹם:

^{NAS} Genesis 41:7 **And the thin ears swallowed up the seven plump and full ears. Then Pharaoh awoke, and behold, it was a dream.** (וְהַ שִׁבְעַ אֶת דְּקָ הַ שִׁבְלֵת הַ בִּלְעַ הַ) [*waw consec. + v/qal/IPF/3fpl: bala; "and they swallowed up"; + d.a. + n/com/f/pl/abs: shibboleth; "the ears of grain"; + d.a. + adj/f/pl/abs: daq; "the thin ones"; + sign of d.o. + adj/f/s/abs: sheba-; "the seven"; + d.a. + n/com/f/pl/abs: shibboleth; "the ears of grain"; + d.a. + adj/f/pl/abs: bariy'; "the fat/plump ones"; + waw conj. + d.a. + adj/f/pl/abs: male'; "and the full ones"; + waw consec. + v/qal/IPF/3ms: yaqats; "and he awoke"; + proper n: "Pharaoh"; + waw conj. + interj.part: hinneh; "and behold!"; + n/com/m/s/abs: chalom; "it was a dream"])*

וַיְהִי בַבֶּקֶר וַתִּפְעַם רוּחוֹ וַיִּשְׁלַח וַיִּקְרָא
אֶת־כָּל־חֲרָטְמֵי מִצְרַיִם וְאֶת־כָּל־חַכְמָיָהּ וַיִּסְפֹּר פְּרַעֲהַ לָּהֶם
אֶת־חֲלֹמוֹ וְאִין־פּוֹתֵר אוֹתָם לְפְרַעֲהַ:

^{NAS} Genesis 41:8 **Now it came about in the morning that his spirit was troubled, so he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt, and all its wise men.** (וּ בִקְרָהּ בַּ הַיּוֹם הַ) [*waw consec. + v/qal/IPF/3ms: hayah; "and it came about"; + prep: bet + d.a. + n/com/m/s/abs: boker; "in the morning"; + waw consec. + v/Niphal/IPF/3fs: pha-am; {lit. thrust, impel}; "it was troubled"; + n/com/b/s/constr. w/3ms suff: ruach; "his spirit"; + waw consec. + v/qal/IPF/3ms: shalach; "he sent away"; + waw consec. + v/qal/IPF/3ms: qara'; "and called for"; + sign of d.o. + n/com/m/s/constr: kol; "all of"; + n/com/m/pl/constr: charethom; "the magicians/religious gurus of"; + proper n: "Egypt"; + waw conj. + sign of d.o. + n/com/m/s/constr: kol + adj/m/s/constr. w/3fs suff: chakam; "and all of his wise men"])*

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And Pharaoh told them his dreams, but there was no one who could interpret them to Pharaoh. (וַיַּרְעֵה לְאֵת פַּרְעֹה וְהָלֹם אֵת לְפַרְעֹה סֹפֵר וְ) [waw consec. + v/Piel/IPF/3ms: saphar; "and he recounted completely"; + proper n: "Pharaoh"; + prep. w/3mpl suff: lamed; "to them"; + sign of d.o. + n/com/m/s/constr. w/3ms suff: chalom; "his dream"; + waw conj. + adv: 'ayin; "and no one"; + v/qal/ptc/m/s/abs: phathar; "could interpret"; + sign of d.o. w/3mpl suff: 'eth; "them"; + prep: lamed + proper n: "for Pharaoh""]

ANALYSIS VERSES 1 – 8:

1. The scene fast forwards to “**the end of two full years/qets shanah yom**” literally translated “**the end of two years of days**”.
2. The Hebrew language “**two years of days**” personifies the dragging on of time that Joseph experienced in prison since the butler’s exoneration ending chapter 40.
3. During this time, the power of dominant reign over Egypt has been transferred from the **Pharaoh** Amenemhet I to his son Sesostris I.
4. Though they co-reigned until Amenemhet’s death ~1657-56 BC (2nd year of famine), the son was the declared “**Pharaoh, king of Egypt**” (vs.46).
5. Ultimate intentions for this transfer of power was alluded to in the attempted coup letter written by the father to his son introduced in our introduction to chapters 40-42 in the words, “...**before the courtiers had heard I would hand over to you [the kingdom]; before I had sat with you as to advise you.**”
6. Joseph has now been in Egypt and enslaved some 13 years dating vs.1 circa 1665 BC.
7. At God’s timing, “**Pharaoh had a dream, and behold, he was standing by the Nile/Pharaoh chalam waw hinneh –amad –al ha ye’or**”.
8. The **dream** as recorded in our verses is presented from the author’s perspective.
9. Later, in vss.17ff, it will be recounted in the 1st person as a direct quote by **Pharaoh**.
10. Moses prefixes the account of the **dream** to give the reader opportunity to analyze it beforehand i.e., it serves to challenge one’s doctrinal acuity.
11. In other words, with the example of exegetical interpretation given by Joseph in the preceding dreams by the butler and chef, can the student of God’s word unravel its meaning on their own?
12. One commentator (Dillmann) says that based on the known Egyptian symbols contained within the **dreams** that Pharaoh’s Egyptian counsel should have been able to make good sense of their meanings.
13. Yet they draw a complete blank!! Cf.vs.8
14. How Moses records Pharaoh’s **dreams** is just another subtle example of the reality to interpreting the truth of BD.
15. As Joseph said, “*Do not interpretations belong to God?*” (cf.40:8) meaning that the one doing the interpreting must be enlightened by God the Holy Spirit. Psa.143:10; Neh.9:20; Joh.14:26; 1Cor.2:9-16
16. Moses approach in writing is a reminder to all that judgment against –V is blindness to the truth even in the simplest matters of interpretation. Mat.13:13-15
17. **Pharaoh** has two **dreams** in one night with both having the same meaning (cf.vs.25).

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18. The first outstanding feature of the **dream** is **Pharaoh standing** literally “*over/upon* (-al) **the Nile**.”
19. He is obviously previewing the events in a position of authority “*over*” this river.
20. The emphasis of his authority is initiated with the exclamatory *hinneh* (**behold!**) in the Hebrew.
21. The particle is used 6x in vss.1,2,3,5,6,7 in both **dream** experiences as markers to symbolism most prevalent to their interpretation.
22. The final *hinneh* in vs.7 points to the ultimate need for interpreting the symbolisms.
23. “**The Nile**” (*ye’or*) a term of Egyptian origin (*i’rw*), is both the basis and symbol for Egypt.
24. The origin of the Greek *Neilos* and Latin *Nilus* (our **Nile**) is uncertain.
25. The basic meaning is stream, river or canal.
26. Only one time is the Hebrew term normally translated “river” (*nahar*) used to reference **the Nile** (Gen.15:18) emphasizing its enormity as a water tributary, as the same term is commonly used for the Euphrates River (cf.Gen.31:21; 36:37; Exo.23:31; etc).
27. The **Nile** River is the longest river in the world traversing some 4160 miles, with the Amazon as a close 2nd.
28. Its head waters originate in tributaries that feed Lake Victoria in Tanzania flowing into the White **Nile** (upper Nile) and Lake Tana in Ethiopia into the Blue **Nile** with both combined into the **Nile** proper.
29. It flows north through Sudan and Egypt and empties into a large delta into the Mediterranean Sea.
30. Along the way there are 6 cataracts that impede travel southward towards the highlands.
31. Its average discharge is 200,000 cubic feet per second.
32. The **Nile** floods the lands of Egypt leaving a black rich silt-sediment.
33. This provides superb pasture and farm land.
34. The fertile soil is deposited by the annual spring flooding that overflows the river’s banks on almost exactly the same day each year; the 15th of July.
35. The **Nile** does not flood now due to the construction of the Aswan Dam in the 1960’s so that from 1970 onward the river was controlled.
36. The rains initiate in the highlands and otherwise very little rain falls on Egypt.
37. The Greek historian Herodotus wrote that “Egypt was the gift of the **Nile**”.
38. As **Pharaoh** is overlooking the **Nile**, “**there came up seven cows, sleek and fat; and they grazed in the marsh grass**/-alah sheb- para yapheh mare’eh waw bariy basar waw ra-ah bet ha ‘achu”.
39. These heifers that appeared to ascend from the river are described as pure blood or pedigree stock (**sleek**) and literally “**fat-fleshed**”.
40. Any of them would be a blue ribbon contender at any fair.
41. They proceed to graze the plentiful **marsh grass** that would explain their sustaining of such good health.
42. The number **seven** in the ancient world was a sacred number, sometimes symbolizing fate.
43. Obviously, the reader might recall the significance of numbers from the preceding dreams and have a better understanding of the symbolism.
44. At this point, the **dream** shifts from an appealing experience to something more nightmarish in vss.3-4a.

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45. On the heels of the 1st 7 heifers, “**seven other cows came up after them from the Nile**/sheba- parah ‘acher –alah ‘acharely min ha ye’or”.
46. Their conditions were starkly different as they are described as “**ugly and gaunt**/ra- mare’eh waw daq basar”.
47. These appeared as range cattle having had to forage on what little nettle plants a draught stricken area might produce for survival.
48. The Hebrew *ra-* (**ugly**) is literally bad or evil and is a hint there is more to their appearing than meets the eye.
49. At first their presence seems benign as “**they stood by the other cows on the bank of the Nile**/-amad ‘etsel ha parah –al saphah ha ye’or.
50. Then the horror movie suddenly begins, “**and the ugly and gaunt cows ate up the seven sleek and fat cows**/waw ‘akal ha para ra- ha mare’eh waw daq basar sheba- ha parah yapheh ha mare’eh waw ha bariy”.
51. The fantastical goes hyper when **Pharaoh** witnesses the 7 **ugly** heifers engaging in cannibalism.
52. These herbivores suddenly turn into carnivore and devour the blue ribbon specimens.
53. The only normal element that might have prompted such a quirk in nature was that the **ugly cows** were skin and bones and thus starving.
54. No wonder “**Then Pharaoh awoke**/waw yaqats Pharaoh” (vs.4b).
55. Sometime later, he managed to again fall “**asleep and dreamed a second time**/yashan waw chalom sheniy” (vs.5a).
56. God again imposed on his subconscious a seemingly life like visual.
57. In this dream, the **Nile** is not featured.
58. Rather it turns to agriculture, “**and behold, seven ears of grain came up on a single stalk, plump and good**/waw hinneh sheba- shibboleth –alah bet ‘echad bariy waw tob”.
59. He simply saw a **stalk of grain** with not one, but **seven heads of grain**.
60. Though the English translation may insinuate corn in view (**ears**), the Hebrew *shibboleth* makes clear that the plant is wheat.
61. For centuries Egypt was known as the bread-basket of the Mediterranean area.
62. Like the first **dream**, this one proceeds forward concluding with a dark theme.
63. A second set of **seven heads of grain** appears having “**sprouted up after them**/tsamach ‘achery”.
64. These in contrast to the first were “**thin and scorched by the east wind**/daq waw shadaph qadiym”.
65. This one **stalk** was shriveled due to an apparent lack of moisture.
66. The important feature is their sequence of appearance “**after**” the healthy grain.
67. The **east wind** is called the sircco that when it blew came in the spring or autumn and was a withering **wind**.
68. Finally comes a really bizarre scene, “**and the thin ears swallowed up the seven plump and full ears**/waw bala ha shibboleth ha daq sheba- ha shibboleth ha bariy’ waw ha male’.
69. Obviously only Divine intervention could make this happen!
70. The **dream** presence was so life-like that again, “**Pharaoh awoke, and behold, a dream**/waw yaqats Pharaoh waw hinneh chalom”.
71. **Pharaoh** was relieved to get back in touch with reality once again.
72. An important marquee to the two **dreams** is that both fauna and flora are featured.

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73. Obviously, a famine affects both.
74. The **dreams** were intended to be symbolic of something very good followed by something very bad.
75. The impression of this premonition is embedded in Pharaoh's soul, "**And it came about in the morning that his spirit was troubled**/waw hayah bet boker waw pha-am ruach" (vs.8a).
76. "**His spirit**" reflects the essence of his soul stirring up his thinking as to the meaning of the **dreams**.
77. As the butler and chef thought they needed in their situations, the **Pharaoh** had access to a complete counsel of experts on the matter.
78. "**So he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt, and all its wise men**/waw shalach waw qara' kol charethom Egypt waw kol chakam" (vs.8b).
79. These two groups of professionals comprised all that **Pharaoh** thought could **interpret** these matters before him.
80. But as Joseph originally made clear, interpretations belong to God.
81. What is to be understood with respect to these **dreams** is they were prophetic revealing the truth of BD foretelling history.
82. Hence, only under the GAP (grace apparatus for perception) system of understanding could a sound interpretation be made.
83. That these were not lead by the H.S., there efforts were fruitless (though they may have given it a shot).
84. Thus, "**Pharaoh told them his dreams, but there was no one who could interpret them to Pharaoh**/saphar Pharaoh lamed chalom waw 'ayin phathar 'eth lamed Pharaoh" (vs.8c).
85. The first group called *charethom* (**magicians**) were the religious minds of his kingdom.
86. They were skilled in the reading and writing of the Egyptian history and sacred literature.
87. They also cultivated such arts as astrology, the interpretation of dreams, the foretelling of event, conjuring, magic and such.
88. There were regarded as the possessors of secret arts and had a link through the occult to their gods (channeling).
89. The second group of *chakam* (**wise men**) would be the equivalent of our university professors, political prognosticators, etc.
90. They would apply the human science to the mystical approach.
91. As it was, neither could give a clue as to what the **dreams** meant.
92. They tried to understand Divine viewpoint with a human viewpoint approach.
93. These **dreams** could not be ascertained by the carnal mind and +V is required for discernment.
94. A principle as true today as in the time of **Pharaoh**. 1Cor.1:26-29
95. The spirit filled believer could discern that the dreams symbolize two 7 periods of time whereas good will be followed by bad involving fauna and flora and the bad dependent upon the good for survival.
96. *Review the Doctrine of GAP.*