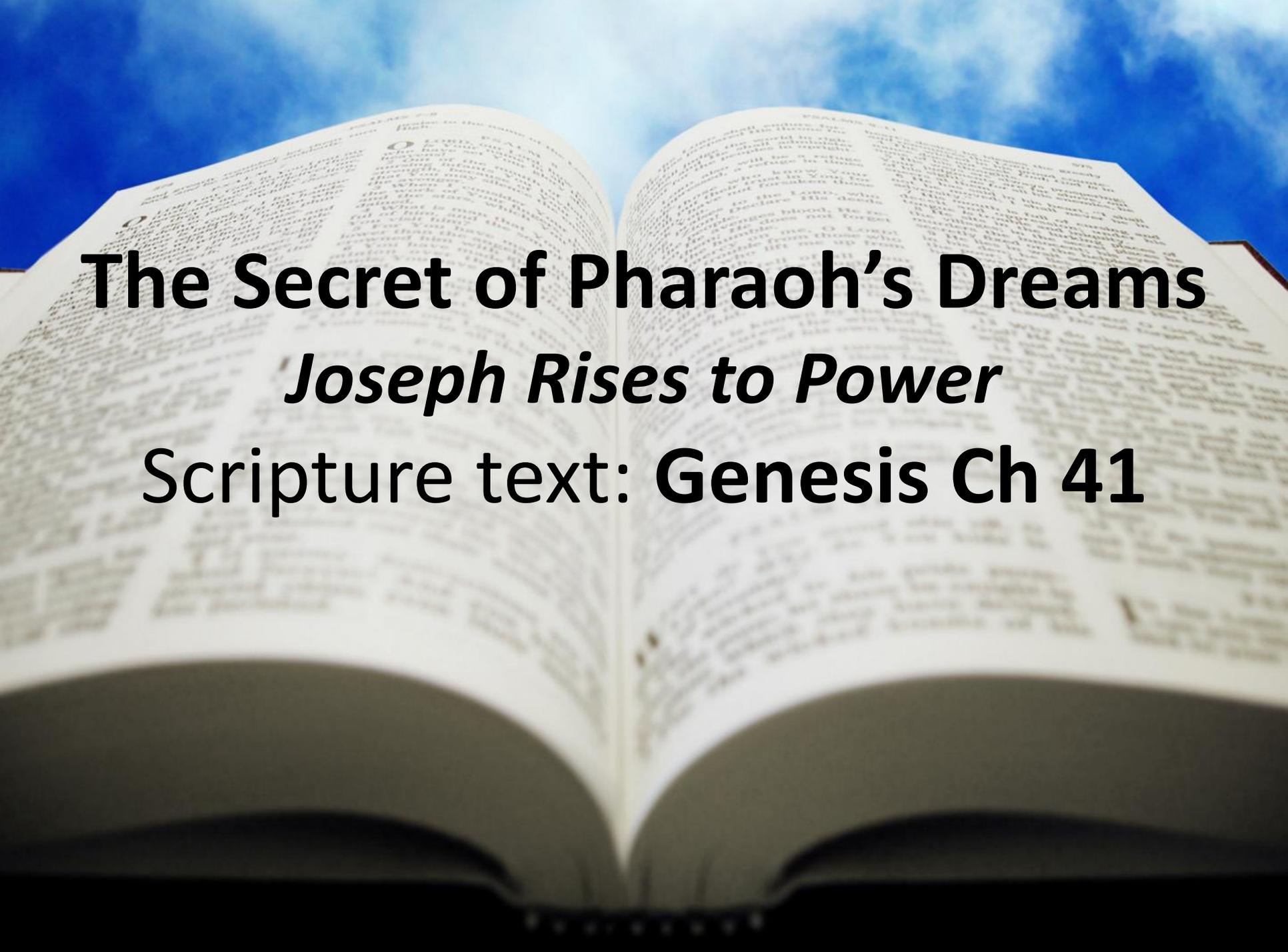


Welcome to Promise Land Bible Church
We're glad you're here!



An open Bible is shown from a low angle, looking up at the pages. The pages are filled with text, and the background is a bright blue sky with wispy white clouds. The text is overlaid on the center of the Bible.

The Secret of Pharaoh's Dreams

Joseph Rises to Power

Scripture text: Genesis Ch 41

Genesis 41:1-4 After two whole years, Pharaoh dreamed that he was standing by the Nile, and behold, there came up out of the Nile seven cows attractive and plump, and they fed in the reed grass. And behold, seven other cows, ugly and thin, came up out of the Nile after them, and stood by the other cows on the bank of the Nile. And the ugly, thin cows ate up the seven attractive, plump cows. And **Pharaoh awoke.**

Genesis 41:5-8 And he fell asleep and dreamed a second time. And behold, seven ears of grain, plump and good, were growing on one stalk. And behold, after them sprouted seven ears, thin and blighted by the east wind. And the thin ears swallowed up the seven plump, full ears. And **Pharaoh awoke, and behold, it was a dream.** So in the morning his spirit was troubled, and he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt and all its wise men. **Pharaoh told them his dreams, but there was none who could interpret them to Pharaoh.**

Joseph had hoped that the butler would remember him and intercede for him, but the man did not remember Joseph until the day Pharaoh became disturbed because he could not find the meaning of his strange dreams.

Genesis 40:13-15 In three days Pharaoh will lift up your head and restore you to your office, and you shall place Pharaoh's cup in his hand as formerly, when you were his cupbearer. **Only remember me, when it is well with you, and please do me the kindness to mention me to Pharaoh,** and so get me out of this house. For I was indeed stolen out of the land of the Hebrews, and here also I have done nothing that they should put me into the pit."

Joseph's interpretation of Pharaoh's dreams

God then used two dreams to elevate Joseph from the misery of prison to the splendor of the court. Joseph had proven himself faithful to God and therefore fit for service.

Verses 1–8. Pharaoh's **two dreams caused him great distress**, especially since none of the wise men of Egypt could explain them (v. 8). **God used an Israelite slave to confound the wisdom of Egypt.** *Later in the days of Moses another Pharaoh would be at the mercy of God's power.*

Egyptian coloring is evident in these dreams. Cows like to stand half-submerged in the Nile among its reeds in refuge from the heat and the flies. They then come up out of the water for pasture. **The troubling part of the first dream was that seven ugly and gaunt cows came up and devoured the seven ... fat cows.**

The second dream carried a similar message: seven plump ears of grain ... on a single stalk **were swallowed up by seven thin and scorched ears of grain that sprouted after them.**

The magicians belonged to a guild expert in handling the ritual books of magic and priestcraft. **However, they could not interpret Pharaoh's dreams.**

A later guild of wise men in Babylon also would be unable to interpret a king's dream, and **God would use another Hebrew slave, Daniel, to show that no matter how powerful a nation might be, it is still not beyond God's sovereign control (Dan. 2).**

Genesis 41:9-13 Then the chief cupbearer said to Pharaoh, "**I remember my offenses today.** When Pharaoh was angry with his servants and put me and the chief baker in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, we dreamed on the same night, he and I, each having a dream with its own interpretation. **A young Hebrew was there with us, a servant of the captain of the guard.** When we told him, he interpreted our dreams to us, giving an interpretation to each man according to his dream. **And as he interpreted to us, so it came about. I was restored to my office, and the baker was hanged.**"

41:9–27. Joseph was summoned from prison when the cupbearer remembered that Joseph was gifted in interpreting dreams. Yet when Joseph stood before Pharaoh (shaved, as was the Egyptian custom, and in a fresh change of clothes) he declared that the interpretation was with God alone (cf. 40:8). After Pharaoh recounted both dreams (41:17–24; cf. vv. 1–8), Joseph reiterated this conviction as he explained that God was making known to Pharaoh what He was about to do (vv. 25–27).

Genesis 41:14-16 Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they quickly brought him out of the pit. And when he had shaved himself and changed his clothes, he came in before Pharaoh. And Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I have had a dream, and there is no one who can interpret it. I have heard it said of you that when you hear a dream you can interpret it." Joseph answered Pharaoh, "**It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer.**"

Verses 28–32. Both dreams predicted that seven years of plenty would be followed by seven years of severe famine. Furthermore, Joseph explained that because **the dream came in two versions it signified that it was of God, and would be carried out soon.** During God's dealings with him several things must have been on Joseph's mind: **his own two dreams (37:5–7, 9), his two imprisonments (37:36; 39:20), the two dreamers in prison (40:5–23), and now Pharaoh's two dreams.**

God's ways are past finding out, but **God's time to act is never too early or too late.** Note the humility of Joseph as he stood before the mightiest monarch on earth: "**God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace**" (v. 16). He explained the dream: there would be seven years of plenty followed by seven years of famine. Then he gave wise counsel: appoint a wise man to administer the food supply. **God directed Pharaoh to appoint Joseph, so now he was exalted to the throne!**

Verses 33–36. **God's revelation demanded a response.** So Joseph advised Pharaoh to choose a wise man who would oversee storing 20 percent of the grain during each of the years of plenty for the coming years of famine. Wisdom literature teaches that wisely planning ahead is a basic principle of practical living.

Verses 37–40. The man whom Pharaoh recognized as capable for such a task was **Joseph in whom was the Spirit of God.** Centuries later **Daniel was chosen to be the third highest ruler in Babylon for the same reason (Dan. 5:7, 16).**

Daniel 5:14-17 I have heard of you that the spirit of the gods is in you, and that light and understanding and excellent wisdom are found in you. Now the wise men, the enchanters, have been brought in before me to read this writing and make known to me its interpretation, but they could not show the interpretation of the matter. But I have heard that you can give interpretations and solve problems. Now if you can read the writing and make known to me its interpretation, you shall be clothed with purple and have a chain of gold around your neck and **shall be the third ruler in the kingdom.**" Then Daniel answered and said before the king, "**Let your gifts be for yourself, and give your rewards to another.** Nevertheless, I will read the writing to the king and make known to him the interpretation.

Daniel 5:7 The king called loudly to bring in the enchanters, the Chaldeans, and the astrologers. The king declared to the wise men of Babylon, "**Whoever reads this writing, and shows me its interpretation, shall be clothed with purple and have a chain of gold around his neck and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom.**"

Joseph had been faithful over all the little things God sent him; now he would become ruler over all the land of Egypt under **Pharaoh.**

The exaltation (41:41–57)

Verses 41–46. The signet ring **Pharaoh gave Joseph was a ring with a seal used for signing documents.** When the seal was impressed on a soft clay document which then hardened, it left an indelible impression of the ruler's seal and **so carried his authority.** Pharaoh also dressed Joseph in linen clothes and a gold neck chain, **made him second in command to Pharaoh,** and had him ride in the second chariot **so all the people could do homage to him.**

As a token of Joseph's new status, **Pharaoh gave him a wife**, Asenath, from the priestly family of On (a city which was a center of sun worship seven miles north of Cairo and also known as Heliopolis). **He also gave Joseph an Egyptian name**, Zaphenath-Paneah (the meaning of which is unknown). Joseph was 30 at the time of his installment, 13 years after he was sold by his brothers (cf. 37:2). Joseph's position gave him opportunity to travel extensively across Egypt. (Ps. 105:16–22 speaks of Joseph's imprisonment, release, and rise to power.)

Psalm 105:16-22 When he summoned a famine on the land and broke all supply of bread, he had sent a man ahead of them, Joseph, who was sold as a slave. His feet were hurt with fetters; his neck was put in a collar of iron; until what he had said came to pass, the word of the LORD tested him. The king sent and released him; the ruler of the peoples set him free; he made him lord of his house and ruler of all his possessions, to bind his princes at his pleasure and to teach his elders wisdom.

Verses 47–52. Pharaoh's dreams were then fulfilled. The land produced abundant, even immeasurable crops for seven years, and Joseph gathered them into storage in the Egyptian cities, **exercising absolute authority throughout the land.**

In spite of his success, he did not abandon his Israelite heritage. He gave his two sons characteristically Hebrew names. **Manasseh (forget)** signified that God had made him forget the misery of his separation from his family. **Ephraim (fruitful)** signified that **God had made him fruitful in the land of Egypt.**

Joseph's marriage to a Gentile bride is a type of Christ's marriage to the church during this age when His brothers after the flesh have rejected Him.

"Manasseh" means "to forget" and suggests that Joseph's new position in God's will had caused him to forget the trials of the past; and "Ephraim" means "doubly fruitful," suggesting that all his trials had, in the end, led to fruitfulness and blessing. Like the grain of wheat, Joseph "died" that he might not abide alone (John 12:23–26). God kept His Word to Joseph, and Joseph's predictions came true. The Word of the Lord stands when man's wisdom fails (41:8).

John 12:23-26 And Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. **Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.** Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever **hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.** **If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also.** If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.

Verses 53–57. **Joseph's wisdom bore fruit**, for the seven good years were indeed followed by seven years of severe famine, and the Egyptians and people in other countries as well went to buy grain from the storehouses throughout Egypt.

At last Joseph was in power in Egypt. **God's revelation to him by dreams was being fulfilled.**