

Genesis 41

In order for God's man to be in control of Egypt during the upcoming famine, God needs him to earn Pharaoh's trust. So, God sends Pharaoh two dreams, the interpretations of which elude Pharaoh's dream interpreters. Suddenly, the chief butler remembers his own dream and the Hebrew prisoner who interpreted the dream and that the interpretation was fulfilled. Pharaoh then calls for Joseph, who interprets Pharaoh's dreams, earns his trust, and is appointed second in command in all Egypt. God's plan is working.

TRANSLATION - 41:1-4:

1 Then it was at the end of two years of days that Pharaoh was dreaming and behold, he was standing at the Nile. **2** Then behold, from the Nile was coming up seven cows, handsome in appearance and fat of flesh and they fed on the papyrus plants. **3** Then behold, seven other cows were coming up after them from the Nile, evil in form and thin of flesh and they stood near the cows at the edge of the Nile. **4** Then the evil in appearance and thin of the flesh cows ate the seven cows handsome in appearance and the fat ones and then Pharaoh awoke.

WORDS:

"Cows" (verse 3) are found 26 times in the OT, eleven times in this chapter. In the Egyptian culture, they symbolized the god Isis. The word "handsome" (or "beautiful") is found 42 times. "Fat" or well-fed is found 14 times. The word "evil" (verse 3) is, of course, not used here in the moral sense of wickedness but in a generic sense of "bad" or "pitiful." "Thin", meaning "lean or skimpy", is found 14 times. "To wake up" (verse 4) is found eleven times.

ARCHAEOLOGY:

This word for "Nile" (verse 1) is the Egyptian word for the river that supplied directly or indirectly the economy of the country. It was so important that the Egyptians considered it a god, named Hap or Hapy when the Nile was at its flood stage. The northern part of Egypt, called "Lower Egypt" since it is lower in elevation than "Upper Egypt" has low rainfall. So, it was important for the Nile to flood periodically. The Egyptians had also developed an irrigation system that carried water from the Nile to their crops. "Papyrus plants" (verse 2) is also an Egyptian word.

It is notoriously difficult to pinpoint which Pharaoh this man is both from the biblical record and from Egyptian history. The Egyptians did not associate a personal name with the title "Pharaoh" for many, many years.

COMMENTS:

Joseph spent two complete years in prison because the chief butler forgot, or otherwise did not mention, Joseph before Pharaoh. But the time came when God sent Pharaoh two dreams. In the first dream, Pharaoh was standing near the Nile River when he saw seven healthy cows eating papyrus plants at the edge of the Nile. Soon, seven thin, ugly cows came up to the healthy cows and ate them. Pharaoh awoke.

APPLICATION:

Contemporaries of Moses - A clear conclusion the Israelites could draw from this event is that it is possible for God to communicate to a non-Israelite. Yet, it is also clear here that God will interpret the Pharaoh's dream through a member of Abraham's family, Joseph. Egyptian magicians will later deceive another Pharaoh into not acknowledging the power of God (Exo. 7:11, 22) but even they will be forced to recognize His power (Exo. 8:18-19). Israel will later make its own cow and bow down to it as if it had brought them out of Egypt (Exo. 32:1-6).

TRANSLATION - 41:5-7:

5 Then he fell asleep and dreamed a second time and behold, seven ears of grain were coming up in one stalk, fat and good. **6** And behold seven ears of grain thin and scorched from the east were sprouting after them. **7** Then the thin sprouts of grain swallowed up the seven sprouts of grain fat and the full ones; then Pharaoh awoke and behold, a dream.

WORDS:

“To fall asleep” (verse 5) is used 16 times. The “ear of grain” is found 16 times as well. It is the word “*shibboleth*” which would later be used to distinguish one’s regional origins (see Judges 12:6). The “ear” is the seeds at the top of the stalks of a cereal plant, which is cut and gathered. “To swallow up” (verse 7) or “engulf” is found 42 times.

COMMENTS:

Pharaoh almost immediately fell back asleep and dreamed a second time. This dream is very similar to the first in its major points. He saw seven healthy ears of grain on a stalk. Then, he saw seven unhealthy ears of grain, parched by the east wind (coming off the sands), sprout up nearby. But, then the unhealthy ears of grain swallowed up the seven healthy ears of grain. Pharaoh awoke and “behold, a dream;” this suggests that Pharaoh, perhaps, at first thought he was seeing something real. Then he awoke and realized it was just a dream.

Both dreams involve sets of seven items; in both, there are seven healthy items and seven unhealthy items; and both dreams end when the unhealthy items consume the healthy items. There is certainly something unusual about the dreams since cows are not carnivores and ears of grain cannot consume other ears of grain. The Egyptians certainly would believe the gods were trying to communicate with them.

TRANSLATION - 41:8-13:

8 Then it was in the morning that he was troubled in his spirit and sent and called all the soothsayers of Egypt and all the wisemen and Pharaoh reported to them his dreams and there was not one interpreting them for Pharaoh. **9** Then the chief of the butlers spoke with Pharaoh, saying, “My sin, I myself, am remembering today... **10** Pharaoh was angry at his servant and gave me into custody of the house of the chief of the guards with me and the chief of the bakers. **11** We dreamed a dream in the night, one, me, and he, a man, according to the interpretation of the dream we dreamed. **12** And there with us, a young man, a Hebrew, a servant to the chief of the body guards and we reported to him and he interpreted for us our dreams, a man as he dreamed, he interpreted. **13** Then it was just as he interpreted for us, thus it was to me, he brought back to my office and him, he hanged.”

WORDS:

“Troubled” (verse 8) is only found five times, twice in Daniel 2 (2:1, 3; see also Judges 13:25 and Psalm 77:5). “Spirit” is used 378 times, first at 1:2, referring to the Spirit of God. Here, it refers to Pharaoh’s inner being. “Soothsayers” is also an Egyptian word; it can mean “soothsayer, magician, or even priest.” It is found only 11 times. “Wisemen” translates an important Hebrew word. “To be or act wisely” (the verb) is used 28 times. “Wisdom” is used 153 times and can be translated “skill.” The adjective (as here) is used 138 times and can also mean “skillful, experienced.” This is the only text where the word is used in Genesis (41:8, 33, 39). The word will provide a designation for a genre of Jewish literature: Wisdom Literature, which includes Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Song of Solomon.

“To interpret is found in the OT only here in chapters 40 (40:8, 16, 22) and 41 (41:8, 12, 13, 15). “Sin” (verse 9), the noun, is used for the first time in Scripture; this is the only time it is used in Genesis. It is used 34 times in the rest of the OT. This word for “angry” (verse 10) is only used in Genesis at 40:2 and here. It is used 34 times. “To hang” was first used at 40:19, 22. See comments there.

COMMENTS:

Pharaoh was disturbed by his dreams; they were, indeed, unusual for the reasons mentioned above. So, Pharaoh did what he would normally do; he called for his soothsayers and his wisemen. Surely among them, they would have knowledge of the books and the proper interpretation of his dreams. Thousands of texts used by “dream interpreters” have been found throughout the Ancient Near East. However, for whatever reason, they were not able to interpret Pharaoh’s dreams.

It was then that the chief butler remembered Joseph and explained to Pharaoh that when he was angry and threw the butler into prison, he was there with the chief baker and they each dreamed dreams. There in the prison was a Hebrew slave who had interpreted the dreams for the baker and butler and Joseph’s interpretations came true. The butler used a figure of speech when he reported that Joseph restored him to his office and hanged the baker. Joseph, of course, did not do so but his interpretations were fulfilled just as he said.

APPLICATION:

Contemporaries in the text - God is leading Joseph into the presence of Pharaoh. The Pharaoh’s own wisemen could not interpret the meaning of the dreams. It will take someone led by Jehovah God.

Contemporaries of Moses - For Moses’ audience, coming out of the slavery in Egypt, they see in this account that the God of Joseph is the one who has the power to interpret Pharaoh’s dreams. The Egyptian magicians are powerless. God will forbid magic and sorcery (Lev. 19:26; Deut. 18:10-11).

TRANSLATION - 41:14-24:

14 Then Pharaoh sent and called for Joseph and they brought him from the pit and he shaved and he changed his garments and he came to Pharaoh. **15** Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, “A dream I dreamed and one interpreting, there is not with me, and I myself have sent to you saying, ‘You will listen to the dream, to interpret it.’”

16 So Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, “Not in me; God will answer with peace Pharaoh.”

17 Pharaoh said to Joseph, “In my dream, behold, I was standing on the edge of the Nile **18** and behold, from the Nile coming up [was] seven cows fat in flesh and handsome form and they fed on the marsh plants. **19** Then behold, seven other cows were coming up after them thin and evil in appearance, extremely, and thin of flesh. I have not seen like them in all the land of Egypt for evil. **20** Then the thin and evil cows ate the first seven fat cows. **21** Then they came to the devouring and it was not known that they came to the devouring and the evil in form just as at the beginning and then I awoke.”

22 And I saw in my dream and behold, seven ears of grain were coming up in the stalk, one full and good. **23** And behold seven ears of grain withered, thin, scorched of the wind sprouting after them. **24** Then the thin ears of grain swallowed up the seven good ears of grain and I said to the soothsayers, and there is not a report for me.”

WORDS:

The verb “to bring” (verse 14) means “to run” (104 times) but here, it is *hiphil*, causative, so they brought Joseph quickly into the presence of Pharaoh. “To shave” is found 23 times. “To change” means to “change, replace, substitute.” It is found 26 times. “Peace” (verse 16) was first seen at 15:15; see comments there. Here, Joseph means God will give Pharaoh a proper answer, if not a positive answer.

ARCHAEOLOGY:

This whole text illustrates intimate knowledge of Egyptian culture, as we would expect if Moses, trained in the wisdom of Egypt (cf. Acts 7:22), was the author. Hebrew men did not normally shave their heads; Egyptian men did.

COMMENTS:

Based on the butler's experience, Pharaoh immediately called for Joseph to be brought from the prison. Joseph made himself presentable to the Egyptian king and came into his presence, not knowing what would happen. Pharaoh explained to Joseph that he had dreamed a dream - the word is singular so it appears Pharaoh saw the two dreams as a single message - and he tells Joseph to listen to the dream and then interpret it. Joseph immediately disavows any ability to interpret dreams. He clearly gives God the credit for answering dreams. It is this attitude, an attitude that desires to honor God rather than self, that makes Joseph such a powerful servant of Jehovah God.

The next paragraph is largely a reiteration of the two dreams reported in verses 1-4; 5-7. In Pharaoh's retelling, he states that he had not seen such unhealthy cows in all the land of Egypt (verse 19). In verse 21, Pharaoh states that even after the unhealthy cows consumed the healthy cows, it was not "known" or evident or visible that they were any healthier or better fed. Again, in verses 22-24, Pharaoh recounts the second dream to Joseph. At the end of that retelling, Pharaoh comments that he told his magicians and they were not able to report anything to Pharaoh.

APPLICATION:

Contemporaries in the text - Pharaoh confesses the impotence of his own magicians which will give heart to Joseph as he interprets the dreams with the aid of Jehovah God.

Contemporaries of Moses - The impotence of the Egyptian magicians is highlighted in this text, particularly in contrast to the servant (Joseph) of Jehovah God.

TRANSLATION - 41:25-36:

25 Then Joseph said to Pharaoh, "The dream of Pharaoh it is one, which God is making, a report to Pharaoh. **26** Seven good cows they [are] seven years and seven good ears of grain, seven years they [are]. The dream, it is one. **27** And seven thin cows and evil coming up after them, they [are] seven years and seven ears of thin grain, scorched of the wind, they are seven years of famine. **28** This [is] the word which I spoke to Pharaoh which God is making; He has shown to Pharaoh. **29** Behold, seven years are coming, of great plenty in all the land of Egypt.

30 "Then will come seven years of famine after them and all the plenty in the land of Egypt will be forgotten for all the famine in the land. **31** The plenty in the land will not be known from before the famine. This afterward that heavy it [is] extremely. **32** And to the repeated dream to Pharaoh, twice that being ready the thing, God with us, and shortly, God to do it.

33 "Even now, let Pharaoh see a man, an intelligent one and wise, and let him put him over the land of Egypt. **34** Let Pharaoh do and let him appoint appointees over the land and let him take a fifth of the land of Egypt in the seven years of plenty. **35** Then let them gather all the food for the good years, these are coming and let them store up grain underneath the hand of Pharaoh, food in the cities and they will guard [it]. **36** Then it will be the food to reserve for the land for the seven years of famine which will be in the land of Egypt and the land will not be cut off in the famine."

WORDS:

"Famine" (verse 27) has been seen in chapter 12, with Abraham (12:10) and chapter 26 (26:1) with Isaac. The word is now found a dozen times in chapter 41 (41:30, 31, 36, 50, 54, 56, 57). The word "plenty" is nearly spelled the same as the word "seven." The vowels are different and the initial letter is a "sh" instead of a "s." The noun is only used eight times; the verb "to be

satisfied” is used 97 times. The noun “abundance / plenty” is found six times in this text: 41:29-31, 34, 47, 53.

“Intelligent” (verse 33; 171 times) means “to understand, perceive, behave intelligently,” and “wise”, as we commented above at verse 8, is an important biblical concept. “To collect, gather, or assemble” (verse 35) is used 127 times. “To store” is only found seven times in the OT, twice here (41:35, 49).

COMMENTS:

Joseph began by reporting that the two dreams are, in fact, one message and they have reported what God is going to do. God has, in fact, reported to Pharaoh what He has planned to do. The interpretation of the dreams is found in verses 26-27. The “seven” in each dream symbolizes seven years. Both dreams suggest the same message. The healthy cows and healthy ears of grain symbolize seven years of “plenty,” while the unhealthy cows and unhealthy ears of grain symbolize seven years of famine. In verse 28, Joseph repeats his message that these dreams are relating what God is going to do.

The seven years of plenty will be “great” plenty and this abundance will be available in all the land of Egypt. Yet, the seven years of “great plenty” will be followed by seven years of famine (verse 30). So intense will be the famine that, as the butler had forgotten Joseph (40:23), so the seven years of great plenty will be forgotten! In fact, the famine will “consume” the land. This statement sets the stage for the intense description of the famine found in the last paragraph of this chapter. The 31st verse emphasizes again how difficult the famine was. The years of plenty will not be known, or remembered, as a result of the famine because the famine will be “heavy” in the extreme. In verse 32, Joseph emphasizes that the double-dream was intended to show that the fulfillment was definite and he states twice that God is in control of the whole matter.

Consequently, Joseph implores Pharaoh to put a man in charge who could handle serious responsibilities in getting Egypt ready for such a severe and wide-spread famine. This man, Joseph says, should be intelligent and wise. He should know the facts (intelligent) and be able to relate the facts to the nation’s experiences (wise). Additionally, Joseph implores Pharaoh to appoint appointees (the words are related) over the land, to help the supervisor, and Joseph recommends the gathering of one-fifth of the land’s produce during the seven years of plenty and storing the plenty for the years of famine. The storage would be under the control, the “hand,” of Pharaoh. The appointees would oversee the storage of the grain in various cities and guard the grain, under Pharaoh’s supervision. In verse 36, Joseph once again emphasizes the severity of the famine. If nothing is done, the land of Egypt will be “cut off.” This expression brings a call of alarm to Pharaoh and his advisors.

APPLICATION:

Contemporaries in the text - As Joseph has said, God has provided all this information to Joseph. Joseph has shown himself to be faithful to God, in ways we surely do not know, and God has responded by giving Joseph the ability to interpret these two dreams which are a prediction of the next fourteen years of Egyptian history. Joseph will later sell the food at a price of 20% of the Egyptians’ produce and land (47:24, 26).

Contemporaries of Moses - Once Joseph has been established as a prophet of God, a man in whom was the Spirit of God (see verse 38), then his prediction of a return from Egypt to the promised land (50:24-25) has power for Moses’ contemporaries.

TRANSLATION - 41:37-45:

37 Then the word was good in the eyes of Pharaoh and in the eyes of all his servants. **38** Then Pharaoh said to his servants, “Is there found, as this man, in whom [is] the Spirit of God?” **39** Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, “After God to inform you all this, there is not an intelligent one and wise like you. **40** You, yourself, will be over my house and on your mouth all

my people will kiss, only [on] the throne I will be greater than you.” **41** Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, “See, I am giving you over all the land of Egypt.”

42 Then Pharaoh took off his signet from on his hand and gave it to him on the hand of Joseph and he clothed him in the garments of linen and put a necklace of gold on his neck. **43** Then he made him to ride in the second chariot which [was] his and they cried out before him, “Bow! And give him all the land of Egypt.”

44 Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, “I [am] Pharaoh and without you, he will not raise up a man his hand and his foot in all the land of Egypt.” **45** So Pharaoh called the name of Joseph Zaphenath Paneah and he gave him Asenath, daughter of Poti Phera, priest of On, for a wife and Joseph went out to the land of Egypt.

WORDS:

“It was good” (verse 37) is the verbal form of the adjective “good.” The expression “Spirit of God” has not been seen since 1:2. It is not likely that Pharaoh had an understanding of the second person of the Godhead but he did believe a divine spirit was in Joseph. “To kiss” (verse 40) is found 32 times. Here, it connotes following the word or command of one in authority. This is the first time “throne” is found in Scripture; the only time it is used in Genesis. It is found 135 times and can mean “seat or chair” as well as throne. “I will be great” is the verbal form of the noun “great.” This is the only time “signet ring” (verse 42) is found in Genesis but it is used 50 times total, the majority found in the book of Exodus. It is different than the signet in the Judah story from 38:18. This word for “necklace” is only found twice, here and Ezekiel 16:11.

This is the first, of two (cf. 46:29), uses of the word “chariot” (found 44 times). It is a related word to the verb “to ride” (78 times). This is the only time “Bow!” (verse 43) is used in Scripture.

ARCHAEOLOGY:

The Egyptian city of On was called Heliopolis by the Greeks and “Beth Shemesh” by the Israelites (cf. Jer. 43:13) and was well known for its worship of the sun gods, Re and Atum. It is located ten miles northeast of Cairo. The priest of On was extremely influential in Egyptian culture. The signet ring would have been distinctive to this particular Pharaoh, including his name.

COMMENTS:

When Joseph’s advice seemed wise to Pharaoh and to his own servants, the king of Egypt could not imagine finding anyone in Egypt better than Joseph to assume this task. It is clear that Joseph directed his thoughts at the health and welfare of the nation as a whole; it was not trying to “gain” favor with Pharaoh. In verse 38, Pharaoh recognized divine power behind Joseph. It is not likely that Pharaoh meant the second person of the Godhead by the expression “Spirit of God” but he did see divine power behind Joseph. This is the first mention of someone being endowed with the “Spirit of God.” Notice how frequently in this paragraph that Moses emphasizes Pharaoh is talking to Joseph. It makes the statement even more astounding, later in Exodus 1 that there arose a Pharaoh who did not know Joseph. Moses is emphasizing that Egypt was saved by Joseph, who was second in command of Egypt!

In verse 40, Pharaoh begins the process of making Joseph the vizier, the second in command, of Egypt. He might be comparable to a prime minister in today’s political terminology. The verse begins with an untraditional emphatic pronoun: you! He puts Joseph over his house, the third house over which Joseph has had control, and everyone will have to do what Joseph commands; this is the meaning of the expression “the people will kiss your mouth.” The one source of authority over which Joseph will not have control is the “throne” itself. That is, Pharaoh will still maintain ultimate control.

But Pharaoh emphasizes several times that Joseph is under Pharaoh and, otherwise in control of all of Egypt. The Egyptian king was considered the god Horus or “son of Re.” He had

complete authority. Pharaoh is putting everything into the hands of Joseph, giving him his signet ring, denoting his authority. Whatever document Joseph might sign, it would carry the authority of the Pharaoh. Pharaoh dresses Joseph in linen (an Egyptian loan word) garments, denoting prestige, and giving him a golden necklace to wear. Joseph was given the second chariot (the first mentioned in the Bible), behind Pharaoh, in which to ride, and he had his own heralds who would call out “Bow down!” before the chariot of Joseph, wherever Joseph went in Egypt.

Again, in verse 44, Pharaoh emphasizes the authority, behind Pharaoh, which Joseph would have. No one could lift a hand or a foot (a merism meaning nothing could be done) without Joseph’s permission, throughout all the land of Egypt. It was also typical for Egyptians to give foreigners new names so that Pharaoh named Joseph “Zaphenath Paneah,” a name which is never used again in the Bible. In fact, Pharaoh does not even subsequently refer to him by his Egyptian name but, rather his Hebrew name. Scholars are not sure of the meaning of the name. Guesses include “God has spoken and he will live” and “the one who knows.” Pharaoh also gave Joseph a wife, the daughter of the priest of On, named Asenath (which means “one who belongs to the goddess Neith”), who not appear again in the Bible. This marriage would strengthen Joseph’s authority and influence among the Egyptian people. Then, Joseph begins serving over the whole land of Egypt, working to save them from the coming famine.

It is well known from Egyptian texts that Semites often served in high government offices during this period of time.

APPLICATION:

Contemporaries in the text - Joseph has remained faithful to God, despite trying circumstances. He was maliciously sold into slavery by his brothers. He was sold again to the captain of Pharaoh’s bodyguard. He was falsely accused by Potiphar’s wife. But he remains humble toward God, serving his master(s) selflessly, being thankful for what he has, staying active in the role(s) he has been given, and yielding to God’s leadership every step of the way. If Joseph had yielded to Potiphar’s wife’s advances, he would not have ended up in such a place of position, authority, and honor.

Contemporaries of Moses - If Israel knew the story of Joseph while they were in Egypt, and this writer presumes they did, then they would know that if they imitated Joseph’s confidence in God, then God would imitate His loyalty to them, as He did Joseph. Israel will use Egyptian linen in making the priestly clothes (Exo. 25:4; 28:5) and the tabernacle. Moses will wish all God’s people would have the Spirit of God (Num. 11:29).

Later Hebrew writers - Israel will later have a position somewhat comparable to a “vizier:” 1 Kings 16:9; Isa. 22:15, 19-21. Joel will predict that all God’s people will have the Spirit of God (Joel 2:28-32). Several of the later kings of Judah would have their names changed by either Egyptian or Babylonian overlords, as would Daniel, Hananiah, Meshech, and Azariah (Dan. 1:6-7).

NT writers - Stephen rehearses high points of Israel’s history in his sermon from Acts 7 and he reviews the life of Joseph in 7:9-14. Peter declares that Joel’s promise of God’s Spirit resting on all His people has been fulfilled beginning on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:14ff).

TRANSLATION - 41:46-52:

46 Then Joseph, [was] a son of thirty years, when he stood before Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and Joseph went out from before Pharaoh and he traveled in all the land of Egypt. **47** Then the land brought forth in the seven years of plenty abundantly. **48** And he gathered all the food seven years which they were in the land of Egypt and he gave the food in the cities, food of the field of the city which was around it, he gave in it. **49** So Joseph stored up grain like the sand of the sea, to increase exceedingly until that he stopped to count because there was not a number.

50 And to Joseph there was born two sons before there came the year of famine which Asenath bore to him, daughter of Poti Phera, priest of On. **51** So Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh because, "God made me forget all my difficulty and all the house of my father." **52** And the name of the second, he called Ephraim because "God has made me fruitful in the land of my oppression."

WORDS:

The verb "to bring forth" (verse 47) is the normal verb to "do or make." "Abundantly" is, literally, "handfuls." "To forget" (verse 51) is used 18 times. "Difficulty" can mean "labor" or "toil"; it is used 54 times. "Oppression" (verse 52) was first seen back in 16:11; 29:32; and 31:42. It is used 36 times.

COMMENTS:

In verse 46, Moses mentions again that Joseph served over all the land of Egypt. He was thirty years old at this point in time. His story picks up in 37:2 when he was 17 years old. He will live to be 110 years old (50:22), a well-respected age of death among the Egyptians. This means that Joseph will live in Egypt from this point another 80 years. God blessed the land of Egypt during those seven years of plenty so the land produced abundantly, or "by the handfuls."

During that period, Joseph implemented the plan he had recommended to Pharaoh. He gathered food during those seven years of plenty in the land of Egypt and set aside that food in the cities, the food from the field around each city, for that city. Joseph stored up the grain, as numerous as the sand of the seashore, a great multitude of ears of grain, so much so that he had to quit keeping a record of the supplies. Of course, this might have been an exaggeration but the point is that there was an abundance of food.

Not only did Egypt prosper during that seven years of plenty but Joseph and his wife, Asenath, also prospered. God gave Joseph two sons, before the years of famine struck. The firstborn son was named Manasseh, a word related to the verb "to forget" because, Joseph thought, God had caused him to forget his troubles and the "house of his father." This last statement indicates how much Joseph had yearned for his father and, perhaps, even his brothers. He missed them greatly and was glad to be distracted with the birth of his own sons.

The second born son will be named "Ephraim", a word related to the word "fruit" or "fruitful." Joseph named the boy this name because "God has made me fruitful in the land of my oppression." That is, Joseph was fruitful in his family and in his career and he recognized those blessings came from God.

APPLICATION:

Contemporaries in the text - Joseph set to work doing what God had called him to do. Joseph finds himself a "prisoner" in a foreign land but he works to serve his lord as he would serve God. God blesses him with two boys whom Joseph sees as blessings from God, one, to forget the past, the other, to anticipate the future. Manasseh is mentioned 146 times, extensively in the book of Judges. Ephraim is mentioned 180 times in the OT, extensively in the book of Hosea. Ephraim's family will become the largest tribe of Israel.

Contemporaries of Moses - The Israelites will experience their own "oppression", in Egypt which will cause them to cry out to God (Exo. 3:7, 17; 4:31).

Later Hebrew writers - According to 1 Chronicles 5:1-2, the birthright will pass on to Joseph and, through him, to Manasseh and Ephraim.

NT writers - Manasseh is only mentioned twice in the NT. The king, who was a different individual, was a son of King Hezekiah in the lineage of Jesus (Matt. 1:10). The tribe of Manasseh is listed with the other tribes in Revelation 7:6. "Ephraim" as a tribe is not mentioned in the NT but a city called by that name is found in John 11:54.

TRANSLATION - 41:53-57:

53 Then the seven years of plenty were completed which was in the land of Egypt. **54** Then began the seven years of famine to come just as Joseph said and the famine was in all the lands and in all the land of Egypt there was bread. **55** And all the land of Egypt was in famine and the people cried to Pharaoh for bread and Pharaoh said to all Egypt, "Go to Joseph who said to you, "Do this." **56** Now the famine was on all the face of the land and Joseph opened all which was in them and sold to Egypt and the famine was severe in the land of Egypt. **57** So all the land came to Egypt to buy from Joseph because severe [was] the famine in all the land.

WORDS:

"To begin" (verse 54) is used 135 times, largely denoting "to defile" or "to pollute." The phrase "was in famine" (verse 55; 13 times) is actually the verbal form of the noun "famine." "To be severe" (verse 56; 290 times) can mean "to be strong."

COMMENTS:

Now Moses is going to record just how heavy the seven years of famine really were. In verse 53, he notes that the seven years of plenty were over, "completed," to illustrate its termination. Verse 54 notes that after the seven years of plenty finished, the seven years of famine began, "just as Joseph said." He was a prophet of God. This famine was widespread; it was in "all the lands." But, thanks to Joseph, in "all the land of Egypt" there was bread!

Verse 55 emphasizes the harsh famine, using the verb "was in famine," "all the land of Egypt." The people cried to Pharaoh, out of hunger, fear, or anxiety, for bread but Pharaoh said "to all Egypt" to go to Joseph who had told them all how things were going to be handled.

Again, verse 56 tells us that the famine was over all the face of the land so Joseph opened the store places (see Exo. 1:11), the treasures of grain scattered throughout the whole land of Egypt. But, Joseph did not just give the food away in some kind of redistribution scheme or welfare scheme. He made the people pay for their food. He sold it. At the end of verse 56, Moses writes the famine was "severe / strong" in the land of Egypt.

We have counted eight times that the word "all" is used from verses 53-57 to denote the extensive spread of the famine. The phrase "land of Egypt" is used four times in this paragraph as Moses noted that the source of bread (food) was found in Egypt. So, verse 57 relates that all the earth ("land") came to Egypt to buy from Joseph because "heavy" or "severe" was the famine in all the earth. This verse sets the context for Joseph's family to come to Egypt in chapter 42, where we begin to see fulfilled Joseph's dreams from 37:5-11.

APPLICATION:

Contemporaries in the text - It must have given Joseph a sense of satisfaction, not to see Egypt suffer, but to know that he had helped mitigate the suffering, by listening to God and fulfilling God's will. Not only has Joseph brought comfort to his own nation, Egypt, but to nations surrounding Egypt (41:57), including his own family (chapter 42). We will see in 47:13-26 what the end results are of Joseph's management of Egypt's agricultural economy.

Later Hebrew writers - When God punishes David for his pride (2 Sam. 24:13), one option God gives David is to experience a seven-year famine. David opts to be punished by God Himself!