

# Seven Fat Cows and Seven Lean Cows, Seven Full Heads of Grain and Seven Thin

## 41: 14-24

**DIG:** How did Joseph give ADONAI credit before Pharaoh and his people? How had Yosef changed since he gave his family the interpretation of his own dreams? What two ways did Joseph foreshadow the life of Christ?

**REFLECT:** Like Yosef, who resisted the temptation to take pride in his own abilities, when have you likewise given God the credit for something He has done in your life?

Pharaoh wasted no time in sending for Joseph. Under normal circumstances he probably wouldn't have sought out the help of a Hebrew, let alone one in prison, but he had nowhere else to turn. What a picture it must have been, the mighty king and the unknown slave.<sup>638</sup>

So Pharaoh sent for Yosef, and he was quickly brought from the dungeon in prison. 43. So it was with our blessed Lord. The Jews might have despised Him, the powers of darkness might have raged against Him, wicked men might have plotted against Him and crucified Him, but it was impossible for death to keep hold on Him (Acts 2:24b). No, on the third day He rose again to triumph over the grave, leaving His burial clothes of death behind, changed in the twinkling of an eye, raised imperishable (John 20:6-7 and First Corinthians 15:51-57). How beautifully this was prefigured in the case of Joseph. When he had shaved and changed his clothes, he came before Pharaoh (41:14). Joseph's beard had grown in prison; when he was released, he shaved. Egyptians did not approve of beards. This was the Egyptian custom and would have been a disgrace for him to appear with a beard in the presence of the king.<sup>639</sup>

Pharaoh immediately told Joseph his problem. The king of Egypt said: I had a dream, and no one can interpret it. It was a common belief in Egypt that the gods communicated through dreams. Magicians and magi preserved different interpretations of past dreams in dream books, which were supposedly reliable. But even the wise men of Egypt, who were trained in this art, were unable to interpret it, like the wise men of Daniel's time (Daniel 2:1-12). The king continued: But I have heard it said of you that when you hear a dream, you can interpret it (41:15).

At this point, **Yosef** might have been tempted to bargain with **Pharaoh**. He could tell that his services were very much in demand at that moment. At the very least he could have asked for his freedom in return for his interpretation of **Pharaoh's dream**, but in that single moment of incredible opportunity, **Joseph's** true character was revealed.<sup>640</sup>

He said: **I cannot do it, but God will give Pharaoh the answer he desires**. Literally it reads: **God will answer the shalom of Pharaoh**. The word *shalom* often bears the idea of *completely, perfectly, or fully*, and that is what it means here. **God will answer Pharaoh completely**.<sup>641</sup> By this answer, **Yosef** exhibited great growth in spiritual maturity since the time of his own dreams back in Canaan. Then, he had antagonized his family by calling attention to his own superiority. Now, however, he won the confidence and respect of a heathen king and court by his own ability and giving full credit to **ADONAI**. His years of slavery and imprisonment had indeed taught him humility and patience. Instead of calling attention to the failures of the wise men and stressing his own powers, he acted with the utmost courtesy and restraint, and directed all the praise to **God** alone.<sup>642</sup>

**44. Both Joseph and Jesus were raised up by the hand of God.** Joseph replied to the king: **I cannot do it, but God will give Pharaoh the answer he desires (41:16)**. It is obvious that, apart from divine intervention, **Yosef would have been left to languish in prison until he died. It was God who troubled Pharaoh's spirit in a dream that brought about his release. Joseph himself recognized this, as is clear from his words to his brothers later on: And God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So then, it was not you who sent me here, but God (45:7-8a). So it was with our Savior because God raised Him from the dead (Acts 2:24a, 2:32, 10:40).**

After thirteen long years in prison, the **LORD** had stripped **Yosef** of his carnal ego. He was not strutting around in his royal coat of many colors given to him by his father. He was not saying, "I can do it"; he was saying: **It is not I, but Christ in me (Galatians 2:20)**. He was saying: **By myself I can do nothing, for I seek not to please Myself but Him who sent Me (John 5:30)**. He was saying that being a servant is the basis of leadership. **Yeshua** said of Himself: **Even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45)**. The one who foreshadowed **Jesus** also became a servant. Are you a servant? Whom do you serve? Service is the golden key that unlocks the door to success in the kingdom of **God**. **You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature, rather, serve one another in love (Galatians 5:13)**. We are like beasts when we bite and devour each other; we are like humans when we criticize each other, but we are like **God** when we **serve one another in love**. That's what **Joseph** did here.

Then Pharaoh proceeded to tell Joseph the details of both of his dreams, with a few details added which were not told earlier. His anxiety was growing. He said: In my dream I was standing on the bank of the Nile, when out of the river there came up seven cows, fat and sleek, and they grazed among the reeds. After them, seven other cows came up - scrawny and very ugly and lean. I had never seen such cows in all the land of Egypt. The lean, ugly cows ate up the seven fat cows that came up first. But even after they ate them, no one could tell that they had done so; they looked just as lean and ugly as before. Pharaoh's dreaming only got worse.

Then I woke up troubled. In my dreams I also saw seven heads of grain, full and good, growing on a single stalk. After them, seven other heads sprouted - withered and thin and scorched by the east wind. The thin heads of grain swallowed up the seven good heads (41:17-24a). Pharaoh omitted saying that he had had a second dream (41:5). He possibly suspects that the two dreams were really one, and they would have only one interpretation.

In his frustration, Pharaoh said: I told this to the magicians, but none could explain it to me (41:24b). The gods of Egypt, the wise men and the magicians were helpless to interpret Pharaoh's dreams, and hence were helpless to deal with the coming problems that the dreams suggested.