



The groundwork for this 'sudden act' had taken much time to lay. God had worked inside Joseph and Joseph had co-operated with God. Too often we are not at all concerned with the development of our character and spirituality we just want the position.



*Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us. Romans 5v3-5*

**How did this verse work in Joseph's life?**

**What will happen if you have the position without the character?**



**Is it credible that someone would go from the prison to the palace in such a short time?**

**Do you think the Captain of the Guard (we assume Potiophar) was consulted?**

**What do you think he would have said?**



There is a possible explanation for this meteoric rise. In the millennium around Joseph Egypt was relatively stable. It had to resist invasions from Sudan, Libya and most famously by the Sea People (the Philistines) but only once in this period was Egypt ruled by foreigners (c1650-1550BC). This was a group called the Hyksos (Greek for foreign rulers), they were referred to as shepherds and they were a Semitic people like the Israelites and they probably came to power from an internal uprising rather than an invasion. We do not know the exact time that the Israelites lived in Egypt or when the exodus occurred, but it is tempting (and chronically not impossible) to think that the Pharaoh at the time was a Hyksos and favoured someone of similar ethnicity and culture as himself. If this is so then, it makes perfect sense of the first chapter of Exodus where a new Egyptian Pharaoh arose who did not know (recognise) Joseph and was frightened the Israelites would join forces with his enemies (i.e. the Hyksos).

God works in mysterious ways.

Joseph and Daniel follow the same pattern, both are Hebrew slaves, both are in foreign lands, both rise to power by interpreting dreams, both become second in the land., both outdo the wise-men of the land.



### Good and Bad

The dreams predict a time of plenty and a time lack.

This also describes Joseph's life, he too lived through 'thin cows and fat cows' times.

**What were they?**

**Does this pattern still occur?**

Life is seasonal. The tick is to recognise the time and acts accordingly. We all go through good times and bad times. After every mountain there is a valley, and after every valley there will be a mountain top.



**What should you do in the good years?**

**What should you do in the bad years?**

**What are the dangers of the good years?**

**What are the dangers of the bad years?**

When you look at Joseph's life and especially the years of drought. His behaviour ensured that the bad years were really not all that bad.

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## Joseph IV - The Dream Master



Joseph is now 30 years old and still in prison. He has interpreted the dreams of two of Pharaoh's officials and seen those dreams come to pass. He had hoped that this would lead to his deliverance, but those hopes have been dashed. It has been two years and Joseph is still in prison.



### Read Genesis 41:1-14

The Egyptians took dreams very seriously.



**What were the two dreams?**

**How would you describe them?**

**What is common to both of them?**

**How do you think Pharaoh felt?**



The agriculture of the Nile delta was (up until the building of the Aswan dam) reliant on the annual flooding of the great river. The flooding brought life but it was also very destructive, bringing death and disease. (Big contrast here to the promised land which was watered by streams and rain.)



Egypt's two main staples were grain and cattle. The dreams indicate that both will fail. When Pharaoh describes the cows as ugly, a literal translation of the Hebrew is bad or evil. רַע Rah ). For the fat cows word used is יָפָה yafa which is usually translated beautiful.

The dreams are each told twice in this chapter and they are more like parables than dreams.



The second and third sets of dreams follow a clear pattern, Dream, interpretation, fulfilment. This is in contrast to the first set where the fulfilment is delayed. It takes 25 years to be fulfilled. The second dream is a little like Joseph's second dream. (Sheaves)

All of us live in this delay to some degree or another.

How should you live when the fulfilment is delayed.



**Did the cupbearer take a risk in speaking out?**

**Why do you think he took this risk?**

Most of us try to cover our faults and mistakes but the cupbearer owned up to his failings. Even though it meant reminding himself and Pharaoh of something best forgotten by all.



*So Pharaoh sent for Joseph, and he was quickly brought from the dungeon. When he had shaved and changed his clothes, he came before Pharaoh. Genesis 41:14*

The word dungeon here is the same word used of the pit Joseph was thrown into in Chapter 37.

**What had to happen before Joseph could be presented to Pharaoh?**

**Why?**

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✓ Egyptians are generally portrayed in their own works of art as clean-shaven. Israelites tended to have beards.

Being dressed in a new robe before taken into Pharaoh's presence is tantalising. This is the third set of clothes mentioned in the account.

? **What are the others and how would you describe them?**

|              |                    |
|--------------|--------------------|
| Ornate       | Privilege          |
| Slavery      | Character building |
| Recognition. | Leadership         |

▶ **Read Genesis 41:15**

**What were the meanings of the dreams?**

**The meaning here is not difficult to work out. Why do you think no one could interpret the dream?**

? These dreams cannot be handled by human wisdom, they have a life of their own. It may be that God clouded the minds of Pharaoh's wise men, but it is more likely that no one wanted to bear responsibility for such ominous dreams. The purpose of this comment is to emphasize that Egypt and Pharaoh are powerless.

When asked if he can interpret the dreams Joseph replies:

*'I cannot do it,' Joseph replied to Pharaoh, 'but God will give Pharaoh the answer he desires.'* Genesis 41:16

♥ **What does this tell us about Joseph?**

Four times in his speech to Pharaoh, Joseph brings things back to God.

? **What does this say to us?**

**What can we learn from this?**

When Joseph stands before Pharaoh it is obvious that the blessing of God is on him. Joseph takes every opportunity to express faith in God.

This is interesting. Joseph is asked to interpret the dreams. He does this, but then he goes further and tells Pharaoh what to do.

? **What solution did Joseph suggest?**

**What risk does he take in doing this?**

**What advice does Joseph give to Pharaoh?**

Joseph owns the dreams in a way no Egyptian can.

♥ *'And now let Pharaoh look for a discerning and wise man and put him in charge of the land of Egypt.'* Genesis 41:33

**Is Joseph putting himself forward here?**

? **In what way did Joseph seize the moment?**

**Should he not have waited until God did it all?**

**How would you describe the way Joseph addresses Pharaoh?**

**Would you have had the courage to do what Joseph did?**

**Decisive, respectful, humble and bold**

♥ *'So Pharaoh asked them, 'Can we find anyone like this man, one in whom is the spirit of God?'* Genesis 41:38

**What does it mean 'in whom is the spirit of God'?**

**How did Pharaoh recognise that the 'spirit of God' was in Joseph?**

? **What did the Spirit do in Joseph's life?**

|                |
|----------------|
| Wisdom         |
| Boldness       |
| Interpretation |

(There are no capital letters in Hebrew so spirit or Spirit is a choice the bible translators make)

? **What does the Spirit do in Genesis 1:2?**

**What does the Spirit do in Genesis 6:3?**

**How would describe the Spirit combining these two references?**

? The Spirit in Genesis is a restless Spirit, but in Joseph the Spirit finds rest.

**What does this tell us about the Holy Spirit?**

**How does this apply to us?**

☺ **What did God's Spirit have to do with it?**

Isaiah 11:2

John 14:16-17

John 14:26

John 16:12-15

**What is the Spirit going to do in your life?**

♥ *The reason the dream was given to Pharaoh in two forms is that the matter has been firmly decided by God, and God will do it soon.* Genesis 41:32

**Why two dreams?**

✓ In these dreams, God is asserting His authority. God is taking authority away from Pharaoh. He is the one who will have control in Egypt and Pharaoh has no power to change what is fixed in the dreams.

**What choices does he have?**

! Pharaoh can accept or reject the interpretation. He also has complete control of what he does in response to the interpretation. There is an interesting interconnection here between Divine will and Human will. The evil cows and heads can be mitigated by Pharaoh's response. He cannot change the bad years but he can avoid the harm they will do. The dreams are fixed but the outcome is not.

? Pharaoh just accepts the dream and Joseph's plan.

**Why do you think he does this?**

**What position is Joseph given?**

*Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, 'Since God has made all this known to you, there is no one so discerning and wise as you.'* Genesis 41:39

? Did you notice how sudden Joseph's rise to power was?

**Was it really all that sudden?**

**Do you believe that God can change your life so quickly?**

This is the defining moment in Joseph's life. In one hour everything in Joseph's life changes. But nothing changes Joseph just kept being Joseph.

♥ *'His master replied, "Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!"'* Matthew 25:21

*Matthew 25:21*

**How did this verse work in Joseph's life?**