

14 Thereupon Pharaoh sent for Joseph, and he was rushed from the dungeon. He had his hair cut and changed his clothes, and he appeared before Pharaoh. 15 And Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I have had a dream, but no one can interpret it. Now I have heard it said of you that for you to hear a dream is to tell its meaning." 16 Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, "Not I! God will see to Pharaoh's welfare."

17 Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "In my dream, I was standing on the bank of the Nile, 18 when out of the Nile came up seven sturdy and well-formed cows and grazed in the reed grass. 19 Presently there followed them seven other cows, scrawny, ill-formed, and emaciated—never had I seen their likes for ugliness in all the land of Egypt! 20 And the seven lean and ugly cows ate up the first seven cows, the sturdy ones; 21 but when they had consumed them, one could not tell that they had consumed them, for they looked just as bad as before. And I awoke. 22 In my other dream, I

14 וַיִּשְׁלַח פַּרְעֹה וַיִּקְרָא אֶת־יֹסֵף וַיְרִיצֵהוּ מִן־הַבּוֹר וַיַּגְלַח וַיַּחֲלֵף שְׂמֹלְתָיו וַיָּבֵא אֵל־פַּרְעֹה: 15 וַיֹּאמֶר פַּרְעֹה אֶל־יֹסֵף חֲלֹם חֲלָמַי וּפְתַר אֵין אֲתוֹ וְאֲנִי שָׁמַעְתִּי עֲלֶיךָ לֵאמֹר תִּשְׁמַע חֲלֹם לִפְתֹּר אֲתוֹ: 16 וַיַּעַן יֹסֵף אֶת־פַּרְעֹה לֵאמֹר בְּלִעְדֵי אֱלֹהִים יַעֲנֶה אֶת־שְׁלוֹם פַּרְעֹה: 17 וַיַּדְבֵּר פַּרְעֹה אֶל־יֹסֵף בְּחִלְמֵי הַנְּנִי עֹמֵד עַל־שֵׁפֶת הַיָּאֵר: 18 וְהִנֵּה מִן־הַיָּאֵר עֹלֹת שֶׁבַע פְּרוֹת בְּרִיאֹת בְּשָׂר וַיִּפֹּת תָּאֵר וַתִּרְעֶינָה בְּאָחוּ: 19 וְהִנֵּה שֶׁבַע פְּרוֹת אַחֲרוֹת עֹלֹת אַחֲרֵיהֶן דְּלוֹת וְרַעוֹת תָּאֵר מְאֹד וְרַקוֹת בְּשָׂר לֹא־רָאִיתִי כְהֵנָּה בְּכָל־אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם לְרַע: 20 וְהַתְּאֻכְלָנָה הַפְּרוֹת הַרְקוֹת וְהַרְעוֹת אֵת שֶׁבַע הַפְּרוֹת הָרְאשׁוֹנֹת הַבְּרִיאֹת: 21 וַתִּבְאֲנָה אֶל־קִרְבְּנָהּ וְלֹא נֹדַע בִּיבְבָאוּ אֶל־קִרְבְּנָהּ וּמְרֵאִיהֶן רָע כַּאֲשֶׁר בַּתְּחִלָּה וַאֲיָקֹץ: 22 וַאֲרָא בְּחִלְמֵי וְהִנֵּה | שֶׁבַע

JOSEPH'S DREAM INTERPRETATION
(vv. 14-32)

14. *he was rushed* The verbs in this verse indicate a series of actions performed in swift succession in the atmosphere of urgency created when Pharaoh's wishes are to be satisfied.

dungeon See Comment to 40:15.
his hair cut The verb meaning "to shave" (גלח) applies to both the head and the face. Egyptian men shaved both areas.

his clothes Clothes have consistently been a key element in Joseph's misfortunes. This change of clothing marks the beginning of his liberation.

15. *no one can interpret* See Comment to verse 8.

for you to hear a dream Pharaoh believes that Joseph is endowed with magical power.

16. *God will see* Joseph is saying, in effect, "God will respond to me and grant Pharaoh's

welfare." He is certain that the sudden turn of events that has brought him into the presence of Pharaoh is providential for him. And he believes that he will receive a dream interpretation from God that will satisfy Pharaoh entirely.

17. *Then Pharaoh said* The repetition of the dreams to Joseph contains differences from the original narration. Such variations between an initial version and a repeat of it are a recurring feature of biblical discourse.

19. *never had I seen* This previously unstated personal observation points to the real meaning of the dream.

21. *but when* This entire verse is not in Pharaoh's original narrative. Here, it directs attention to the key element (see vv. 30ff.).

22. *In my other dream* Significantly, the phrase (v. 5) "a second time" is omitted, as though Pharaoh himself realized that the two dreams are really one.

14. Joseph, who twice was stripped of his clothes and thrown into a pit, is twice (here and in v. 42) elevated in status and given new clothes to mark his new position.

Etz Hagim: Torah and Commentary

saw seven ears of grain, full and healthy, growing on a single stalk; ²³but right behind them sprouted seven ears, shriveled, thin, and scorched by the east wind. ²⁴And the thin ears swallowed the seven healthy ears. I have told my magicians; but none has an explanation for me.”

²⁵And Joseph said to Pharaoh, “Pharaoh’s dreams are one and the same: God has told Pharaoh what He is about to do. ²⁶The seven healthy cows are seven years, and the seven healthy ears are seven years; it is the same dream. ²⁷The seven lean and ugly cows that followed are seven years, as are also the seven empty ears scorched by the east wind; they are seven years of famine. ²⁸It is just as I have told Pharaoh: God has revealed to Pharaoh what He is about to do. ²⁹Immediately ahead are seven years of great abundance in all the land of Egypt. ³⁰After them will come seven years of famine, and all the abundance in the land of Egypt will be forgotten. As the land is ravaged by famine, ³¹no trace of the abundance will be left in the land because of the famine thereafter, for it will be very severe. ³²As for Pharaoh having had the same dream twice, it means that the matter has been determined by God, and that God will soon carry it out.

³³“Accordingly, let Pharaoh find a man of

שְׂבִלִים עֲלֵת בְּקִנְהָ אֶחָד מִלֵּאֵת וְטֹבוֹת: ²³וְהִנֵּה שֶׁבַע שְׂבִלִים צְנֻמּוֹת דְּקוֹת שְׂדֵפוֹת קָדִים צְמָחוֹת אַחֲרֵיהֶם: ²⁴וְתִבְלַעַן הַשְּׂבִלִים הַדְּקוֹת אֶת שֶׁבַע הַשְּׂבִלִים הַטֹּבוֹת וְאָמַר אֶל-הַחֲרֻטָּמִים וְאִין מֵגִיד לִי:

²⁵וַיֹּאמֶר יוֹסֵף אֶל-פַּרְעֹה חֲלוֹם פְּרַעְהָ אֶחָד הוּא אֵת אֲשֶׁר הָאֱלֹהִים עָשָׂה הַגִּיד לְפַרְעֹה: ²⁶שֶׁבַע פָּרֹת הַטֹּבוֹת שֶׁבַע שָׁנִים הֵנָּה וְשֶׁבַע הַשְּׂבִלִים הַטֹּבוֹת שֶׁבַע שָׁנִים הֵנָּה חֲלוֹם אֶחָד הוּא: ²⁷וְשֶׁבַע הַפְּרוֹת הַרְקוֹת וְהַרְעֵת הָעֲלֵת אַחֲרֵיהֶן שֶׁבַע שָׁנִים הֵנָּה וְשֶׁבַע הַשְּׂבִלִים הַרְקוֹת שְׂדֵפוֹת הַקָּדִים יִהְיוּ שֶׁבַע שָׁנֵי רָעָב: ²⁸הוּא הַדְּבָר אֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְתִּי אֶל-פַּרְעֹה אֲשֶׁר הָאֱלֹהִים עָשָׂה הִרְאָה אֶת-פַּרְעֹה: ²⁹הֵנָּה שֶׁבַע שָׁנִים בָּאוֹת שֶׁבַע גְּדוֹל בְּכָל-אֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם: ³⁰וְקָמוּ שֶׁבַע שָׁנֵי רָעָב אַחֲרֵיהֶן וְנִשְׁפַח כָּל-הַשֶּׁבַע בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם וְכָלָה הָרָעָב אֶת-הָאֶרֶץ: ³¹וְלֹא-יִוָּדַע הַשֶּׁבַע בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם מִפְּנֵי הָרָעָב הַזֶּה וְעַל-כֵּן אַחֲרֵי-כֵן כִּי-יִבְדַּד הוּא מְאֹד: ³²וְעַל-הַשְּׁנוֹת הַחֲלוֹם אֶל-פַּרְעֹה פְּעָמִים כִּי-נִבְּוֶן הַדְּבָר מֵעַם הָאֱלֹהִים וּמִמֶּהָרָה הָאֱלֹהִים לַעֲשׂוֹתוֹ:

³³וְעַתָּה יִרְא פַרְעֹה אִישׁ נְבוֹן וְחָכָם

24. none has an explanation The phrase refers to what was related in verses 8 and 15.

25. one and the same Both dreams, though separate and successive, constitute a single whole and express the identical phenomenon.

has told That is, “has disclosed.”

31. no trace The reserves of food set aside for the famine will be used up completely.

32. determined It is established beyond doubt.

soon The seven-year cycle begins at once.

JOSEPH’S ADVICE (vv. 33–36)

Unsolicited by Pharaoh, Joseph offers advice on how to avert the famine.

33. Accordingly Joseph presents his advice

33. Joseph’s interpretation strikes Pharaoh as valid because its message of impending disaster seems to fit the mood of the dream and

because he not only interprets the dream but gives Pharaoh advice on how to deal with its message.

discernment and wisdom, and set him over the land of Egypt. ³⁴And let Pharaoh take steps to appoint overseers over the land, and organize the land of Egypt in the seven years of plenty. ³⁵Let all the food of these good years that are coming be gathered, and let the grain be collected under Pharaoh's authority as food to be stored in the cities. ³⁶Let that food be a reserve for the land for the seven years of famine which will come upon the land of Egypt, so that the land may not perish in the famine."

³⁷The plan pleased Pharaoh and all his courtiers. ³⁸And Pharaoh said to his courtiers, "Could we find another like him, a man in whom is the spirit of God?" ³⁹So Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Since God has made all this known to you, there is none so discerning and wise as you. ⁴⁰You shall be in charge of my court, and by your command shall all my people be directed; only with respect to the throne shall I be superior to you." ⁴¹Pharaoh further said to Joseph, "See, I put you in charge of all the land of Egypt." ⁴²And removing his signet ring from

וּשְׂתַחֲוֶהוּ עַל-אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם: ³⁴ יַעֲשֶׂה פְרֹעָה וַיִּפְקֹד פְּקָדִים עַל-הָאָרֶץ וַחֲמִשָּׁ אֶת-אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם בְּשֶׁבַע שָׁנֵי הַשָּׁבַע: ³⁵ וַיִּקְבְּצוּ אֶת-כָּל-אֲכָל הַשָּׁנִים הַטֹּבֹת הַבָּאֹת הָאֵלֶּה וַיִּצְבְּרוּ-בָר תַּחַת יַד-פְּרֹעָה אֲכָל בְּעָרִים וְשָׁמְרוּ: ³⁶ וְהָיָה הָאֲכָל לַפְּקֻדֹן לְאֶרֶץ לְשֶׁבַע שָׁנֵי הָרָעַב אֲשֶׁר תִּהְיֶינָה בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם וְלֹא-תִפְרֹת הָאָרֶץ בְּרָעַב:

³⁷ וַיִּיטֵב הַדָּבָר בְּעֵינָיו פְּרֹעָה וּבְעֵינָיו כָּל-עַבְדָּיו: ³⁸ וַיֹּאמֶר פְּרֹעָה אֶל-עַבְדָּיו הֲנִמְצָא כָזֶה אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר רוּחַ אֱלֹהִים בּוֹ: ³⁹ וַיֹּאמֶר פְּרֹעָה אֶל-יוֹסֵף אַחֲרֵי הוֹדִיעַ אֱלֹהִים אוֹתָךְ אֶת-כָּל-זֹאת אִין-נִבּוֹן וְחָכָם כְּמוֹךָ: ⁴⁰ אֲתָה תִהְיֶה עַל-בֵּיתִי וְעַל-פִּיךָ יִשָּׁק כָּל-עַמִּי רַק הַפֶּסֶא אֲגַדֵּל מִמֶּךָ: ⁴¹ וַיֹּאמֶר פְּרֹעָה אֶל-יוֹסֵף רְאֵה נָתַתִּי אֹתְךָ עַל כָּל-אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם: ⁴² וַיִּסֶר פְּרֹעָה אֶת-טַבַּעְתּוֹ מֵעַל יָדוֹ וַיִּתֵּן אֹתָהּ

שלישי

not as part of the dream message but as a personal suggestion.

34. let Pharaoh Not wishing to raise any suspicion that he is suggesting the creation of a new focus of power, Joseph repeatedly emphasizes "Pharaoh," thereby stressing the ubiquitous, omniscient, and omnipotent nature of the king in ancient Egypt.

35. good years Joseph sensibly suggests that grain be stockpiled during the plentiful years against the forthcoming years of famine.

JOSEPH'S APPOINTMENT AS VIZIER
(vv. 37-46)

37. The plan pleased Pharaoh Pharaoh and his courtiers are impressed by Joseph's perception that the two dreams are actually one, by his relating them to national affairs rather than to the king's personal interests, and by the social concern that he displays in his advice.

38. Could we find Pharaoh's question to his courtiers is rhetorical. He knows at once what he must do.

in whom is the spirit of God This is the

first biblical mention of an individual so endowed. Possession of the "spirit of God" impels one to undertake a mission (Num. 27:18), imparts extraordinary energy and drive (Judg. 3:10, 11:29), and produces uncommon intelligence and practical wisdom.

39. discerning and wise Pharaoh repeats Joseph's own words (v. 33).

40. in charge of my court This function probably refers to the position of "overseer of the domain of the palace," one of the known Egyptian bureaucratic titles. Most likely, Joseph is given control over the king's personal estates.

41. Pharaoh further said Joseph does not utter a word in response to Pharaoh's announcement.

in charge of all the land The function reflects the Egyptian title "chief of the entire land."

42. removing Pharaoh now performs a series of ceremonial acts that confirm Joseph's position as "grand vizier of Egypt."

signet ring The transfer of the ring bearing the royal seal from the finger of Pharaoh to that of Joseph signifies the delegation of authority; it

his hand, Pharaoh put it on Joseph's hand; and he had him dressed in robes of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck. ⁴³He had him ride in the chariot of his second-in-command, and they cried before him, "Abrek!" Thus he placed him over all the land of Egypt.

⁴⁴Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I am Pharaoh; yet without you, no one shall lift up hand or foot in all the land of Egypt." ⁴⁵Pharaoh then gave Joseph the name Zaphenath-paneah; and he gave him for a wife Asenath daughter of Poti-pha, priest of On. Thus Joseph emerged in

על־יַד יוֹסֵף וַיִּלְבֹּשׁ אֹתוֹ בְּגָדֵי־שֵׁשׁ וַיַּעַם
רַגְלֵי הַחֹמֶב עַל־צְוָארָיו: ⁴³וַיַּרְכֹּב אֹתוֹ
בְּמַרְכָּבַת הַמְּשֻׁנָּה אֲשֶׁר־לוֹ וַיִּקְרְאוּ
לְפָנָיו אֲבֵרֶךְ וַנִּתֵּן אֹתוֹ עַל כָּל־אֶרֶץ
מִצְרָיִם:

⁴⁴וַיֹּאמֶר פַּרְעֹה אֶל־יוֹסֵף אֲנִי פַרְעֹה
וּבְלִעְדֶיךָ לֹא־יָרִים אִישׁ אֶת־יָדוֹ וְאֶת־
רַגְלוֹ בְּכָל־אֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם: ⁴⁵וַיִּקְרָא פַרְעֹה
שֵׁם־יוֹסֵף צַפְנַת פַּעֲנָח וַיִּתֵּן־לוֹ אֶת־אֲסֵנַת
בַּת־פּוּטִי פַרַע בַּתְּנָן אֵן לְאִשָּׁה וַיַּיְצֵא יוֹסֵף

enables the new official to validate documents in the king's name. The title "royal seal bearer" was well known in ancient Egypt.

fine linen The term translated as "fine linen" (*shesh*) is an Egyptian loan word for cloth of exceptional quality.

a gold chain The giving of a gold chain was one of the highest distinctions the king could bestow upon his favorites.

43. chariot This is the first reference to a chariot in the Bible. The Hyksos invasion of Egypt in the 18th century B.C.E. introduced the chariot to that country as an instrument of warfare.

second-in-command That is, viceroy.

they cried before him The practice of having heralds declaim in front of the chariot rider is recorded in Esther 6:9.

Abrek! An exclamation found nowhere else in the Bible. In Akkadian, *abarakku* is the term for a steward of the temple and the chief steward of a private or royal household.

44. I am Pharaoh That is, I speak with the full authority of my royal office.

lift up hand or foot A figure of speech meaning "no action shall be taken."

45. gave Joseph the name The change of name signifies a new identity and a fresh start in life. The king probably wanted to "Egyptianize" the name Joseph.

Zaphenath-paneah The Egyptian words mean "God speaks; he lives," or "the creator/sustainer of life." During this period in Egypt, it was not unusual for foreigners, and Semites in particular, to be welcomed by the court and to rise to positions of responsibility and power in the government.

Asenath The Egyptian name means "she who belongs to (the goddess) Neith."

Poti-pha See Comment to 37:36.

priest of On This city, located seven miles northeast of modern Cairo, was the worship center of the sun god Re. It was called Beit Shemesh in Hebrew (Jer. 43:13) and Heliopolis in

45. Is Poti-pha identical with Potiphar, whom Joseph served in chapter 39? The Talmud thinks he is and understands his giving his daughter to Joseph in marriage as an acknowledgment that Joseph was innocent of the charge brought against him (BT Sot. 13b).

A Rabbinic legend identifies Asenath as the daughter who was born to Dinah, Jacob's daughter, after she had been violated by Shechem (Gen. 34). Subsequently, she was adopted by the childless Potiphar. Thus Joseph, like the other Patriarchs, marries a relative.

HALAKHAH L'MA'ASEH

41:45 the name This is the first instance in Jewish tradition of having more than one name, one of them Hebrew. For purposes of religious honors (such as an *aliyah* to the Torah) and religious documents (such as for marriage and divorce), one is identified by one's Hebrew name, the son or daughter of (*ben* or *bat*) one's father's Hebrew name. In prayers for the ill, one is traditionally identified by one's mother's name. Conservative practice increasingly uses both the mother's and father's Hebrew names in all circumstances, as an expression of honoring both parents in accordance with the Decalogue (see Exod. 20:12).