LESSON 4

Raised Up by God

I am not able to. It is God who will give Pharaoh a favorable answer.

— Genesis 41:16

Genesis 41 takes Joseph from the pit to the second chariot in a single morning, and the man who comes up says the same thing about God at the top that he said at the bottom.

Introduction

GENESIS 40 ENDED WITH A MAN NOBODY REMEMBERED. Genesis 41 opens two years later, and the one who moves the story forward is Pharaoh, asleep in his bed. That is the first thing we should notice. Joseph does nothing to get himself out of prison. He doesn't file an appeal, offer a bribe, or send another message to someone with influence. He has been in that prison so long that Genesis stops counting days and starts counting years. Then a king across the city has a troubled night, and by midday Joseph is dressed in Egyptian linen.

It took thirteen years to bring Joseph down, and one morning to bring him up.

This chapter doesn't ask whether God can do something like that. We have known since childhood that He can. The question is what a man looks like after he has been down that long, and whether he comes up the same man. In these fifty-seven verses, Egypt works on Joseph hard. He is given a razor, new clothes, a new name, a wife from the family of a priest of the sun, and a gold chain. Every pressure that has ever turned a man into someone else is here.

Last week you were asked to count how many times Joseph speaks of God in front of a king who thought he was a god. Keep your number handy. We'll come to it at verse 16, and the answer depends on whether you counted in English or in Hebrew.

This lesson also brings Part One of our study to a close. We began Part One with a question: where is God when everything comes apart? Four chapters ago, a boy was thrown into a hole in the ground. Today he is the second most powerful man in Egypt. It would be easy to answer the question with Joseph's promotion, but Genesis won't let us do that. The same chapter that raises Joseph up ends with the famine reaching the family he says he has forgotten.

Cows Coming Up Out of the River (41:1–8)

At the end of two years Pharaoh had a dream.

The Hebrew is heavier than the English here. It says two years *of days*, which older translations render *two full years*. Genesis includes that detail so we feel the length of the wait before the rescue comes.[51] Then the scene moves from the prison to the palace, and Joseph is nowhere in it.

In his dream, Pharaoh was standing beside the Nile. Seven cows came up out of the river, healthy and well-fed. Then seven more came up behind them, sickly and thin, and they ate the first seven. Pharaoh woke up, fell back asleep, and dreamed the same thing again, this time with heads of grain. *Then Pharaoh woke up, and it was only a dream.*

Every detail of this dream is Egyptian. Cattle along the Nile really did stand half-submerged in the water to escape the heat and the flies, and the Hebrew word for *reeds* is borrowed from Egyptian. The east wind was the hot desert wind, the *khamsin*, which could dry up a field in a single day. Even the *magicians* in verse 8 carry an Egyptian title. They belong to the same class of men who would later stand against Moses in Exodus 7.[52]

Two things in the dream were wrong, and Pharaoh sensed both of them. Cows don't eat other cows, and the thin cows looked no better after they had eaten. The Hebrew writer adds to the sense of dread with a word the CSB leaves out entirely. Six times in seven verses he says *behold*, the way we might say *look* to someone who doesn't want to see. Six times Pharaoh looks, and each time what he sees is worse.[53]

This is the third pair of dreams in Joseph's story. Joseph had two dreams in chapter 37. The cupbearer and the baker had theirs on the same night in chapter 40. Now Pharaoh has two dreams on one night, both saying the same thing. No one has yet explained what a doubled dream means. Joseph will explain it in verse 32, and when he does, it sheds light on everything back to Dothan.

When morning came, he was troubled. Pharaoh called for every magician and wise man in Egypt, and *no one could interpret them for him.* These were men who interpreted dreams for a living. They had their manuals and their records of past cases, and they stood before the king with nothing to say.

Consider where this was happening. The Nile was considered sacred, and Pharaoh was regarded as a god. Now this god had been frightened by his own dreams, and he couldn't find anyone in his kingdom to tell him what they meant.[54]

The Cupbearer Remembers (41:9–14)

One man in that room had seen something like this before.

Then the chief cupbearer said to Pharaoh, "Today I remember my faults." Genesis has waited eight verses before showing him to us. He was standing where he always stood, beside the throne. Notice that he speaks of his faults in the plural. Pharaoh would have heard *my faults* as a reference to the offense that put him in prison. We know about another one.[55]

Then the cupbearer tells his story, and it is worth comparing his version with what actually happened. *A young Hebrew, a slave of the captain of the guards, was with us there. We told him our dreams, he interpreted our dreams for us.* Everything he says is true, but the way he tells it is misleading. He leaves out that the Hebrew said interpretations belong to God. He leaves out that the Hebrew asked to be remembered. He makes it sound as though he found the interpreter, when in fact Joseph had come to him one morning and asked why he looked so troubled. It sounds like a man trying to protect his position.[56]

Genesis doesn't dwell on it. Pharaoh sends for Joseph, and everything happens quickly. *They quickly brought him from the dungeon. He shaved, changed his clothes, and went to Pharaoh.*

CHART 1 · GENESIS 41

Three Pairs of Dreams

Dreamer	The pair	One meaning, said twice	Comes true
Joseph 37:5–10	Sheaves bow. Sun, moon, eleven stars bow.	His family will bow to him.	42:6
Cupbearer and baker 40:5–19	Three branches. Three baskets.	Three days: one restored, one hanged.	40:20–22
Pharaoh 41:1–7	Seven cows eaten by seven. Seven heads of grain swallowed by seven.	Seven years of plenty, then seven of famine.	41:47, 54

"Since the dream was given twice to Pharaoh, it means that the matter has been determined by God" (41:32). Doubled means fixed. Joseph never dreams again after chapter 37.

There are three details in that sentence, and each one brings something from earlier in the story to a close.

The word *dungeon* is *bôr* again. It is the same word used for the dry pit at Dothan and the word Joseph used for this prison in 40:15. The CSB includes a footnote here: *or pit, or cistern.* This is the last time Genesis puts Joseph in one. He went down into a pit in chapter 37, and here he comes up out of one. The writer uses the same word for both so we can see that Joseph's going down and his coming up belong to the same journey.[57]

He shaved. Hebrew men wore beards, and Egyptian men did not. To a Semite, a shaved head was a sign of shame or grief (Amos 8:10; Job 1:20). The first thing Egypt did to Joseph was make him look Egyptian, and it worked so well that in the next chapter, ten men who grew up with him will stand in front of him and see a stranger.[58]

He changed his clothes. Here again we see the garments. His robe was taken from him, and his cloak was left in a woman's hand. Now his prison clothes are taken off and replaced, and before the chapter ends he will be dressed in fine linen. Every time Joseph's clothes change in this story, his life changes too. This is the first change he was glad to see.

What if things had gone the other way? Suppose the cupbearer had remembered Joseph a week after his release, as Joseph had asked. He tells Pharaoh about a Hebrew in the dungeon who is good with dreams, and Pharaoh, who isn't having any dreams at the time, nods and forgets about it. If Joseph's request had been granted right away, it would have done him no good. God isn't mentioned in these fourteen verses, yet He arranged every one of them, including the two years of waiting.[59]

One Word (41:15–32)

CHART 5 · GENESIS 41

One Word for the Pit

Verse	CSB	Hebrew	Who puts him there, who takes him out
37:24	"threw him into the pit"	*bôr*	His brothers throw him in.
40:15	"put me in the dungeon"	*bôr*	Joseph, about himself.
41:14	"brought him from the dungeon"	*bôr*	Pharaoh takes him out.

Three scenes, one Hebrew word, two English ones. This is the last time Genesis puts Joseph in one.

Pharaoh begins with a compliment: *I have heard it said about you that you can hear a dream and interpret it.*

Think about where Joseph was standing. An hour earlier, he had been in a prison cell. Now he was a foreign slave in borrowed clothes, standing before the most powerful man on earth and being told he had a gift. The polite thing would have been to bow modestly and say, *I will do my best.*

In Hebrew, Joseph's answer is a single word: *Bilʿāday*, which means "not I." The CSB needs five words to say it, *I am not able to*, and even those five sound softer than the one Joseph used. Kidner says Joseph disowns any ability of his own almost explosively and points past himself to God so bluntly that Daniel's speech to Nebuchadnezzar sounds polished by comparison. *It is God who will give Pharaoh a favorable answer.*[60]

The word behind "favorable answer" is *shalom*. God would answer Pharaoh with peace. Joseph hadn't even heard the dreams yet, and he was already telling Pharaoh that God's answer would be for his good.

Now for your count. In the CSB, Joseph mentions *God* to Pharaoh four times between verses 16 and 32: *It is God who will give Pharaoh a favorable answer* (16); *God has revealed to Pharaoh what he is about to do* (25); *God has shown Pharaoh what he is about to do* (28); and *the matter has been determined by God, and he will carry it out soon* (32). In Hebrew the count is five. Verse 32 names God at both the beginning and the end of the sentence, and the CSB translates the second one as *he*. Either number makes the point.

What matters is where these references come. The first comes before Joseph has heard a word of the dreams, and the last two come in the sentence that confirms the interpretation. Joseph begins with God, ends with God, and keeps God at the center of everything in between. Not once does he claim the interpretation as his own.[61]

Pharaoh then tells Joseph his dreams, and his retelling adds something. He includes the detail he couldn't get out of his mind: after the thin cows had eaten, *you could not tell that they had devoured them; their appearance was as bad as it had been before.* Joseph picks up on that in verse 31. The famine would be so severe that it would wipe out all memory of the good years.[62]

The interpretation was simple. There would be seven years of abundance followed by seven years of famine, and the famine would be so severe that no one would remember the abundance. Then comes verse 32, which explains every pair of dreams in the book: *Since the dream was given twice to Pharaoh, it means that the matter has been determined by God, and he will carry it out soon.*

When God gives a dream twice, the matter is settled. In explaining Pharaoh's two dreams, Joseph also explained his own. The sheaves and the stars had been one message given twice. Joseph was seventeen when he told those dreams, and he was thirty now. This is the first time in the story he says out loud what a pair of dreams means.

Kidner makes a point here that is easy to miss. This famine was not a judgment. No one in Egypt was being punished. It was one of the ordinary disasters that happen in a world where the rain sometimes fails. God told Pharaoh about it ahead of time for the same reason we would warn a friend that a storm

was coming. Knowing what God has determined is a call to action, and Joseph treated it that way before Pharaoh could even ask what to do.[63]

The Ring, the Linen, and the Chariot (41:33–45)

So now, let Pharaoh look for a discerning and wise man and set him over the land of Egypt.

No one had asked Joseph for a plan, but he offered one anyway, and it was a good one. Pharaoh should appoint overseers and collect a fifth of the harvest during the seven good years. The grain should be stored in the cities near where it was grown and held for the seven years of famine. Joseph proposed setting aside twenty percent for seven years and keeping it close to the people who would need it.[64]

Was Joseph angling for the job? Borthwick thinks the text reads that way, and Hughes is convinced it doesn't. Genesis leaves that for us to decide. What the text does show is that Pharaoh had just watched every *wise man* in his kingdom fail him, and the qualification Joseph named for this new position was a man who was *wise*.[65]

Pharaoh's response is the strangest sentence in the chapter: *Can we find anyone like this, a man who has God's spirit in him?* The CSB footnote offers another possible reading: *or the spirit of the gods.* Pharaoh didn't know the God of Joseph. He reached for the only religious language he had and got it partly wrong, yet Genesis lets him say it anyway, much as John later records Caiaphas prophesying without realizing it. Joseph's one-word answer in verse 16 had done its work.[66]

Then everything happened at once. *You will be over my house. Only I, as king, will be greater than you.* Pharaoh took the signet ring off his own hand and put it on Joseph's. That ring bore the king's own name, so whatever Joseph sealed carried Pharaoh's authority. Joseph was dressed in fine linen, the clothing of the royal court, and a gold chain was placed around his neck. He was given the second chariot, with runners going ahead of it.[67]

The runners shouted *ʾabrēk*, which the CSB translates *Make way!* and footnotes as *Kneel!* Kidner prefers the footnote, "bow the knee." Read that with chapter 37 in mind. Thirteen years earlier, a boy told his brothers they would bow down to him, and they hated him for it. Now a whole city was bowing to him in the streets, and not one of the eleven brothers from his dream was anywhere near Egypt. The bowing had begun, but not yet with the people the dream was about.[68]

In the last verse of this section, the pressure on Joseph changes. Pharaoh gave him a new name, *Zaphenath-paneah*, which no one has ever been able to translate with certainty. He also gave Joseph a wife, *Asenath, daughter of Potiphera, priest at On*. On is Heliopolis, the city of the sun, and her father led the worship of the sun god Re. Joseph's clothes were Egyptian now, his name was Egyptian, and his father-in-law was a priest of the sun god. Genesis doesn't pass judgment on any of it.[69]

Hughes makes an important observation. Joseph's soul was in greater danger at the top than it had ever been in the pit. When he was in the pit, there was nowhere to look but up. At the top, looking up became a choice.[70]

Genesis handles the Egyptian side of Joseph's life very quietly. It never uses his Egyptian name again, and it mentions Asenath only as the mother of his two sons. The writer allows Egypt to dress Joseph, but he keeps calling him Joseph.

Forget and Fruitful (41:46–57)

Joseph was thirty years old when he entered the service of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

Genesis gave Joseph's age once before, in 37:2, and will give it again in 45:6. He was seventeen at Dothan and thirty when he stood before Pharaoh. Thirteen years passed between the pit and the throne room, nearly half his life. Kidner counts nine more years before his brothers walk in. It follows the same long pattern we see in Abraham waiting for Isaac and in Jacob serving Laban.[71]

Joseph went to work immediately. *Joseph left Pharaoh's presence and traveled throughout the land of Egypt.* The years of plenty came just as he had said they would. He gathered the grain and stored it city by city until the total was more than he could keep track of: *he stored up grain in such abundance—like the sand of the sea—that he stopped measuring it because it was beyond measure.* Genesis has used that picture before to describe what God promised Abraham's family would become (22:17; 32:12). Here it describes grain in Egyptian storehouses, gathered by Abraham's great-grandson.

Then Joseph had two sons, and the names he gave them are the most personal words in the chapter.

Joseph named the firstborn Manasseh and said, "God has made me forget all my hardship and my whole family." The name Manasseh is a play on the Hebrew word for *forget*. The phrase the CSB translates *my whole family* literally reads *all my father's house*, meaning Jacob's household and the tents at Hebron. Joseph was saying that God had helped him put all of that behind him.

And the second son he named Ephraim and said, "God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction." Note that even in a year of plenty, while he was riding through Egypt in the second chariot, Joseph still called it the land of his affliction.[72]

Both names are Hebrew. Everything else Egypt gave Joseph was Egyptian, but when it came time to name his sons in front of Egypt's aristocracy, he reached back to the language of his father's tents.[73] Listen to the name Manasseh again. Borthwick quotes Wenham, who says there was still something missing, and that Joseph had not really forgotten his father's house. A man who has to announce that he has forgotten something hasn't forgotten it. People don't name a child after a wound that has fully healed.

Then the good years came to an end, *and Genesis says the seven years of famine began, just as Joseph had said.* Egypt had food. When the people cried out to Pharaoh, he sent them to Joseph: *Go to Joseph and do whatever he tells you.* And Joseph opened the storehouses.

Then we come to the last verse of the chapter: *Every land came to Joseph in Egypt to buy grain, for the famine was severe in every land.*

Every land includes Canaan. Somewhere in that famine, an old man in Hebron has eleven sons and not enough food to feed them. The only grain within reach is in storehouses managed by the son he buried

years ago. Joseph had just named a son after forgetting his family, and the chapter ends with that family about to start the journey toward him.[74]

This is where Part One ends. Joseph is at the top of the world, he has a son whose name means "forget," and the family he has tried to forget is growing hungry.

Looking to Christ

Stephen makes the connection for us, so we don't have to guess. *God was with him and rescued him out of all his troubles. He gave him favor and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, who appointed him ruler over Egypt and over his whole household* (Acts 7:9–10). Last week we looked at the *wisdom.* This week we see the *ruler.* Stephen told this story to the Sanhedrin on purpose, shortly before they killed him, because it follows the same pattern as the life of the One he was about to die for. Joseph was rejected by his brothers, raised up by God, and placed over the very people who had sold him.

The psalm we read at the opening of Part One continues past where we stopped. *Until the time his prediction came true, the word of the LORD tested him.* Then it goes on: *The king sent for him and released him; the ruler of peoples set him free. He made him master of his household, ruler over all his possessions* (Psalm 105:19–21). Genesis 41 is the second half of that psalm. The psalmist understood the thirteen years the same way we have been trying to understand them, as a test that had an ending God had already set.

Other connections should be held more loosely. Paul says of Christ that *God highly exalted him* and that *every knee will bow* (Philippians 2:9–10). It is hard to read about runners shouting *Kneel!* in front of Joseph's chariot without thinking of that passage. But no apostle cites verse 43, so we should let it remain an echo. Kidner points out a quieter one. When the people cry out for bread, Pharaoh tells them, *Go to Joseph and do whatever he tells you.* At the wedding in Cana, Mary tells the servants, *Do whatever he tells you* (John 2:5). Kidner thinks John may have intended for us to hear the connection.[75]

We shouldn't press the details too far. Joseph married a priest's daughter and accepted a pagan name, and the comparison breaks down in many places if we lean on it too hard. But the larger pattern holds. The one who was brought up out of the pit became the one everyone had to come to, and the bowing began before the brothers knew whose feet they would fall at.

Applying the Text

Say the same thing about God in the throne room that you said in the prison. Joseph said, *Don't interpretations belong to God?* to two prisoners who had nothing to offer him. He said *Not I* to a king who was offering him everything. Most of us look up to God when we're at the bottom of a pit. The real test is how we respond to praise, and Joseph answered Pharaoh's compliment with one word that gave all the credit away. Pay attention to when your own confession of God grows quiet. It usually isn't during the hard times.

When God tells you something is certain, get to work. Joseph heard that seven years of famine had been determined by God and could not be changed, and his very next words were a plan to prepare for it. Kidner is right that predictive prophecy in Scripture is almost never a reason to sit still. In the Bible, the

people who take God's sovereignty most seriously are usually the ones working the hardest. If we use "God is in control" as a reason to do nothing about a problem we can see coming, Genesis 41 doesn't call that faith.

Watch what success does to you. The pit taught Joseph to depend on God because it left him nothing else to depend on. The palace offered him a new name, a wife, a ring, and a city on its knees, and every one of those things could have given him a reason to stop looking up. The greatest danger to Joseph in this chapter was success, and the quiet way it can convince a man that he earned everything he was given. What did your best year do to your prayer life?

Hold on to what you were taught. Joseph accepted everything Egypt gave him, and it was all Egyptian. But he named his sons Manasseh and Ephraim, Hebrew names that pointed to what God had done, and he gave them those names in front of the priest of the sun. Most of us can do our jobs faithfully in a world that doesn't share our faith. The question is what is spoken and practiced in our homes.

Be careful what you decide you are finished with. Joseph said, *God has made me forget all my hardship and my whole family.* That sounds like peace, and it may have been. It may also have been a man who had shut a door on his past and named a child after it, while the famine was reaching the people on the other side of that door.

Some of us have a Manasseh of our own. It may be a broken relationship, a painful season, or a wrong someone did to us that we have set aside with the words, *God got me past that.* Perhaps He has. He may also not be finished with it yet, and we may find that out on the day the people we tried to forget show up needing bread.

For Discussion

1. In 41:16–32, count how many times Joseph mentions *God* to Pharaoh. What does Joseph say about his own ability, and at what point in the conversation does he say it?

2. Compare the cupbearer's account in 41:9–13 with what actually happened in chapter 40. What does he leave out? Why does it matter that Pharaoh sent for Joseph anyway?

3. Was Joseph putting himself forward for the job in 41:33? Read 41:33–36 both ways. Does your answer change how you feel about Joseph? Should it?

4. Joseph was shaved, renamed, dressed in linen, and married into the family of a pagan priest, yet he gave his sons Hebrew names. Where is the line between serving within a culture and being absorbed by it? Where is that line in your own work?

5. Joseph said, *God has made me forget all my hardship and my whole family*. Is that faith, or is it a man closing a door? What have you decided you're finished with that God may not be finished with?

6. Part One asked where God is when everything comes apart. You have now studied four chapters. Answer the question in one sentence without using the word *eventually*.

Looking Ahead

Lesson 5: The Brothers Come to Egypt (Genesis 42)

Ten men walk into a room without knowing whose room it is. Twenty-two years after they laughed at Joseph's dream, they bow before him with their faces to the ground. The man who named his son "forget" looks at them and remembers. He speaks harshly to them through an interpreter and accuses them of being spies. Then he overhears something they say in Hebrew that no one in Egypt was ever supposed to hear, and that is when the tears come for the first time. Joseph weeps seven times in this story, and he hasn't wept once in the four chapters we've already studied.

Before you come, read Genesis 42. Mark every verse where someone bows, and find the one verse where someone weeps.

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[51] Borthwick, *Life of Joseph*. On 41:1 he notes that the Hebrew's *full* years underscores how thoroughly Joseph had been forgotten and reminds the reader of his endurance. Grigoni et al., *Joseph*. On 41:1 they observe that the two years pass

unrecorded, that Joseph continued serving in the house of confinement with what freedom and responsibility the situation allowed, and that after two years he had likely given up any hope of the cupbearer's intervention.

[52] Kidner, *Genesis*. On 41:1–2 he draws attention to the Egyptian coloring of the dream: cattle coming up out of the Nile, where, as Vergote points out, they stand almost submerged to escape heat and flies, to graze in the reed-beds; and the Hebrew *ʾāḥû*, "reeds," is an Egyptian loan-word. On 41:6 he identifies the east wind as the desert wind, the *khamsin* in Egypt, which can be devastating to crops (cf. Ezekiel 17:10; Hosea 13:15). On 41:8 he notes that *magicians*, *ḥarṭummîm*, is another Egyptian-based word, part of a title for experts in the ritual books of priestcraft and magic, and that they appear again in Exodus 7:11.

[53] Hughes, *Genesis*. On 41:1–8 he notes that the narrator's Hebrew uses an astonished *behold* six times to mark Pharaoh's reaction, that both dreams featured cannibalism and were built on the number seven, and that their arrival as a pair signaled importance and certainty.

[54] Hughes, *Genesis*. On 41:1–8 he cites Hamilton, *Genesis 18–50*, for the observation that the account of Pharaoh's helplessness and fear emphasizes the mortality and finiteness of the dreamer, the pharaoh-god. Grigoni et al., *Joseph*. On 41:1–7 they document the ancient conviction that a dream repeated was especially significant, citing a Sumerian king's paired dreams, Gilgamesh's two dreams of Enkidu, and a text from Mari on consecutive-night dreams.

[55] Hughes, *Genesis*. On 41:9–14 he suggests that the plural my faults may include the cupbearer's failure to remember Joseph.

[56] Hughes, *Genesis*. On 41:9–14 he lists the cupbearer's selective editing: no mention that the Hebrew disclaimed any power of his own and credited God, a false impression that the cupbearer took the initiative, and silence about the broken promise.

[57] Grigoni et al., *Joseph*. On 41:14 they identify bôr, "pit," as a deliberate link to 37:24 and to Joseph's own words in 40:15, so that the story pivots on this reversal: dreams sent him into the pit, and dreams now pull him out of it. Kidner, *Genesis*. On 41:14 he reads out of the dungeon as another sign of the narrative's unity.

[58] Grigoni et al., *Joseph*. On 41:14 they explain that Egyptians shaved head and beard while Semites were bearded and associated shaving with shame and grief (Amos 8:10; Job 1:20), and that the transformation left Joseph unrecognizable to his brothers (42:8). Kidner, *Genesis*. On 41:14 he takes the shaving as a further detail of Egyptian rather than Semitic etiquette (cf. Jeremiah 41:5).

[59] Hughes, *Genesis*. On 41:9–14 he adds that God, though unnamed, was the convener of the scene, arranging its timing through the cupbearer's forgetfulness and then his self-serving recollection; had the memory functioned earlier, it would likely have been lost on Pharaoh.

[60] Kidner, *Genesis*. On 41:15–16 he observes that while Pharaoh thought in terms of expertise in the science of dreams, Joseph almost explosively disavowed the whole approach, the exclamation It is not in me being a single Hebrew word; with hasty brevity he points from himself to God as sole revealer, his abruptness contrasting with Daniel's polished speech to the same effect (Daniel 2:27–30). Borthwick, *Life of Joseph*. On 41:16 he notes that Joseph repeats his statement of 40:8 and promises Pharaoh God's peace, shalom.

[61] Hughes, *Genesis*. On 41:25–32 he notes that Joseph's interpretation invokes God at its beginning, middle, and end, and that the final sentence names God twice, so that the interpretation announced to Pharaoh and all Egypt that the one true God controlled their existence; he reads the article on hāʾĕlōhîm, "the God," as an assertion to Pharaoh's face of the true God's sovereignty over the gods of Egypt. The CSB renders the second occurrence in 41:32 as he, so the English count is four and the Hebrew five. He cites Brueggemann, Genesis, for the point that the future in Egypt does not depend on Pharaoh, who can neither cause it nor resist it.

[62] Kidner, *Genesis*. On 41:19 he notes that the extra description in Pharaoh's retelling makes it more than repetition, and that only now do we learn of the startling lack of change in the thin cattle (41:21), which Joseph will interpret in 41:31.

[63] Kidner, *Genesis*. On 41:25 and 41:33 he argues that the reiteration of what God is about to do and the emphasis on certainty and imminence in 41:32 are calls to action, not resignation, exactly as in the prophets (cf. Jeremiah 18:7–10); and that the famine, unlike many disasters foretold in the Old Testament, is not a judgment but one of life's irregularities, against which a wise manager insures. God looks for an active response: to a threat of judgment, repentance; to a friendly warning, realistic precautions.

[64] Hughes, *Genesis*. On 41:33–36 he lays out the plan's merits: decentralized storage in the cities allowed convenient distribution and protection as the famine deepened, and every part of it called for action grounded in knowledge of what God was about to do.

[65] Hughes, *Genesis*. On 41:37–41 he insists that Joseph never dreamed he was commending himself. Borthwick, *Life of Joseph*. On 41:33 he allows that the verse comes across as Joseph's initiative in promoting himself, and reads it as a man of leadership who, having lobbied the cupbearer without result, now speaks for himself. Grigoni et al., *Joseph*. On 41:33 they judge the advice neutral and free of self-recommendation, but note the implication that Pharaoh's wise men, who had failed, were not wise enough for the post.

[66] Kidner, *Genesis*. On 41:38–39 he observes that the Spirit of God would be a phrase colored by polytheism for Pharaoh, who was not the last man in Scripture to speak more wisely than he knew (cf. John 11:49–52), and that Pharaoh's words show Joseph's opening protest in 41:16 had made its mark.

[67] Kidner, *Genesis*. On 41:42 he takes Joseph's office as that of vizier; the signet ring carried the king's authority, though this was delegated to more than one officer; the fine linen, an Egyptian word, was court dress; and a gold chain or collar was a customary royal reward, shown as a detail of a vizier's investiture under Sethos I, though that painting is some four hundred years later and its value for Joseph's story is disputable. Borthwick, *Life of Joseph*. On 41:42 he quotes Walton and Matthews, *IVP Bible Background Commentary*, 76, on the signet ring bearing the king's name in its cartouche, so that anyone using it acted in the king's name. Grigoni et al., *Joseph*. On 41:42–43 they connect the seal to the Egyptian office of Royal Seal Bearer, often held by the vizier.

[68] Kidner, *Genesis*. On 41:43 he holds that the second chariot proclaims Joseph next after Pharaoh, and that bow the knee is the most likely meaning of ʾabrēk, an adapted Semitic root borrowed into Egyptian, reflecting an etiquette depicted in Egyptian drawings.

[69] Kidner, *Genesis*. On 41:45 he notes that giving foreigners Egyptian names is well attested but that no agreement exists on Zaphenath-paneah, for which Steindorff, Vergote, and Kitchen offer three different readings; Asenath means "she belongs to Neith" and Potiphera "he whom Re has given," Re being the sun god worshiped at On, later Heliopolis. Grigoni et al., *Joseph*. On 41:45 they observe that the narrative passes no judgment on the marriage, never mentions Asenath again except as mother of Joseph's sons, and never again refers to Joseph by his Egyptian name.

[70] Hughes, *Genesis*. On 41:45 he argues that Pharaoh intended to Egyptianize Joseph through the name and the marriage, and that Joseph's soul was in greater peril at the pinnacle than in the pit, since the pit instilled dependence and the pinnacle inclines toward pride and independence.

[71] Kidner, *Genesis*. On 41:46 he notes that the age punctuates a story that began at seventeen (37:2) and will reach its climax nine years later (45:6), more than twenty years after the breach with his brothers, comparable to Abraham's wait between promise and fulfillment and Jacob's years with Laban; each delay fruitful, no two alike. He adds that went throughout all the land emphasizes the personal energy of Joseph's administration and wonders whether it was enhanced by the joy of release. Borthwick, *Life of Joseph*. On 41:46 he counts two years since the cupbearer's dream and thirteen since Joseph's own.

[72] Kidner, *Genesis*. On 41:51–52 he notes that the names are Hebrew, not Egyptian, and match the two sides of Joseph's experience: Manasseh with the mixed feelings that go with closing a chapter, Ephraim with a more buoyant sense of fulfillment. Smith, *Pentateuch*. On 41:46–52 he glosses the names as "forget" and "double fruitful."

[73] Hughes, *Genesis*. On 41:50–52 he stresses that a man renamed in Egyptian and married to a woman named for the goddess Neith gave his sons blatantly Hebrew names, reasserting his origin when every other foreigner sought assimilation. Borthwick, *Life of Joseph*. On 41:51–52 he quotes G. J. Wenham in *New Bible Commentary*, rev. ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 87: there was still something missing; he had not forgotten his father's household.

[74] Kidner, *Genesis*. On 41:56–57 he notes that Egyptian records twice describe famine severe enough to drive its people to cannibalism, and that because Palestine was watered by rain and Egypt by the Nile the two rarely failed together (cf. 12:10; 26:1–2), so that this famine was exceptional and only one man's exertions averted a multiple disaster. Hughes, *Genesis*. On 41:53–57 he cites Sarna, *Genesis*, on Lower Egypt's dependence on the Nile flood, where a shortfall of a few inches could bring famine, and observes that Genesis repeats famine five times in these verses, twice calling it severe.

[75] Kidner, *Genesis*. On 41:55 he suggests an intended echo of the great provider in John's record of Mary's words at Cana (John 2:5): what Joseph was to the men of his day, this and more Jesus would be to the world.

PART TWO

The Dreams Come True

Can guilty men change?

The one who conceals his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them will find mercy. — *Proverbs 28:13*

Part Two covers about two years of famine and the end of twenty-two years of silence. Ten men walk into a grain office in Egypt and bow before a governor they don't recognize, and the brother they threw into a pit watches his own dream come true without saying a word. What Joseph does next has troubled readers for centuries. He accuses his brothers of spying, puts one of them in prison, and has a silver cup planted in the sack of the youngest. These four lessons deal with all of that. What does it take to make a family whole after twenty years of hidden guilt? Genesis doesn't answer with a simple scene of apology. Instead, it sets up the circumstances of the original crime once again. There is a favored younger son, an easy opportunity to abandon him, and no one watching. Then it lets us see whether these men will do it again. The coming chapters follow that test: the first journey that brings ten men to their knees, the banquet where the seating arrangement alone unsettles them, the speech Judah gives to save a brother after once helping to sell another, and the moment an Egyptian official clears the room and says, *I am Joseph*.