

CHAPTER 41

INTRODUCTION TO GENESIS 41

In this chapter are related Pharaoh's dreams, which his magicians could not interpret, (⁰⁴¹⁰Genesis 41:1-9), upon which the chief butler now remembering Joseph, recommended him to Pharaoh as an interpreter, having had an happy experience of him as such himself, (⁰⁴¹⁰Genesis 41:10-13), when Joseph was sent for out of prison; and Pharaoh having related his dreams, he interpreted them of seven years of plenty, and seven years of famine, that should be in the land of Egypt, (⁰⁴¹⁴Genesis 41:14-32); and having done, he gave his advice to provide in the years of plenty against the years of famine, and proposed a scheme for doing it, which was approved of by Pharaoh and his ministers, (⁰⁴¹³Genesis 41:33-37); and Joseph himself was pitched upon as the most proper person to execute it, and was appointed chief over the kingdom next to Pharaoh, who gave him a new name and a wife upon this occasion, (⁰⁴¹³Genesis 41:38-45); accordingly, in the years of plenty he took a tour throughout the whole land, and gathered and laid up food in vast quantities in every city, (⁰⁴¹⁴Genesis 41:46-49); an account is given of two sons born to Joseph, and of their names, (⁰⁴¹⁵Genesis 41:50-52); and of the seven years of famine, beginning to come on at the end of the seven years of plenty, which brought great distress on the land of Egypt, and the countries round about, who all came to Joseph to buy corn, (⁰⁴¹⁵Genesis 41:53-57).

Ver. 1. *And it came to pass at the end of two full years*, etc.] It is not a clear case, as Aben Ezra observes, from whence these years are to be reckoned, whether from the time of Joseph's being put into prison, or from the time that the chief butler was taken out of it; the latter seems more probable, and better connects this and the preceding chapter:

that Pharaoh dreamed, and, behold, he stood by the river; it seemed to him, in his dream, as if he stood near the river Nile, or some canal or flow of water cut out of that river.

Ver. 2. *And, behold, there came up out of the river seven well favoured kine, and fatfleshed*, etc.] Seven cows or heifers, sleek, fat, and plump,

goodly to look at; these seemed in the dream, as if they came out of the river, because they were fed with the fruits of the earth, which the overflowing of the river Nile, and its canals, produced:

and they fed in a meadow; adjoining to the river, where there was good pasture for them, and gives a reason of their being in so good a condition.

Ver. 3. *And, behold, seven other kine came up after them out of the river, ill favoured, and leanfleshed*, etc.] Thin and haggard, their bones stuck out, having scarce any flesh upon them, and made a wretched figure:

and stood by the [other] kine; and looked so much the worse, when compared with them:

upon the brink of the river; it not being overflowed, so that there was no grass to be had, but just upon the bank, where these kept for that purpose; for the fruitfulness of Egypt was owing to the river Nile; as that overflowed or did not, there was plenty or famine; hence both these sorts of creatures came up out of that.

Ver. 4. *And the ill favoured and leanfleshed kine did eat up the seven well favoured and fat kine*, etc.] So it seemed in the dream as if this was done, was very strange and surprising that animals should devour one another; and especially that tame ones, cows or heifers, should eat those of their own species, which was never known to be done:

so Pharaoh awoke; through surprise at the strange sight he had in his dream.

Ver. 5. *And he slept, and dreamed the second time*, etc.] He fell asleep again quickly, and dreamed another dream the same night, and to the same purpose, being much of the like kind with the former:

and, behold, seven ears of corn came up upon one stalk, rank and good; which were very uncommon even in those fruitful countries; though Dr. Shaw^{f1705} observes of Barbary, which vied with Egypt for fruitfulness, that it sometimes happens that one stalk of wheat will bear two ears, while each of these ears will as often shoot out into a number of lesser ones, thereby affording a most plentiful increase.

Ver. 6. *And, behold, seven thin ears, and blasted with the east wind*, etc.] Which is very fatal to corn, to dry, burn, smite, or blast it; and especially to the corn in Egypt, whither it blew from the desert of Arabia: these

sprung up after them; after the seven full ears, in the same place the other did, or near unto them.

Ver. 7. *And the seven thin ears devoured the seven rank and full ears*, etc.] So it appeared to Pharaoh in his dream, which must be very amazing to behold, and unaccountable how it should be:

and Pharaoh awoke, and, behold, [it was] a dream; not a real fact, but a dream; yet not a common dream, but had some important signification in it; it not vanishing from his mind, but abode upon it, which made him conclude there was something more than common in it, and made him very desirous to have the interpretation of it.

Ver. 8. *And it came to pass in the morning, that his spirit was troubled*, etc.] With the thoughts of his dreams; they were uppermost in his mind; he was continually thinking of them; it was as if he had always the same images before him now awake, as well as when asleep, and therefore could not be easy without getting knowledge of the meaning of them:

and he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt, and all the wise men thereof; who pretended to have great skill in the things of nature, and in astrology and other sciences, by which they pretended to know future events, and to interpret dreams among other things; and show what they portended, and what things would happen for the accomplishment of them:

and Pharaoh told them his dream; both his dreams, which for the similarity of them, and there being so little interruption between them, are represented as one dream; for that both were told them appears by what follows:

but [there was] none that could interpret them unto Pharaoh; they were nonplussed and confounded, and did not know what to say; the things were so strange and surprising that he related, that they could not offer any conjectures about them, or, if they did, they were very unsatisfactory to Pharaoh.

Ver. 9. *Then spake the chief butler unto Pharaoh*, etc.] When the magicians and wise men could not interpret his dreams, he was in distress of mind on that account:

saying, I do remember my faults this day; which some interpret of his forgetfulness of Joseph and his afflictions, and of his ingratitude to him,

and breach of promise in not making mention of him to Pharaoh before this time; but they seem rather to be faults he had committed against Pharaoh, and were the reason of his being wroth with him, as in (^{[0410](#)}Genesis 41:10); and these were either real faults, which the king had pardoned, or however such as he had been charged with, and cleared from; and which he now in a courtly manner takes to himself, and owns them, that the king's goodness and clemency to him might appear, and lest he should seem to charge the king with injustice in casting him into prison; which circumstance he could not avoid relating in the story he was about to tell.

Ver. 10. *Pharaoh was wroth with his servants*, etc.] Not with all of them, but with the butler and the baker. Aben Ezra observes here, that Pharaoh was not the proper name of this king, but a title of office, and signifies the king; for it cannot be thought that the butler would use such freedom in his presence as to call him by his name: the true name of this prince, according to the eastern writers ^{f1706}, was Rian ben Walid; others take him to be Aphophis, the third of the Hycsi, or pastor kings: but, according to Bishop Usher ^{f1707}, his name was Mephramuthosis:

and put me in ward in the captain of the guard's house: in consequence of his wrath and displeasure, for crimes really or supposed to be committed by him; and the captain of the guard's house was a prison, or at least there was a prison in it for such sort of offenders; and this was Potiphar's, Joseph's master's, house:

[both] me and the chief baker; which explains who the officers were Pharaoh was wroth with, and who were for their offences committed to prison.

Ver. 11. *And we dreamed a dream in one night, I and he*, etc.] In one and the same night:

we dreamed each man according to the interpretation of his dream; they both dreamed exactly what should befall them, as it was interpreted to them; the dreams, the interpretation of them, and the events, answered to each other.

Ver. 12. *And [there was] there with us a young man*, etc.] Who was in the prison with them, had the care of them, and waited upon them; he was then about twenty eight years of age; for it was two years ago he speaks of, and Joseph was thirty when he stood before Pharaoh, (^{[0446](#)}Genesis 41:46):

an Hebrew servant to the captain of the guard; he first describes him by his age, a young man, then by his descent, an Hebrew, and by his state and condition, a servant; neither of them tended much to recommend him to the king:

and we told him; that is, their dreams:

and he interpreted to us our dream, to each man according to his dream did he interpret; told them what their dreams presignified, what the events would be they portended; the interpretation was different according to their dreams.

Ver. 13. *And it came to pass, as he interpreted to us, so it was,* etc.] The event answered to the interpretation, and showed it to be right; this is frequently hinted and repeated, to show the exactness and certainty of the interpretation given, in order to recommend Joseph to Pharaoh the more:

me he restored unto my office, and him he hanged: that is, Joseph interpreted the butler's dream to such a sense, that he should be restored to his butlership, and accordingly he was; and the baker's dream, that he should be hanged, and so he was. Aben Ezra and Jarchi interpret this of Pharaoh, that he restored the one, and hanged the other, or ordered these things to be done, which answered to Joseph's interpretation of the dreams; but the former sense seems best, for Joseph is the person immediately spoken of in the preceding clause; nor would it have been so decent for the butler, in the presence of Pharaoh, to have spoken of him without naming him, and which would have been contrary to his usage before.

Ver. 14. *Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph,* etc.] Sent messengers to him to come to him directly, ordered the captain of the guard, or keeper of prison, to loose him, and let him free, (see ~~verso~~ Psalm 105:20);

and they brought him hastily out of the dungeon; that is, out of the prison house; which, as Jarchi says, was made like a ditch or dungeon, or in which the dungeon was where Joseph was first put when he was brought to prison; though it cannot be thought that he continued there when he had so much respect shown him by the keeper, and had other prisoners committed to his care: however, he was fetched in great haste from his place of confinement, by the messengers that were sent for him; or “they made him to run”,^{f1708} from the prison to the palace, the king being so eager to have his dream interpreted to him:

and he shaved [himself]; or the barber shaved him, as Aben Ezra; his beard had not been shaved, nor the hair of his head cut very probably for a considerable time; it being usual for persons in such circumstances to neglect such things:

and changed his raiment; his prison garments being such as were not fit to appear in before a king, and put on others, which either the king sent him, or the captain of the guard his master furnished him with:

and came in unto Pharaoh: into his palace, and his presence; what city it was in which this Pharaoh kept his palace, is no where said; very probably it was which the Scriptures call Zoan, that being the ancient city of Egypt, (^{וְאַתָּה} Numbers 13:22).

Ver. 15. *And Pharaoh said unto Joseph,* etc.], Immediately, upon his being introduced to him:

I have dreamed a dream, and [there] is none that can interpret it; that he could yet meet with; none of his magicians or wise men, who made great pretensions to skill in such matters:

and I have heard say of thee, [that] thou canst understand a dream to interpret it; it had been reported to him, particularly by the chief butler, that when he heard a dream told him, he had such knowledge and understanding, that he could interpret it, tell the meaning of it, what it portended, and what would be the events signified by it.

Ver. 16. *And Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, [it is] not in me,* etc.] Which expresses his great modesty, that he did not arrogate such skill and wisdom to himself; declaring that he had no such power and abilities in and of himself, to interpret dreams; what he had was a gift of God, and wholly depended upon his influence, and the revelation he was pleased to make to him of such things:

God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace; such an answer to his request in the interpretation of his dream, as shall give him full content, and make his mind quiet and easy, and which shall tend to the welfare of him and his kingdom. Some render the words as a prayer or wish, “may God give Pharaoh”, etc. ^{f1709}; so as it were addressing his God, that he would be pleased to make known to him his interpretation of the dream to the satisfaction of Pharaoh: but the other sense seems best, which expresses his

faith in God, that he would do it, and to whom it should be ascribed, and not unto himself.

Ver. 17. *And Pharaoh said unto Joseph*, etc.] Relating both his dreams in a more ample manner, though to the same purpose, than before related:

in my dream, behold, I stood upon the bank of the river; the river Nile, where he could have a full sight of what were after presented to his view.

Ver. 18. *And, behold, there came up out of the river seven kine*, etc.]

Cows or heifers, (see Gill on “[¶]~~¶~~ Genesis 41:2”); the account of them is the same here as there, and of the place where they fed, only the words are transposed.

Ver. 19. *And, behold, seven other kine*, etc.] Here some addition is made: these are said not only to be

very ill favoured, and leanfleshed, (see Gill on “[¶]~~¶~~ Genesis 41:3”), but

poor, thin, meagre, exhausted of their flesh and strength through some disease upon them, or want of food: and it follows, what was not before expressed,

such as I never saw in all the land of Egypt, for badness; so poor, so lean, and so ill favoured; for whatever might be seen in other countries, never were such seen in Egypt, which was famous for good cattle.

Ver. 20. *And the lean and the ill favoured kine*, etc.] The same as previously described; (see Gill on “[¶]~~¶~~ Genesis 41:4”).

Ver. 21. *And when they had eaten them up*, etc.] Or “were come into their bowels” ^{f1710}, into their inward parts, their bellies, being swallowed and devoured by them:

it could not be known that they had eaten them: or were in their bellies, they seemed never the fuller nor the fatter for them:

but they [were] still ill favoured as at the beginning; looked as thin and as meagre as they did when they first came out of the river, or were first seen by Pharaoh:

so I awoke; surprised at what he had seen; this was his first dream.

Ver. 22. *And I saw in my dream*, etc.] Falling asleep again quickly, he dreamed a second time; and this dream being of a like kind with the former,

and so small a space between them, they are represented as one, and this is the continuation of it:

and, behold, seven ears, etc. (see Gill on “^{וְהִנֵּה} Genesis 41:5”).

Ver. 23. *And, behold, seven ears withered*, etc.] Here a new epithet of the bad ears is given, and expressed by a word nowhere else used, which Ben Melech interprets, small, little, according to the use of the word in the Misnah; Aben Ezra, void, empty, such as had no grains of corn in them, nothing but husk or chaff, and observes that some render it images; for the word is so used in the Arabic language, and may signify that these ears were only mere shadows or images of ears, which had no substance in them: Jarchi says, the word, in the Syriac language signifies a rock, and so it denotes that these ears were dry as a rock, and had no moisture in them, laid dried, burnt up, and blasted with the east wind.

Ver. 24. *And the thin ears devoured the seven good ears*, etc.] (See Gill on “^{וְהַלְאָה} Genesis 41:7”);

and I told [this] unto the magicians; just in the same manner as he had to Joseph:

but [there was] none that could declare [it] unto me; the meaning of it; what all this should signify or portend.

Ver. 25. *And Joseph said unto Pharaoh, the dream of Pharaoh [is] one*, etc.] Though there were two distinct dreams expressed under different images and representations, yet the meaning, sense, and signification of them were the same; one interpretation would do for both:

God hath showed Pharaoh what he [is] about to do; that is, by the above dreams, when they should be interpreted to him; for as yet he understood them not, and therefore there could be nothing showed him, but when interpreted it would be clear and plain to him what events were quickly to be accomplished: God only knows things future, and those to whom he is pleased to reveal them, and which he did in different ways, by dreams, visions, articulate voices, etc.

Ver. 26. *The seven good kine [are] seven years*, etc.] Signify seven years, and these years of plenty, as appears from the antithesis in (^{וְהַלְאָה} Genesis 41:26):

and the seven good ears [are] seven years; signify the same:

the dream [is] one; for though the seven good kine were seen in one dream, the seven good ears in another, yet both dreams were one as to signification.

Ver. 27. *And the seven thin and ill favoured kine that came up after them [are] seven years*, etc.] Signify other seven years, and these different from the former, as follows:

and the seven empty ears blasted with the east wind shall be seven years of famine: or there will be seven years of famine that will answer to them, and are signified by them: Grotius, from the Oneirocritics or interpreters of dreams, observes, that years are signified by kine, and particularly he relates from Achmes, that according to the doctrine of the Egyptians, female oxen (and such these were) signified times and seasons, and if fat (as the good ones here also were) signified fruitful times, but if poor and thin (as the bad ones here were) barren times: it seems as if all this skill of theirs was borrowed from Joseph's interpretation of Pharaoh's dreams here given. Josephus^{f1711} relates a dream of Archelaus the son of Herod, who dreamed that he saw ten ears of corn, full and large, devoured by oxen; he sent for the Chaldeans and others to tell him what they signified; one said one thing and another another; at length one Simon, an Essene, said that the ears signified years, and the oxen changes of affairs, because, when they plough up the earth, they turn it up and change it; so that he should reign as many years as were ears of corn seen, and after many changes should die, as he accordingly did.

Ver. 28. *This [is] the thing which I have spoken unto Pharaoh*, etc.] As an interpretation of his dreams:

what God [is] about to do, he sheweth unto Pharaoh: the events of fourteen years with respect to plenty and sterility.

Ver. 29. *Behold, there come seven years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt.*] Not only a sufficiency but an abundance, even to luxury, as when the Nile rose to sixteen cubits, as Pliny observes^{f1712}; which, though a natural cause, was owing to God, and that it should thus overflow for seven years successively, and cause such a continued plenty, can be ascribed to no other.

Ver. 30. *And there shall arise after them seven years of famine*, etc.]

Which might be occasioned by the river Nile not rising so high as to overflow its banks, as, when it did not rise to more than twelve cubits, a

famine ensued, as the above writer says^{f1713}; and it must be owing to the overruling providence of God that this should be the case for seven years running:

and all the plenty shall be forgotten in the land of Egypt; the seven years of plenty being all spent, it should be as if it never was; the minds of men would be so intent upon their present distressed case and circumstances, that they should wholly forget how it had been with them in time past; or it would be as if they had never enjoyed it, or were never the better for it: this answers to and explains how it was with the ill favoured kine, when they had eaten up the fat kine; they seemed never the better, nor could it be known by their appearance that they had so done:

and the famine shall consume the land: the inhabitants of it, and all the fruits and increase of it the former years produced.

Ver. 31. *And the plenty shall not be known in the land, by reason of that famine following,* etc.] That is, before it would be over; otherwise the former plenty was in some measure known by the stores of provisions laid up in the seven years of it, and which were brought forth when the famine became very pressing; but by that time, and before the seven years of it were ended, there were no traces of the foregoing plenty to be observed:

for it [shall be] very grievous; as it was both in Egypt and in all the countries round about.

Ver. 32. *And for that the dream was doubled unto Pharaoh twice,* etc.] Or was repeated to him under different figures and images:

[it is] because the thing [is] established by God; by a firm decree of his, and is sure, and will most certainly be accomplished; of which Pharaoh might be assured, and to assure him of it was the repetition of the dream made:

and God will shortly bring it to pass: or “make haste to do it”^{f1714}, that is, would soon begin to accomplish these events; for, as Bishop Usher^{f1715} observes, from the harvest of this (the then present) year, the seven years of plenty are reckoned.

Ver. 33. *Now therefore let Pharaoh look out a man discreet and wise,* etc.] Of good judgment and conduct, of abilities equal to the execution of a scheme hereafter proposed: it can scarcely be thought consistent with the

great modesty of Joseph that he meant himself, or that indeed, he ventured to give any advice at all, until it was first asked of him by the king; who being so well satisfied with the interpretation of his dreams, thought him a proper person to consult with what to be done in this case; who, as a true father of his country, as every king should be, was concerned for the good of it, and to provide against the worst for them:

and set him over the land of Egypt; not to be governor of it in general, but with a particular respect to the present case, to take care of provision for it.

Ver. 34. *Let Pharaoh do [this],* etc.] Appoint such a person; who as a sovereign prince could do it of himself:

and let him appoint officers over the land; not Pharaoh, but the wise and discreet governor he should set over the land, who should have a power of appointing officers or overseers under him to manage things according to his direction:

and take up the fifth part of the land of Egypt in the seven plenteous years; not the officers appointed, but the appointer of them, the chief governor under Pharaoh, for the word is singular; it is proposed that he should, in Pharaoh's name, and by his order, take a fifth part of all the corn in the land of Egypt during seven years of plenty; not by force, which so good a man as Joseph would never advise to, whatever power Pharaoh might have, and could exercise if he pleased; but by making a purchase of it, which in such time of plenty would be bought cheap, and which so great a prince as Pharaoh was capable of. It is commonly asked, why an half part was not ordered to be took up, since there were to be as many years of famine as of plenty? and to this it is usually replied, that besides this fifth part taken up, as there might be an old stock of former years, so there would be something considerable remain of these seven years of plenty, which men of substance would lay up, as Pharaoh did; and besides, a fifth part might be equal to the crop of an ordinary year, or near it: to which may be added, that in times of famine men live more sparingly, as they are obliged, and therefore such a quantity would go the further; as well as it may be considered, that notwithstanding the barrenness of the land in general, yet in some places, especially on the banks of the Nile, some corn might be produced; so that upon the whole a fifth part might be judged sufficient to answer the extremity of the seven years of famine, and even to allow a distribution to other countries.

Ver. 35. *And let them, gather all the food of those good years that come, etc.]* That is, let the under officers collect together the fifth part of all fruits of the land during the seven years of plenty:

and lay up corn under the hand of Pharaoh; as his property, and only to be disposed of by his orders; for as it was to be purchased with his money, it was right that it should be in his hands, or in the hands of his officers appointed by him, as the Targum of Jonathan:

and let them keep food in the cities; reserve it in the several cities throughout the land, against the years of famine.

Ver. 36. *And that food shall be for store to the land,* etc.] A deposit in the said cities, to be brought forth and used in a time of public distress; the Targum of Jonathan is, it

“shall be hidden in a cave in the earth.”

against the seven years of famine which shall be in the land of Egypt: and so be a supply to the inhabitants of the land, when they should be sore pressed with a famine, and know not what to do, nor where to go for food:

that the land perish not through the famine; that is, that the people of the land perish not, as the above Targum, which, without such a provision, they would have been in great danger of perishing. Justin, an Heathen writer^{f1716}, confirms this account of the advice of Joseph, of whom he says, that

“he was exceeding sagacious of things wonderful, and first found out the meaning of dreams; and nothing of right, divine or human, seemed unknown to him, so that he could foresee the barrenness of land many years beforehand; and all Egypt would have perished with the famine, if the king, by his advice, had not commanded an edict, that the fruits of the earth, for many years, should be preserved.”

Ver. 37. *And the thing was good in the eyes of Pharaoh,* etc.] He approved of the advice Joseph gave, and of the scheme and plan which he proposed:

and in the eyes of all his servants; his nobles, ministers of state and courtiers, all highly commended and applauded it; and it was with the general and unanimous consent of all agreed that it should be put into

execution: but then the next question, and the thing to be considered, was, who was a person fit to be engaged in such an affair?

Ver. 38. *And Pharaoh said unto his servants*, etc.] That were about him, and with whom he was consulting about a proper person to be over this affair of gathering in the fruits of the earth in the time of plenty, and laying them up against a time of famine:

can we find [such an one] as this [is], in whom the Spirit of God [is]? if we search among all the ranks and degrees of men throughout the kingdom, let them be of what character they will, we shall never find a man like this, who appears to have the Spirit of God, or “of the gods”, as he in his Heathenish way spoke, and which he concluded from his vast knowledge of things; and especially of things future: hence the Targums of Onkelos and Jonathan interpret it, the spirit of prophecy from the Lord.

Ver. 39. *And Pharaoh said unto Joseph*, etc.] After his servants had agreed to his being the man: at least Pharaoh had declared his mind that he should be the person; which if any of them disliked, as probably might be the case of some through envy, and as desirous of the post themselves, yet durst not make any opposition to it:

forasmuch as God hath shewed thee all this; the interpretation of his dreams, what would be hereafter for fourteen years to come, what was advisable to be done for the good of the nation, and had proposed a plan so well contrived and formed:

[there is] none so discreet and wise as thou [art]; and consequently none so fit for this business, since he was so divinely qualified; and Justin, the Heathen writer^{f1717}, observes that he had such knowledge and experience of things, that his answers seemed to be given not from men, but from God.

Ver. 40. *Thou shall be over my house*, etc.], Have the care of his domestic affairs, and be the principal man in his palace and court:

and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled; not only in his family, but in his whole kingdom; whatever he ordered and commanded them to do, they should it, or “all my people shall kiss”^{f1718}, that is, either their hand at the sight of him, or meeting him, in token of respect and veneration shall yield a ready and cheerful obedience to him, of which the kiss was a sign, (see ^{f1022}Psalm 2:12). The Targum of Onkelos renders it,

“shall be fed”^{f1719}, supplied with corn, and with all necessary provisions, and so Jarchi interprets it; which is restraining it to that part of his office which concerned the gathering and laying up their stores for time to come; but the Targum of Jonathan is, “shall be armed”^{f1720}; and so Aben Ezra makes him the prince or general of the army, or who had the militia at his command, and could arm them when he pleased; but it seems to denote a more large and unlimited power than either of these, even the government of the whole land under the king, who only excepts himself:

only in the throne will I be greater than thou; that is, he alone would be king, wear the crown sit upon the throne, and have all the ensigns of royal majesty, in which Joseph was to have no share; otherwise he was to have an executive power and authority over all his subjects in the land, even to bind his princes at pleasure, and to teach, instruct, and direct his senators, (^{¶¶¶¶}Psalm 105:21,22).

Ver. 41. *And Pharaoh said unto Joseph*, etc.] He continued speaking to him for the greater confirmation of what he had said, and for further explanation of it:

see, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt; not merely as the corn master general, to take care of a provision of corn in time of plenty, against a time of scarcity, but as a viceroy or deputy governor over the whole land, as appears by the ensigns of honour and dignity bestowed on him; of which in the following verses.

Ver. 42. *And Pharaoh took off his ring from his hand, and put it upon Joseph's hand*, etc.] Which, as it was expressive of the interest he had in his royal favour, so was a token of that high office and great dignity to which he was promoted: thus among the Romans, in later times, when anyone was put into the equestrian order, a ring was given to him^{f1721}; for originally none but knights were allowed to wear rings; and it was sometimes used to design a successor in the kingdom, as, when Alexander was dying, he took his ring from off his finger, and gave it to Perdicca^{f1722}, which was understood, though he did not express it, that he should be his successor, in the Apocrypha:

“14 Then called he for Philip, one of his friends, who he made ruler over all his realm, 15 And gave him the crown, and his robe, and his signet, to the end he should bring up his son Antiochus, and nourish him up for the kingdom.” (1 Maccabees 6)

Now, though Pharaoh did not by this intend to point out Joseph for his successor in the kingdom, yet he gave him his ring as a mark of honour, and as being in place next unto his viceroy or deputy: and besides, as it is observed by many, this might be his signet, or the ring which had his seal upon it, by which he sealed patents and public deeds, and which he gave to Joseph to make use of in his name; though Schmidt doubts whether this was such a ring, since kings and princes have been used to have larger for such purposes, than what are wore on the finger: by this it appears, that Pliny^{f1723} was mistaken that there were no rings in and before the time of Troy:

and arrayed him in vestures of fine linen; of which there was the best sort in Egypt, and which great personages used to wear:

and put a gold chain about his neck; another badge of honour and dignity, (see ^{¶156} Daniel 5:16).

Ver. 43. *And he made him to ride in the second chariot which he had,* etc.] By which it appeared that he was next to Pharaoh, but not above him; as kings were wont to have more chariots than one, those were distinguished by first, second, etc. being of greater state the one than the other, (see ^{¶152} 2 Chronicles 35:24):

and they cried before him, bow the knee; that is, his guard that attended him, when he rode out in his chariot, called to the people, as they passed along, to bow the knee to Joseph, as a token of veneration and respect; or they proclaimed him “Abrech”, which Onkelos paraphrases, this is the father of the king; and so Jarchi, who observes, that “Rech” signifies a king in the Syriac language; and this agrees with what Joseph himself says, that God had made him a father to Pharaoh, (^{¶148} Genesis 45:8). Others render it a tender father; and the Targums of Jonathan and Jerusalem take in both senses,

“this is the father of the king, (or let the father of the king live, so the Jerusalem,) who is great in wisdom, and tender in years:”

though rather he may be so called, because he acted the part of a tender father to the country, in providing corn for them against a time of scarcity:

and he made him [ruler] over all the land of Egypt; appointed him to be governor of the whole land, and invested him with that office, and made him appear to be so, by the grandeur he raised him to.

Ver. 44. *And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I [am] Pharaoh*, etc.] Or I am king, which the word Pharaoh signifies, as Josephus^{f1724} says; and that this is not a proper name, but a title of office, seems plain from these words; and the sense either is, that though Pharaoh had raised Joseph to such high honour and dignity, yet he alone was king: or this he said to show his power and authority to do what he had done, and would stand by him, and support him in his office and grandeur:

and without thee shall not a man lift up his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt; which is to be taken not in a strict literal sense, but proverbially, signifying, that nothing should be done in the nation of any moment or importance, relating to political affairs, but what was by his order and authority; the hands and feet being the principal instruments of action. The Targum of Jonathan is,

“without thy word (or order) a man shall not lift up his hand to gird on armour, or his foot to mount a horse;”

signifying thereby, that all things relating to war and peace should be altogether under his direction.

Ver. 45. *And Pharaoh called Joseph's name Zaphnathpaaneah*, etc.] Which, according to the paraphrase of Onkelos, signifies one to whom hidden things are revealed; or, as Jonathan, a revealer of secrets; and so most of the Jewish writers explain it; and which seems to be given him from his interpreting Pharaoh’s dreams, and revealing what was hereafter to come to pass. The word is only used in this place, at least the latter part of it and Aben Ezra confesses his ignorance of it, whether it is an Egyptian word or not; Kircher^{f1725} most asserts it, and says it signifies a prophet (or foreteller) of future things. Though some think the first part of the name has some respect to the Egyptian idol Baal Zephon, (^{f1726}Exodus 14:2), and that, in this new name Pharaoh gave Joseph upon his promotion, he inserted the name of his god, as Nebuchadnezzar, when he gave new names to Daniel and his comparisons, (^{f1727}Daniel 1:7 5:12):

and he gave him to wife Asenath the daughter of Potipherah; not the same with Potiphar, Joseph’s master, as Jarchi says, not only their, names differ, but also their offices; nor would Joseph, it is imagined, marry the daughter of such a woman, so wicked as his mistress was, and had so much abused him, and been the cause of all his troubles; nor was this Asenath the daughter of Dinah by Shechem, as some Jewish writers^{f1726} assert, whom

Potiphar's wife, having no child, brought up as her own, which is not at all probable; but an Egyptian woman, the daughter of the person before named: who was

priest of On: the same with Aven; (see Gill on “^{אֹן}Ezekiel 30:17”); and which in Ptolemy ^{f1727} is called Onii, about twenty two miles from Memphis, and said to be the metropolis of the “Heliopolitan home”; and has been since called “Heliopolis”, as it is here in the Septuagint version, which signifies the city of the sun, and is the same with Bethshemesh, the house of the sun, (^{בֵּית שֶׁמֶשׁ}Jeremiah 43:13); where, as Herodotus ^{f1728} says, the sun was worshipped, and sacrifice offered to it, and the inhabitants of this place are by him said to be the wisest and most rational of the Egyptians ^{f1729}; here Potipherah, Joseph's father-in-law, was “priest”; and Strabo ^{f1730} says, at Heliopolis we saw large houses, in which the priests dwelt; for here especially of old it was said, that this was the habitation of priests, of philosophers, and such as were given to astronomy: the Septuagint version and Josephus ^{f1731} call this man Petephre; and an Heathen writer ^{f1732}, Pentephre, a priest of Heliopolis; which a very learned man ^{f1733} says, in the Egyptian tongue, signifies a priest of the sun; and so Philo says ^{f1734}, that Joseph married the daughter of a famous man in Egypt, who had the priesthood of the sun. But the word may as well be rendered “prince” ^{f1735}, as it is when there is nothing to determine its sense otherwise, as there is none here; and it is more likely, that Pharaoh should marry his prime minister into the family of one of his princes than of his priests; this seems to be more agreeable to the high rank that Joseph was raised to, as well as more suitable to his character as a worshipper of the true God, who would not choose to marry the daughter of an idolatrous priest: though, according to Diodorus Siculus ^{f1736}, the Egyptian priests were second to the king in honour and authority, and were always about him, and were of his council; and Aelianus, says ^{f1737}, that formerly with the Egyptians the judges were priests, and the eldest of them was a prince, and had the power of judging all; and even Sethon, king of Egypt, was a priest of Vulcan: whether this prince or priest was of the king's family, or whether the kings of Egypt had a power to dispose of the daughters of their subjects, especially of their priests or princes when dead, is not certain: perhaps no more, as Bishop Patrick observes, is meant, than that Pharaoh made this match, and which was a mark of great honour and affection to Joseph; and which, if even disagreeable to him, being an idolater, he could not well refuse:

and Joseph went out over [all] the land of Egypt; either the name and fame of him, as Aben Ezra interprets it, (see ⁴⁰²⁴Matthew 4:24); or rather he himself went forth in all his grandeur before related, and took a tour, throughout the whole land to observe the fruitfulness of it, and make choice of proper places to lay up his intended stores.

Ver. 46. *And Joseph [was] thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh king of Egypt,* etc.] Interpreting his dreams, and had such honour conferred upon him as to be made his prime minister; from whence it appears that Joseph had now been thirteen years in Egypt, partly in Potiphar's house, and partly in prison, since he was seventeen years of age when he was sold thither, (see ⁴³⁷⁰Genesis 37:2):

and Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh; from standing before him, and ministering to him as his counsellor and chief statesman, or he went out from his court and palace for a while:

and went throughout all the land of Egypt: this seems to be a second tour; before he went to survey the land, and pitch upon the most proper places for granaries to lay up store of corn in; and now he went through it, to gather in and give directions about it, and see it performed, for the years of plenty were now begun.

Ver. 47. *And in the seven plenteous years the earth brought forth by handfuls.*] Such as the gatherers take up in their hands when reaped, in order to bind up in sheaves: now such was the fruitfulness of the land during the seven years of plenty, that either one stalk produced as many ears as a man could hold in his hand; or one grain produced an handful, as Ben Melech observes; though Onkelos paraphrases the words,

“the inhabitants of the earth in the seven years of plenty gathered even into their treasures:”

and this they did by the order and direction of Joseph as he passed through the land; what he bought of them they brought, and put into the granaries, as he directed them.

Ver. 48. *And he gathered up all the food of the seven years,* etc.] That is, of plenty; not all the fruits of the earth, or all that was eatable, but the corn, as in (⁴¹⁴⁹Genesis 41:49); and not all of that the earth produced, but the fifth part of it, as he proposed, which he bought with Pharaoh's money, and therefore: had a right to sell it again as he did:

which were in the land of Egypt; in which only he had a concern, and where only was this plenty:

and laid up the food in the cities; in places built for that purpose, and whither the people round about could easily bring it, and fetch it, when it was wanted:

the food of the field, which [was] round about every city, laid he up in the same; which was very wisely done, for present carriage, and for the convenience of the people in time of famine. At this day, at old Cairo, is an edifice the most considerable in it, called Joseph's granary; it occupies a square, surrounded by a wall, and has divers partitions contrived within it, where is deposited the corn, that is paid as a tax to the Gram Seignior, brought from different parts of Egypt.^{f1738}.

Ver. 49. *And Joseph gathered corn as the sand of the sea, very much, until he left numbering*, etc.] At first he took an account of the quantities that were bought and laid up, how much there was in each granary, until it amounted to so much, that there was no end of numbering it; it was like the sand of the sea, an hyperbolical expression, denoting the great abundance of it:

for [it was] without number; not only the grains of corn, but even the measures of it, whatever were used; so Artapanus, an Heathen writer, says^{f1739}, Joseph, when governor of Egypt, got together the corn of seven years, an immense quantity.

Ver. 50. *And unto Joseph were born two sons*, etc.] The word for “born” is singular; hence Ben Melech conjectures that they were twins: and this was *before the years of famine came*; or “the year of famine”^{f1740}; the first year: *which Asenath, the daughter of Potipherah priest of On, bare unto him*; which is observed, to show that he had them by his lawful wife; whom the Targum of Jonathan wrongly again makes the daughter of Dinah, and her father prince of Tanis, the same with Zoan; whereas this was “On” or “Heliopolis”, a very different place; so Artapanus says^{f1741}, that Joseph married the daughter of the priest of Heliopolis, by whom he had children; and another Heathen writer^{f1742} mentions their names, Ephraim and Manesseh.

Ver. 51. *And Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh, etc.]*

Which signifies forgetfulness, as the reason of it shows:

for God, [said he], hath made me forget all my toil, and all my father's house; all his toil and labour in Potiphar's house, and especially in the prison; and all the injuries his brethren had done him; all this he was made to forget by the grandeur and honour, wealth and riches, power and authority he was possessed of; and indeed he had so much business upon his hands, that he had scarce time to think of his father, and his family.

Ver. 52. *And the name of the second called he Ephraim, etc.]* Which signifies fruits or fruitfulness; and being of the dual number, may intend both his spiritual and temporal fruitfulness God had blessed him with:

for God hath caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction; in the land of Egypt, where he had been long afflicted, even for the space of thirteen years, more or less, in his master's house, and in the prison; but God had made him fruitful in grace and good works, in holiness, humility, etc. and oftentimes afflictive seasons are the most fruitful ones in this sense. God also bestowed great gifts upon him, as skill in the interpretation of dreams, wisdom in political affairs, a large abundance of wealth, and riches, honour and glory; to which may be added, the fruit of his body, his two children.

Ver. 53. *And the seven years of plenteousness that was in the land of Egypt were ended.]* Perhaps quickly after the birth of Ephraim, Joseph's second son; since the account follows upon that, and it is certain that he was born before the years of famine began, (^{¶445}Genesis 41:50); some connect the words, "moreover when" the seven years of plenty were ended, then began, as follows, seven years of famine; these events were fulfilled just as Joseph had predicted.

Ver. 54. *And the seven years of dearth began to come, as Joseph had said,* etc.] In the interpretation of Pharaoh's dreams; as soon as the seven years of plenty were over, there were quickly some appearances of the famine coming on; as particularly the river Nile not flowing to its usual height at the season of it; hence there was a drought, the earth was parched, and everything began to wither and decay, and the seed that was sown sprung not up:

and the dearth was in all lands; adjoining to Egypt, as Syria, Arabia, Palestine, Canaan, etc.

but in all the land of Egypt there was bread; which was in the hands of everyone, and remained of their old stores in the years of plenty not yet exhausted, and which continued for some time after the dearth began. It is very probable that to this seven years' drought in Egypt Ovid ^{f1743} refers, which he makes to be nine; as does also Apollodorus ^{f1744}.

Ver. 55. *And when all the land of Egypt was famished,* etc.] Their old stock and store eaten up, and the inhabitants ready to starve with hunger:

the people cried to Pharaoh for bread; as their common father, and knowing that he had stores of provision laid up in all cities against this time:

and Pharaoh said to the Egyptians, go unto Joseph; whom he had appointed over this business of providing and laying up corn against this time, and of distributing it:

what he saith to you, do; give the price for the corn he fixes or requires; for this was the principal thing they had to do with him, to get corn for their money.

Ver. 56. *And the famine was over all the face of the earth,* etc.] Not over the whole world, but the land of Egypt; all the inhabitants of it were pinched with it, rich and poor; it reached all parts and all sorts of men:

and Joseph opened all the storehouses; in the several cities throughout the land where he had laid up corn:

and sold unto the Egyptians; for, as he had bought it with Pharaoh's money, it was no injustice to sell it; and as it could be sold at a moderate price, and yet Pharaoh get enough by it, being bought cheap in a time of plenty, no doubt but Joseph, who was a kind and benevolent man, sold it at such a price:

and the famine waxed sore in the land of Egypt; there being no overflow of the Nile year after year, and nothing left of the old stock but what was in the storehouses.

Ver. 57. *And all countries came into Egypt to Joseph for to buy [corn],* etc.] All the neighbouring nations (Syria, Arabia, Palestine, Canaan, etc.), when they heard there was corn there for money, came from all parts for it, and were glad to get it at such expense and trouble:

because that the famine was [so] sore in all lands; that there was no bread to be got for money elsewhere. It is thought by many, that for this care of Joseph in laying up provision against this time of need, and which was the preservation of the Egyptians, he was worshipped by them under various names; as the Apis, which was an ox, a sign of fruitfulness; and Serapis, sometimes figured as a young man carrying a basket of bread on his head; and Osiris, who is sometimes represented with a bushel on his head. However, this is certain, that he was an eminent type of Christ in all this, both in his estate of humiliation and exaltation: as Joseph was wrongly charged by his mistress, so was Christ falsely accused by the Jews; as he was cast into prison and bound there, so Christ was taken and bound as a prisoner; as Joseph was raised to great honour and glory in Pharaoh's court, so Christ was exalted by his Father, and crowned with glory and honour; and if the new name given him, "Zaphnathpaaneah", signifies the Saviour of the world, as some interpret it, it agrees well with Christ, who was sent into the world for that purpose; and indeed, if it means a revealer of secrets, it suits with him, who hath declared his Father's mind and will, and revealed the mysteries of his grace to the sons of men: and as Joseph had all the stores of corn under his care, and the needy were bid to go to him for it, so Christ has all the treasures of grace in his hand, and all that are sensible of their need of it are directed to go to him for it; and it is from him that men of all nations and countries receive grace for grace, and have all their supplies, and spiritual sustenance and nourishment.