

CCLEB SERMON NOTES

SUNDAY FEBRUARY 22, 2026
GENESIS 41:1-57

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THE EDEN PARTNERSHIP RE-IMAGINED



What makes a good partnership? Working together; Mutual respect; Honest communication; Trust; Shared goals; Knowing our individual identities, roles, limits, strengths, and weaknesses; and showing grace.

What makes a good partnership?

It takes effort to make a partnership work, but the outcome is worth it. My wife and I make a great partnership. Our elder and pastor team and senior management team make a great partnership. But none of those are perfect partnerships. I have had some partnerships that didn't work.

Now what if the partnership is between you and God who does everything perfectly? Today we will see what the God-human partnership looks like when it operates as God intends.

Here is a summary of where we are going today:

Chapter 41 Summary

God's timing isn't chance.

The world's wisdom can't save.

Humility comes before elevation.

Both abundance and famine serve God's purpose.

There is wisdom in Spirit led planning.

Joseph models the restored Eden partnership and points us to Jesus.

This chapter is lengthy, so we are going to take it in chunks.

Notice that **verse 1** opens talking about the passing of time. So two years after **chapter 40**, Pharaoh had dream. Timing isn't chance, it's by God's design.

Now, Pharaoh is the king of Egypt and in Egyptian culture and religion Pharaoh is believed and respected to be a god.

And demigod Pharaoh has a weird dream (**verses 2-4**) where he is personally watching seven fat cows and seven ugly skinny cows. And the fat cows are vegetarian, and the ugly cows like beef and are cannibals. That's the first dream.

Verse 5-6 tells us Pharaoh fell asleep again! How could anyone fall asleep again after the nasty first dream of cows eating cows? It seems that God caused him to fall back asleep.

And then Pharaoh had a second dream - note two dreams total, this is another "two". And in the second dream, seven plump and beautiful grains are eaten by seven shriveled and withered heads of grain.

Ancient Egyptians took dreams very seriously and according to Egyptologist Bob Brier they believed every dream prophetic. They even had an ancient book for interpreting dreams that Archeologists have discovered. The soothsayer priests would use this to interpret dreams. So dreams in ancient Egypt were a big deal.

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VOL. I. TEXT

PAPYRUS No. III

PLATE 6

IF A MAN SEE HIMSELF IN A DREAM

(4, 15) falling from a wall,¹
carving up an ox with his (own) hand,
fetching vessels (*in hmw*) out of the water,

good; it means an issue from words.²
good; killing his (own) adversary.
[good]; finding increased life (*n hꜣw*) in his house.³

(5, 15) [eating] excrement,
having connexion with a cow,
eating crocodile [flesh],
directing (a jet of) water(?),

good; eating his possessions in his house.
good; passing a happy day in his house.
good; [acting as] an official among his people.⁸
good; it means prosperity.

Now watch how God uses Pharaoh dream to upend human wisdom.

Verse 6 tells us that in the dream the "shriveled and withered" grain comes from the "east wind". This phrase is a biblical signal of God's judgement and deliverance.

In the Old Testament the phrase “East Wind” occurs 16 times as **Exodus 14:21**. The “East Wind” brought deliverance for the Israelites who trusted God and walked through the sea, but the east wind also brought judgment and destruction on the enemies of God – the Egyptian soldiers walked into the death trap created by the East wind.

East Wind Verses in the Old Testament

Verse	Symbolic Meaning	Explanation
Genesis 41:6	Destructive force	East wind blights thin heads of grain in Pharaoh's dream.
Genesis 41:23	Destruction/Judgment	East wind scorches the good heads of grain.
Genesis 41:27	Divine judgment	Seven years of famine symbolized by the east wind.
Exodus 10:13	Instrument of God	East wind brings the locusts as judgment on Egypt.
Exodus 14:21	Deliverance/Judgment	Strong east wind parts the Red Sea for Israel.
Job 15:2	Emptiness/Futility	Foolish speech compared to filling oneself with east wind.
Job 27:21	Divine judgment	East wind carries away the wicked.
Job 38:24	Power of God	God controls the pathways of the east wind.
Psalms 48:7	Destructive power	East wind breaks the ships of Tarshish.
Psalms 78:26	Divine provision	East wind used by God to bring quail.
Isaiah 27:8	Disciplinary judgment	God drives Israel away with fierce east wind.
Jeremiah 18:17	Judgment/Scattering	God scatters Judah before the east wind.
Ezekiel 17:10	Withering/Judgment	A vine withers when struck by the east wind.
Ezekiel 19:12	Withering	Mother vine dried up by the east wind.
Ezekiel 27:26	Destruction	East wind breaks Tyre's ships.
Hosea 13:15	Destructive invasion	East wind symbolizing Assyria's judgment.



But in the next verse we see that human wisdom hits a wall.

Verse 8. In response to the dreams, Pharaoh was disturbed. In Hebrew it says Pharaoh’s “spirit pounded”.

So Pharaoh sends for Magicians (soothsayer priests) and wisemen – but no one can tell him what his dreams means.

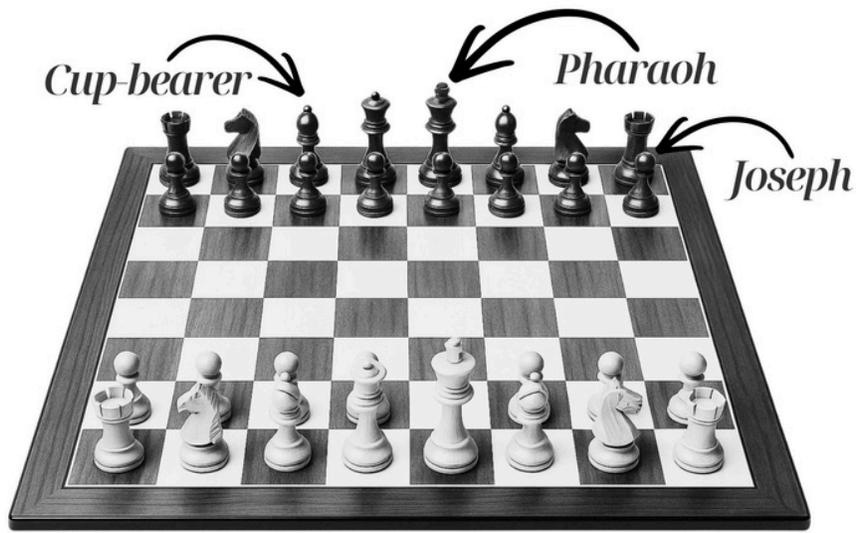
The simple clear message here is that the world’s wisdom has nothing to offer.

*The world's wisdom
has nothing to offer.*

In **Verses 9-14** we see God’s providence moving all the chess pieces in the places he wants them, including Joseph in prison, the cup bearer in Pharaoh’s court who has already experienced God interpreting dreams thru Joseph, and Pharaoh – the highest-ranking Egyptian, being in desperate need of a dream interpretation that brings peace.

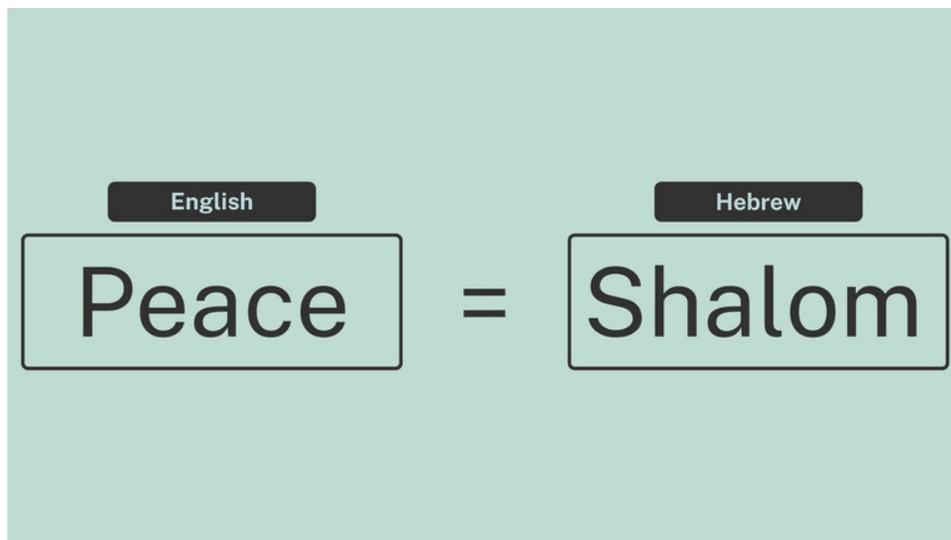
The Cupbearer’s story has the exact effect on Pharaoh that God wanted it to and so we see in **verse 14** that Pharaoh called for Joseph the prisoner to be pulled out of the dungeon, the lowest place. Joseph shaves and changes clothes out of his prison garb so he can enter the highest place in Egypt, Pharaoh’s presence. Lowest to highest. And this is another instance of Joseph’s garment motif.

Here in **verses 15-16** God has all his pieces moved. Picture this scene - highest ranking position Pharaoh /King- believed to be a god, seeking wisdom from lowest ranking position, a foreign prisoner - pawn.



Well Joseph speaks and note how readily Joseph acknowledges that interpreting Pharaoh's dreams "is beyond (his) power" And that the wisdom to discern the dream can only come from God! And this is a picture of the God - human partnership. Humans in humility acknowledge their limits, and God provides the wisdom.

In the last line of **verse 16** notice that Pharaoh doesn't need just information, he needs Shalom-peace. What Joseph tells Pharaoh God will provide is peace. Remember in **verse 8** Pharaoh's "spirit was pounding" - he was "disturbed"! for him and his kingdom. He needs peace.



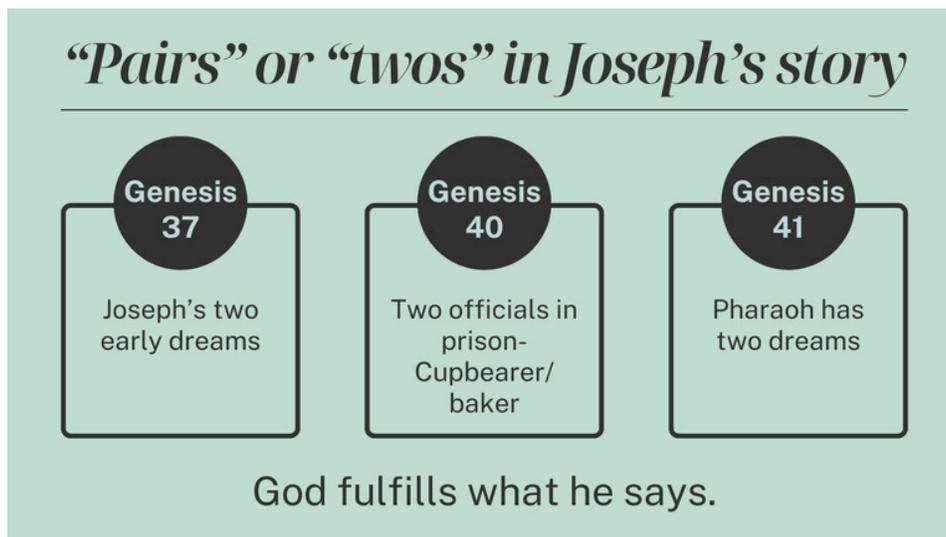
So **verses 17- 24** Pharaoh repeats his dreams to Joseph.

In **verse 25** Joseph interprets the dreams quickly and decisively. Perhaps picture it like this. Joseph is listening to the dreams from Pharaoh in one ear, and in the other ear, God is telling Joseph what the dreams means- as in real time. So Joseph interprets quickly and decisively. **Verses 25-31.**

Now since this dream was a message from God, which does come to pass then we have to pause and reflect on the truth here. Both abundance and famine serve God's purpose as part of Gods wise sovereign plan. (prosperity gospel? Health and wealth?)

*Both abundance and
famine serve
God's purpose.*

In **verse 32** we finally have an answer to why all the “twos” in the Joseph story? Here are a few of the “twos or pairs”.



Verse 32. “...decreed by God and he will soon make them happen”. This pattern of “twos” underlines God’s trustworthy message – God fulfills what he says.

Now Joseph’s dreams from **Chapter 37** are fulfilled in next week’s chapter, that fulfillment means that those dreams were from God. The baker and cupbearer’s dreams were fulfilled in **chapter 40** – so those messages were also from God . And Pharaoh’s dreams – also messages from God, are fulfilled in the end of our chapter today.

While some promises and some prophecies from God are yet to be fulfilled, the pattern of fulfillment from **Genesis 40** and **41** supports that those messages yet to be fulfilled will be fulfilled. This is a subtle “Hey reader pay attention!” to all of God’s messages in the whole bible.

*Hey reader
pay attention!*

Joseph continues speaking in **verses 31-37**. This is the Hebrew slave-prisoner Joseph not just interpreting the dream but unsolicited telling Pharaoh the mighty king -- what to do! Imagine that and listen to how bold and clear and detailed the instructions are.

Now remember Pharaoh is “disturbed” by the dreams -- and Pharaoh’s “spirit is pounding”. And in **Genesis 41:16 NKJV** Joseph tells Pharaoh that “God will give Pharaoh an answer of peace”. So...was what Joseph interpreted and then what he told Pharaoh to do the “answer of peace” that Pharaoh needed in response to God’s message? Look how Pharaoh responds in **verses 37-39 NIV**

God’s presence was obvious in Joseph. Potiphar had noticed that the LORD YHWH was with Joseph.

The prison warden noticed that the LORD was with Joseph, and now Pharaoh, sees God's Spirit in Joseph and - and recognized God's spirit in Joseph's as the source of discernment and wisdom. It was obvious that God was with Joseph!

This is a picture of the Eden God - human partnership. God's spirit in Joseph (partnership) produces discernment and wisdom that brings salvation to others. For Joseph God was literally physically saving the known world through the partnership.

*God's spirit in Joseph
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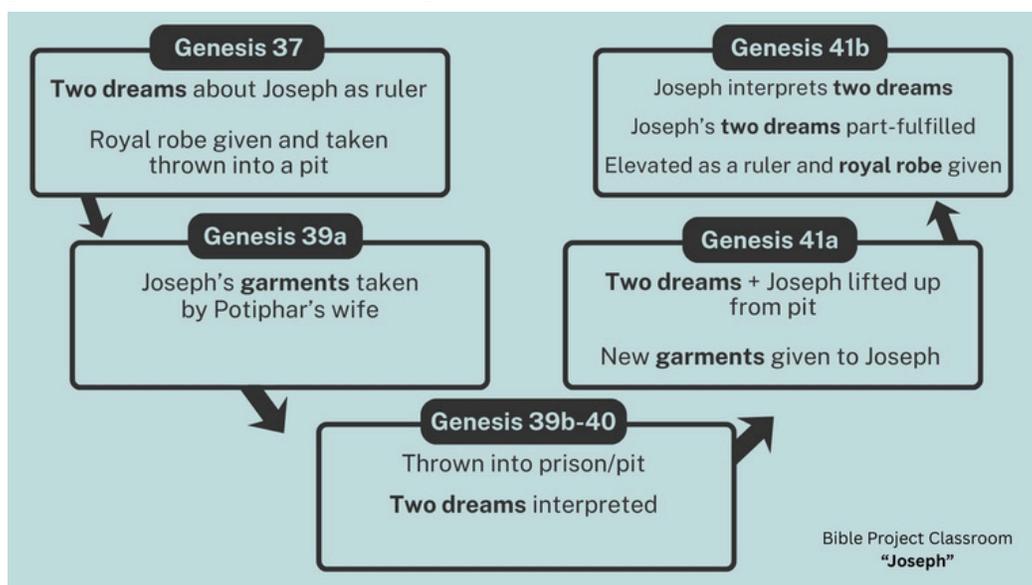
Leaders and parents in **verses 40-44** there is an application for you. Pharaoh must give Joseph the appropriate resources to accomplish the plan. If you task someone to do something, make sure, they are given the authority and resources to do what you want them to do. I have failed at times to give people the authority and resources they need- and when they fail, it is also my failure.

Look at the authority and resources Pharaoh gives Joseph in **verses 40-44**

Joseph being made a co-regent, having been given the authority of Pharaoh by Pharaoh is an echo of the original vocation assigned to man in **Genesis 1**: To rule under God's authority. **Genesis 1:26-27.**

The picture of Joseph being elevated from the lowest place to the highest place, being given the co-regency position, being given the power of Pharaoh's signet ring, and royal garments and royal jewelry is a picture of the Eden God-man partnership in **Genesis 1 & 2**. God made Adam from dust, made Adam in God's image, and set mankind to rule over the animals. That's an elevation from "dust" to "ruling".

Now re: the garment...take a look at this graphic:



See how the emphasis on the garment follows the descent and ascent of Joseph through the story. This a picture of the spiritual history of mankind from **Genesis** to **Revelation**. Where mankind started as ruling in the garden, then was stripped of that rule because of sin. Sin then ruled, till Jesus came and defeated sin and death. Jesus then returned to heaven and sits at the right hand of the father. King Jesus. Those that trust the new covenant Jesus' death and resurrection provides are given the garment of Christ's salvation and righteousness. And we know from several verses in the New Testament that we will reign with Christ.

Here's one: **2 Timothy 2:12**. That's a picture of the Eden God - Man partnership restored. What a beautiful future picture.

Now back to Joseph in **verses 45-49** we see God's physical salvation plan for Pharaoh and Egypt in action.

Several Egyptologist translate Joseph's Egyptian name as "The God who Speaks and Lives" .

“The God who Speaks and Lives”

Now when Joseph put God's plan in action - note here that Joseph did his part but only because God first did his part. Think "partnership". God provided grain in abundance - "bumper crops". In Hebrew a mechanical translation literally means, Joseph counted the amount of grain stored "until there was no number" left... meaning he ran out of numbers that could apply to the amount of grain God provided. In other words "without measure". This was God's blessing of supernatural fruitfulness and multiplying...this is Eden imagery.

God did his part - "provide". Joseph did his part - "steward". That's a partnership. Archeology shows us that many ancient Egyptian cities dated to this era have large scale grain storage facilities perhaps indicative of Josephs stewardship.



But God's blessing in the story is not just for Pharaoh in Egypt. We know from **verse 45** that he gave Joseph a wife and in **verses 50-52** God had blessed Joseph with two sons. Another two in the Joseph story.

Verses 53-57. Two considerations here. Seven years of abundant crop, "without measure", is a God blessed "creation event" - "fruitful and multiplying". Seven years of famine is a "de-creation event". Both "abundance and famine" are from the LORD. This parallels the LORD's creation of the world in seven days, and the de-creation of the world through the flood - **Genesis 7:10**

It cannot be a coincidence then that in **Revelation** there is a seven-year period of judgment upon the earth. Through the lenses of both the Genesis flood and **Genesis 41** famine, this can be seen as a "de-creation" event, that is followed by a "re-creation" event. And all the "twos" in Genesis mean it's going to happen.

Note the last verse says the "famine was severe throughout the earth", meaning that "all the earth" needed "saved" through God's plan. Sound like the gospel?

Now let's pull all these threads together for your meditation and application.

What does faithful partnership with God look like?

- Trust God's sovereignty in hard times, delays, and detours. Timing is not chance.
- Practice Humility - acknowledge your limits, and seek God's wisdom.
- Resist the temptation of forbidden fruit.
- Refuse to define good and evil apart from God.

Resist the temptation of forbidden fruit. Joseph refused the forbidden fruit of Potiphar's wife.

But take that one step further. In **Genesis 2:17** the forbidden fruit is literally the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. In interpreting the dreams Joseph refused to define good and evil apart from God. Let me show you. In **verses 19-21 NASB**. In Hebrew that is the word "ra" evil.

In **verse 22-26 NASB** In Hebrew that is the word "tob" good. Joseph with God's spirit was literally discerning good and evil.

We do not have the ability to discern good and evil apart from God. God illuminates that in his word by his spirit.

2. We also see in **chapter 41** that Jesus is the greater Joseph. Ultimately this picture of the Joseph and Pharaoh partnership that saved the world is a picture of Jesus and God the Father saving the world fully and finally, both physically and spiritually. **John 3:16**

Jesus is the greater Joseph.

3. "Every knee should bow". **Philippians 2:10** Joseph told Pharaoh that what was "...decreed by God he will soon make happen". As God's East wind judgement happened and humbled Pharaoh and Egypt, so will God's future judgement humble the world, and "every knee should bow."

4. And a closing word for anxious hearts. God gives answers of peace. Bring your troubled spirit to him, ask for his wisdom timing and Shalom - his peace.

God gives answers of peace.

BONUS

CONTENT:

Genesis 41:1 Chapter 40 ends with Joseph in prison and chapter 41 opens telling us about Pharaoh. Note the two extremes of who they are. Joseph, the Hebrew slave, is in prison in the lowest place of the Egyptian world, prison. And we have Pharaoh, in the highest place of the Egyptian world – he’s the king and revered as deity.

Genesis 41:1 Pharaoh was believed to be the “son of ra” the supreme god in the Egyptian pantheon.

Genesis 41:6 East Wind: It is fascinating that this red sea judgement on Egypt is the 3rd time the East Wind brought destruction on Egypt.. the first was the famine in Genesis 41. The second was the plague of locust brought by the East Wind – that also destroyed crops in Exodus 10:13.

Genesis 41:8 This is curious, because later in early Exodus in the story of Moses and Pharaoh we see Egyptian soothsayer priest use demonic power to replicate the first three plagues. Staff – snakes, river water – blood, frogs. That’s real wicked power of Satan and it’s not just a story. So with Pharaoh’s two dreams it’s fascinating to me that there is not even a demonic interpretation offered by the soothsayer priests.

Genesis 41:14 shaved. In Egypt was honorable be cleanshaven, in Hebrew culture is was dishonorable to be cleanshaven.

Genesis 41:17 this is God speaking directly to Pharaoh – a pagan – thru dreams. We already saw God speak to King Abimelech of Gerar through a dream when Abraham out of fear lied about his wife being his sister. Genesis 20:3

Genesis 41:17-24 What we learn through this second telling of Pharaoh’s dreams is in: Verse 19 the ugly cows are more sorry looking than anything Pharaoh has ever seen. And second in Verse 21 that after the ugly cows ate the fat cows, it didn’t look like the ugly cows ate anything at all. I wish that was true for me after being at a buffet.

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