

11.05 Joseph Interprets Pharaoh's Dreams (Genesis 41:1–45) (This lesson may be combined with Lesson 11.06, Joseph Is Ruler)

☐ “Check” it out; opinion, inference, supposed conversation, or fact one can verify follows

[. . .] indicates a remark to the teacher that usually should not be read. It also indicates answers to questions.

Visuals and Tools:

- Pictures and other visuals found at the end of this lesson. Please give credit to the sources of pictures.
- Check “Activities” and “Handwork” found below for additional materials.
- (optional) Flash cards from “Joseph,” Genesis Series 5, A Beka Book, Pensacola, FL
- (optional) Herein Is Love Commentary Series; *Genesis, A Commentary for Children*, by Nancy Ganz, Shepherd Press, 2002.

Bible Time Tips and Terms to Teach: Vocabulary words are enlarged for flashcards at the end of this lesson. Print, cut out, and glue to card stock, or just print on colorful cardstock.

- *Nile River*: the longest river in the world; in Egypt the Nile River floods, and when the water recedes, a valley of rich soil remains for growing crops
- *ears of grain*: clusters of grain on a stalk; the KJV calls these “ears of corn,” which were not corn on the cob but ears of grain
- *blighted*: dried up by the sun or lack of water
- *signet ring*: a ring with letters, usually one's initials, or a design carved into it; used for sealing of official documents

Scripture (ESV)

Genesis 41:1 After two whole years, Pharaoh dreamed that he was standing by the Nile, 2 and behold, there came up out of the Nile seven cows, attractive and plump, and they fed in the reed grass. 3 And behold, seven other cows, ugly and thin, came up out of the Nile after them, and stood by the other cows on the bank of the Nile. 4 And the ugly, thin cows ate up the seven attractive, plump cows. And Pharaoh awoke. 5 And he fell asleep and dreamed a second time. And behold, seven ears of grain, plump and good, were growing on one stalk. 6 And behold, after them sprouted seven ears, thin and blighted by the east wind. 7 And the thin ears swallowed up the seven plump, full ears. And Pharaoh awoke, and behold, it was a dream. 8 So in the morning his spirit was troubled, and he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt and all its wise men. Pharaoh told them his dreams, but there was none who could interpret them to Pharaoh.

9 Then the chief cupbearer said to Pharaoh, “I remember my offenses today. 10 When Pharaoh was angry with his servants and put me and the chief baker in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, 11 we dreamed on the same night, he and I, each having a dream with its own interpretation. 12 A young Hebrew was there with us, a servant of the captain of the guard. When we told him, he interpreted our dreams to us, giving an interpretation to each man according to his dream. 13 And as he interpreted to us, so it came about. I was restored to my office, and the baker was hanged.”

14 Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they quickly brought him out of the pit. And when he had shaved himself and changed his clothes, he came in before Pharaoh. 15 And Pharaoh said to Joseph, “I have had a dream, and there is no one who can interpret it. I have heard it said of you that when you hear a dream you can interpret it.” 16 Joseph answered Pharaoh, “It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer.” 17 Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Behold, in my dream I was standing on the banks of the Nile. 18 Seven cows, plump and attractive, came up out of the Nile and fed in the reed grass. 19 Seven other cows came up after them, poor and very ugly and thin, such as I had never seen in all the land of Egypt. 20 And the thin, ugly cows ate up the first seven plump cows, 21 but when they had eaten them no one would have known that they had eaten them,

for they were still as ugly as at the beginning. Then I awoke. 22 I also saw in my dream seven ears growing on one stalk, full and good. 23 Seven ears, withered, thin, and blighted by the east wind, sprouted after them, 24 and the thin ears swallowed up the seven good ears. And I told it to the magicians, but there was no one who could explain it to me.”

25 Then Joseph said to Pharaoh, “The dreams of Pharaoh are one; God has revealed to Pharaoh what he is about to do. 26 The seven good cows are seven years, and the seven good ears are seven years; the dreams are one. 27 The seven lean and ugly cows that came up after them are seven years, and the seven empty ears blighted by the east wind are also seven years of famine. 28 It is as I told Pharaoh; God has shown to Pharaoh what he is about to do. 29 There will come seven years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt, 30 but after them there will arise seven years of famine, and all the plenty will be forgotten in the land of Egypt. The famine will consume the land, 31 and the plenty will be unknown in the land by reason of the famine that will follow, for it will be very severe. 32 And the doubling of Pharaoh’s dream means that the thing is fixed by God, and God will shortly bring it about. 33 Now therefore let Pharaoh select a discerning and wise man, and set him over the land of Egypt. 34 Let Pharaoh proceed to appoint overseers over the land and take one-fifth of the produce of the land of Egypt during the seven plentiful years. 35 And let them gather all the food of these good years that are coming and store up grain under the authority of Pharaoh for food in the cities, and let them keep it. 36 That food shall be a reserve for the land against the seven years of famine that are to occur in the land of Egypt, so that the land may not perish through the famine.”

37 This proposal pleased Pharaoh and all his servants. 38 And Pharaoh said to his servants, “Can we find a man like this, in whom is the Spirit of God?” 39 Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Since God has shown you all this, there is none so discerning and wise as you are. 40 You shall be over my house, and all my people shall order themselves as you command. Only as regards the throne will I be greater than you.” 41 And Pharaoh said to Joseph, “See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt.” 42 Then Pharaoh took his signet ring from his hand and put it on Joseph’s hand, and clothed him in garments of fine linen and put a gold chain about his neck. 43 And he made him ride in his second chariot. And they called out before him, “Bow the knee!” Thus he set him over all the land of Egypt. 44 Moreover, Pharaoh said to Joseph, “I am Pharaoh, and without your consent no one shall lift up hand or foot in all the land of Egypt.” 45 And Pharaoh called Joseph’s name Zaphenath-paneah. And he gave him in marriage Asenath, the daughter of Potiphara priest of On. So Joseph went out over the land of Egypt.

Introduction/Review:

Joseph had been both in the household of Potiphar and in prison a total of eleven years. ¶We do not know how much time he spent in each of those locations, but we can imagine the whole period might have seemed to him to be interminable. Although God, through Joseph, had correctly interpreted the dreams of Pharaoh’s cupbearer and baker, the cupbearer had forgotten to speak to Pharaoh for Joseph.

Story:

Dream #1

Two whole years passed, making Joseph’s Egypt experience a total of thirteen years. At that time Pharaoh had a dream. This is what he dreamed: He was standing by the Nile River, and seven cows came up out of the Nile. They were good-looking cows, attractive and plump, because they ate the reed grass. Then seven other cows, ugly and thin, came up out of the Nile. First, they stood by the good-looking cows on the bank of the Nile; then the ugly, thin cows ate up the seven attractive, plump cows.

Pharaoh awoke. ¶“What a strange dream!” he might have thought. “I’m going back to sleep.”

Dream #2

He did and had another strange dream. This time, seven ears of grain, plump and good, were growing on one stalk. Then seven ears, thin and blighted by the east wind, sprouted. Guess what these thin ears of grain did. Yes, they swallowed up the seven plump, full ears.

No interpreter

This time when Pharaoh awoke, he was troubled by his dreams. ¶“What in the world could this mean?” he wondered. In the morning he ordered, “Send for my magicians. Send for my wise men. Tell me what these dreams mean. Interpret them for me. I must have some answers, for this is serious!”

The magicians and wise men answered, ¶“We agree, Your Highness, that the dreams certainly have special meaning, but we are sad to report that we are unable to interpret them.”

“Oh!” cried the cupbearer, “I remember my faults today. When Pharaoh was angry with his servants and put me and the chief baker in prison in the house of the captain of the guard,* we dreamed on the same night, he and I, each having a dream with its own interpretation. A young Hebrew was there with us, a servant of the captain of the guard. When we told him, he interpreted our dreams to us. Exactly as he interpreted, so it came about. I was restored to my office, and the baker was hanged.”

¶“Send for this Hebrew at once!” commanded Pharaoh.

Joseph, the interpreter

Servants called for Joseph and quickly brought him out of the pit or dungeon. (What a terrible prison!) Joseph, having been in prison a few years, ¶had had no need to shave and had probably let his beard grow long. However, being clean-shaven was the custom of the Egyptians. So Joseph shaved himself, changed out of his prison clothes, and came as quickly as he could to Pharaoh.

Pharaoh said to Joseph, “I have had a dream, and there is no one who can interpret it. I have heard it said of you that when you hear a dream you can interpret it.”

Joseph answered Pharaoh, “It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer.”

Then Pharaoh told Joseph his dreams. What were they? [Teacher, you might ask students to answer, one picking up the story after another. First, the seven good-looking cows were eaten up by seven scrawny cows. Second, seven thin ears of grain ate up seven good ears of grain.]

Pharaoh continued, “I told these dreams to the magicians, but no one could explain them to me.”

The interpretation

Joseph replied to Pharaoh, “The dreams of Pharaoh are one: both mean the same thing. God has revealed to Pharaoh what he is about to do.”

Does this mean the dreams were prophetic, telling the future? Yes. Let’s hear God’s interpretation.

“The seven good cows are seven years, and the seven good ears are seven years. The seven lean and ugly cows that came up after them are seven years, and the seven empty ears blighted by the east wind are also seven years—of famine. God is showing Pharaoh what He is about to do.

“Seven years of great plenty will come throughout all the land of Egypt, but after them will arise seven years of famine. In this famine people will forget all the plenty they had in the land of Egypt. The famine will consume the land; it will be very severe. The fact that you had two dreams means that the thing is fixed by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass.”

The advice

Then Joseph ventured to give advice to Pharaoh. He said, “Let Pharaoh choose a wise man and set him over all the land of Egypt. Appoint overseers to take one fifth of the produce of the land during the seven plentiful years. Store the grain. That food shall be a reserve for the land when the seven years of famine come. In that way, the land will not perish through the famine. ¶If you don’t store grain, Egypt will perish.””

“Well,” answered Pharaoh, “I don’t know of anyone wiser than you to do the job. What do you think,

servants of Pharaoh? Can we find a man like this in whom is the Spirit of God?"

"No we can't," answered the servants.

The promotion

Then to Joseph Pharaoh said, "Since God has shown you all this, there is none so discerning and wise as you are. You shall be over my house, and all my people shall do as you command. Only as regards the throne will I be greater than you."

Taking his signet ring from his own hand and putting it on Joseph's hand, Pharaoh proclaimed, "See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt." Pharaoh clothed Joseph in garments of fine linen and put a gold chain about his neck. In addition, he made Joseph ride in his second chariot. The Egyptian servants called out before him, "Bow the knee!"

So important was Joseph in Egypt that Pharaoh said to him, "I am Pharaoh, but no one shall do anything in all the land of Egypt without your consent." What promotion! See, God *was* with Joseph even when it seemed as if He wasn't. God exalted Joseph to be the ruler, second only to Pharaoh himself, in the vast kingdom of Egypt.

Pharaoh gave Joseph an Egyptian name, Zaphenath-paneah, meaning "a revealer of secrets" or "one who tells the future" (<https://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/gills-exposition-of-the-bible/genesis-41-45.html>). Pharaoh also found Joseph an Egyptian wife. Thus, Joseph began his long rule over the great land of Egypt under the pharaoh.

*Could this be Potiphar? This officer has the same title as Potiphar had in Genesis 39:1. If not Potiphar himself, it might have been a man in the same position.

Lessons from this lesson:

- We see Jesus:
One day, although He suffered, He will be exalted to be King of kings and Lord of lords.
- Remember that God is always at work, even when we can't see Him at work.
- God's providence is a wonder. Even though the cupbearer should have remembered Joseph earlier, God knew when his interpretation would be most needed.
- Like Joseph, we need to give glory to God in every situation, saying, "It [ability] is not in me; God will give Pharaoh [or anyone else] a favorable answer" (Genesis 41:16).

Activities:

- Play dough: fat and thin cows; full and thin stalks of grain; bearded face and shaven face; signet ring; chariot
- Snack: With respect for the last lesson serve grape juice. Another grape recipe is Orange-Drizzled Grape Tartlets and may be found at <https://www.tasteofhome.com/recipes/orange-drizzled-grape-tartlets/>.
- Using small objects, separate one in five (1/5).
- Sing stanzas 1–5 of "Joseph," found at Lesson 11.01 or on the Songs page at teachingthebibletokids.org, where an audio and a visual version are found.
- Sing "Pharaoh" found below. The poem is by Ruth Hale and was published on the internet; I don't remember the site.
- Do the math to figure the number of years Joseph was in Egypt to this point. If he left Canaan at age

seventeen and was thirty years old when he entered Pharaoh's service (Genesis 41:46), how many years had he been in Egypt? [Thirteen.] What was his age when he interpreted the cupbearer's dream two years before? [Twenty-eight.]

- Review questions: (Game: Color, glue a piece of colored paper, or place colored tape in one of the stripes on the Egyptian headdress found below.)
 1. How much time passed between the cupbearer's dream and the pharaoh's dreams? [Two years.]
 2. What happened in Pharaoh's first dream? [Seven fat cows were consumed by seven thin cows.]
 3. What happened in Pharaoh's second dream? [Seven full clusters of grain were consumed by seven blighted clusters of grain.]
 4. Who could not help Pharaoh interpret his dreams? [His wise men and magicians.]
 5. Who remembered Joseph's ability to interpret dreams? [The cupbearer.]
 6. Joseph said who could interpret the dreams? [God.]
 7. Why were there two dreams of basically the same outcome? [Because the thing was fixed by God and would shortly come to pass.]
 8. What action did Joseph propose? [To find someone to collect one fifth of the harvest during the good years to store for the famine afterwards.]
 9. When Pharaoh chose Joseph to supervise all of Egypt, how did he honor him? [With his signet ring, fine linen garments, a gold chain, with his riding in his second chariot, and by giving him a wife.]
 10. In what one way was Pharaoh greater than Joseph? [Only as the throne was regarded.]

Memory Verse[s]:

- Genesis 41:16—[Joseph said,] "It [ability] is not in me; God will give Pharaoh [or anyone else] a favorable answer."

Handwork:

- Make Pharaoh's headdress. On card stock copy one headdress (found below) for each student. Have students color the stripes or glue colored paper (preferably some gold) over the stripes. Glue or staple a 1"x7" card stock strip to each side about 1.5" from the top of the headdress. Fit the headdress to the head of each student, and staple or tape the strips accordingly, cutting off excess.

Nile River

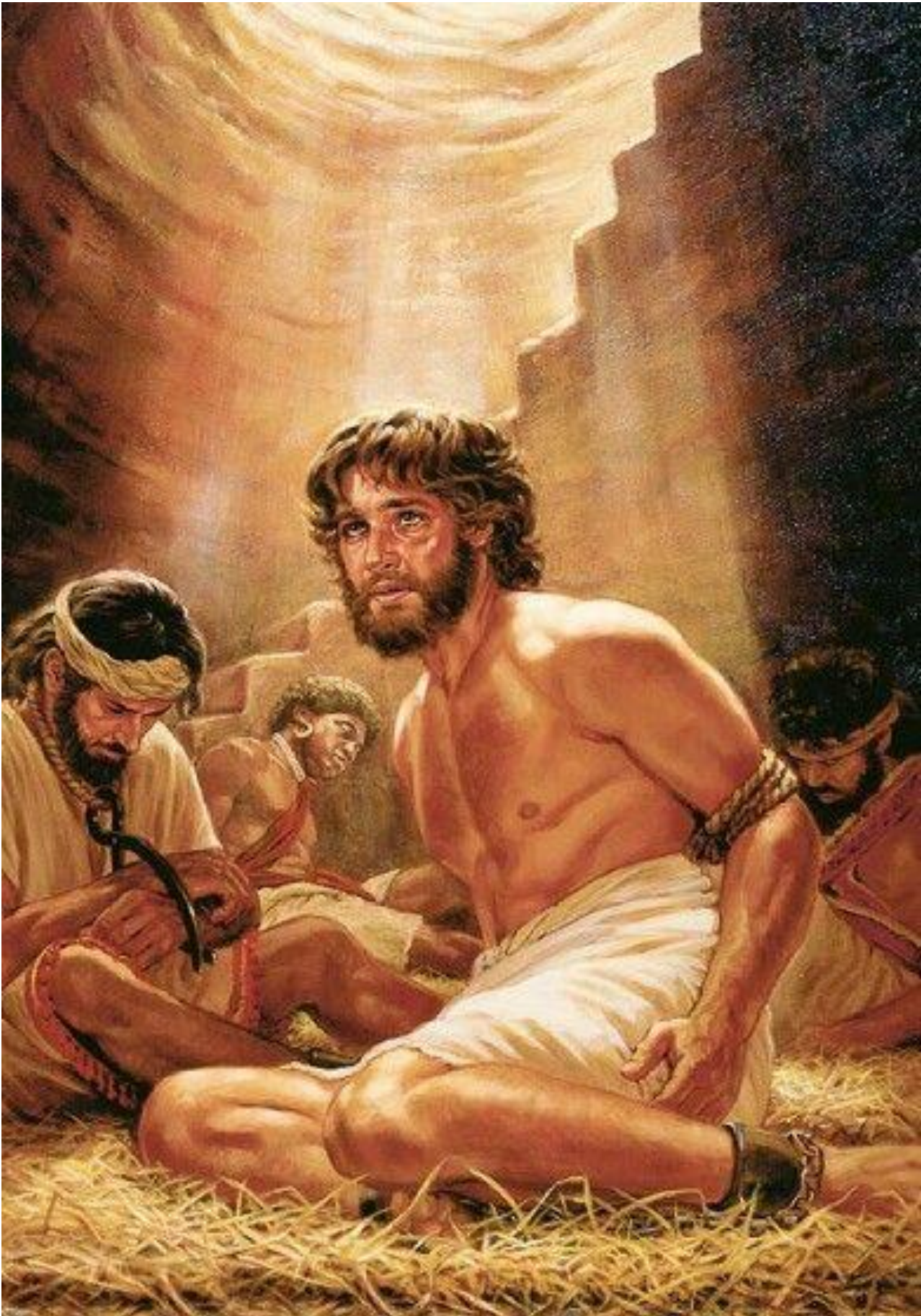
ears of grain

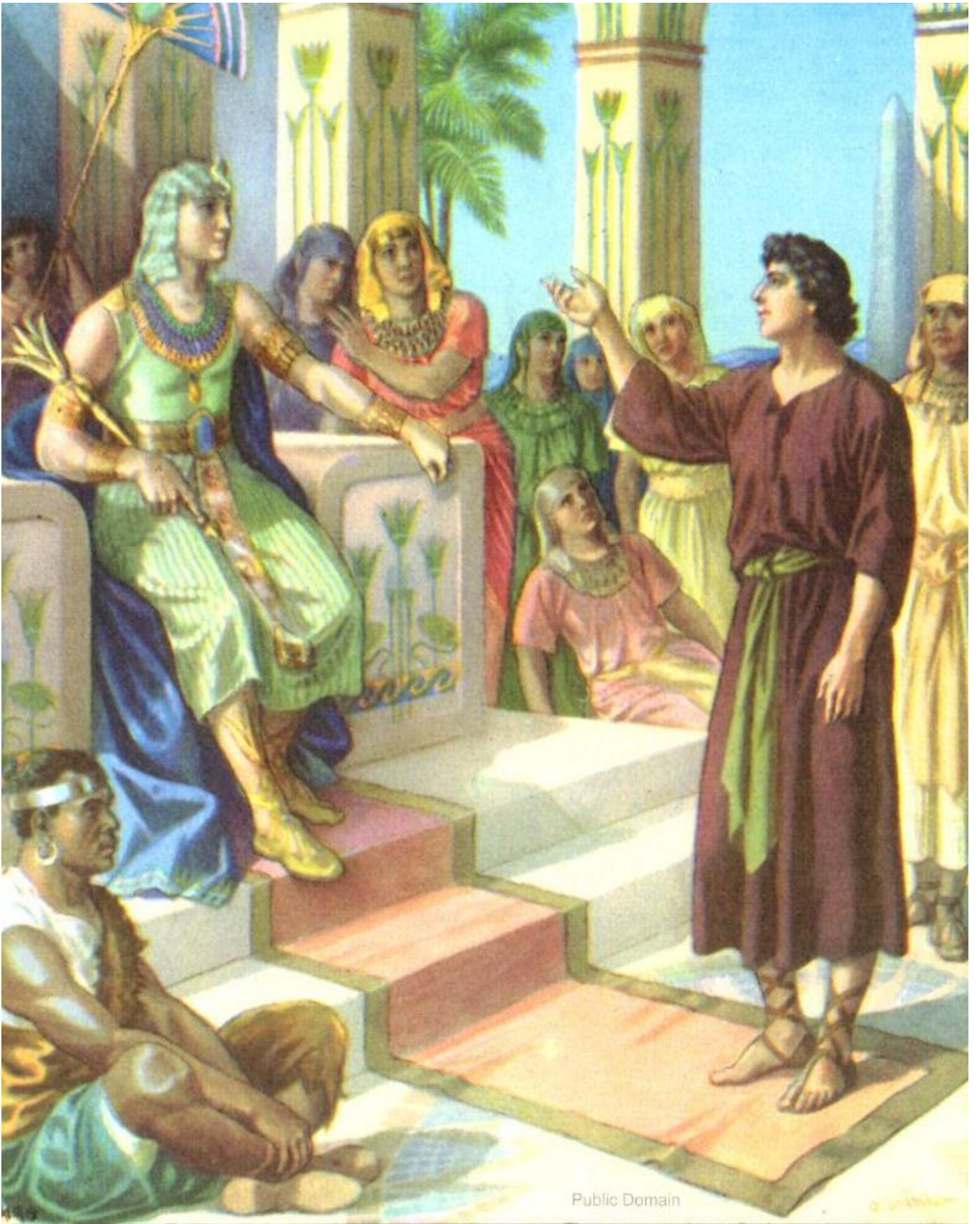
blighted

signet ring

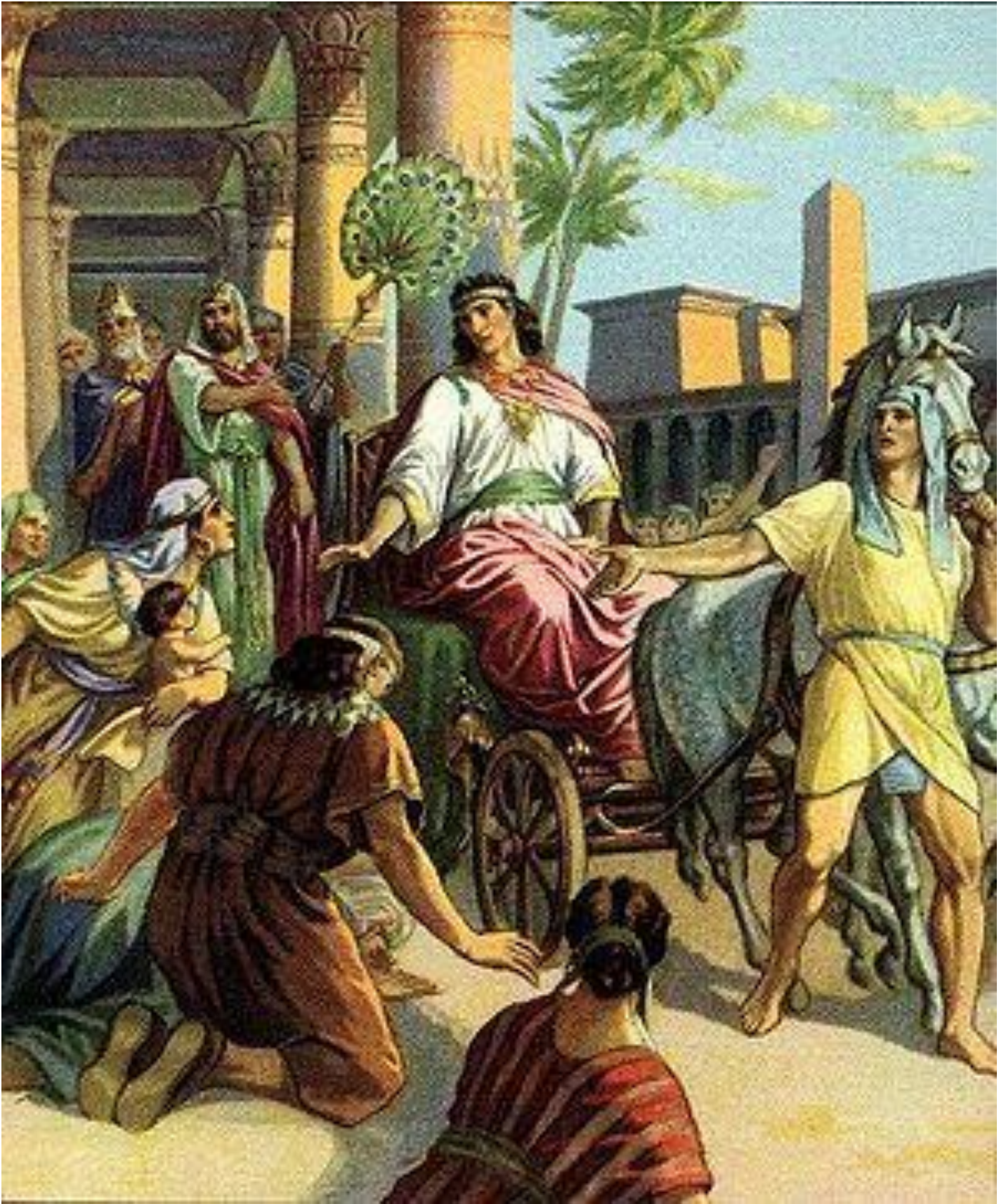


<https://exeraunao.com/2015/06/26/genesis-59-joseph-interprets-pharaohs-dream/>





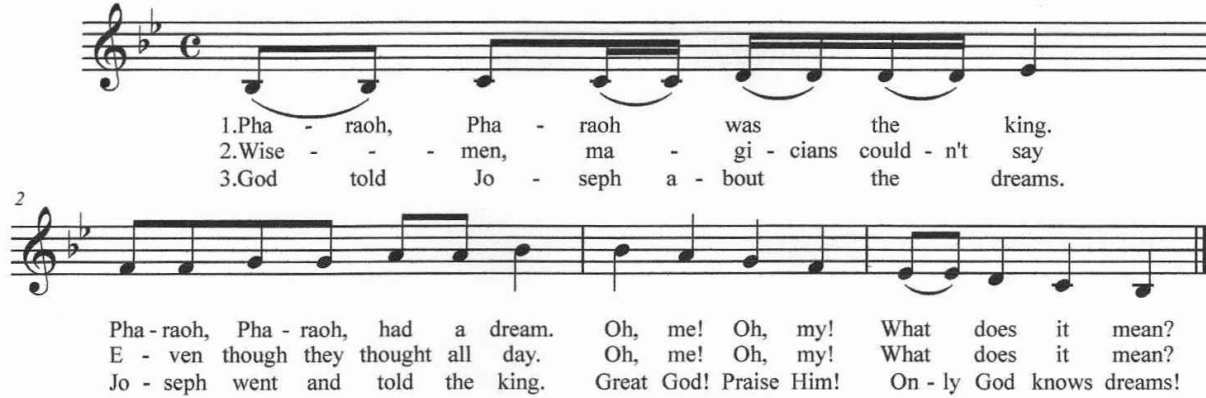
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Pharaoh

Ruth Hale

Put to a simple scale by M. Alexander



1. Pha - raoh, Pha - raoh was the king.
 2. Wise - - men, ma - gi - cians could - n't say.
 3. God told Jo - seph a - bout the dreams.

2
 Pha - raoh, Pha - raoh, had a dream. Oh, me! Oh, my! What does it mean?
 E - ven though they thought all day. Oh, me! Oh, my! What does it mean?
 Jo - seph went and told the king. Great God! Praise Him! On - ly God knows dreams!

Motions:

- Stanza 1: Pharaoh, Pharaoh was the king (*Form crown with hands and place on head*)
 Pharaoh, Pharaoh had a dream. (*Pillow head on folded hands to "sleep"*)
 Oh, me! Oh, my! (*Lift left hand and drop in despair; repeat with right hand*)
 What does it mean? (*Rest chin in hand to ponder*)
- Stanza 2: Wise men, magicians couldn't say (*Shake index finger*)
 Even though they thought all day (*Touch finger to side of forehead*)
 Oh, me! Oh, my! (*Lift left hand and drop in despair; repeat with right hand*)
 What does it mean? (*Rest chin in hand to ponder*)
- Stanza 3: God told Joseph about the dreams. (*Point up*)
 Joseph went and told the king. (*Move fingers as if walking; place right hand by mouth*)
 Great God! (*Clap hands*) Praise Him! (*Clap hands*)
 Only God knows dreams! (*Point up*)

