

- (א) וַיְהִי מִקֵּץ שְׁנָתַיִם יָמִים וּפָרְעָה חָלֵם וְהִנֵּה עֹמֵד עַל־הַיָּאָר.
(יז) וַיְדַבֵּר פָּרְעָה אֶל־יוֹסֵף בְּחִלְמֵי הַנְּבִי עֹמֵד עַל־שִׁפְתֵי הַיָּאָר.
- (ב) וְהִנֵּה מִן־הַיָּאָר עֹלֹת שְׁבַע פָּרוֹת יְפוֹת מְרֹאָה וּבְרִיאוֹת בָּשָׂר
וְתִרְעִינָה בָּאָחוּ.
- (יח) וְהִנֵּה מִן־הַיָּאָר עֹלֹת שְׁבַע פָּרוֹת בְּרִיאוֹת בָּשָׂר וְיִפְתֹּת תֹּאֲרֹ
וְתִרְעִינָה בָּאָחוּ.
- (ג) וְהִנֵּה שְׁבַע פָּרוֹת אַחֲרוֹת עֹלֹת אַחֲרֵיהֶן מִן־הַיָּאָר רָעוֹת מְרֹאָה
וְדָקוֹת בָּשָׂר וְתַעֲמֹדָנָה אֶצֶל הַפָּרוֹת עַל־שִׁפְתֵי הַיָּאָר.
- (יט) וְהִנֵּה שְׁבַע פָּרוֹת אַחֲרוֹת עֹלֹת אַחֲרֵיהֶן דְּלוֹת וְרָעוֹת תֹּאֲרֹ מְאֹד
וְרָקוֹת בָּשָׂר לֹא־רֹאִיתִי כְהִנֵּה בְּכָל־אַרְצָּ מִצְרַיִם לָרַע.
- (ד) וַתֹּאכְלֶנָּה הַפָּרוֹת רָעוֹת הַמְרֹאָה וְדָקוֹת הַבָּשָׂר אֵת שְׁבַע הַפָּרוֹת
יְפֹת הַמְרֹאָה וְהַבְּרִיאוֹת וַיִּיקֶץ פָּרְעָה.
- (כ) וַתֹּאכְלֶנָּה הַפָּרוֹת הָרָקוֹת וְהָרָעוֹת אֵת שְׁבַע הַפָּרוֹת הָרֹאשֹׁנוֹת
הַבְּרִיאוֹת.
- (כא) וַתִּבְאֶנָּה אֶל־קִרְבָּנָהּ וְלֹא נֹדַע כִּי־בָאוּ אֶל־קִרְבָּנָהּ וּמִרְאִיהֶן רַע
כַּאֲשֶׁר בַּתְּחִלָּה וַאֲיָקָץ.

comes from God, to those who trust in Him. The Torah's statement that *at the end of two years ... Pharaoh is dreaming*, teaches that it was because Yosef improperly relied on the butler that God arranged for Pharaoh to have the dreams that led to Yosef's freedom only after those two years, and not when the ten previous years had concluded.⁷ [This answers the first part of Question 2.]

Answer to
First Part of
Question 2

7. We have juxtaposed the Torah's account of the dreams (verses 1–8) with Pharaoh's recounting of the dreams to Yosef (verses 17–24) in order to make it easier to understand the Alshich's discussion of our passage. To make it clear to the reader which version of the dreams are being discussed, we will refer to the Torah's original recording of the dreams as "the first version" and Pharaoh's account to Yosef as "the second version."

(5) He fell asleep and began to dream a second time. Look! Seven ears of grain going up from a single stalk — healthy and good.

(22) I saw in my dream, seven ears of grain going up from a single stalk — full and good.

(6) Seven ears of grain, thin and battered by the east wind are growing after them.

(23) Seven ears of grain, withered, thin and battered by the east wind are growing after them.

(7) The thin ears of grain swallowed up the healthy and full ears of grain. Pharaoh woke up, and behold — it was a dream!

(24) The thin ears of grain swallowed up the good ears of grain. I said to the sorcerers and there was no one to tell me [the interpretation].”

(8) It was the [next] morning and he (Pharaoh) felt extremely agitated. He sent for and summoned all the sorcerers of Egypt and all its wise men. Pharaoh told them his dream but there was no one who interpreted them to Pharaoh.

THE TORAH'S ACCOUNT OF THE DREAMS COMPARED TO PHARAOH'S ACCOUNT TO YOSEF

There are two versions of the dreams.

Consider the following differences between the two:

1. In the first version (verse 1) it says that Pharaoh was standing *over the river* (עַל-הַיָּאָר); in the second version (verse 17) it says that he was standing *by the side of the river* (עַל-שִׁפְתֵי הַיָּאָר).
2. In the first version (verse 2) it says the cows were *beautiful-looking* (יְפוֹת מַרְאֶה); in the second version (verse 18) it says they had a *beautiful form* (יְפוֹת תַּצָּר).
3. In the first version (verse 2) it describes the beauty of the cows before noting that they have *healthy flesh*; in the

(ה) וַיֵּשֶׁן וַיַּחֲלֹם שְׁנֵית וַהֲנֵה שְׁבַע שְׁבָלִים עֹלֹת בְּקֶנֶה אֶחָד בְּרִיאֹת וְטִבּוֹת.

(כב) וַאֲרָא בְּחֻלְמִי וַהֲנֵה שְׁבַע שְׁבָלִים עֹלֹת בְּקֶנֶה אֶחָד מְלֹאֵת וְטִבּוֹת.

(ו) וַהֲנֵה שְׁבַע שְׁבָלִים דְּקוֹת וְשִׁדּוּפֹת קָדִים צִמְחוֹת אַחֲרֵיהֶן.

(כג) וַהֲנֵה שְׁבַע שְׁבָלִים צִנְמוֹת דְּקוֹת שְׁדָּפוֹת קָדִים צִמְחוֹת אַחֲרֵיהֶם.

(ז) וַתִּבְלַעְנָה הַשְּׁבָלִים הַדְּקוֹת אֶת שְׁבַע הַשְּׁבָלִים הַבְּרִיאֹת וְהַמְּלֹאֹת וַיִּיקֹץ פְּרָעָה וַהֲנֵה חֵלֹם.

(כד) וַתִּבְלַעְנָה הַשְּׁבָלִים הַדְּקוֹת אֶת שְׁבַע הַשְּׁבָלִים הַטִּבּוֹת וַאֲמַר אֶל־
הַחֲרָטָמִים וַאֲיֵן מִגִּיד לִי.

(ח) וַיְהִי בְּבֹקֶר וַתִּפָּעֶם רוּחוֹ וַיִּשְׁלַח וַיִּקְרָא אֶת־כָּל־חֲרָטָמֵי מִצְרַיִם
וְאֶת־כָּל־חֲכָמֶיהָ וַיִּסְפֹּר פְּרָעָה לָהֶם אֶת־חֻלְמוֹ וַאֲיֵן־פוֹתֵר אוֹתָם
לַפְּרָעָה.

second version (verse 18) it first mentions that they have *healthy flesh* and only afterward does it mention their beauty.

4. In the first version (verse 3) it says that the thin cows were coming out after the fat cows *from the river* (עֹלֹת בְּקֶנֶה מִן־הַיָּאֵר); in the second version (verse 19) it just says that they were coming out *after them*, without mentioning the river.
5. In the first version (verse 3) it says that the thin cows *stood next to the [healthy] cows* (וַתַּעֲמִדְנָה אֶצֶל הַפְּרוֹת); in the second version (verse 19) it leaves out this detail completely.
6. In the first version (verse 3) it just describes the cows as *ugly-looking and thin* (רָעוֹת מְרָאָה וְדְקוֹת בָּשָׂר); in the second version (verse 19) it describes them in more

extreme terms, as *poor, with a very ugly form and thin* (דלות ורעות תאר מאד ורקות בקר), with the additional comment, “*I have never seen such terrible-looking cows in the whole of Egypt.*”

7. In the first version (verse 3) it describes the cows as *ugly-looking* (רעות מראָה), while in the second version (verse 19) it describes them as being *with a very ugly form* (ורעות תאר מאד).
8. In the second version (verse 21) it says, *They came inside them, but it was not noticeable that they had come inside them. Their appearance was as bad as it was before...* None of this is mentioned in the first version.
9. In the first version (verse 5) it says, *He fell asleep and began to dream a second time* (ויישן ויחלם שנית). In the second version (verse 22) it just says, “*I saw in my dream* (וארא בחלמי),” as if it was still the same dream.
10. In the first version (verse 5) it refers to the ears of grain as *healthy* (בריאות), while in the second version (verse 22) it calls them *full* (מלאות).
11. In the second version (verse 23) it calls the bad ears of grain *withered*, while in the first version (verse 6) it leaves this description out.
12. Finally, why did Pharaoh make a point of telling Yosef that his sorcerers had already attempted to interpret his dreams (verse 8) and that he had not accepted their interpretation?

When Pharaoh told his dreams to the sorcerers and wise men of Egypt, he described them exactly as the Torah recounts them in verses 1–7, as verse 8 states: *Pharaoh told them his dream*. Since Pharaoh knew that the second dream (about the ears of grain) contained the same message as the first dream (about the

cows) — he just didn't know what the message was — the verse says that he told them “his dream” (in the singular) rather than “his dreams.” But the Egyptian sorcerers and wise men thought that they were two separate dreams with different messages; that is why the Torah goes on to say in the same verse, *but there was no one who interpreted them*. Our Sages⁸ tell us that the Egyptians interpreted one dream to mean: “Seven daughters you will father, and seven daughters you will bury,” while they said the other meant: “Seven countries you will conquer and seven countries you will lose.”

The Sages⁹ tell us that Pharaoh did not accept this interpretation. Verse 8 thus states, *There was no one who interpreted them to Pharaoh*, meaning that while there **were** interpreters of the dreams, none of them interpreted them **to Pharaoh** — i.e., he did not accept what they said.

Pharaoh was worried that Yosef would interpret the dreams in the same way as his wise men. He therefore changed certain details of the dreams to make it harder to explain them as they had. Pharaoh asked himself what details of the dreams had led his wise men to interpret that he would have seven daughters who would all die. He concluded that it was because he had said that he was standing עַל־הַיָּאֵר, over the river (verse 1) and that the seven thin cows had emerged מִן־הַיָּאֵר, from the river (verse 3). It was this emphasis on the flowing Nile that the wise men had compared to the male power of producing offspring. Therefore, when he recounted the dream to Yosef, he said that he was standing עַל־שְׂפַת הַיָּאֵר, by the side of the river (verse 17), which made his connection to the river less direct; and he omitted completely the detail that the thin cows had emerged “from the river.” [This explains Differences 1 and 4.]

*Explanation
of Differences
1 and 4*

8. Bereishis Rabbah 89:6.

9. Yalkut Shimoni 147.

Furthermore, he concluded that he should not have described the first cows as *יְפוֹת מֵרָאָה*, *beautiful-looking* (verse 2), since this type of description is more appropriate for human beings than for animals, which would normally be admired for their shape or form. In addition, he decided that he should not have mentioned first that the cows were *beautiful-looking* and only afterwards that they had *healthy flesh*, because the first thing a person would notice about a plump cow would be its healthy flesh, not its beauty; only human beings are noticed first for their beautiful appearance and perhaps only afterward if they had “healthy flesh.” He felt that these details must have also led his wise men to interpret the dream as referring to seven daughters. Because of this, when Pharaoh came to recount his dream to Yosef, he described the cows (verse 18) as being *יְפוֹת תֹּאֲר*, of a *beautiful form* rather than as being *beautiful-looking*, which is more appropriate for animals; and he mentioned that they had *healthy flesh* before mentioning their beauty. [This explains Differences 2 and 3.]

Explanation
of Differences
2 and 3

Pharaoh also changed the original description of the thin cows (verse 3) from *רָעוֹת מֵרָאָה*, *ugly-looking*, to a more appropriate term for animals, saying to Yosef (verse 19) that they were *רָעוֹת תֹּאֲר מְאֹד*, of a *very ugly form*. [This explains Difference 7.]

Explanation of
Difference 7

In a similar vein, in his original description of the ears of grain (verse 5), he referred to them as *בְּרִיאֹת*, *healthy*, which is a more appropriate term for a person than for ears of grain. Therefore, when he spoke to Yosef (verse 22), he referred to them as *מְלֵאָה*, *full* instead. [This explains Difference 10].

Explanation of
Difference 10

Pharaoh then did the same thing to prevent Yosef from offering the sorcerers’ interpretation of seven countries that would be first conquered and then lost. He asked himself, “What elements of my dreams gave the impression of countries being conquered?” He decided that his statement about cows consuming cows and grain swallowing grain seemed reminiscent of nations fighting and “swallowing up” one another. Furthermore,

the phrase “*from the river*” (verse 3) brought other countries to mind, for many countries located along the length of the Nile derived their sustenance from its flowing waters, and their well-fed people may well be compared to fat, healthy cows. To help prevent this mistaken interpretation, Pharaoh did not mention that the seven thin cows emerged *from the river* (in verse 19), even though the earlier version of the dream (verse 3) did say this. [This is an alternative explanation of Difference 4.]

Alternative
Explanation of
Difference 4

The wise men of Egypt’s interpretation also seemed to make sense of the detail that the second set of thin cows *stood next to the [healthy] cows on the river bank* (verse 3). According to them, this indicated that the warring countries were located in close proximity to each other. Indeed, this proximity helps explain how the weaker countries (the thin cows) were able to overcome the stronger ones (the beautiful, healthy cows): their nearness had allowed the weaker countries to spy out all the movements and potential weaknesses of the stronger countries and exploit this knowledge. To ensure that Yosef would not fall into the trap of this false interpretation, Pharaoh completely left out the detail of the thin cows standing next to the healthy cows in speaking to Yosef (in verse 19). [This explains Difference 5.]

Explanation of
Difference 5

To render even more implausible the interpretation of conquering kingdoms, Pharaoh greatly exaggerated how emaciated and withered the thin cows and the bad ears of grain were. For how could such feeble countries possibly manage to conquer and consume strong, healthy ones? Obviously, they could not represent countries but something else. Pharaoh therefore described the thin cows as דָּלוֹת וְרָעוֹת תֹּאֲרָ מְאֹד — *poor, with a very ugly form and thin*, and added the comment, “*I have never seen such terrible-looking cows in the whole of Egypt*” (verse 19), when in the original version of the dream it only said that the cows were רָעוֹת מִרְאָה וְדָקוֹת — *ugly-looking and thin* (verse 3). [This explains Difference 6.] Similarly, when describing the ears of grain to Yosef, Pharaoh

Explanation of
Difference 6

Chapter 41

(25) Yosef said to Pharaoh, “Pharaoh’s dream is one. What God is going to do, He is telling Pharaoh.

(26) “The seven good cows are seven years; the seven good ears of grain are seven years. It is a single dream.



(32) “The doubling of the dream to Pharaoh twice means that the matter is all prepared from before God and God will bring it about speedily.”



Explanation of Difference 11

added the detail that they were *withered* (verse 23), something that was not mentioned in the original version of the dream (verse 6). [This explains Difference 11].

Because it was still possible to say that Divine intervention could enable even weak, “thin” countries to consume strong, “healthy” ones, Pharaoh added another significant detail when he spoke to Yosef. He told him, “[*The healthy cows*] came inside [*the thin cows*], but it was not noticeable that they had come inside them. Their appearance was as bad as it was before” (verse 21). Even if Yosef could say that Divine intervention helped the weak countries prevail, it is impossible that after conquering the strong nations, they would remain as thin (i.e., as poor) as before. They would certainly take the spoils of war — the riches, the animals, the slaves and all the other possessions — and “fatten themselves up” with them. The two added sentences of verse 21 would thus make it impossible for Yosef to mistakenly interpret the dreams like the wise men of Egypt. [This explains Difference 8.]

Explanation of Difference 8

Finally, in order that Yosef not make the mistake of Pharaoh’s sorcerers and think that there were two separate dreams, Pharaoh also did not tell Yosef clearly, as he had told them, that he had awakened from his first dream, fell asleep again, and then had another dream (verses 4–5). Rather, he told him, “*I woke up;*

(כה) וַיֹּאמֶר יוֹסֵף אֶל־פַּרְעֹה חֲלוֹם פַּרְעֹה אֶחָד הוּא אֶת אֲשֶׁר
הָאֱלֹהִים עָשָׂה הַגִּיד לְפַרְעֹה.

(כו) שִׁבְעַת פָּרֹת הַטֹּבֹת שִׁבְעַת שָׁנִים הֵנָּה וְשִׁבְעַת הַשָּׁבָלִים הַטֹּבֹת שִׁבְעַת
שָׁנִים הֵנָּה חֲלוֹם אֶחָד הוּא.

(לב) וְעַל הַשָּׁנוֹת הַחֲלוֹם אֶל־פַּרְעֹה פָּעַמִּים כִּי־נִכּוֹן הַדָּבָר מֵעַם
הָאֱלֹהִים וּמִמָּהָר הָאֱלֹהִים לַעֲשׂוֹתוֹ.

I saw in my dream seven ears of grain...” (verses 21–22) — as if it was still the same dream. [This explains Difference 9.]¹⁰

Explanation of
Difference 9

After recounting his dreams to Yosef, Pharaoh made a point of telling him that he had *said* the dreams *to the sorcerers and there was no one to tell* him what they really meant. This was because he did not want Yosef to say, “Let us bring in the sorcerers and hear their ideas, too, and decide on the truth together.” [This answers Question 12.]

Answer to
Question 12

YOSEF BEGINS TO INTERPRET PHARAOH’S DREAMS

Consider the following questions:

1. In saying, “*Pharaoh’s dream is one,*” Yosef was beginning his interpretation of the dreams. Why does he then interrupt his interpretation by saying, “*What God is going to do, He is telling Pharaoh?*” This would

10. Thus, in order to verify that Yosef’s interpretation of Pharaoh’s dream was correct, Pharaoh deliberately changed key details of his dreams. Since despite this Yosef was still able to provide the correct interpretation of the dreams, it proved that Yosef’s explanation was the genuine one.