

(כה) וַיֹּאמֶר יוֹסֵף אֶל־פַּרְעֹה חֲלוֹם פַּרְעֹה אֶחָד הוּא אֵת 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 הַדְּבָר מֵעַם  
הָאֱלֹהִים וּמִמָּהֵר 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.]<sup>10</sup>

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.

have been more appropriate as an introduction to the interpretation, or a conclusion.

2. What does Yosef mean by the redundant expression (verse 32), “*The repeating of the dream ... twice*”?
3. How does the repeating of the dream show both that everything is already *prepared from before God* and that *God will bring it about speedily*? These seem like two different things that are not necessarily related.

There were two ways of looking at Pharaoh’s dreams. On the one hand, the content of the two dreams had many similarities, which would indicate that they were communicating the same, single message. On the other hand, since they were two separate dreams, and since the king had woken up between them, it was possible that they meant to convey two separate messages. In fact, these two possibilities were the basis of the dispute between Pharaoh and his wise men, as explained in the previous passage.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, Yosef began his interpretation by stating unequivocally that the dreams were giving Pharaoh a single message: “*Pharaoh’s dream is one.*” But a person might still ask, “If so, why did Pharaoh have two separate dreams? The first one would have been enough!” This is why Yosef continued, “*What God is going to do, He is telling Pharaoh.*” By this he meant, “*What God hinted to you in the first dream that He is going to do, He is telling you more explicitly in the second dream.*” The first dream, which spoke of cows, provided a hint. But the second dream spoke explicitly of food (ears of grain); and it is quite logical that full ears of grain should indicate abundance, and that thin, blighted grain should indicate hunger and famine. [Thus, the words, “*What God is going to do, He is telling Pharaoh,*” are part of the actual interpretation

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11. See Alshich above, 41:1–8, 17–24.

itself and cannot be considered an interruption.] [This answers Question 1.]

Answer to  
Question 1

Two further questions might now be asked:

4. If the dream about the ears of grain indicated the true message of the dreams, why was there a need for the dream about the cows altogether?
5. If both dreams are conveying a single message, why did Pharaoh wake up after the first dream, fall asleep again, and then dream a second time?

Yosef went on to address these questions, saying (verse 32), וְעַל הַשְּׁנוֹת הַחֵלוּם אֶל פְּרָעָה פִּעְמָיִם. The word הַשְּׁנוֹת may be translated as “changing” (rather than *repeating*).<sup>12</sup> The phrase thus reads: *The changing of the dream to Pharaoh, twice*, and refers to two separate issues: (a) the dream *changing* from seven cows to seven ears of grain (i.e., and not sufficing with the dream about the grain); and (b) Pharaoh’s dreaming *twice*. [This answers Question 2.]

Answer to  
Question 2

Yosef continued and said, כִּי נָכוֹן הַדְּבָר מֵעַם הָאֱלֹהִים. The word נָכוֹן can be translated as “true” or “correct” (rather than *prepared*). Accordingly, Yosef was saying: “The changing of the dream (from cows to ears of grain) proves that my interpretation of your dreams is true and correct, since the interpretation comes from God, Who gave you the true interpretation through the dreams themselves.” If Pharaoh had dreamed only about ears of grain, the dream would have been subject to varying interpretations, like all dreams, and Pharaoh would have been uncertain as to which was correct. But now that the dream about the cows came

12. The root of the word הַשְּׁנוֹת is שָׁנָה, which can indicate either *repetition* (as in the word שָׁנִים), which is how we originally translated it, or *change* (as in the word שִׁנּוּי).

The verse continues: “...means that the matter is all prepared from before God and God will bring it about speedily”; see further.

(33) “And now, let Pharaoh locate a perceptive and wise man and appoint him over the land of Egypt.

(34) “Let Pharaoh go ahead and appoint officials over the land and let him prepare the land of Egypt during the seven years of plenty.

(35) “Let them gather all the food [that grows] during these coming years of good, and let them stockpile grain under the authority of Pharaoh, food in the cities, and let them guard it.

(36) “The food shall be set aside for [the people of] the land for the seven years of famine which there will be in the land of Egypt. [In this way] the land will not be wiped out through famine.”



(40) [Pharaoh said to Yosef,] “You shall be in charge of my palace and by your command all my people will be fed; only with regard to the throne will I be greater than you.”

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first, and was followed by the dream about the grain, it can only be that the second dream was an explanation and clarification of the first. Therefore, the second dream must be understood according to its most simple explanation about abundance and lack of food and not in any other, non-literal way.<sup>13</sup> This clearly shows that *the matter is prepared from before God*. [This answers part of Question 3 and Question 4.]

Yosef then explained that the fact that Pharaoh dreamed *twice* also meant that *God will bring it about speedily*. When a king wants something to be done quickly, he gives the command once and then immediately repeats it. Similarly, God gave

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13. Since the dream about the thin cows swallowing fat ones and gaining no weight was so similar to the dream about the thin ears swallowing the full ears and remaining unchanged, it was evident that the two dreams bore a single message, and that the dream about the grain should not be reinterpreted in some metaphorical way.

- (ג) וַעֲתָה יֵרָא פַרְעֹה אִישׁ נְבוֹן וְחָכֵם וַיִּשְׁתִּיתָהוּ עַל־אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם.
- (ד) יַעֲשֶׂה פַרְעֹה וַיִּפְקֹד פְּקָדִים עַל־הָאָרֶץ וְחָמַשׁ אֶת־אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם בְּשֶׁבַע שָׁנֵי הַשָּׁבַע.
- (ה) וַיִּקְבְּצוּ אֶת־כָּל־אֹכֵל הַשָּׁנִים הַטּוֹבוֹת הַבָּאֹת הָאֵלֶּה וַיִּצְבְּרוּ־בָר תַּחַת יַד־פַּרְעֹה אֹכֵל בְּעָרִים וְשָׁמְרוּ.
- (ו) וְהָיָה הָאֹכֵל לְפָקֶדוֹן לְאֶרֶץ לְשֶׁבַע שָׁנֵי הָרָעַב אֲשֶׁר תִּהְיֶינָה בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם וְלֹא־תִכָּרַת הָאֶרֶץ בְּרָעַב.

(מ) אַתָּה תִּהְיֶה עַל־בֵּיתִי וְעַל־פִּיךָ יִשְׁקַ כָּל־עַמִּי רַק הַכֶּסֶּא אֶגְדֹּל מִמֶּנּוּ.

Pharaoh a dream predicting what would happen to him. He then had him wake up and fall asleep again, and then sent him another dream with the same prediction. This indicated that the prediction would come true very soon. [This answers the other part of Questions 3 and 5].

Answer to  
the Rest of  
Questions  
3 and 5

## YOSEF'S ADVICE TO PHARAOH

Consider the following questions:

1. Yosef had been summoned in order to interpret Pharaoh's dreams. What prompted him to start giving Pharaoh advice about what he should do next?
2. Why did the official who would be supervising the gathering and storage of grain need to be appointed to a position of authority over the whole land of Egypt? Would it not have been sufficient to put him in charge of the grain storehouses?