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# Second in Charge

(Based on Genesis 41)

It was Joseph's God-given ability to interpret dreams that finally got him out of prison. Two years after his cupbearer was released from prison and given his job back, Pharaoh had a strange dream. He was standing by the Nile River when he saw seven fat, healthy cows come up out of the water. They grazed among the river reeds for a while. Then seven skinny, unhealthy cows came up out of the water. Suddenly, the skinny cows ate up the fat cows. The dream was so frightening, it woke Pharaoh up. When he was able to get back to sleep, he had another dream. This time he saw seven fat heads of grain that were eaten up by seven thin, worthless heads of grain. Again, the dream woke him up, and he tried to figure out what it meant.

The next morning, Pharaoh was so troubled by his dreams, he sent for all the wise men and magicians in Egypt to see if anyone could explain what they meant. No one had any idea. Suddenly, Pharaoh's cupbearer remembered Joseph. He explained that when he and the baker had been in prison a Jewish slave named Joseph had explained their dreams, and what he said came true.

Pharaoh eagerly called for Joseph to be brought to him. "I have heard it said of you that when you hear a dream you can interpret it," Pharaoh said to him.

Though he was a foreign slave talking to the highest ruler in the land, Joseph was not shy. "I cannot do it," he said, "but God will give Pharaoh the answer he desires." So Pharaoh described what he had dreamed and Joseph explained the meaning. The cows and the heads of grain represented years. The seven skinny cows and the seven worthless heads of grain represented seven years of famine that Egypt was going to experience. The seven fat cows and heads of grain represented seven years of good, plentiful crops Egypt would have before the famine. Joseph warned that the years of famine would be so bad, they would ruin the land in spite of the previous years of good crops. "The reason the dream was given to Pharaoh in two forms is that the matter has been firmly decided by God," Joseph said, "and God will do it soon."

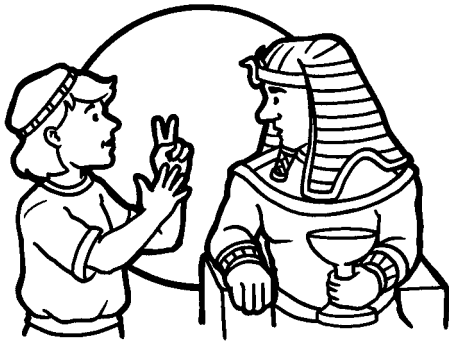
Joseph advised Pharaoh to appoint a wise man to organize a system for saving a fifth of the harvest for each of the seven good years. All of it should be stored and set aside to be used during the seven years of famine. This seemed like a good plan to Pharaoh, and Joseph seemed like just the one to carry it out. "Can we find anyone like this man, one in whom is the spirit of God?" Pharaoh said to his advisors. "You shall be in charge of my palace, and all my people are to submit to your orders," he told Joseph. "Only with respect to the throne will I be greater than you."

Joseph had been brought to Egypt as a young slave; he had been mistreated and thrown into prison and forgotten by those he had helped. Now, he had suddenly become second in charge of the whole land! No matter what happened to him, Joseph had always believed that God had a plan for him. And what a plan! Pharaoh put his own ring on Joseph's finger, dressed him in fine robes, and put a gold chain around his neck. Joseph rode in a chariot and everyone did just what he said. He set to work right away, organizing people to collect food from the bountiful crops and store it away. For seven years he stored up huge quantities of grain "like the sand of the sea." He stored up so much, he lost count of how much there was! By the time famine hit, Egypt was ready for it. The storehouses were opened and everyone, even people from neighboring countries, could buy all the food they needed, thanks to Joseph's faith in God.



# What Next?

**Directions:** Number the pictures from 1 to 6 to show the order in which they happened. Read the story in Genesis 41 to check your work.



\_\_\_\_\_ Joseph explained that the dreams meant good crops, then famine was coming.



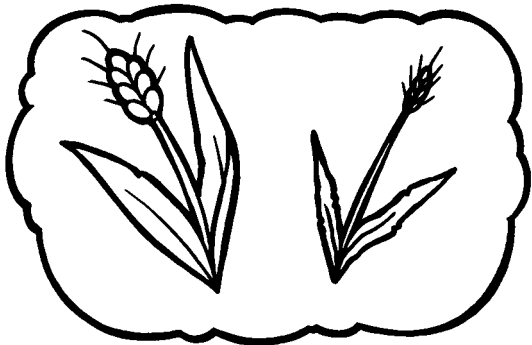
\_\_\_\_\_ Famine came just as Joseph had said.



\_\_\_\_\_ Joseph opened up the storehouses and sold the food to anyone who needed it.



\_\_\_\_\_ Pharaoh made Joseph second in command of all Egypt.



\_\_\_\_\_ Pharaoh had two strange dreams that none of his wise men could explain.



\_\_\_\_\_ Joseph stored up 1/5 of all the good crops in Egypt.