

The Story of Joseph

Nightmare on the Nile

Part 29 – October 14, 2012



Last week we looked at the simple, but highly detailed, biblical timespans that allow us to fairly precisely place Joseph. And I told you about the unparalleled radio-carbon dating project, led by an Oxford research team, and reported in the journal *Science*, for peer review, June 18, 2010, *confirming* the high chronology for most all serious archeological scholars. In *two* places the chronologies are pinned to absolute calendrical dates by a rare astronomical observation¹ (i.e. Heliacal Rise of Sirius); one occurs just 11 years before the birth of Moses.



When we apply the biblical timespan, we can see that Queen Hatshepsut would've been the daughter of Pharaoh who would have adopted Moses; and her stepson, Thutmose III, would have ruled *during* the exodus. Now, out of 3,000 BC-years of Egyptian history, one absolute astronomical anchor occurs just before the birth of Moses ...

... and the other just 15 years *after* Joseph interprets Pharaoh's dream!



When two full years had passed, [since Joseph had interpreted the dream of, and was completely forgotten by, the butler/cupbearer/wine-taster. But we can't really blame him; everyone in prison claims to be innocent. And what would Pharaoh want with an incarcerated Hebrew? He has a full staff of royal Egyptian interpreters, trained in dream decoding] Pharaoh had a dream ... – *Genesis 41:1a NIV*

And thanks to that astronomical anchor, we can be fairly certain that this Pharaoh was Seneferu, 4th king of Egypt's 12th Dynasty. He was in the last eight years of a 19-year reign. (c. 1877–1878). He has about six names; but we'll stick with Seneferu.

He co-reigned with his father for two years and, like his dad, he enjoyed a peaceful reign, preferring diplomacy over warfare. I t's assumed that Princess Sit-Hathor-Yunet is his daughter because her tomb, where they found a trove of Sit-Hathor-Yunet's jewelry, is part of Seneferu's pyramid complex.



Remember the image of the chief baker? The necklace and pendant I used is an *actual photograph* of Sit-Hathor-Yunet's jewelry! It's called a pectoral and it bears the name of Seneferu II. Princess Sit-Hathor-Yunet would've worn this around the palace. 372 carefully cut pieces of semiprecious stone.

¹ Oxford Radiocarbon Accelerator Unit: <http://c14.arch.ox.ac.uk/embed.php?File=egypt.html#science>

Get a good look at that turquoise; in a minute I'll show you where they got it. But for now, life was good for Senusret II.

Have you ever had a nightmare *so* realistic, you keep reacting *after* you wake? Slowly it dawns on you. Once, Shar jumped up and pulled off the blankets, frantically looking for all the bugs! Ever had a dream that surprisingly *turned into* a nightmare? This is how *my nightmares* are usually packaged. They mostly begin as innocent dreams, and then, "WHAM!" I'm in a nightmare!



Sadly, that doesn't just happen in our sleep. Anything in *your* life begin as a sweet dream, and end up as a living nightmare? This is what happens to Pharaoh, both asleep and awake!



He was standing by the Nile, when out of the river there came up seven cows, sleek and fat, and they grazed among the reeds. [Ahh, *so serene; gentle cows cooling themselves in the Nile, grazing on marsh grass along the riverbank*] After them, seven other cows, ugly and gaunt, came up out of the Nile and stood beside those on the riverbank. [Oh, poor, hungry cows] And the cows that were ugly and gaunt ate up the seven sleek, fat cows. [Cannibal cows! Who would'a guessed *that?*] Then Pharaoh woke up. – *Genesis 41:1b-4 NIV*



Let's recreate it: He was standing by the Nile, when out of the river there came up seven cows, sleek and fat, and they grazed among the reeds. After them, seven other cows, ugly and gaunt, came up out of the Nile and stood beside those on the riverbank. And the cows that were ugly and gaunt ... ate up the seven sleek, fat cows. Then Pharaoh woke up.



He fell asleep again and had a second dream: Seven heads of grain, healthy and good, were growing on a single stalk. [Soothing amber waves of grain] After them, seven other heads of grain sprouted — thin and scorched by the east wind. [Hey, wait!] The thin heads of grain swallowed up the seven healthy, full heads. Then Pharaoh woke up; it had been a dream. – *Genesis 41:5-7 NIV*

Some translations say that Pharaoh *realized* it was a dream, because the original says: and *behold* it was a dream!

Do you know what golf swings and flight plans have in common? If they begin even a tiny bit off course, the further they travel, the worse the *nightmare*, and the more radical the correction needed.

This is why constant, real-time corrections take place during a flight. And this is why the fear/respect of God is the beginning of wisdom (Proverbs 9:10): it keeps us on course in those real-time moments when we need a tie-breaker between *my* will and *Thy* will.

In the morning his mind was troubled ... [And rightly so! The dreams of Egyptian kings were believed to be direct revelations from the gods.] – *Genesis 41:8a NIV*



And the Lord knew exactly how to get this guy’s attention. Hathor, the divine bovine, the symbol of rebirth, was one of the most important deities throughout Egypt’s history. This Hathor statue was discovered in 1907 in a funerary chapel for Thutmosis III, who likely died in the Red Sea chasing after Moses.



These are the remains of a temple to Hathor, brand new in Joseph’s day, on the site of the turquoise mines at *Sinai* ... as in *Mount Sinai*. An inscription says that Moses’ probable mom, Hatshepsut, enlarged the temple of Hathor and exploited these Sinai mountain mines. And slave graffiti is written in ‘old Hebrew’.

Hathor ... where have we heard that name before? Oh yeah, Senusret’s daughter: *Sit-Hathor-Yunet*! Her name means ‘daughter of Hathor of Dendera’ (a small town on the bank of the Nile).

Serabit al-Khadim

Senusret had more or less named his daughter, ‘the symbolic cow from the bank of the Nile’!



... so [in a fit of Pharaonic panic] he sent for all the magicians [This is the same group that opposed Moses (Ex 7:11) when they threw down their staffs and turned them into snakes] and wise men of Egypt. Pharaoh told them his dreams ... – *Genesis 41:8b NIV*

These are Pharaoh’s professional dream decoders who literally ‘go by the book’.

Dream Book of Qeniherkhepshef, c. 1220 BC

This is the earliest dream decoding manual in existence. It is 14” tall (seldom exceeded, except in official documents) and over 5.5’ long (it’s missing both ends, so who knows how big it was). The column of large hieratic symbols says, “If a man sees himself in a dream”, each line to the left says, “[doing such-and-such]”, then *good* or *bad* (in red), and then an interpretation.

This copy is from about 1220^{BC}, but the copied language dates it back to approximately 2000-1790^{BC}.² The direct center of that being 1895^{BC} or, one year before Pharaoh had this dream! This is either a direct copy of, or very similar to what the magicians and wise men used to try and decode Senusret’s dream! And I have a copy of the 1935 English translation (considered the most accurate by the British Museum, who has the Dream Book).

And here’s the thing, the interpretations are *all* based on puns similes, word associations. This dream decoder has the style of a fortune cookie with all the science of a haphazard horoscope! For instance, “If a man sees himself with a harp, that’s bad; it means something evil will happen” (because the 12th Dynasty word for harp (benet) and evil (bint) *happened* to sound similar). But, to a mostly illiterate culture, it seemed so esoteric and abstruse and ... *smarty-pants* and ... *highfalutin!*

... but no one could interpret them for him. [God gave him two dreams that couldn’t be found in their in-depth decoding directory] – *Genesis 41:8c NIV*

² Hieratic Papyri in the British Museum, Edited by Alan H. Gardiner, D.LITT., F.B.A., MCMXXXV

“Were you *plunging* in the river? That’s good; it’s absolution from ... no plunging?” “Were you sailing in a boat?” “Feeding cattle is bad! It means roaming the earth.” “Were you *towing* a boat?” “Did you see *herbs* in the field? You’ll find meals for your father.” “Did you fetch mice from the field? You’ll have a sore heart!” “Were you sitting in the hull, or sailing downstream? Both are pretty bad.” “*Not compared to drinking warm beer.*” “Or shaving his lower parts!” “If you killed an ox, that’s good. You’ll kill your enemies.” “But if you drank the *blood*, that’s bad.” “I thought it was good.” “Okay, I know I’m harping on this boat, but were you putting a *seat* in the boat? ‘Cause then you’re ... you’ll divorce.”³

Our culture has decoders that are every bit as ridiculous: Girlfriend just dumped you? Pick a bar, pick your poison, pick a fight, and pick up a gal and maybe a disease. That should do it! Says so right here in the manual. Need relief from stress, guilt, shame, or a sense of worthlessness, purposelessness, or meaninglessness? Numb it! Pop a pill, hit the bottle, snort it, smoke it, or shoot it up. It’s all here in the American dream decoder.

When Pharaoh dismisses his advisors, he’s more confused than ever, and the weight of a nation is *still* on his shoulders. It’s a Pharaoh’s worst nightmare: I’m not a god, I’m a fraud! That’s the conclusion God waits for each of us to reach.

Man’s wisdom *works ... until* it doesn’t.

Every system that’s not based on God’s wisdom is guaranteed to fail you – and it usually happens in the midst of a crisis. Illicit relationships relieve loneliness ... at first. But they can’t fulfill your deepest needs. And they leave you more empty, more lonely, and suffering more pain than when you began. Numbing the pain works ... at first. But all superficial solutions leave you less and less satisfied, and craving more and more, no longer for the euphoria, but just to keep from withdrawals.

Worldly wisdom just won’t answer the nightmares of life.

But, there are so many voices pulling us in so many directions. So, how do you know who to trust to help you interpret what it all means? Well, it mainly depends on which book they’re using as their ultimate authority (and how consistently they live by it). When you’re having a bad dream, isn’t it wonderful when someone wakes you up? And you open our eyes and realize all is not lost?

Make sure your advisors are willing to shake you to wake you!

I wonder if the butler/cupbearer ever asked those dream interpreters what it means if a man sees himself pressing out wine from grapes (as *he* had dreamt in prison). “Oh, that’s an easy one!” they would’ve said, (because it’s right here in the Dream Book). “It means the *taking away* of his possessions.” “It doesn’t mean the *restoration* of his possessions?” “Absolutely not!” “Well doesn’t that beat all? He *contradicted* your manual.” “Who did?!” “Just an incarcerated Hebrew I *almost* forgot about.”

And this is where we have to close God’s story for today.

³ All scenarios taken directly from the Dream Book of Qeniherkhepshef