

JOSEPH INTERPRETS DREAMS

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Joseph was one of the sons of Israel, or Jacob. He was the eleventh son—the favorite of his father. Because of this his brothers were jealous of him. They envied him, and finally they came to hate him. So they sold him to the Midianites—traders going down into Egypt. There, Joseph was sold as a slave. Potiphar, a captain of Pharaoh's army, bought Joseph. He made him a servant in his household.

Now Joseph had learned one thing very thoroughly from his father Israel. He had learned that the Lord would always be with him if he tried to do what the Lord wanted—to be honest, good, and faithful in all his duties. So Joseph was not afraid. He prayed to the Lord for help and did everything that his master asked him to do. He did these things well, and the Lord was with him, and gave him favor in Potiphar's eyes. Because of these things Potiphar was good to him, and made him ruler over all things in his household.

But after Joseph had been in Egypt for some time, there was some trouble. The wife of Potiphar did not like Joseph, and she told her husband that Joseph had done something wrong—something that he actually had not done. But when Potiphar heard this he believed his wife. He became angry with Joseph and put him in prison.

Joseph had not done anything wrong, yet he was put into prison. Even then Joseph remembered what his father had taught him—that if he were good, and did the best he knew, then no matter where he was, the Lord would be with him. He knew also that no matter what happens to a person the Lord turns it to good, if he tries to do the right thing. Joseph might have become angry and bitter and said, "I did not do anything wrong, yet here I am in prison." He could have become very angry and hated Potiphar and turned away from the Lord. But instead he remembered the teaching of his father that the Lord would not let anything happen that would not turn to his good after awhile. So even in prison he did the very best that he was able to do. The keeper of the prison came to love and trust him, and he did everything he could to help Joseph. He put everything of the prison in his charge. So Joseph helped the other prisoners.

Later, two of the prisoners, who had been Pharaoh's butler and baker, told their dreams to Joseph. Then the Lord told Joseph what the dreams meant. Joseph told the butler that his dream meant that in three days time the king or pharaoh would take him out of prison, and he would live in the palace again. And Joseph said, "remember me when it is well with you, and please show kindness to me; make mention of me to Pharaoh, and get me out of this house. For indeed...I have done nothing here that they should put me into the dungeon" (Genesis 40:14-15).

Everything came to pass just as the Lord had said. The butler returned to the palace. But he was so excited about serving the king again that he forgot all about Joseph. So Joseph had to stay in prison for two more years. Then Pharaoh himself had a dream. He told it to all the wise men of Egypt, but none of them could tell him what it meant. Then the butler said, "I remember my faults this day. When Pharaoh was angry with his servants, and put me in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, both me and the chief baker, we each had a dream in one night, he and

I... Now there was a young Hebrew man with us there...and he interpreted our dreams for us... And it came to pass, just as he interpreted for us, so it happened” (Genesis 41:9-13).

Then the king sent for Joseph, and he came before the king and bowed low. Pharaoh said, “And Pharaoh said to Joseph, “I have dreamed a dream, and there is no one who can interpret it. But I have heard it said of you that you can understand a dream, to interpret it” (Genesis 41:15). “It is not in me” said Joseph. “God will give Pharaoh an answer of peace” (Genesis 41:16).

So the King said, “Behold, in my dream I stood on the bank of the river. Suddenly seven cows came up out of the river, fine looking and fat; and they fed in the meadow. Then behold, seven other cows came up after them, poor and very ugly and gaunt, such ugliness as I have never seen in all the land of Egypt. And the gaunt and ugly cows ate up the first seven, the fat cows. When they had eaten them up, no one would have known that they had eaten them, for they were just as ugly as at the beginning. So I awoke” (Genesis 41:17-24).

Then the Lord gave Joseph the answer. So Joseph said to Pharaoh, “ The seven good cows are seven years.... And the seven thin and ugly cows which came up after them are seven years.... Indeed seven years of great plenty will come throughout all the land of Egypt; but after them seven years of famine will arise, and all the plenty will be forgotten in the land of Egypt; and the famine will deplete the land” (Genesis 41:26-30).

Then Joseph said, “Now therefore, let Pharaoh select a discerning and wise man, and set him over the land of Egypt.... And let them gather all the food of those good years that are coming, and store up grain under the authority of Pharaoh, and let them keep food in the cities. Then that food shall be as a reserve for the land for the seven years of famine which shall be in the land of Egypt, that the land may not perish during the famine” (Genesis 41:33-36).

Then the king said, “Can we find such a one as this, a man in whom is the Spirit of God?” (Genesis 41:38) And so he said to Joseph, “Inasmuch as God has shown you all this, there is no one as discerning and wise as you. You shall be over my house, and all my people shall be ruled according to your word.... See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt” (Genesis 41:39-41). And he took his ring, the symbol of his power, and put it on Joseph’s hand. And he took royal garments and put them on him, and he gave him a chariot and horsemen so that wherever Joseph went people would bow down, because he was their ruler. Only Pharaoh himself was greater than Joseph in the land of Egypt.

Now this story is wonderful because it teaches us a most important thing. That is if we love the Lord and try to do what is right and what is good, then, no matter what happens to us, the Lord will be with us and turn things to our good, just as the Lord took care of Joseph, even when he was imprisoned for a time. The Lord brought him out of prison and made him the greatest man in all the land of Egypt. He made him the savior of the land so that people would not die of hunger. So with us—no matter what bad thing may happen to us—we must not worry about it—we must not become angry and bitter and say “I did not do this, I should not be punished.” Instead we must think, “The Lord only allows this to happen to make something good occur to help me to prepare for heaven.” If we look at things this way, then our life will be filled with happiness, and, through us, the Lord can bring a blessing to many people.

Amen.