

“Joseph’s Dreams Fulfilled”

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The seven years of plenty that God had told Pharaoh about, soon began, and Joseph, who was now ruler over all the land of Egypt, gathered in a great store of food to last through the seven years of famine.

“In the seven plenteous years the earth brought forth by handfuls.” And Joseph gathered all the food that grew in the fields, and stored it up in the nearest city, so that in each city there were storehouses from which the people could be supplied with food during the famine.

At first Joseph kept an account of all that was stored up, but he “gathered corn as the sand of the sea, very much, until he left numbering, for it was without number.”

When the seven plenteous years were ended, “the seven years of dearth began to come,” but while the famine was in all lands, “in all the land of Egypt there was bread.” Through the wisdom that God had given to Joseph, the people of Egypt had food all through the famine; and not the Egyptians only, but “all countries came into Egypt to Joseph for to buy corn.”

Now we can see something of God’s wonderful plan in sending Joseph down into Egypt years before, and leading him into the prison. For it was through being cast into the king’s prison that Joseph was brought to the notice of Pharaoh, and to the highest position in the land of Egypt. God’s way is perfect, it is always the very best for His children, and we may safely trust in Him, as Joseph did, even in dark days and dark ways. Like Joseph remembering always that He is with us, we can sing with David, “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me.”

“Through waves and storms and clouds
He gently clears thy way;
Wait thou His time, so shall this night
Soon end in joyous day.

“Far, far above thy thought
His counsel shall appear,
When fully He the work has wrought
Which caused thy needless fear.”

When Joseph spoke of God’s purpose in sending him into Egypt, he said, “God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.”

But what about Joseph’s father Jacob, and his brothers? How were they getting on in this time of famine that was in all lands? Like the rest of the people they soon found themselves without any food; and “Jacob heard that there was corn in Egypt.” He sent down ten of Joseph’s brothers to buy food, but he kept Benjamin, the youngest, at home, for fear that “some mischief befall him,” like that which he believed had happened to his favourite son Joseph.

When Joseph's brothers reached Egypt they were brought in to him, and they "bowed down themselves before him with their faces to the earth." But they did not recognize him, nor know that they were then fulfilling his boyhood's dreams that they had thought to get rid of for ever. Joseph knew them however, "and Joseph remembered the dreams which he dreamed of them."

As he wanted to find out if they still kept in their hearts the spirit of envy and hatred that had made them so cruel to him, Joseph did not make himself known to his brothers at once. He pretended to think that they were spies, and questioned them very closely about their home life.

How glad Joseph was to learn that his father Jacob and his own brother Benjamin were still alive! He told his brothers that he would keep one of them in prison while the others went to fetch Benjamin, and he would give them no more food unless they brought him back with them. So Simeon was put in prison, and the others were sent away.

When Jacob heard what had happened to his sons in Egypt, he was in great trouble and said, "Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away; all these things are against me." But were they? No; Joseph and Simeon were both alive and well in Egypt, and all these things God was working for him, to save him and all his children and grandchildren alive through the time of famine.

But he could not part with Benjamin, he was afraid to let him go; so the others did not go back for some time, for they knew it would be no use to go without him. At last all the food that they had brought from Egypt was gone, and Jacob was obliged to let Benjamin go with the others to buy some more, to save them all from dying of hunger.

When they reached Egypt again with Benjamin, Joseph had them all to dine with him, and when he served out the food for them, he gave Benjamin five times as much as any of the others. He waited to find out if they were still jealous, for as they thought that no one understood their language, they talked freely together. But they did not show any signs of anger or jealousy.

Joseph gave them one more trial. When they left to go home, he had his own silver drinking cup put in the top of Benjamin's sack of corn. When they had got a little way from the city his servants were sent after them to search their sacks, and they agreed that the one in whose sack it was found should be taken back and kept as a prisoner.

But when the missing cup was found in Benjamin's sack, not one of his brothers would leave him; they all went back with him to the city with their clothes rent. They entreated Joseph to let Benjamin go home, for it would break his father's heart to part with him, and one of the others would stay and be his slave.

When Joseph saw the change that had taken place in his brothers, he did not try to hide them any longer who he was. He said: "I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt." When they heard this they were very much astonished and afraid, for they thought that now he would surely punish them, but he comforted them, and kissed them all, and told them not to be angry with themselves for sending him down there, for it was God sending him before them to save their lives and the lives of their families.

As this was only the second year of the famine, Joseph told his brothers to go home and fetch their father and their families, and he would feed them all through the five years that were yet to come.

The news that Joseph's brethren were come soon spread through the palace and reached the ears of Pharaoh. Everyone loved Joseph, for they all looked upon him as their deliverer; and Pharaoh was glad to have an opportunity to do something for them. So he sent wagons out of Egypt, to fetch Jacob and the wives and children of Joseph's brothers, and sent plenty of food for them to eat on the way.

When Jacob and his sons were come, Pharaoh gave them one of the richest spots in all the land of Egypt,—the land of Goshen—and there they lived in peace and plenty, with their families and flocks and herds.

Think what a lesson of God's way this must have been for Joseph's brothers, as well as for Joseph himself. Surely they learned something of His forgiving love, using even their own wicked deeds, and making these work for their own salvation and the salvation of others, when they repented of their wicked works. More of what God was teaching by these things we will learn another time.