

Joseph Presented His Father to Pharaoh

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain how God used something that was a thing of horror to the Egyptians to keep Israel a separate people so they could grow into a great nation while in Egypt. In this topic, we will see that Joseph presented his father to Pharaoh.

After Joseph had seen and talked with his father, he went to Pharaoh to tell him that his father and the rest of his family had arrived in Egypt. Genesis 47:1-4 says, “Then Joseph went and told Pharaoh, and said, ‘My father and my brothers, their flocks and their herds and all that they possess, have come from the land of Canaan; and indeed they *are* in the land of Goshen.’ And he took five men from among his brothers and presented them to Pharaoh. Then Pharaoh said to his brothers, ‘What *is* your occupation?’ And they said to Pharaoh, ‘Your servants *are* shepherds, both we *and* also our fathers.’ And they said to Pharaoh, ‘We have come to dwell in the land, because your servants have no pasture for their flocks, for the famine *is* severe in the land of Canaan. Now therefore, please let your servants dwell in the land of Goshen.’” Here, we see that Joseph took five of his brothers with him when he went to tell Pharaoh that his family had arrived in Egypt.

Joseph arrived at the house of Pharaoh and told him that his father and brothers had done as Pharaoh had instructed and had come from the land of Canaan to Egypt. They had brought with them their flocks, and their herds, and all of their possessions when they came from Canaan to Egypt. Then, Joseph said that they were still in the area where they came when they first reached Egypt, which was the land of Goshen. The land of Goshen was the area of Egypt located in the northeast section of Egypt in the delta region of the Nile River. That was the first area the family reached when they came from Canaan. However, it was also an area of much grass for the sheep and cattle because it was watered by the Nile River. Joseph took five of his brothers with him to present to Pharaoh so that Pharaoh also could become acquainted with part of the family of Joseph. One of the first questions Pharaoh asked the brothers was, “What is your occupation?”

This question made it possible for the brothers to make their request to Pharaoh to live in the area of Goshen. The brothers told Pharaoh that they were shepherds. They also told Pharaoh that had been the occupation of their fathers as well. This was important for Pharaoh to know because it meant that these men had grown up as shepherds and had been shown from childhood the best things to do to care for the cattle, sheep and goats. That statement later led Pharaoh to make a request of Joseph regarding his own cattle. After answering the question of Pharaoh, the brothers went on to tell Pharaoh why they had come to the land of Egypt. They said there was no grass in the land of Canaan to feed their flocks because the famine was very severe in the land of Canaan. Then, they made their request to Pharaoh. They asked Pharaoh to allow them to remain in the land

of Goshen, because they had seen that there was much grass in that area.

Genesis 47:5-10 says, “Then Pharaoh spoke to Joseph, saying, ‘Your father and your brothers have come to you. The land of Egypt *is* before you. Have your father and brothers dwell in the best of the land; let them dwell in the land of Goshen. And if you know *any* competent men among them, then make them chief herdsmen over my livestock.’ Then Joseph brought in his father Jacob and set him before Pharaoh; and Jacob blessed Pharaoh. Pharaoh said to Jacob, ‘How old *are* you?’ And Jacob said to Pharaoh, ‘The days of the years of my pilgrimage *are* one hundred and thirty years; few and evil have been the days of the years of my life, and they have not attained to the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage.’ So Jacob blessed Pharaoh, and went out from before Pharaoh.” Pharaoh gave Joseph instructions for his family after he had heard their request.

Pharaoh recognized that the land of Egypt was prepared for the famine because Joseph had told Pharaoh how to prepare for the coming famine during the seven years of plenty. He realized that Egypt would also be facing starvation if Joseph had not told him how to prepare the land for the famine. As a result, Pharaoh wanted the family of Joseph to have the land that would be the best for shepherds with large flocks of cattle, sheep and goats. In addition, since the Egyptians considered shepherds an abomination, he probably thought it would be best to have the family in an area where they did not have regular contact with the other Egyptians. Pharaoh then instructed Joseph to have his family remain in the land of Goshen since the Nile River caused much grass to grow there and that would provide plenty of food for their herds and flocks.

Then, Pharaoh made his request of Joseph. Pharaoh said, “And if you know any competent men among them, then make them chief herdsmen over my livestock.” Here, we see that Pharaoh recognized that Joseph probably had some brothers who knew more about caring for flocks than any of the Egyptians. The word translated “competent” means *strength of power* and is most frequently used to speak of military strength. However, in this use, it refers to *men of strength and knowledge of caring for flocks*. As a result, Pharaoh said that if any of the brothers were known for their ability to care for herds and flocks, Joseph should appoint those brothers to be the chief herdsmen over the livestock of Pharaoh.

Later, Joseph also brought his father into the palace to meet Pharaoh. When Pharaoh saw Jacob, the first recorded question he asked Jacob was, “How old are you?” The word translated “pilgrimage” usually means *sojourner or stranger*. That word was applied to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob during the time they lived in the land of Canaan because they had no property rights. Abraham had purchased a piece of land to bury Sarah and Jacob had purchased a piece of land to build an altar. Since these were small pieces of land, they did not include property rights. As a result, Jacob was considered a sojourner his entire life because he had no permanent place to live. Abraham had lived one hundred seventy-five years, and Isaac had lived one hundred and eighty years, while Jacob was

only one hundred and thirty years old, so he felt that his years had been few in comparison. He also felt that the years had been evil because of the many difficult things he had experienced. In addition, for the last twenty-two years, he had thought that Joseph was dead and that had filled him with sorrow and grief. However, before Jacob left the presence of Pharaoh, he gave him a blessing. Then, he went on his way and returned to the land of Goshen for the remaining years of his life.

Genesis 47:11-14 says, “And Joseph situated his father and his brothers, and gave them a possession in the land of Egypt, in the best of the land, in the land of Rameses, as Pharaoh had commanded. Then Joseph provided his father, his brothers, and all his father’s household with bread, according to the number in *their* families. Now *there was* no bread in all the land; for the famine *was* very severe, so that the land of Egypt and the land of Canaan languished because of the famine. And Joseph gathered up all the money that was found in the land of Egypt and in the land of Canaan, for the grain which they bought; and Joseph brought the money into Pharaoh’s house.” Pharaoh had commanded, in Genesis 47:6a, “The land of Egypt *is* before you. Have your father and brothers dwell in the best of the land; let them dwell in the land of Goshen.” Here, we see that Joseph followed the command of Pharaoh. They were given a place to live in the land of Goshen. This was the best land for cattle and sheep because there was abundant grass for cattle and flocks in that area due to the Nile River. In addition to having land for their cattle and flocks, Joseph was also able to provide his entire family with grain, so they had bread throughout the remaining years of the famine. This is an illustration of the fact that the plan of Joseph made it possible for many people to live through the famine, including the family of Joseph.

Joseph had been faithful in serving Pharaoh and preparing the land of Egypt for the famine. The famine was very severe and had a very great impact on both the land of Egypt and the land of Canaan. The word translated “languished” means to *faint, to become feeble or to become weak*. The people became discouraged because of the famine. It was so severe that there was no bread throughout the land of Egypt. This shows again that very few of the people had prepared for the famine during the seven years of plenty. That is why Genesis 41:55-56 said, “So when all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread. Then Pharaoh said to all the Egyptians, ‘Go to Joseph; whatever he says to you, do.’ The famine was over all the face of the earth, and Joseph opened all the storehouses and sold to the Egyptians. And the famine became severe in the land of Egypt.” The longer the famine lasted, the more severe the conditions became.

Here, we see that as the famine continued, the people eventually used up all of the money they had in order to buy grain to make bread. This was true both in the land of Egypt and also in the land of Canaan. Meanwhile, Joseph did not keep the money. Instead, Joseph brought that money into the house of Pharaoh. Pharaoh had given Joseph the key position of leadership to prepare for the famine. However, Joseph did not use that position to personally benefit himself. Instead, he used that position to save the lives of

many people from starvation. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to understand that godly leadership is not selfish. Instead, the desire of godly leaders is to serve the needs of others instead of seeking personal benefits for self. We also want to help our children learn to show, by their example, that godly leaders seek to serve others because the love of God has been poured out in their hearts. This will provide others with an example of the greatness of the love of God. Christ modeled this love for us when He gave His life a ransom for others. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain this lesson.