

Joseph Became the Second Ruler of Egypt

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to grow in godly discernment and wisdom so they will be able to give practical advice from the Word of God and help people learn to apply the Word to their own lives and situations. In this topic, we will see that Joseph was appointed by Pharaoh to be the second ruler in the land of Egypt.

Joseph had interpreted the dreams of Pharaoh and had suggested a practical plan to Pharaoh to help the nation of Egypt prepare for the coming famine. Pharaoh realized that Joseph was the only person who had the discernment and wisdom to carry out that plan because he was guided by the Spirit of the living and true God. Genesis 41:40-45 says, “You shall be over my house, and all my people shall be ruled according to your word; only in regard to the throne will I be greater than you.’ And Pharaoh said to Joseph, ‘See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt.’ Then Pharaoh took his signet ring off his hand and put it on Joseph’s hand; and he clothed him in garments of fine linen and put a gold chain around his neck. And he had him ride in the second chariot which he had; and they cried out before him, ‘Bow the knee!’ So he set him over all the land of Egypt. Pharaoh also said to Joseph, ‘I *am* Pharaoh, and without your consent no man may lift his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt.’ And Pharaoh called Joseph’s name Zaphnath-Paaneah. And he gave him as a wife Asenath, the daughter of Poti-Pherah priest of On. So Joseph went out over *all* the land of Egypt.” In these verses, we see that the Lord used Pharaoh to move Joseph from the prison to the palace.

The very first responsibility Pharaoh gave Joseph was to appoint Joseph over his house. This was the same responsibility, but for a different household, that had been given to Joseph by Potiphar. However, this included a much greater responsibility because the next thing Pharaoh said was that Joseph would be over all of the people of Egypt. The only person in the entire land who would have more authority was Pharaoh himself. Pharaoh also gave Joseph four things to show that Joseph had been given this authority. The first was the signet ring of Pharaoh. Pharaoh took that ring off his own hand and placed it on the hand of Joseph. In that day, the signet ring was used to sign all legal documents. Hot wax would be placed at the bottom of the document and then the ring would be pressed into the hot wax so that the image on the ring was placed on the bottom of the document. This meant the king had delegated all legal authority to Joseph so anything he signed became the law of the land.

Pharaoh also did three other things, including: giving Joseph clothing of fine linen, giving him a gold chain to wear around his neck, and giving him the second chariot of Egypt with men who ran before it to say, “bow the knee” as Joseph rode wherever he went.

When people saw Joseph coming and heard the words of the runners, it was clear that Pharaoh had given Joseph authority over the entire land. Pharaoh also defined that authority since Joseph was second to Pharaoh. He said, “I am Pharaoh, and without your consent no man may lift his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt.” Then, Pharaoh gave Joseph a new name or title, Zaphnath-Paaneah, which means *treasury of the glorious rest*. Finally, Pharaoh gave Joseph a wife. Her name was Asenath and she was the daughter of Poti-Pherah priest of On. By the time Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh, he was over all of the land of Egypt. The Lord had allowed all of the suffering, through which Joseph had gone, to prepare him for this great responsibility.

Genesis 41:46-52 says, “Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh king of Egypt. And Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh, and went throughout all the land of Egypt. Now in the seven plentiful years the ground brought forth abundantly. So he gathered up all the food of the seven years which were in the land of Egypt, and laid up the food in the cities; he laid up in every city the food of the fields which surrounded them. Joseph gathered very much grain, as the sand of the sea, until he stopped counting, for *it was* immeasurable. And to Joseph were born two sons before the years of famine came, whom Asenath, the daughter of Poti-Pherah priest of On, bore to him. Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh: ‘For God has made me forget all my toil and all my father’s house.’ And the name of the second he called Ephraim: ‘For God has caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction.’” Joseph was thirty by the time he was brought before Pharaoh. He had been seventeen when he was sold as a slave by his brothers, so he had suffered for thirteen years to prepare him for this service.

Over the following months, Joseph traveled throughout the land of Egypt. In each city, he found places to store the grain. He appointed those who were responsible for gathering one-fifth of the grain from the people, during the seven years of plentiful crops, and taking the grain to storage places in each city. Then, throughout the seven years, Joseph continued to travel throughout Egypt to make certain that everything was ready before the seven years of famine began. During those seven years, the crops were so plentiful that even though only one-fifth of the grain was gathered by Joseph, a huge amount of grain was gathered. The amount was compared to the sand of the sea and became impossible to even continue counting. It could no longer be measured because there was so much grain. As we saw in our last topic, one thing of interest to notice is the fact that the people, as a whole, did not save part of the grain from their remaining fourth-fifths of the grain. They did not prepare for the coming famine.

We also see that Joseph and his wife had two sons born to them during the seven years of plenty. The meaning of the names Joseph gave to his sons explains why Joseph was able to care for his brothers when they came to him for food during the famine. Joseph named the first son “Manasseh”. That name means *causing to forget*. We see what Joseph chose to forget, by the statement Joseph made about that name. Joseph said, “For God has made me forget all my toil and all my father’s house.” Here, we see that God was the One who gave Joseph strength to forget or let go. First, Joseph was able to let go of all of

the unjust suffering he had suffered during the thirteen years he was a slave or a prisoner. Second, he was able to let go of the fact that he might never see his family again in order to preserve many people alive. Joseph named the second son “Ephraim”, which means, *I shall be doubly fruitful*. Joseph also gave the full meaning of this name when he said, “For God has caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction.” As a slave, in his suffering, Joseph did not even know he would have one son. However, God had a plan for Joseph that he did not know. Here, we see that God chose to give him two sons, not just one.

Genesis 41:53-57 says, “Then the seven years of plenty which were in the land of Egypt ended, and the seven years of famine began to come, as Joseph had said. The famine was in all lands, but in all the land of Egypt there was bread. 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. So all countries came to Joseph in Egypt to buy *grain*, because the famine was severe in all lands.” Joseph had prepared well during the seven years of plenty. Even though they knew Joseph was gathering grain in every city, most of the rest of the people of Egypt had not prepared for the famine by storing a larger amount of their own grain. As a result, even though there was bread throughout the land of Egypt when the famine first began, the little grain that had been stored individually was soon gone and then we see that all of the land of Egypt was famished.

It was when the people of Egypt became famished that they cried to Pharaoh for bread. Then, Pharaoh told the people, “Go to Joseph; whatever he says to you, do.” Joseph had prepared carefully for the famine. He had people in charge of every storehouse. He told the officers he had appointed to be in charge of each storehouse, to open all of the storehouses and sell grain to the other Egyptians. The storehouses were scattered throughout the entire country. Joseph had shown his wisdom in the suggestion he had given to Pharaoh more than seven years earlier. Joseph had told Pharaoh, in Genesis 41:34-36, “Let Pharaoh do *this*, and let him appoint officers over the land, to collect one-fifth of the *produce* of the land of Egypt in the seven plentiful years. 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.” When Pharaoh appointed him, that was what Joseph had done.

However, the famine was not limited to the nation of Egypt. All of the surrounding nations also suffered from the famine. Joseph opened all of the storehouses and sold grain to the Egyptians. Then, the famine became even more severe. As the famine continued to get worse, people in the surrounding countries heard there was grain in the land of Egypt. As a result, people in these other countries also came to Egypt to buy grain. This became necessary because the famine was severe in all of the surrounding

lands. We see that those who came from other countries came to Joseph to buy food. The people of each city of Egypt could buy grain in their own city, but those from other countries had to come to Joseph because Pharaoh had said, “Go to Joseph; whatever he says to you, do.”

We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain how the Lord used Joseph to preserve the lives of the people of Egypt, as well as to save the lives of the people of the surrounding nations. Here, we see that the Lord was going to help many nations. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain how the Lord worked through Joseph.