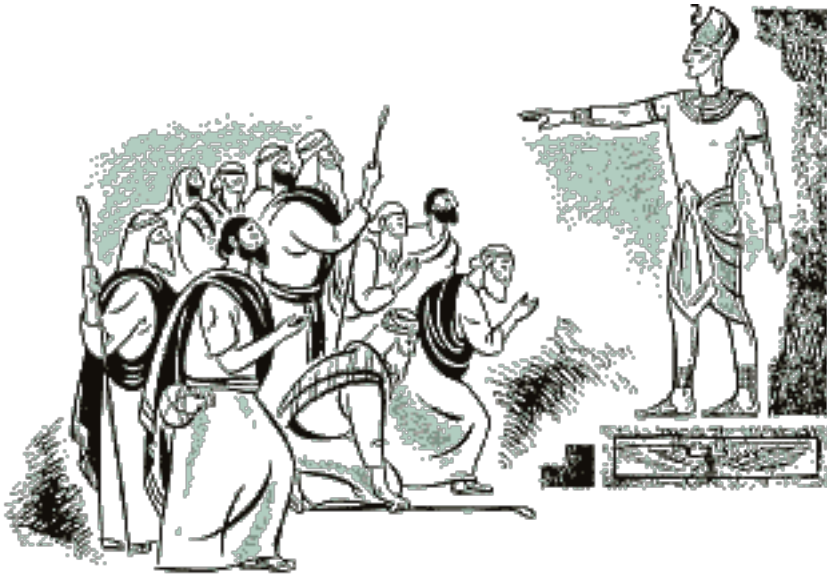


WHEN DREAMS COME TRUE



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YES, Pharaoh's dreams came true, just as Joseph had explained them. There was a great famine in all the land of Egypt, which spread to the land of Canaan, the land that God promised to Abraham, and to Isaac, and to Jacob. Joseph's father, Jacob, and his eleven brothers who sold him to be a slave in Egypt, were running short of food because of the famine.

So Jacob sent ten of his sons all the way to Egypt to see if they could buy food. They had heard that although there also was a famine in Egypt, the people there had food for themselves and for others. They did not know, of course, that Joseph was the one who had made provision for the food supplies of Egypt. In fact, Joseph's father thought that he was dead.

Jacob's other son was much younger. His name was Benjamin. He loved Benjamin very much, and would not let him go to Egypt with the other ten boys. He was afraid that something would happen to him, even as something had happened to Joseph years before.

When Jacob's sons arrived in Egypt and asked if they could buy grain and food, they were taken to see their brother Joseph. Of course they hadn't seen Joseph in many years, and they, too, probably thought he was dead. They were taken before Joseph because he was the ruler of Egypt, and had charge of all the food. Now we would call him a food administrator.

No one could buy food and take it out of Egypt unless Joseph was willing that they should do so. When they explained that they had come from Canaan, and that their father was very old and needed food, Joseph knew they were his own brothers.

Well, I suppose when Joseph saw his older brothers standing before him asking for food, he must have remembered those wonderful dreams that God had given him when he was a young man. Those dreams had shown to Joseph and to his brothers that they would one day bow down before him. And sure enough, here they were, bowing down before their brother Joseph pleading for something to eat.

Of course they didn't know they were talking to their very own brother whom they had sold to be a slave. They probably thought it was very strange that Joseph should ask them so many questions about their father and about their youngest brother, Benjamin, who had been kept home for safety. No wonder, though, that Joseph asked questions! He loved his father, and he loved his brothers, and he was anxious to find out all that had happened to them since they had sold him to be a slave.

Joseph longed to see Benjamin, his younger brother. So he worked out a plan to make his brothers bring Benjamin with them the next time they came for food. And what do you suppose his plan was? It was this! He gave them a supply of grain. To each brother he gave a sack full. Of course, they paid money to Joseph for this grain; but after filling their sacks with the food, Joseph told his servant to put their money back in their sacks with the grain. You see, he did not really want to take money from his brothers for the food.

But Joseph made his brothers believe that he was not sure they were telling him the truth. He told them he thought they were spies.

Naturally they felt very badly about this, and insisted that it was not true. But Joseph replied that there was something they would have to do if they wanted him to believe them. He said that he would keep one of the brothers in Egypt until they returned and brought Benjamin with them. If they did not return with Benjamin, this would prove to Joseph that they were not telling the truth—that they did not really have a brother called Benjamin.

The brothers thought that this was a rather hard thing,, but there was nothing else they could do. So they went back to Canaan to their father Jacob, and to their youngest brother, Benjamin, and related the strange things which had happened to them.

Jacob didn't want Benjamin to be taken into Egypt. He feared that harm would come to him, and that he would never see Benjamin again. He said he had lost Joseph and he just couldn't let Benjamin go with them and perhaps lose him too.

But the famine continued, and again Jacob and his family were in need of food. And you know, when people get hungry they will do things they wouldn't do at other times. So finally Jacob decided he would let his sons take Benjamin and go back to Egypt for more food.

When they arrived in Egypt the second time they were again taken to Joseph. Joseph knew right away who they were, and when he saw his young brother Benjamin with them he felt so glad that he just had to weep. But Joseph didn't want all his brothers to see how he felt, so he went off in a room by himself and had a really good cry. Then he wiped the tears from his eyes and washed his face, and went back to his brothers.

He told his servants to get dinner ready, and then they all ate together. But the brothers thought Joseph was an Egyptian, and it was against the law for an Egyptian to eat at the same table with people of other nations, especially with Hebrews. So Joseph arranged to have a table all by himself. You see, he was not ready to let his brothers know that he was their own brother whom they had sold into Egypt.

That must have been a very exciting dinner! Can't you imagine those brothers wondering what would happen to them next, and why the food administrator of Egypt was serving them such a delicious meal? And can you imagine the many thoughts which were going through Joseph's mind as he remembered all of his experiences since his brothers had sold him into Egypt?

Finally dinner was over, and they all retired for the night. The next morning another supply of grain was prepared for the brothers to take back to Canaan. Again each one was given a sack full. But this time Joseph told a servant to take his own silver cup and put it in the top of Benjamin's sack.

Now wasn't that odd?

So they all started on their way back to Canaan, but before they traveled very far Joseph's servants came hurrying after them. They stopped the brothers, and explained that Joseph's silver cup had been stolen. Of course the brothers were sure that they had not taken the cup, so they were very willing to take the bags of grain off the donkeys' backs and open them up to prove to Joseph's servants that they had not stolen the cup.

But when they came to Benjamin's sack, there was Joseph's silver cup. My, how badly they felt! They had promised their father so faithfully that they would bring Benjamin back, and now they thought he would be kept in jail in Egypt.

What could they do? Well, here's what they did, and I suppose it was about the best thing to do under the circumstances. All the brothers went right back to Joseph and tried to explain to him that they were not to blame for what had happened. Joseph explained that the brother in whose sack the silver cup was found would have to remain with him as a prisoner in Egypt. All the others, he said, would be allowed to go back home. But this was just what they didn't want, because they had promised their father that they would surely bring Benjamin back to him.

They really were in trouble, weren't they? Then Judah, one of the older brothers, explained to Joseph very patiently how terribly hard it would be for their poor old father if Benjamin should be kept in

Egypt. He told Joseph that he was quite sure if Benjamin was not with them when they arrived home their father would die of a broken heart. Wouldn't that have been terribly sad?

Judah was very much concerned about it, and he offered to remain in Egypt to take Benjamin's place. Now that was a loving thing to be willing to do, wasn't it? It really meant that Judah was offering to go to jail instead of his brother. This showed a great deal of love for his brother.

It pleased Joseph very much, so he sent all the Egyptians out of the room, and he and his brothers were left there alone. Then he broke right down and wept before them, and said:

"I am Joseph, your brother!"

My, what a surprise that must have been to them! And I imagine they were afraid, too. But Joseph told them not to be afraid. He said they should not blame themselves for having sold him into Egypt because God had really wanted him to come to Egypt. Yes, God wanted Joseph to be in Egypt to take charge of the food supply so that all his brothers and their families might have food to eat during the seven years of famine. Now, wasn't that a wonderful and forgiving spirit?

Joseph's brothers had been jealous of him, but he was not jealous of them. He didn't want to punish them for what they had done, so he told them to go back to Canaan and bring their father, and their families, and all their flocks and herds down to Egypt. He promised that he would give them a large section of land in a part of the country called Goshen, where they could live.

That was a fine thing for Joseph to do for his brothers.

In this way Joseph's dreams finally came true. He was now ruler over his father and over his brothers, and not only ruler, but he was their savior. Because he loved God and because God helped him, he had been able to provide food for the whole family.

In some ways Joseph was just like Jesus. Jesus came here to earth, just as Joseph went into Egypt. Joseph was put in prison after he went into Egypt. And Jesus, after coming to earth, was also put in prison.

But it was much worse than the prison in which Joseph had been. Jesus was put into the grave, the great prison-house of death. But just as Joseph was freed from prison and made a ruler, so Jesus was freed from the prison-house of the grave, and he will become a great Ruler, too. He is the great King who will rule over all the earth; and just as Joseph provided food to keep his people alive, so Jesus will provide food which will give life to everybody on the earth. Isn't that wonderful? And the food which Jesus will provide will be so nourishing that the people who eat it will live forever! The Bible calls it the Bread of Life.

So, are we not glad that God was so good to Joseph? And are we not even more glad that God loves everybody so much that he sent Jesus here to provide food that will give life, by and by, to all who want it? Really, this is what God meant when he told Abraham that he planned to give blessings to all the families of the earth!

QUESTIONS

- Why was it necessary for Joseph's brethren to come to Egypt for food, and did they know that the ruler of Egypt who sold them food was their brother?
- Who was Benjamin, and why did his father not want him to go to Egypt?
- Why did Jacob and all his family go to Egypt to live?