

A SLAVE BECOMES RULER



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JOSEPH, that lovely boy who was so truly loved by his father, Jacob, was now in Egypt. It must have been very hard for him to be there among strangers. Probably he was homesick. But Joseph was not alone. The Bible tells us that God was with him, and that God blessed him.

The merchants who bought Joseph from his brothers sold him to a man named Potiphar. Potiphar was a very rich man, and he was also an officer of the king. In Egypt they called their kings Pharaohs. Joseph loved God, and he tried to do everything to please God. Even though he was a slave, Joseph knew that God would want him to do all his work just as well as he could do it. Because of this, Joseph

was a very good slave indeed, and besides, God helped him, and blessed him in everything he did.

Because Joseph was such a good worker, and was so anxious to please, his master was delighted with him. Because Potiphar was so pleased with Joseph, it was not long before he gave Joseph the job of managing all his business for him. Potiphar did not have to take care of anything, because God helped Joseph to be a good manager and worker. The Bible tells us that all Potiphar had to do was to eat. I hope, of course, that he didn't spend all his time eating!

But one day Potiphar's wife told a lie about Joseph. Her husband believed it, and it made him very angry with Joseph, and he had him put in jail. That was really trying, wasn't it, to be put in jail when he had done nothing wrong! But Joseph still trusted God. Even when he was in jail he tried to do everything as well as he could, and God blessed him there, too.

Before very long the keeper of the jail saw what a good man Joseph really was, and gave him charge over all the other prisoners in the jail. Wasn't that wonderful? The prison-keeper knew that Joseph was a good man, and he trusted him, and God blessed Joseph in the jail.

In those days of the long, long ago, kings and rulers became angry very easily. One day two of Pharaoh's officers did something he did not like, and he became very angry with them and had them put in jail. These were Pharaoh's chief butler and baker. This chief butler and the chief baker were put in jail where Joseph had charge of the prisoners. One night the butler and the baker each had a dream, and when Joseph met them the next morning he saw that they were very sad.

When he asked them why they were so sad, they told him about their dreams, and said that no one could explain what the dreams meant. Now Joseph knew a great deal about dreams, because God had given him two wonderful dreams when he was a very young man while he still lived with his father, Jacob, and with his brothers.

God helped Joseph to understand dreams, so he asked the butler and the baker to tell him their dreams, which they did.

The butler's dream had been a good one, and Joseph told the butler it meant that in three days he would be out of jail, and would again be Pharaoh's chief butler. My, how happy that butler must have been!

Joseph was happy, too, and when the butler left the jail Joseph asked him to speak to Pharaoh about him to see if something could be done to get him out of jail. The butler promised to do this, but before he arrived at Pharaoh's house, he had forgotten what he promised Joseph, and did not think about it again for two whole years! Wasn't that awful?

The baker's dream was not a good one. Joseph explained to the baker that his dream meant he was to be killed within three days. Although this was not a very good dream, Joseph knew what it meant, and he told the truth about it. This proved that God was blessing Joseph, and helping him to understand dreams and to be successful in all the other good things he was doing.

After Pharaoh's butler had been out of jail for two years, Pharaoh himself had two dreams. He was very much worried about these dreams. At that time kings and rich men hired people to explain their dreams for them. Pharaoh sent for these men, but they were unable to tell him the meaning of his dreams. They simply didn't know what Pharaoh's dreams meant. This made the king sadder than ever. He was really worried because he did not know what these two remarkable dreams meant. He may have thought some great trouble was coming to him, and he became terribly concerned.

Of course the butler knew how much Pharaoh worried about his dreams. You see, a butler has to be very well acquainted with his master, because he takes care of his master's wines and brings him his meals. The butler found out from talking to Pharaoh how much he was worrying about his dreams.

And then the butler remembered Joseph, that Hebrew youth who had charge of the prisoners in jail, and how correctly Joseph had

explained his dream. The butler remembered, too, that he had promised to speak to Pharaoh about Joseph, and now he felt sorry that he had forgotten to do so.

Well, here was a good chance to tell Pharaoh about Joseph, so he did. Pharaoh sent for Joseph right away, and related his dreams to him. They were very strange dreams! In his first dream Pharaoh saw seven fat cows come up out of the water. They were very nice looking and healthy. And then in his dream he saw seven lean cows come up out of the water, and these seven lean cows ate up the seven fat cows.

Wasn't that an odd dream?

Pharaoh's second dream was just as strange. In this dream the king saw seven very large ears of corn. And then he saw seven ears of corn which really had no kernels at all. These seven poor ears of corn ate up the other seven, just as the seven lean cows ate up the seven fat cows.

Of course these were only dreams, because actually we know that lean cows can't eat fat cows, nor can lean ears of corn eat fat ears of corn-can they? But then, strange things happen in dreams, and the things which happened in these dreams were so strange that Pharaoh was greatly worried.

Joseph was a very wise young man indeed. He was wise because God was with him, and helped him to understand dreams. So with God's help Joseph knew what Pharaoh's dreams meant.

He explained to Pharaoh that these dreams meant there were to be seven years when everything on the farms, the grain and everything else, would grow very well, because there would be plenty of rain.

Then there were to be seven years when nothing would grow.

So he told Pharaoh that the proper thing to do during the seven years of plenty was to store away all the grain and food they possibly could. Then, you see, everybody would have plenty to eat during the seven years when nothing would grow. Wasn't that wonderful?

Pharaoh was delighted that Joseph could explain the dreams for him because, knowing in advance about these seven good years,

they could take Joseph's advice, and thus no one would go hungry. Yes, Pharaoh was well pleased, and what do you suppose he did? Why, he released Joseph from prison, and made him ruler over all Egypt.

From that time on no one in the whole country had any more authority than Joseph, except the king himself. He instructed Joseph to make all the necessary arrangements to take care of the food which would grow in abundance during the seven years of plenty, and Joseph did a very good job of this.

Wasn't it wonderful how God blessed Joseph in all these experiences?

First he was sent as a slave to Egypt and became ruler in Potiphar's house. Then he was put in prison and became a ruler there. Finally he was freed from jail and made ruler over all the land of Egypt.

Now what do you suppose was the reason for all this?

QUESTIONS

- For whom did Joseph go to work when he first arrived in Egypt?
- Why was Joseph put in jail in Egypt, and how did he get along there?
- Explain the circumstances by which Joseph was released from jail and made a ruler in Egypt.
- Was Joseph made a ruler in Egypt because he was so wise, or because God arranged it that way?