

GENESIS

Lesson 58

Genesis 41:41-57 Joseph the Overseer

⁴¹ So Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I hereby put you in charge of the whole land of Egypt." ⁴² Then Pharaoh took his signet ring from his finger and put it on Joseph's finger. He dressed him in robes of fine linen and put a gold chain around his neck. ⁴³ He had him ride in a chariot as his second-in-command, and people shouted before him, "Make way!" Thus he put him in charge of the whole land of Egypt.

⁴⁴ Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I am Pharaoh, but without your word no one will lift hand or foot in all Egypt." ⁴⁵ Pharaoh gave Joseph the name Zaphenath-Paneah and gave him Asenath daughter of Potiphera, priest of On, to be his wife. And Joseph went throughout the land of Egypt.

⁴⁶ Joseph was thirty years old when he entered the service of Pharaoh king of Egypt. And Joseph went out from Pharaoh's presence and traveled throughout Egypt. ⁴⁷ During the seven years of abundance the land produced plentifully. ⁴⁸ Joseph collected all the food produced in those seven years of abundance in Egypt and stored it in the cities. In each city he put the food grown in the fields surrounding it. ⁴⁹ Joseph stored up huge quantities of grain, like the sand of the sea; it was so much that he stopped keeping records because it was beyond measure.

⁵⁰ Before the years of famine came, two sons were born to Joseph by Asenath daughter of Potiphera, priest of On. ⁵¹ Joseph named his firstborn Manasseh and said, "It is because God has made me forget all my trouble and all my father's household." ⁵² The second son he named Ephraim and said, "It is because God has made me fruitful in the land of my suffering."

⁵³ The seven years of abundance in Egypt came to an end, ⁵⁴ and the seven years of famine began, just as Joseph had said. There was famine in all the other lands, but in the whole land of Egypt there was food. ⁵⁵ When all Egypt began to feel the famine, the people cried to Pharaoh for food. Then Pharaoh told all the Egyptians, "Go to Joseph and do what he tells you." ⁵⁶ When the famine had spread over the whole country, Joseph opened all the storehouses and sold grain to the Egyptians, for the famine was severe throughout Egypt. ⁵⁷ And all the world came to Egypt to buy grain from Joseph, because the famine was severe everywhere.

Genesis 41:41-57 [NIV]

In this lesson, we will examine the Pharaoh's response to Joseph's interpretation of his dreams. As we can see in the text above, in spite of Joseph being a prisoner at the time, the Pharaoh immediately put him in charge of "the whole land of Egypt." He recognized immediately that God was with Joseph and that all Joseph had told him was going to happen.

The Pharaoh's first act was to give Joseph his signet ring. This is an incredible sign to everyone. The signet ring was how the Pharaoh made everything that he did official. Signet rings had a specific design, raised above the ring, and when it was impressed into a clay seal, it indicated that whatever was written in the sealed document was official, representing the will of the Pharaoh. The Pharaoh was, in effect, passing much of his power over to Joseph, a Hebrew prisoner whom he had now freed.

Next, Pharaoh dressed Joseph in "robes of fine linen" and then he placed a gold chain around his neck. Joseph, as his second in command, would now ride in the second chariot, right behind the Pharaoh. Joseph now traveled throughout Egypt, signaling to everyone that he was now "in charge of the whole land of Egypt."

The Pharaoh's third act was to provide Joseph with a new name, Zaphenath-Paneah, and an Egyptian wife, Asenath.

Joseph then traveled "throughout the land of Egypt" and began his service to the Pharaoh. Joseph would have had much to do in preparing for the coming abundance and arranging for the storage of grain at all of Egypt's grain storage sites. Records needed to be compiled and people needed to be appointed across the land to help Joseph administer this large and very complex task. In fact, scripture tells us that the abundance Joseph stored up "was so much that he stopped keeping records because it was beyond measure."

Can you imagine what Joseph was experiencing? Thirteen years earlier, his brothers had sold him into slavery, and then Potiphar had him thrown in prison because of the false accusations of Potiphar's wife. Further, when he might have had a chance to plead his case to the Pharaoh, the Cupbearer forgot his promise, and Joseph continued his stay in prison until the day Pharaoh summoned him to his court. Now, overnight, Joseph is in charge of all of Egypt. He now has a wife, and two sons, both of which he gave Hebrew names—Manasseh and Ephraim. He has not forsaken his family lineage and continues to place God at the center of his life and work.

The years of plenty came as God had told Joseph, as well as the seven years of famine. The famine became so great that, "all the world came to Egypt to buy grain from Joseph." The dreams that Joseph originally told his father and brothers about had now come true (Genesis 37:5-9).

This period in Joseph's life is also recounted in Psalm 105:16-22:

He called down famine on the land and destroyed all their supplies of food; and he sent a man before them—Joseph, sold as a slave. They bruised his feet with shackles, his neck was put in irons, till what he foretold came to pass, till the word of the Lord proved him true. The king sent and released him, the ruler of peoples set him free. He made him master of his household, ruler over all he possessed, to instruct his princes as he pleased and teach his elders wisdom.

In the last few verses at the close of Genesis Chapter 41, Joseph serves as a testimony to all of us, demonstrating for us what it means to live each day worshipping and following God's will. Never in the past thirteen years did Joseph cry out against God for allowing every hardship to happen to him. He never complained or turned his back on God; he was faithful in all that he did and God used him in a mighty way.

We can also see that God's plan, God's vision, is an eternal one. He was using the experiences in Joseph's life, in the life of the Pharaoh, and the famine event to prepare the way for the early roots of God's chosen people to come to Egypt.

In the next lesson, we see Joseph's brothers coming to Egypt during the famine.

Let's spend this week focusing more on living a life that pleases God, and one that reflects His infinite mercy and grace in our lives to all those who are lost and living amongst us.

In Christ,

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