

Life of Joseph

Lessons in Humility, Leadership and Forgiveness

The Brutal Famine

- The famine intensified and became very severe in Egypt and Canaan [Gen 47:13].
 - The famine had previously been described as severe (כָּבֵד, kated = heavy, difficult, severe) [Gen 43:1; 47:4], but here the intensifier מְאֹד (m'od = exceedingly, very) is added.
 - The lands of Egypt and Canaan wasted away (לָהָה, lahah = languish, waste away) as a result.
- When the Egyptians ran out of money to buy food, Joseph asked that they pay with their livestock [Gen 47:14-17].
 - Joseph was faithful with the money used to purchase grain [v. 14].
 - This Pharaoh was Sesostris III (1878-1843 B.C.).
 - The Egyptians came to Joseph and asked for free government handouts [v. 15].
 - Joseph did not give in to their demands and asked for payment with livestock [v. 16].
 - The Egyptians responded to Joseph's firm hand of leadership and brought their livestock to exchange for food [v. 17].
 - It is notable that they brought horses and donkeys along with their herds and flocks.
 - ✦ Horses were highly valued in Egyptian culture.
 - ✦ There was no value in retaining work animals since their land was no longer productive.
- The following year, the Egyptians needed food again and sold themselves and their land for food [Gen 47:18-26].
 - The Egyptian people realized the desperate predicament they were in [v. 18].
 - This time they did not ask for free food because Joseph had established a precedent that he would not give in to such demands [v. 19].
 - They offered to exchange their land and their service for food, but they also asked Joseph for seed [v. 19].
 - Joseph purchased the land of Egypt with food and moved the people into the cities [vv. 20-21].
 - The only exception was the Egyptian priests that were supplied food by Pharaoh, so they had no need to sell their land [v. 22].
 - Joseph declared that the people would serve by sowing seed on Pharaoh's land [v. 23].
 - The fact that sowing and harvesting are even mentioned here indicates that these events had likely occurred during the final year of the famine.
 - Joseph's stipulations to the people for their servitude were very generous [v. 24].
 - The people were extremely grateful for Joseph's show of mercy and gladly accepted the terms of their service [v. 25].

- Joseph codified the terms of their agreement to ensure the people's fair treatment [v. 26].
- Meanwhile, during all of these events, the Hebrews prospered in Goshen [Gen 47:27].
 - They were able to acquire additional lands in Goshen after the Egyptians were forced to sell their lands.
 - God's hand of blessing was upon the Hebrews as they prospered and their population began to increase significantly.