

## Genesis 41: 7 Years of Severe Famine

Genesis 41 is an interesting chapter. It actually represents a major turning point in the life of Joseph. This of course was not the only turning point in his life, but certainly a major one. We know that the way his brothers betrayed him (similar to the way Jesus' Jewish "brothers" betrayed Him), was another major turning point. A second major turning point was when Joseph was falsely accused of attempted rape and imprisoned (similar to the way Jesus was falsely accused and executed though He was innocent of any crime, including "blasphemy").

This third major turning point was the one that elevated him to the second in command over all of Egypt. His position was created by Pharaoh who indicated that only he (Pharaoh), outranked Joseph. That's fairly astounding and it occurred, because God brought it about and Joseph submitted himself to Him.

I cannot imagine the emotions that Joseph went through after first being sold into slavery by his own brothers, being purchased by Potiphar who elevated him to the second in command over his entire household, then being thrown unceremoniously into a dungeon and languishing there for several years. If I try to emotionally place myself in that position, I start to sink. While I fully realize that God undoubtedly gave Joseph grace over the years, the events themselves were still likely somewhat traumatic for him. Yet, in spite of the degree of emotional trauma suffered, Joseph persevered in submitting himself to God for God's will to be done in and through him.

It is this latter Joseph that emerges when he finally reveals himself to his blood brothers and had nothing but love and forgiveness for them, didn't he? Joseph, in so many ways, is the near-perfect type of Christ. If you want to have a greater understanding of Jesus' personality, study Joseph. Yes, Joseph was fully human and had his sins (unlike Jesus). He was a bit of a braggart as a youngster and that was somewhat due to the way his own father singled him out for special treatment. That caused jealousy with his eleven other brothers.

But here in Genesis 41, we see a young man, who had grown to the point of willingly giving God the glory without being prompted to do so. After God gives Pharaoh two dreams that left him troubled and which no one could interpret, one of the servants remembers that Joseph had interpreted his own dream as he sat in Pharaoh's dungeon and it had turned out to be true. Pharaoh summoned Joseph to interpret the dreams and Joseph's first statement was succinct and gave God the glory.

*16 And Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, It is not in me: God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace. (KJV)*

How does a person do this unless they are already used to submitting themselves to God on a daily basis and at every temptation they are faced with in life? Joseph gave God the glory. We need to do the same, *daily*, and at every temptation faced.

Joseph proceeded to explain the meaning of the two dreams. Turns out they both meant the same thing, but as Joseph explains, the two dreams emphasize the fact that it would happen, no ifs, ands or buts about it.

In short, the two dreams spoke of seven years of *plenty* followed by seven years of *famine*. In fact, the seven years of famine would be so horrible that people would likely forget the years of plenty.

What is very interesting to me is that not *once* is there any indication that Joseph "felt" like he should ask God to intervene and *not* bring seven years of severe famine. That thought doesn't even seem to cross Joseph's mind.

Why not? Clearly, Joseph must have understood that God's will was going to be done. If we look, we can see God's grace in that He provided the good years of plenty *first*. The bad years of severe famine would *follow*.

Instead of petitioning God for a different result - to not send seven years of severe famine - Joseph was given insight and wisdom in knowing how to *handle* the severe famine. In fact, Pharaoh quickly realized that Joseph was the guy who would make the right decisions and deal with the famine in the best way possible, *if* they were willing to do what Joseph recommended.

During the seven wonderful years of plenty, the people enjoyed a great amount of food. But while those years were moving on toward the seven horrible years, Joseph was busy stockpiling grain in many silos throughout Egypt.

*48 And 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: the food of the field, which was round about every city, laid he up in the same.*

*49 And Joseph gathered corn as the sand of the sea, very much, until he left numbering; for it was without number. (KJV)*

Joseph was 30 years of age when he went into public service. Jesus began His public ministry at the age of 30 as well (Luke 3:23; cf also Numbers 4:3). There are actually many similarities between Joseph and Jesus, which could be a study in and of itself.

So why did God allow seven great years followed by seven horrible years? First, it likely had to do with God wanting the land to lie unused (fallow). Seven years of growth from the soil would leave much of it depleted. This is also why God imposed this rule for Israel (Exodus 23:11). This was the norm for American farmers decades ago. They might not wait seven years to let a field go fallow, but they tended to rotate crops so that every field experienced a time of no planting. This allowed the soil to regain the necessary nutrients and be ready for a future planting.

In today's "corporate" farming (not that farms are necessarily *owned* by corporations, but corporations have contractual agreements with many farmers so that they only grow certain types of food needed by corporations), fields are not necessarily allowed to lie fallow. They get around this with the use of potent chemical additives that are continually added to the soils.

The other reason that God likely sent seven terrible years that followed the good years is because it ultimately gave birth to the people who would be gathered together and called "Israel." This

occurred because the severe famine even reached to Joseph's father, mother and brothers in the land of Canaan. Because of this, they were forced to go to Egypt to buy grain. It wasn't simply Canaan either. Eventually, they wound up moving to Egypt.

<sup>57</sup> And all countries came into Egypt to Joseph for to buy corn; because that the famine was so sore in all lands. (KJV)

I really love the way Genesis 42 starts out. It's actually a bit hilarious due to father Jacob's sarcasm.

<sup>1</sup> *Now when Jacob saw that there was corn in Egypt, Jacob said unto his sons, Why do ye look one upon another?*

<sup>2</sup> *And he said, Behold, I have heard that there is corn in Egypt: get you down thither, and buy for us from thence; that we may live, and not die.*

<sup>3</sup> *And Joseph's ten brethren went down to buy corn in Egypt. (Gen 42:1-3 KJV)*

"Why do you look one upon another?" Great way of saying, "Why are you standing around doing nothing while we starve?" Reminds me a bit of Chumley and Tennessee Tuxedo (if you're old enough to remember that cartoon). "Duh, gee Tennessee..."

So we know ultimately, Joseph's brothers went to Egypt to buy food. There, they were met by this angry "lord" of the land who accused them of being spies. They begged for mercy and had to leave one of their own behind with a promise to bring the youngest back with them.

You probably know the story as well as I do. Eventually, they ran out of the grain they bought the first time and had to return to Egypt but with their youngest brother, Benjamin. It was then during this second visit that Joseph eventually revealed his identity to his brothers, who were of course, shocked to say the least. They even thought Joseph would kill them or mistreat them as they had mistreated them. In fact, even after father Jacob passed from this life to the next, they believed that Joseph would then enact his revenge for what they had done to him when he was just a teen. Notice that they fulfilled Joseph's dream from years earlier.

<sup>15</sup> And when Joseph's brethren saw that their father was dead, they said, Joseph will peradventure hate us, and will certainly requite us all the evil which we did unto him.

<sup>16</sup> *And they sent a messenger unto Joseph, saying, Thy father did command before he died, saying,*

<sup>17</sup> *So shall ye say unto Joseph, Forgive, I pray thee now, the trespass of thy brethren, and their sin; for they did unto thee evil: and now, we pray thee, forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of thy father. And Joseph wept when they spake unto him.*

<sup>18</sup> *And his brethren also went and fell down before his face; and they said, Behold, we be thy servants. (Genesis 50:15-18 KJV)*

Joseph would have none of that and comforted them. This again, is the forgiveness that we have in Jesus for the many sins we *have* committed, *do* commit and *will* commit. His sacrificial life, death and resurrection was *more* than enough to blot out all of our sins.

Today, we are living in a time when the Tribulation fast approaches. We don't necessarily want that, do we? However, God has His reasons for allowing it. The world is *not* going to go along smoothly and then in one instant, turn rotten. That rottenness has been growing exponentially for decades and may have reached a tipping point.

Like the seven years of severe famine, which came whether people wanted it or not or were ready for it or not, so too, are we approaching the Day of the Lord's wrath (Isaiah 7:18-25; Joel 3:14). The coming seven years of the Tribulation are very much like the seven severe years of famine during Joseph's day with of course a few differences.

First, like then, there will be no respite. Second, unlike then, there will be general worldwide results of famine, plagues and other judgments that will take millions of lives from the earth. The book of Revelation explains the seven seal, trumpet and bowl judgments (Rev 6-18). Millions upon millions will die.

Yet, God will also do for Israel what He did during the days of Joseph and shortly thereafter. God will cull His final remnant of Jewish believers from all over the earth. These Jews will win many to Jesus during the Tribulation and these Jewish believers will be the final remnant who will go into the Millennial Kingdom to inherit the fullness of the Land originally promised to Abraham.

As we approach the Tribulation, know that God sees you. He knows your *needs*. He has promised to never leave or forsake you (Deut 31:6; Matthew 28:20; Hebrews 13:5-6). The only thing He expects from us is that we *believe* Him and if we actually believe Him, we will live accordingly, won't we? We will daily submit ourselves to Him asking Him to provide wisdom, discernment and the fulfillment of our *needs* for that day and we will spread the Gospel.

The Bible does not tell us the date the Tribulation will start. It has only revealed the specific *event* (Daniel 9:24-27), that starts it. We can be assured that as things progress toward the start of the Tribulation, society will *worsen*. The birth pangs will *increase*.

Draw close to Him through the reading of His Word *daily*. Pray always and without ceasing. God will provide.

I'll be back next week. Have a wonderful weekend!