

Egyptian Famine

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Date: 07 December 2015

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[0 : 0 0] Now what we have in this chapter 47 that we read from in Genesis and the surrounding chapters is a description of the famine in Egypt in the days of Joseph and its effects not only upon the children of Israel but upon the Egyptians themselves as well.

Now remember that the famine was to last for seven years. As we read in chapter 41 verse 30 there shall arise after them seven years of famine and all the plenty shall be forgotten in the land of Egypt and the famine shall construe the land.

And by the time Jacob and his sons come down into Egypt they are two years into the famine with five years of famine still to go. Again if we turn to chapter 45 at verse 6 we read for these two years hath the famine been in the land and yet there are five years in the which thou shalt neither be earing nor harvest.

Now the ancient world was well familiar with the terrifying effects of famine. Indeed it was something which afflicted even well developed societies up until the 20th century. Everyone knew what happened in a famine.

People died as simple as that. Not just quickly and cleanly but slowly and painfully. To keep its vital organs functioning the body uses up burns up calories units of energy nutrients.

[1 : 3 4] As long as these are being regularly fed into it the body will normally keep going for seven or eight or nowadays in nine decades before it wears out.

But without the ability to refuel with food the body which must get nutrients from somewhere will start first of all to use up the nutrients in body fat. So far so good.

Lots of people choose to simulate this effect under controlled conditions. It's called dieting. Give the body less food it will use up the fat results.

But keep on giving it no fruit. And when it is used up the fat it will start on muscle tissue and skin reserves until eventually the weakened depleted vital organs are encased simply by a skeletal structure tightly stretched over with skin and not much else.

When there is nothing else to use up the vital organs start giving up. But it takes a long time and it's a terrifying prospect. The instinct to survive means that eventually people will eat almost anything.

[2 : 5 7] In some cases the Bible records people in Israel and Judah even resorting to cannibalism to eating their own children and so on.

Now one cannot exaggerate the seriousness to any people group of a protracted famine. It is quite simply and literally a matter of life and death.

And as we saw in our passage people will do anything to survive it. The Israelites will leave their homeland and become strangers in a strange land. The Egyptians will sell everything they have and become the bondservants of Pharaoh just to live and not die in the famine.

Now the reason everybody is coming to Egypt is not because there is no famine in Egypt. Because there is. But because through one man of God as we know Joseph the Egyptians have had divine warning about it and have made preparation.

Or rather the one sent from God has made preparation. And because of what he has done the Egyptians need not die when the famine comes.

[4 : 06] And I am choosing my words carefully. Need not die. It is not that you can stop and just say well I am not going to Joseph. I am just going to sit in my hands and I will just hope good times and better times come. And if they do not come then you die.

But you do not need to die if you are an Egyptian. You can go to Joseph. You can live. You see I doubt very much if the knowledge of the seven bumper years and then the 17 years was either known or recognised.

Let alone believe much outside the court of Pharaoh. Ordinary Egyptians would just be plodding along. Working their fields. Doing their chores. And being surprised and delighted when you know.

As we see in chapter 41. Verse 47. The seven plenteous years. The earth brought forth by handfuls. Now with stacks of food. More food than they could possibly eat.

Or store more than they could ever sell on the markets. Because hey everybody else's fields were doing bumper crops as well. So the market was positively glutted.

[5 : 11] With cheap grain. There was just stacks of it. There was more than anybody could get rid of. You could barely give it away. And it just keeps happening. You know. Most people might think. Okay fine.

But a really good year. Let's store it away. In the buyer. Or whatever it was. And then the next. Wow. Another bumper year. Then it happens again. And then again. And again.

And again. And eventually. It just seems year after year. It just begins to seem normal. These massive bumper crops. So when the government comes along.

And buys up. Or perhaps just requisitions. All the excess. Throughout the land of Egypt. You know. Nobody's complaining. It's the opposite of quantitative easing. They're taking the excess off your hands.

And no extra charge. Great. Nobody in Egypt. Outside the court. Thinks this is of God. And if you told them. It was. Then you say. Well which one?

[6 : 05] The Egyptians. Worshipped approximately 100 different gods. So no. They were just letting the good times roll. But Joseph rolls what is up ahead.

Because God has told him. And all the trappings. And the wealth. And the privileges. Of being second in the kingdom. Will count for very little. Other than to enable him.

To do the job. Because there's a huge amount of work to do. And people's lives depend on it. However blissfully unaware they may be. So far.

But then. The famine begins to bite. And the previously self-sufficient Egyptians. Who probably haven't given fatal much thought. Over the past seven years.

Now turned to him. In their time of distress. Again chapter 41. Read it verse 53. The seven years of plenteousness. That was in the land of Egypt. Were ended.

[7 : 02] And the seven years of dearth. Began to come. According as Joseph had said. And the dearth was in all lands. But in all the land of Egypt. There was bread. And when all the land of Egypt was famished.

The people cried to Pharaoh for bread. And Pharaoh said unto all the Egyptians. Go to Joseph. What he said to you do. And the famine was over all the face of the earth. And Joseph opened all the storehouses.

And sold unto the Egyptians. And the famine waxed sore in the land of Egypt. And all countries came into Egypt. To Joseph. For to buy corn. Because the famine was so sore.

In all lands. Now of course it wasn't technically. Joseph. Who forewarned of the famine. It was God. God who sent it. And God who also provided.

The means to prepare for it. And God who warned them in advance. But only one man was able to actually accomplish. What was needed. To save the people alive.

[8 : 02] He passed on the message God gave him. And he acted on it. For all their benefits. Now to the Egyptians. Pharaoh was a God. But like all false gods.

He too was helpless. In a time of need. And like all pretended gods. He too was compelled. To acknowledge the power of the messenger. Of the one true God.

And send people to him. We just read chapter 41. Verse 55. When all the land of Egypt was famished. The people cried to Pharaoh for bread. And Pharaoh said to all the Egyptians.

Go unto Joseph. What he saith to you do. This one man. Had told them in advance. What was coming. Death was coming. To put it brutally.

And thankfully. This one man. Done everything equal. To save the lives. Of all that would come to him. For him. Now the parallels. Aren't too difficult.

[8 : 59] Are they? God has given us. Advance notice. And fair warning. Of a terrible. Inevitable. Unstoppable. And fast approaching.

And fast approaching. Death. He has warned us. And he has given us. Everything we need. To prepare for it. And in his mercy. He gives us.

In the meantime. Abundance of this world's goods. Enough. And despair. But because the abundance. Is so normal. We take it for granted.

And because the death. We see around us. And we've all been. To umpteen funerals. In our time. Including perhaps. Those of our contemporaries. Those of similar age to us.

But because the death. We see all around us. Is never ours. We think it will never really come. To us. Let the good times roll. Sure. Do a bit of religion.

[9 : 53] Plenty of gods. And idols in the world. And then we've all got our idols. Suddenly. We've all got the things. We regard as more important. Than God. But what about the approach.

Of death. Famine. Being starved. Of the bread of life. Oh. Don't want to think about that. That's. That's morbid. That's depressing. Life is good.

Yes. My friend. Life is good. But the famine will come. And what then. Will you do. In the prophet Amos. We read these intriguing words.

In chapter 8. In verse 11. Behold the days come. Saith the Lord God. That I will send the famine. In the land. Not a famine of bread. Not a thirst for water.

But of hearing the words. Of the Lord. And they shall wander. From sea to sea. And from the north. Even to the east. They shall run to and fro. To seek the word of the Lord. And shall not find it.

[10 : 50] Rarely in our nation's history. Has there ever been. Such a famine. Of hearing the words. Of the Lord. Heart. Rarely has our beloved land.

Be more desperately. In need. Of the bread of life. While she starves. Agonizingly to death. In the darkness. Of unbelief. That is the state.

Within that. As a nation. There is a famine. Of hearing the words. Of the Lord. The nation. The people. Are starving to death. In Egypt. Only one person. Joseph.

Had done. What was needful. To save. Every Egyptian. Who would come to him. And for eternity. For the death. That is rushing. To meet us. And whatever waits.

On the other side. Whether a blessed eternity. Or a lost eternity. Only one person. Jesus. Has done. What is needful. To save. Every person. Who will come to him.

[11 : 45] John 6. We read it. Verse 37. All that the Father. Giveth me. Shall come to me. And him that cometh to me. I will know. What is cast out. The individual Egyptians.

Could not do it. For themselves. They simply did not. Have the resources. However careful. Or circumspect. An Egyptian. Might have been.

If he had been wise. And saved. Some of his. Excess crop. In the seven bumper years. He might be able. To use the surplus. To feed himself.

And his family. For a year. When the famine. Began to bite. Or if he had. Incredible reserves. Two years. Perhaps. At the very.

Very most. But ordinary. People. Just. Didn't have. That kind of. Storage. Capacity. It's like. All these. You know. Economic opportunities. You see.

[12 : 39] All. You know. Loads of properties. Available. At comparatively. Lower prices. Than they might be. In boom. Years. Think. If only. I had stacks. Of money. I could buy up. All these houses. And then. When the times.

Got better. I could sell them off again. I could use. My economic. For good. But the only thing. You need. To make a lot of money. Is a lot of money. In the first place. Most people. Don't have it. And the only thing.

You need. You know. To be stacked up. Storage. Against a family. Is huge amounts. Of storage space. Most of the ordinary. Egyptians. Just didn't have that. Even if you get.

Through two years. Let's say. You've been really careful. And you managed to feed yourself. And your family. For two years. Then there's famine again. Another year. Three.

And then another four. And then another five. And then another six. And then another seven. It only takes a few weeks.

[13 : 32] Without food. For people to die. Not a whole year. Let alone two. Five. Six. Seven. Nothing had prepared them.

For the sheer scale. Of death. Nothing prepares us. For the sheer scale. Of eternity. It's vastness.

It's impenetrable depths. It's unending emptiness. The blackness of outer space. Is like a well lit. Crowded phone box. By comparison.

We think. Oh. It's not so bad. We can cope with a wee bit. Of emptiness. We can cope with a wee bit of. Time on our own. Sort of thing. Being alone. But it goes on.

And on. And on. Like the unending famine. Like the unstoppable death. You just haven't got enough. Egyptian. Egyptian.

[14 : 27] Or Scottish person. Or Britain. Or whatever you may call yourself. Whatever we may call ourselves. We haven't got enough. For Egyptians. You have to go to Joseph. Or you'll die.

He's done what you couldn't. He had the power. He had the resources. He had the strength. The foresight. The will. He didn't. Then he's food enough.

And despair. Go to him. And live. Or don't. And perish. For that is the choice. For the Egyptian. And this is the choice.

For us. Flee to Christ. And live. For he is the son. Of the living God. The one who alone. Had the power.

The strength. The resources. The purity. The holiness. To do what. We could not do. To make that. Life saving. Preparation.

[15 : 22] To die upon the cross. Offering up his. Perfect sacrifice. That sacrifice. Which alone. Satisfies. The father's justice. Which alone.

Bridges. And spans. The vastness. Of our separation. From the father. Which alone. Outshines. The blackness. Of eternity.

And fills it. With himself. The light. Of the world. All. Joseph's. Preparations. All the vastness. Of his store. Would avail.

Nothing. For an Egyptian. Who would not. Come to him. And ask. For his help. And so it is. For us. With Christ. Jesus said.

Come unto me. All ye that labor. And are heavy laden. And I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. And learn of me. For I am meek. And lowly in heart. And ye shall find rest.

[16:17] Unto your souls. For my yoke is easy. And my burden. Is light. We see. That the starving Egyptians. Submitted to Joseph.

Only stage. By stage. First. Their money. Verses 14 and 15. Joseph gathered. Of all the money. That was found. In the land of Egypt.

And in the land of Canaan. On the corn. Which they bought. And Joseph brought the money. Into Pharaoh's house. And when the money. Failed in the land of Egypt. In the land of Canaan. All the Egyptians. Came unto Joseph. And said.

Give us bread. Why should we die. My presence. For the money. So first of all. They spent all their money. Then secondly. All their worldly goods. We see that in verse 17. They brought their cattle.

On to Joseph. Joseph gave them bread. In exchange for horses. And for flocks. And for the cattle. Of the herds. And for the asses. He fed them with bread. For all their cattle. For that year.

[17:10] Then finally. Their homes. Their lands. Their very selves. Verses 19 and 20. Wherefore shall we die. Before thine eyes. Both we and our land. Buy us. And our land for bread.

We and our land. Will be servants to fail. Give us seed. That we may live and not die. That the land be not desolate. There's nothing left. Except our bodies. And our lands. Now. This wasn't actually that uncommon.

As I've mentioned. In previous occasions. At other times. That you know. If people got into economic difficulty. In the ancient world. And they had nothing left. To sell. No means. They had to sell themselves.

They had to sell their labor. And they had to hope. That somebody would buy them. As. For what of a better word. A slave. A bondservant. They would work for this person. And instead of getting wages.

They would be housed. In their home. They would be fed. They would be clothed. They would be provided for. It wasn't brilliant. But it was better than dying. Better than starving in the street.

[18:06] It was a living. It was a life. At least. Instead of a death. And we may think. Oh how dreadful. Oh how terrible. Who would ever sell themselves. At the slavery. Well.

Friends. You and I. We haven't known. What starvation's like. You would do. Just about. Anything. In order to survive. And in those days. People selling themselves. As bond servants.

Was by no means unusual. This is how the poor. Got by. And it was just. An economic reality. In those days. It was a factor plan.

So they sold themselves. As it were. To become bond servants. To Pharaoh. And who remember. They considered Pharaoh. To be a god. But in doing so. They saved their lives.

Now. We could perhaps. Learn a lesson here. From the heathen Egyptians. When they had surrendered. Everything to Pharaoh. When he owned them. Body. Lands. And wealth.

[19:01] What's he going to do. With it all? You know. He's already got all the wealth. And power he needs. Or wants. Or can use. Effectively. He's doing them a favor. By taking ownership of them.

And once they've given themselves. Completely to him. He houses them in cities. Walled places of safety. And defense. And what then? Well. They get it all back again.

Don't they? We read in verses. 23 and 24. Joseph said to the people. Behold. I have bought you this day. Your land for Pharaoh. Lo. Here is seed for you. And ye shall sow the land.

And it shall come to pass. In the increase. Ye shall give the fifth part. On to Pharaoh. And four parts shall be your own. For seed of the field. And for your food. And for them of your households. And for food.

For your little ones. They have everything they had before. But Pharaoh. To pretend that God. Takes 20%. 20%. As a gesture of his ownership. Of them.

[19 : 56] They have their lands. They have their seed. They have their fields. And everything they had before. But now. They have to pay for you. 20%. Now. When people hesitate. To give themselves to the Lord.

It is often because. They do not yet believe it. To be a matter of life and death. They hope to keep. As much as possible. Of what they have.

In this world. But they can somehow. Do it by themselves. With just a wee bit of help. From the Lord. And they prefer that. We would all have preferred that. Without retaining our own ownership. Of our lives and selves.

But if we can somehow. Do it ourselves. Just a wee top up. A wee help from the Lord. We'd rather that. But God is not a false God. You can't start with money.

Then move on to goods. Then lands and bodies and souls. If you would save your life. It must be you. Body and soul. Given up to him.

[20 : 50] He will accept nothing less. He can't be bought. He can't be bright. As Paul writes to the Corinthians. We read it. 2 Corinthians chapter 12. At verse 14.

And he says. Behold the third time I am ready to come to you. And I will not be burdensome to you. For I seek not yours. But you. I seek not yours. I don't want your goods.

I don't want your money. I don't want your possessions. I seek not yours. But you. For the children ought not to lay up for the parents. But the parents for the children. He wants them. He wants their selves.

Their belonging to him. He wants their love. Their faith. Not for himself. But for the Lord. He wants themselves. They are the most important thing. When you finally give yourself up to the Lord.

When you consent. That he should have you body and soul. Then of course. All your property. All your home. Your land. Your money. Will. Must.

[21 : 46] Inevitably. Be at his disposal. That's all his anyway. He made it. And he gave it to us. So it's all his anyway. But. We lay out of his feet. We hand it over to him.

But. The Lord already rules. The heavens and the earth. You know. In the New Jerusalem. Gold is just the stuff. They put down on the paper. What's the Lord going to do.

With all your goods and chattels. He doesn't need them. He's going to give them back to you. Just like Pharaoh did. With the Egyptians. He's going to give them back. But now in his ownership.

You administer your money. Your home. Your influence. Your land. Your time. Your work. Your life. For him. All for him. It is completely his.

As you by then are completely his. And it is a wonderful thing. A glorious liberty.

- [22 : 43] To be owned by him. Is to be alive. As never before. To have given ourselves up. As his slaves. You know. The Greek word for slave.
- Is the word *duos*. That's what Paul uses. This way. Opens Romans chapter 1. And verse 1. Describes himself. Authorized version says. A servant of Jesus Christ. Same again in Philippians chapter 1.
- And verse 1. But the word literally means slave. He's owned. By Jesus Christ. And to be owned. By the Lord. Is to begin at last.
- To know. The meaning of true. Freedom. John 8 verse 36. The son therefore shall make you free. He shall be free indeed.
- And you know. When we get on to Leviticus. And Numbers. And Deuteronomy. We see how the Lord requires of his people. A tithe. As a gesture. An acknowledgement of his ownership.
- [23 : 40] Of what's a tithe. It's 10%. Now Pharaoh wanted 20%. The living God asks only half. What the false God asks. Pharaoh must have a fifth.
- God asks only a tenth. And of time dedicated specifically to him. Only one seventh. One day in a week for a seventh. But in truth of course.
- Every day is his. Every penny is his. Every square foot of our homes. Every heartbeat of our bodies. Every breath of our souls.
- The Egyptians knew. That whatever they may have given up. It was a bargain. We read at verse 25. They said. Thou hast saved our lives.
- Let us find grace. In the sight of my Lord. And we will be Pharaoh's servants. Of course they were free to starve to death. As their own boss. If they wanted to.
- [24 : 36] If they chose to. Of course they were free to endure. The unending pain. Of the living death of famine. That's what they would prefer. You know. We all in one sense have a choice.
- If I don't want the Lord. If I want to do a Dawkins. And say that there is no God. I can turn my back on God. If I want. And I will have the unending death. Of a lost eternity.
- Unless that poor soul. Is in fact converted. That is our choice. And we are free to exercise it. God is sovereign of course. And no man is.
- Makes a fool out of the Lord. But. They have the opportunity. To come to him. And be saved. They might never go to Joseph. They might never ask.
- And so. They might never receive. Jesus said. Ask and it shall be given. Seek. And you shall find. Knock. And it shall be opened unto you.
- [25 : 32] For everyone that asketh receiveth. And him that seeketh findeth. And to him that knocketh it shall be opened. It was the only way. The Egyptians could face.
- The impending years of death. Without fear. Because someone else. Had done everything necessary. And it is the only way. That we can face. The unknown.
- Of a vastness of eternity. Because someone else. Has done everything. Necessary for us. Many people. In the extremity of need.
- Will cry out to God. As the Egyptians. Cried unto Pharaoh. But. Pharaoh just pointed them to Joseph. And when we cry to God. To help us. God the Father. Will just point us to God the Son.
- The Lord Jesus Christ. Because God will deliver. No one. From death. Except. Through his Son. Jesus Christ.
- [26 : 29] My friend. Father. You may be. In the good years. Of plenty. Spiritually speaking. Or physically. In terms of. Economic well-being. Or whatever the case may be.

Whether you consider your life. To be. In the separate years. Of plenty. Or whether the famine. Has begun to bite. And things are difficult. You cannot deal.

To come in death. By yourself. You need. A saviour. And there is good news. For God has provided one. One who is mighty.

To save. One who nobody ever comes to. And is turned away. One who has done it all. Already. For all will come to him.

In faith. Neither is there salvation. Any other. For there is none other name under heaven. Given among men. Whereby we must be saved.

[27 : 25] But the name. Of Jesus Christ. Let us pray. usage. I need you.

Am I? Not a claim. Not a claim. Promises. He takes. First. Aón.

Right. That. slides.