

# The Story of Joseph: Seeing the Bigger Picture

## Week 16: How to Survive a Famine

### Scripture:

Genesis 47:13-31

### Motivation (Why You Need This):

#### *Where are we in the story?*

- Joseph's brothers return to Canaan, and their father is revived upon hearing the news of Joseph being alive (Gen. 45:25-28)
- Jacob and all his family travel to Egypt (Gen. 46:1-27)
- The entire family is reunited in Egypt to survive the famine (Gen. 46:28-47:12)

Today the famine worsens and Joseph must handle the mounting pressure.

“The family of Israel looked to Joseph, and Joseph only, as their source of provision and supply. Though there was a great famine in that entire region, God’s work through Joseph’s wise preparation meant there was bread for Joseph’s family and countless others.” – David Guzik

### Information (What You Need to Know):

- **Joseph moves from getting his family settled to taking care of the nation**  
**Genesis 47:3 (ESV)** Now there was no food in all the land, for the famine was very severe, so that the land of Egypt and the land of Canaan languished by reason of the famine. **14** And Joseph gathered up all the money that was found in the land of Egypt and in the land of Canaan, in exchange for the grain that they bought. And Joseph brought the money into Pharaoh’s house.
  - ✓ The famine was getting very severe in both Egypt and Canaan
    - We already know that this famine will last 7 years in total (more than 2 years had already passed according to Genesis 45:6)
    - By Genesis 47:13, it’s likely that more time had passed
  - ✓ By selling grain to people, Joseph had collected all the money that existed in Egypt and Canaan (it was then placed in Pharaoh’s treasury)

Let’s consider the fact that Joseph had moved from *one, big life event to another*. One involved his family. One involved his nation. This is a lot to handle in a small amount of time. *How does one handle it?*

- **Joseph puts a plan into action to manage the famine** (seems unfair at first)
  - ✓ All money runs out and people are desperate for food with no means to buy
 

**Genesis 47:15 (ESV)** And when the money was all spent in the land of Egypt and in the land of Canaan, all the Egyptians came to Joseph and said, “Give us food. Why should we die before your eyes? For our money is gone.”
  - ✓ Joseph says they can receive food in exchange for livestock, which lasted a year
 

**Genesis 47:16 (ESV)** And Joseph answered, “Give your livestock, and I will give you food in exchange for your livestock, if your money is gone.” **17** So they brought their livestock to Joseph, and Joseph gave them food in exchange for the horses, the flocks, the herds, and the donkeys. He supplied them with food in exchange for all their livestock that year. **18** And when that year was ended, they came to him the following year and said to him, “We will not hide from my lord that our money is all spent. The herds of livestock are my lord’s. There is nothing left in the sight of my lord but our bodies and our land.
  - ✓ After their money and livestock ran out, they had nothing left except themselves and their land which they offered in exchange for food
 

**Genesis 47:19 (ESV)** Why should we die before your eyes, both we and our land? Buy us and our land for food, and we with our land will be servants to Pharaoh. And give us seed that we may live and not die, and that the land may not be desolate.” **20** So Joseph bought all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh, for all the Egyptians sold their fields, because the famine was severe on them. The land became Pharaoh’s. **21** As for the people, he made servants of them from one end of Egypt to the other.
  - ✓ Joseph gave the people seed for their land and only required a 20% tax of it
 

**Genesis 47:23 (ESV)** Then Joseph said to the people, “Behold, I have this day bought you and your land for Pharaoh. Now here is seed for you, and you shall sow the land. **24** And at the harvests you shall give a fifth to Pharaoh, and four fifths shall be your own, as seed for the field and as food for yourselves and your households, and as food for your little ones.”
  - ✓ Rather than resenting Joseph for the tax, the people attributed his plan for saving their lives
 

**Genesis 47:25 (ESV)** And they said, “You have saved our lives; may it please my lord, we will be servants to Pharaoh.” **26** So Joseph made it a statute concerning the land of Egypt, and it stands to this day, that Pharaoh should have the fifth...

- **Jacob's family settles in Goshen, and Jacob makes preparation for his death**
  - ✓ Israel became comfortable as a small nation inside Egypt
 

**Genesis 47:27 (ESV)** Thus Israel settled in the land of Egypt, in the land of Goshen. And they gained possessions in it, and were fruitful and multiplied greatly. **28** And Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years. So the days of Jacob, the years of his life, were 147 years.

“Although they are aliens in a strange land, and although they are surrounded by famine, the Israelites are blessed. Neither geography nor natural catastrophe can throttle God’s commitment to his own.” - NICOT
  - ✓ Jacob, knowing that Egypt was not Israel’s final home, asked Joseph to bury him in Canaan
 

**Genesis 47:29 (ESV)** And when the time drew near that Israel must die, he called his son Joseph and said to him, “If now I have found favor in your sight, put your hand under my thigh and promise to deal kindly and truly with me. Do not bury me in Egypt, **30** but let me lie with my fathers. Carry me out of Egypt and bury me in their burying place.” He answered, “I will do as you have said.” **31** And he said, “Swear to me”; and he swore to him. Then Israel bowed himself upon the head of his bed.

#### **Application (What You Need to Do):**

Genesis 47 reminds us that God sustains His people even when the famine gets worse.

Joseph *could not remove the famine*, but *he could be faithful with what God placed in front of him*.

...and God used Joseph’s faithfulness to preserve life.

So, when pressure increases in our own lives, don’t assume God is absent.

Take the next wise step rooted in the Spirit and the Word.

Receive His provision with humility and thankfulness.

And remember what Jacob remembered: **Egypt may be where God provides for now, but it is not our final home.**