

A Time of Famine

Genesis 42:5-25

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+42%3A5-25&version=NIV>

“So Israel’s sons were among those who went to buy grain, for there was famine in the land of Canaan also.” (vs 5)

As famine falls over the land, Joseph is in a great position. In fact, while all the world around him is experiencing famine, including his own blood relatives from Canaan, Joseph not only has food to eat, but is in control of the food supplies. Even better than that, as he once dreamed, his brothers come and bow before him. There is a lot that Joseph could have done in retaliation for the way in which they had treated him. After all he was the most powerful man in Egypt, second only to Pharaoh. Yet, Joseph shows wisdom and generosity. He indeed gives them a bit of a hard time and arrests one brother as a sort of ransom and guarantee that they will return to him. He also gives them grain and returns their money to them (a gift he gives without them knowing at first).

Joseph’s response makes me reflect on how I treat others who come before me when they are in a time of famine and I’m on top of the world. Do I encounter such circumstances with wisdom, generosity, and grace? Do I gloat about my fine circumstances in the face of their misery? Do I use an opportune moment to retaliate for past wrongs. I’d like to tell myself that I always act with wisdom, generosity, and grace. Yet, when I am honest, I know that is not the truth. The next time we face another who is in a time of famine perhaps we can strive to recall Joseph and look for opportunities not to brag or punish, but to show wisdom and grace. One way to do this is to be mindful of how we have felt when we have found our own selves in a time of famine going before another for help. In our times of famine and in our times of meeting others in their famine may God work in and through allowing grace to abound all the more.