

**SESSION OBJECTIVE: GENESIS 47:13-28**

To learn about Jacob's agrarian program in Egypt.

"I'm Not Throwin' Away My Shot"

No musical has made more of a splash in the last decade than that of *Hamilton*. Written by and starring Lin-Manuel Miranda, *Hamilton* chronicles the life of one of the founding fathers of the United States, Alexander Hamilton. In one of the opening numbers, *Hamilton* expresses his hopes and dreams to be a contributor to the future of America and sings a phrase repeatedly which later becomes a theme throughout the entire musical: "I'm not throwin' away my shot." And throw away his shot, he did not. In addition to being a brilliant interpreter of the Constitution, he was also the founder of our nation's financial system, the Federalist Party, the United States Coast Guard, and the New York Post newspaper. He left behind a political system that was directly (and positively) affected by him. His legacy cannot be understated.

In Genesis 47:13-31, we learn about how Joseph established an agrarian system in Egypt that long outlasted him. In fact, it was still in affect by the time Moses penned Genesis (Gen. 47:26). Joseph had a shot to make his mark on Egypt, and he took it, and it paid off. His legacy was not only known by the Egyptians, but because of his place in holy Scripture, he will be known forever.

Joseph's System

Verse 13 begins informing the reader that all of the famine had not relented and that the people in Egypt and the land of Canaan had, "languished," (*yālah*), or literally, "they were wasting away." The word implies a sense

of anxiety and consternation. Things were already bad, and now it seems it has gotten worse. Below is a series of “deals” that Joseph makes with the inhabitants of the land that sets in motion the Egyptian economy.

MONEY FOR RATIONS

The first exchange that is made occurs in verse 14. The inhabitants of the land all bring all of their money to Joseph and in exchange, Joseph gives them rations from the storehouses. The term, “found” (*māṣā*) is typically used for money, food, or elusive captives. It implies, “seeking it out.” The picture presented here is that the people were rummaging through their homes, searching for every last coin to give. The level of desperation was very high. Their money was then presented to Pharaoh, the rightful owner now. Pharaoh makes a considerable profit off of the people because of Joseph’s savvy to not only store up grain to begin with, but also to barter with the people for money.

LIVESTOCK FOR FOOD

This is still not enough for the people. In verse 15, the people cry out, “Give us food. Why should we die before your eyes? For our money is gone.” Joseph next devises a plan to trade livestock for food. Verse 17 says, “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.” Now, Joseph has not only acquired all of the money from the inhabitants, but also all of the livestock. The inclusion of “horses” is interesting. Horses were especially valuable and often associated with war, international trade, and Egyptian aristocracy (Deut. 16:6; 1 Kgs. 10:28-29; Is. 31:1). These were not just lower level animals, but the best of the best. The language here in verse 17 does not really reflect the whole story with regard to Joseph’s actions. The ESV reads, “he supplied them.” The word for “supply,” (*nāhal*) is used to capture the idea of leading the weak to a place of respite (Ps. 23:2; Is. 40:11; 51:18). In other words, while it can seem like Joseph is cruelly raking them over the coals, he is actually doing the right thing.

LAND FOR SEED

Again, the people come to Joseph the next year and ask for mercy. They have already spent their money and their livestock, and have nothing left but their land and their ability to serve. This final ploy is a machination of the people, not Joseph, however Joseph again delivers. The land is all deeded over to Pharaoh, such that Pharaoh is now owner of all of the land, and the people become servants to one another (Gen. 47:20-21). The only exception to this agreement is found in verse 22: “Only the land of the priests he did not buy, for the priests had a fixed allowance from Pharaoh and lived on the allowance that Pharaoh gave them; therefore they did not sell their land.” The priests were not in need of rations, food, or seed, because Pharaoh had continued an allowance fixed to their trade. Everyone else sold their land and began servitude. Again, it might be tempting to read cruelty into this, but the inhabitants of the land see Joseph favorably: “You have saved our lives; may it please my lord, we will be servants to Pharaoh” (Gen. 47:25).

Mercy and Grace

The story shows an incredible amount of desperation on the people’s part just to survive. They are willing to spend all of their money, give away all of their livestock, and sell their land and become servants. Of course, what good are any of those things if you’re dead? As mentioned above, it’s tempting to read a level of cruelty into this story, as if Joseph is taking advantage of the people. However, one must remember that this is a monarchy, and that Pharaoh (and by extension, Joseph) is not obligated to give anything to anyone. However, Joseph has demonstrated over and over again throughout the totality of his narrative that he is a good, righteous, upstanding individual who seeks to honor both God and other people. That he is bartering with the inhabitants of the land is remarkable, and shows the depth of his mercy towards other individuals. He has

already exemplified a forgiving spirit when his brothers didn't really deserve it; now he is exemplifying a giving spirit to people in need. One of the points of this portion of the narrative is not to show how self-serving Joseph is, but on the contrary, to reinforce how understanding, kind, and merciful he is.

Coming Full Circle

The passage ends by circling back to where verses 11 and 12 left off. Verses 11 and 12 read, "Then Joseph settled his father and his brothers and gave them a possession in the land of Egypt, in the best of the land, in the land of Rameses, as Pharaoh had commanded. And Joseph provided his father, his brothers, and all his father's household with food, according to the number of their dependents." Picking up in verses 27 and 28: "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. And Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years. So the days of Jacob, the years of his life, were 147 years." Jacob's life is relatively short in comparison to his ancestors, a fact he revealed to Pharaoh in their meeting (Gen. 47:9). This wrap up reveals how Israel ends up inhabiting Goshen, as well as shedding light on how they became so many in number by the time Exodus begins (Ex. 1:9). More than that, the language, "they were fruitful and multiplied greatly" reflects the first command given to man and woman in the garden: "Be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it" (Gen. 2:8). This abrupt end to Jacob's life is not the final word regarding Jacob, but more of a prelude to the final portion of his narrative which comes directly after this passage.

Study Questions

Day One

1. Read Genesis 47:13-14. What do the people gather up to give to Joseph, and what does Joseph give to them in return? What is the people's disposition towards Jacob afterwards?

2. Read Genesis 47:15-17. What has run out at this point for the people? What do they now offer Joseph, and what does he give them in return?

Day Two

1. Read Genesis 47:18-19. What do the people suggest after running out of money and livestock? What does Joseph give them in exchange for their land and their servitude?

2. Read Genesis 47:20-21. Does Joseph take the deal? What does he take from them and what does he have them do to earn their grain?

Day Three

1. Read Genesis 47:22. Who does not have to sell their land, and why?

2. Read Genesis 47:23-24. What does he allow the people to keep from their harvest? What are they required to give to Pharaoh as part of their agreement with him?

Day Four

1. Read Genesis 47:25-26. Are the people happy or upset with Joseph's deal? Did Joseph's plan work? Did it make an impact?

2. Read Genesis 47:27-28. Where did Israel settle? How old was Jacob when he died?

Week 38 Discussion: A Legacy

One of the most important things that people begin to think about as they ponder their mortality is the question of whether or not they will have made a lasting impact. Everyone wants to leave a legacy of some kind. There are whole books devoted to how to do it, but it ultimately comes down to how you treat people, how you care for people, and what state you leave them in. Joseph leaves a legacy, both of financial shrewdness in the Egyptian economy, and also an example of faith to those who read the Scriptures. Talk as a group about how important leaving a legacy is for you, and what you are doing to make sure you leave a good one.

1. Icebreaker: Do you ever worry about whether or not you will leave a legacy behind you? If so, what do you struggle with? What is worrisome to you?
2. Are you doing anything in your own life to leave a legacy? If so, what?
3. What people have invested in you and shaped you into a more mature believer? How will you remember them? If you have never told them that they have impacted you in that way, consider sharing that with the class, and then with the person.
4. What people are you investing in to leave a legacy with? What things are you doing for them?
5. When you think about leaving a legacy, what other biblical characters come to mind, and why?
6. Is it ever too late to begin taking measures to leave a legacy? Why or why not?

Takeaways:

1. Joseph bartered with the inhabitants of the land to ensure they were well-cared for.
2. Jacob and his household settled in Goshen, and he died at the age of 147.

PRAYER REQUESTS: