

A WORD ON WORSHIP

Review of Message from August 13, 2017

BY PASTOR ANDREW KIKKERT, SUNRISE COMMUNITY CHURCH

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Exodus 1:8-10

Now a new king arose over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. And he said to his people, "Behold, the people of the sons of Israel are more and mightier than we. Come, let us deal wisely with them, lest they multiply and in the event of war, they also join themselves to those who hate us, and fight against us, and depart from the land."

Israel prospered in spite of the famine and the poverty which Egypt experienced. While the Egyptians were fainting under the famine, the Israelites were flourishing. Egypt's loss, to some degree, was a gain for the Israelites. This small, select group prospered while the mainstream of Egyptians were impoverished. This raises some questions about the prosperity of the Israelites during the famine. Was it wrong for them to be prosperous while others were doing without? Was it right for them to buy land while others had to give up land?

Before we become too smug, let me ask you a question. Have you ever gone to a "going out of business" sale? And did you insist that the business sell you its merchandise at full retail price because times were hard? No, you delighted at getting something drastically marked down. That business's loss was your gain, and you went away proud of the bargains you found. Lest we lose our sense of perspective, let me also remind you that the prosperity of Israel at this time paved the way for its future persecution.

A little lesson in history will help put this section into perspective. Before Joseph or Jacob entered the land of Egypt, there had been a large influx of Asiatic Semitic slaves into Egypt. They congregated largely in the Delta region of Egypt, the same area where Goshen was located. Over a period of time these Hyksos land owners formed a political coalition which gave them great power in the Delta. At a weak point in Egyptian political power, the Hyksos coalition overthrew the throne, and a Hyksos Pharaoh was installed. It is most likely that the Pharaoh under whom Joseph served was a Hyksos. This explains, at least in part, why a Pharaoh would install a Hebrew slave into such a high office. A fellow Palestinian would be trusted more than a native Egyptian. This situation might also explain why the Pharaoh would encourage the immigration of Hebrews from Canaan. They could enhance his political position and be potential allies if and when the Egyptians attempted to regain power.

Later on, when Joseph had long since died and the Hyksos dynasty had been overthrown, the Egyptians were not inclined to feel favorably toward the Israelites, who had collaborated with the Hyksos and had prospered while they had been impoverished. And if another attempt were made to overthrow the throne of Egypt, the Hebrews might well be expected to become allies in such an effort. No wonder they were disliked, distrusted, and dealt with as a serious threat to Egypt's security.

It might not be going too far to suggest the initial success of the descendants of Jacob and their later persecution provides us with a prototype of later Jewish persecution. I am not a historian, but I believe this to be evident in Germany before the Second World War. Germany's economy had suffered greatly, and yet it was evident that Jews were the successful bankers and financial giants. The Jews then became the scapegoat for all the political woes of the nation and were severely persecuted and oppressed by the Nazi regime.



Sunrise Community Church
Come acknowledge the Lord in our midst
EVERY SUNDAY BEGINNING AT 8:45 A.M.

9642 Live Oak Ave. • Temple City, CA 91780

(626) 287-6120 • PastorAndy@SunriseTC.org • www.SunriseTC.org