

## **What does the Bible say about famine in the Bible?**

In many parts of the world today, food supply chains are an afterthought. But, throughout Scripture, famine was not an uncommon occurrence. While the physical causes of the famines varied, the Bible indicates that God is in control, even during times of scarcity. God's desire in bringing famine upon Israel was to gain His people's attention in a sure-fire way—through their stomachs.

Not all famines are a result of God's direct judgment. We live in a world that has been cursed as a result of sin, and the ground does not produce like it did before the fall of man. Genesis 3:17–19 tells us that not only was mankind cursed, but also the entire creation. Through various times of famine, people have been faced with an opportunity to turn to the true God and Creator of everything. Joseph's time in Egypt allowed him to administrate the country through a time of both incredible bounty and severe famine (Genesis 41:25–31). It's clear that God had absolute power over this famine (verse 28), but it's not described as a direct judgment since the famine became severe among many nations (verse 57).

There are many examples of famines that are similar to the one in Joseph's time that are not given as any specific judgment. However, there are plenty of famines that were used as a judgment to display the severity of the people's sin and to bring them to repentance. As Moses was giving the Israelites some final instructions from God, he spoke of the blessings and curses of either obeying or denying the Lord. If they chose to disobey God's commands and follow idols, "then the Lord's anger will burn against you, and he will shut up the heavens so that it will not rain and the ground will yield no produce, and you will soon perish from the good land the Lord is giving you" (Deuteronomy 11:17).

During the time of King Ahab, "the famine was severe in Samaria" (1 Kings 18:2). It's no coincidence that Ahab had previously "set up an altar for Baal in the temple of Baal that he built in Samaria. Ahab also made an Asherah pole" (1 Kings 16:32–33). God had been crystal clear in the law: if Israel served false gods, then there would be famine in the land.

Ahab bowed to false gods, and God stopped the rain. The famine during the reign of Ahab and Jezebel should have been no surprise to anyone.

Under the terms of the Old Covenant, people trying to live without God were often awakened to their true need by experiencing famine. Going without sufficient food has a way of getting our attention, as God well knows: "He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your ancestors had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD" (Deuteronomy 8:3).

Even worse than a famine of physical food is a famine of spiritual food. Because Israel rejected the prophets, God promised a severe judgment: "'The days are coming,' declares the Sovereign LORD, 'when I will send a famine through the land—not a famine of food or a thirst for water, but a famine of hearing the words of the LORD'" (Amos 8:11). How tragic to turn a deaf ear to God and be given just what we want—silence from God!

In His goodness, God sent His Son to earth. Jesus is the Bread of Life "that comes down from heaven and gives life to the world" (John 6:33). Jesus promised us that, through faith in Him, we will never experience spiritual famine again: "Whoever comes to me will never go hungry" (verse 35). So much better than the manna of the Old Testament, Jesus gives life forevermore: "I am the bread of life. Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, yet they died. But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which anyone may eat and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live forever" (verses 48–51). In Christ, there is no spiritual famine; rather, we have a veritable feast of God's goodness. Someday the curse upon the ground will be lifted as well, and the new earth will never see a famine of any kind (Revelation 22:3). *From GotQuestions.org*