

# GENESIS 47: 13-26

## FINANCIAL ENSLAVEMENT TO A PAGAN god

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I hope that when you read your Bible, you think about what you are reading. If we just read to be reading or to say that we have read our verses for the day then we need to ask ourselves if we really accomplished anything. There should be a purpose to reading; especially the reading of the Bible.

I don't know how many of you watch the news. Hopefully all of you at least keep up with the Middle East and the economy. That is not to say that you let it scare you, but we should be informed.

If you keep up with economics and politics then this chapter of the Bible should stick out at you. Today you will hear phrases such as "when the money fails." Make sure you don't just read over it. We have a tendency as Americans to think that such catastrophic things cannot happen here; or if they do, then we have the resources to pull ourselves up by our boot-straps. To some this is just good old American know-how and courage. However, it is a time-tested trap of the devil.

We have been reading about a nation and its surrounding peoples going through a famine. Might I remind you that Egypt was the greatest nation of its day? It was THE superpower of the day, just as America is at present. Famine and then economic collapse hit them and the currency failed. It has happened time after time historically. We are not immune to these things simply because we are America. In fact I believe America has been protected from such things but that we have ignored the warning signs and if we don't right the ship soon it will be too late.

War, famine and economic collapse are mentioned in the book of Revelation. These will be the vehicles by which the national stage will be changed. The point is that these things have happened in the past and they will happen again in the future. We haven't become so modern that we are immune. When it comes to superpowers, empires, banks and businesses, there is no such thing as "too big to fail."

Getting back to Genesis though, we do have to look at what happens in this chapter. If you remember, last week Joseph had set up his family in Goshen and supplied them with bread. What happens next has a far-reaching effect not only on the Egyptians but the Israelites also. So let's look at what can happen in a nation when its currency fails.

**Gen 47:13** *Now there was no bread in all the land; for the famine was very severe, so that the land of Egypt and the land of Canaan languished because of the famine.*

**Gen 47:14** *And Joseph gathered up all the money that was found in the land of Egypt and in the land of Canaan, for the grain which they bought; and Joseph brought the money into Pharaoh's house.*

**Gen 47:15** *So when the money failed in the land of Egypt and in the land of Canaan, all the Egyptians came to Joseph and said, "Give us bread, for why should we die in your presence? For the money has failed."*

**Gen 47:16** *Then Joseph said, "Give your livestock, and I will give you bread for your livestock, if the money is gone."*

**Gen 47:17** *So they brought their livestock to Joseph, and Joseph gave them bread in exchange for the horses, the flocks, the cattle of the herds, and for the donkeys. Thus he fed them with bread in exchange for all their livestock that year.*

Much has happened in these five verses. First of all we need to recognize that some amount of time had passed between verses 12 and 13. Joseph didn't just give his family the last bit of bread. They were given bread because they had just gotten to Egypt. The Egyptians,

remember, had grain to make bread already because they had been buying it from the government.

In verse 14 we see that Joseph had gathered all the money in the land, both foreign and domestic and had deposited it in Pharaoh's house or you could say all the money was in the hands of the government.

In the next verse we see that the money/ currency in Egypt failed. Does anyone know what that means? It wasn't inflation.

Contrary to popular thinking, inflation is not when prices go up it is when the value of a currency goes down because too much of it is in circulation. It gives the illusion of the value of something going up, but what is actually happening is that the currency, in our case the dollar goes down in value so that it takes more "dollars" to buy something. That is inflation in a nutshell.

What is happening here is that the currency is exhausted. There is no more money (coins) to go around. Everyone has been buying grain from the government so the majority of the cash flow has been going one way. More money has been going to Pharaoh than has come from the government. Due to the famine most government projects have been suspended. Most of the regular folks have spent their money on buying food, just trying to stay alive. Since the only source of food was the government all the money wound up in a centralized location. That's not good, at least if you're a conservative.

Someone once asked economist Ludwig von Mises this question: "If you had the legal authority to straighten out the economy, what would you do?" He immediately answered: "I'd resign!" He made his point that no one person or entity should have that much power over the economy. The free market would cease to exist at that point.

That is what happened in Egypt. This means we have to look at Joseph and how he handled this famine. Then we have to ask ourselves was that righteous? Did he handle it in a godly manner?

Let's look at the rest of the story.

**Gen 47:16** Then Joseph said, "Give your livestock, and I will give you *bread* for your livestock, if the money is gone."

**Gen 47:17** So they brought their livestock to Joseph, and Joseph gave them bread *in exchange* for the horses, the flocks, the cattle of the herds, and for the donkeys. Thus he fed them with bread *in exchange* for all their livestock that year.

After the money ran out Joseph accepted their livestock in lieu of currency. However that only worked for a year.

**Gen 47:18** When that year had ended, they came to him the next year and said to him, "We will not hide from my lord that our money is gone; my lord also has our herds of livestock. There is nothing left in the sight of my lord but our bodies and our lands.

**Gen 47:19** Why should we die before your eyes, both we and our land? Buy us and our land for bread, and we and our land will be servants of Pharaoh; give *us* seed, that we may live and not die, that the land may not be desolate."

**Gen 47:20** Then Joseph bought all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh; for every man of the Egyptians sold his field, because the famine was severe upon them. So the land became Pharaoh's.

**Gen 47:21** And as for the people, he moved them into the cities, from *one* end of the borders of Egypt to the *other* end.

**Gen 47:22** Only the land of the priests he did not buy; for the priests had rations *allotted to them* by Pharaoh, and they ate their rations which Pharaoh gave them; therefore they did not sell their lands.

**Gen 47:23** Then Joseph said to the people, "Indeed I have bought you and your land this day for Pharaoh. Look, *here is* seed for you, and you shall sow the land.

**Gen 47:24** And it shall come to pass in the harvest that you shall give one-fifth to Pharaoh. Four-fifths shall be your own, as seed for the field and for your food, for those of your households and as food for your little ones."

**Gen 47:25** So they said, "You have saved our lives; let us find favor in the sight of my lord, and we will be Pharaoh's servants."

**Gen 47:26** And Joseph made it a law over the land of Egypt to this day, *that* Pharaoh should have one-fifth, except for the land of the priests only, *which* did not become Pharaoh's.

A year later when the people were out of livestock, Joseph took their land as payment for food. He then moved them from their land into the cities with the understanding that they would continue to work the land they no longer owned. They would share crop the land for a 20% tax. The only land left untouched was that of the priests.

Most countries today, especially ours would have to severely cut taxes to get back down to a 20% tax rate. According to the Bible anything mandatory over 10% is a curse. We can see this by looking at how God dealt with Israel when they rebelled and rejected Him.

**1Sa 8:13** He will take your daughters *to be* perfumers, cooks, and bakers.

**1Sa 8:14** And he will take the best of your fields, your vineyards, and your olive groves, and give *them* to his servants.

**1Sa 8:15** He will take a tenth of your grain and your vintage, and give it to his officers and servants.

**1Sa 8:16** And he will take your male servants, your female servants, your finest young men, and your donkeys, and put *them* to his work.

**1Sa 8:17** He will take a tenth of your sheep. And you will be his servants.

**1Sa 8:18** And you will cry out in that day because of your king whom you have chosen for yourselves, and the LORD will not hear you in that day."

**1Sa 8:19** Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, "No, but we will have a king over us,

**1Sa 8:20** that we also may be like all the nations, and that our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles."

**1Sa 8:21** And Samuel heard all the words of the people, and he repeated them in the hearing of the LORD.

**1Sa 8:22** So the LORD said to Samuel, "Heed their voice, and make them a king."

When Israel decided that they wanted a king like the other nations they rejected God as their king. The natural effect would be taxation. The tax that was levied was 10%. Once again this is far less than any modern country and even in Israel's day that 10% was considered a curse.

Joseph levied a 20% tax on the Egyptians while at the same time taking their land. This was a massive re-distribution of wealth. It went from the private sector to the government. In verse 24 we even see that the people were glad to give up their land and become slaves.

God has a way of giving us what we want sometimes so we can learn a lesson.

Israel wanted a king so God allowed them to have one. They were then taxed for government services and at least at the beginning they were glad to pay. If you go forward in their history you will learn that the nation eventually divided over higher and higher taxes.

The people of Egypt were glad to become enslaved to Pharaoh. Did Joseph plan it this way? And if he did is he still to be seen as a righteous man, a man doing God's will?

We have to understand that indentured servitude and slavery were legal under the OT Law, though it was also considered a curse and was used as a means of disciplining those that rebelled against God.

**Lev 25:44** And as for your male and female slaves whom you may have—from the nations that are around you, from them you may buy male and female slaves.

**Lev 25:45** Moreover you may buy the children of the strangers who dwell among you, and their families who are with you, which they beget in your land; and they shall become your property.

**Lev 25:46** And you may take them as an inheritance for your children after you, to inherit *them as* a possession; they shall be your permanent slaves. But regarding your brethren, the children of Israel, you shall not rule over one another with rigor.

**Lev 25:47** 'Now if a sojourner or stranger close to you becomes rich, and *one of* your brethren *who dwells* by him becomes poor, and sells himself to the stranger *or* sojourner close to you, or to a member of the stranger's family,

**Lev 25:48** after he is sold he may be redeemed again. One of his brothers may redeem him;

Now remember, this was OT Law. It wasn't brought over into the NT. It was a way to bring those outside the covenant of God into that covenant. It was better for a pagan to be a slave in the nation that God had chosen than be outside of that nation. That does not however justify slavery as we have seen it in modern times.

Just as the Israelites wanted a king, the Egyptians wanted a leader other than the God of Heaven. They worshipped Pharaoh as a god. Therefore they were enslaved to him.

So Joseph was the instrument that allowed the Egyptians to be enslaved to the god they served. They looked to the government, which in their case was also their god for their provision. This type of servitude would

eventually lead to the tyranny Israel served under after the death of Joseph.

Israel, though they were sequestered from time to time would look back on this way of life and long for it.

Israel would remember their slavery in Egypt and this lesson was to teach them not to look to the government because that only leads to slavery in one form or another.

**God liberated Israel and gave them His Law; they built a golden calf. He gave them manna and they wanted meat. He gave them the opportunity to capture Canaan and they rebelled by wanting to kill Joshua and Caleb. He served as their king and they rebelled wanting a king like the other nations. They kept turning back to Egypt as their model.**

The fallen nature wants to move away from God and to man for provision. This should factor into our politics.

We should also tailor our economic and political ideas to that of the Bible. I would encourage you to look at the Word of God before you vote and before you pick a side in the political arena. I would also like for you to get informed. Ignorance is not a virtue. When we return to a Bible based culture we will see this country turn around. Until then we are doomed to repeat the mistakes of every other nation, including Israel.

To whom do you look for your provision?



