

Sept 16, 2007 (LS)

**A NEW WORLD ORDER
GENESIS 47.13-26**

Summary: *Joseph brings the Egyptians under a gracious slavery and re-orders the world system in order to save the world.*

Context: This passage parallels chs. 40-41 of Genesis. In those chapters we see Joseph as a slave of Egyptians and rising to lordship. What we have the text before us is the lordship of the Egyptians being turned into slavery to Joseph. Reversal.

A DEATH IN THE LAND (13)

Famine: “No bread.” Why not say “grain?” Remember the parallel in ch. 40: Joseph replaces the baker. Joseph is the one who has and controls the bread. The lord of the table is the lord of the world.

Famine = death. The land is not being fruitful; leads to death of man.

The creation fights against man because of sin. Cf. Gen 3; Deut 28.

Famine = curse of sin, death. We need a savior; i.e., a new and faithful Adam/Man who can come and take proper dominion of the land, providing seed, and making it fruitful. This is what we will see in Joseph, who throughout has been set up as a new Adam.

Egypt and Canaan: Egypt and Canaan are representative of the whole world: Promised land and the nations. The whole world is starving. (Cp. 41.53ff.)

If the house of Israel had refused to heed the word of God and leave the promised land, the land of Canaan, they would have been starving and died there.

Life is only found in obedience to God’s word, even when that word leads you out of what you thought was the proper place to be. In other words, Israel was saved by faith.

B THE ENSLAVEMENT OF THE EGYPTIANS (14-22)

Gathering of all the money (14): Because the famine lasts for so many years and food is a staple to any economy, the money supplies of the people run out. Joseph is holding all the silver and gathering it into Pharaoh’s house.

This was Joseph’s job. While he was in Egypt he had the responsibility of building and glorifying the house of Pharaoh. Later in history Daniel and his compatriots will have the same responsibility in the Babylonian and Medo-Persian empires as well.

Gathering all of the livestock (15-17): the giving up their livestock in a time of famine would have been a relief for them. How do you feed yourself, your family, and your animals in this time of famine?

These livestock become Pharaoh’s livestock. Who is in charge of Pharaoh’s livestock? The house of Israel. They are the ones who will be shepherding the flocks. They have joined Joseph in his rule and have the responsibility for being good stewards.

The time indicator at the end of v. 17 may indicate that we are in the last two years of the famine. That is, the money has run out over the first five years. 6th year they give up their livestock. 7th year they give up themselves and their land.

This seems reasonable because later Joseph will provide for the people so that they may plant and harvest. During the famine Joseph said earlier that there would be neither “plowing or harvesting” in 45.6.

Gathering the land and people (18-22): The people propose to Joseph that he buy them as slaves and buy their lands. The price is bread. They know that this is the only way to life. The only way to life is through slavery.

After buying the people, Joseph redistributes them throughout the land of Egypt into various cities. These cities are the places where the grain was stored (cf. 41.48). So the people would be supplied from the cities and essentially create new cities.

The only land that was not bought was the land of the priests in Egypt. This seems to be because they were a part of Pharaoh’s household. They received allotments from him. Cp. priests in Israel later.

What is going on in this passage? Some clues. First, the change of terminology of the people from *bread* to *seed* in v. 19.

Bread is developed seed or grain. In order to have bread one must go through a process. The process begins by planting seed. The seed must grow, be harvested, crushed, mixed other things, put through the fire (i.e., baked), and then, and only then, do you have bread. Bread is a product of dominion.

The Egyptian society was a fully developed world system. But because of the famine they have come to the place where there is “no bread.” That world system is dying and on the verge of death.

New seed will be needed to begin a new culture. In order to get this new seed they will have to “marry” themselves to the true and faithful man, Joseph. They will then become fruitful and multiply as a new world. They will live and not die.

Second, the order of what is sold for bread/seed. Money -> livestock -> people/land.

Money = indicator of a developed society. This is society that has gone beyond a lower bartering system to a more complex system of exchanging currency for goods and services. Egypt is a developed culture; a garden-city. Now is regressing to being a garden.

Livestock necessary in the garden as instruments for dominion over the land (e.g., oxen for plowing). Remove the livestock and there is no power to maintain the garden.

People and land (connected) are next. The whole cultural system, the whole world system, has been de-created; broken down to its lowest level. In other words, that world has died. It must die for a newly ordered world to be ‘born.’

The seed-son, Joseph has gone through this. The firstborn sons of Israel have followed him and have gone through this. Now the whole world system as represented by Egypt is going through this.

In sum, the present world system which inevitably leads to death must be brought to this death so that it can raised up to new life; i.e., the way God intended it to be.

A’ LIFE IN THE LAND (23-26)

Seed for the sowers (23): seed & sowing lead to fruitfulness in the land.

Gracious taxation (24): Joseph sets up something quite similar to a feudal system. That is, Joseph distributes the land of Pharaoh along with what they need to make the land fruitful. They will work the land. They will pay back a portion of their produce to their lord, and they will keep a portion for themselves, their families, and for planting for the next year.

Requires 20% (a double tithe). Historical contexts: Hammurabi (who would have lived relatively around this time give or take a few hundred years), e.g., would require one-half to two-thirds of the produce from tenured farmers.

The 20% may have been a division of 10% to Pharaoh and 10% to the priests. That would make some sense in light of how things developed in Israel later.

Grateful slavery (25): “You have saved our lives.” They understood the fact that had this not happened they would have died. They were glad to be “free” as Pharaoh’s slaves.

A re-ordered world (26): Changes remain in place (that is until an apostate Pharaoh comes on in Exodus).

Justification for enslavement:

1. *The Bible declares that this was a wise and righteous act.*
2. *Slavery is not necessarily antithetical to freedom.*
3. *We don’t know what the situation was like before Joseph in this pagan land.*
4. *The people did negotiate these terms with Joseph.*
5. *The people declared that Joseph had saved their lives.*

(1) To have the true Joseph as your Lord, you must surrender everything and become his slave. **(2)** What we have, we have received by grace of our sovereign. **(3)** Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world, not just individuals within the world.