

Principles of Economic Liberty ~ Session 4: Individual Choice

Joseph Acts Wisely to Save Many Lives

In Genesis 41:53-57 and Genesis 47:13-26 we see a number of words and phrases that describe or imply that transactions, financial and otherwise, took place. Circle these words and phrases below.

When God revealed to Pharaoh through Joseph's accurate interpretation of his dreams that Egypt would experience seven years of plenty followed by seven years of severe famine, Pharaoh elevated Joseph to second in command in Egypt. During the years of plenty, Joseph arranged for the excess grain to be stored. Then, when the famine hit, grain was available, and no one had to starve. Here is Genesis 41:53-57:

Genesis 41:53 Then the seven years of plenty which were in the land of Egypt ended, ⁵⁴ and the seven years of famine began to come, as Joseph had said. The famine was in all lands, but in all the land of Egypt there was bread. ⁵⁵ So when all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread. Then Pharaoh said to all the Egyptians, "Go to Joseph; whatever he says to you, do." ⁵⁶ The famine was over all the face of the earth, and Joseph opened all the storehouses and sold to the Egyptians. And the famine became severe in the land of Egypt. ⁵⁷ So all countries came to Joseph in Egypt to buy grain, because the famine was severe in all lands.

Later, in Genesis 47:13-26, we see that

Genesis 47:13 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. 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.

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."

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

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. 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."

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

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. 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."

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." 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.