

# Come to Understanding

**They also that erred in spirit shall come to understanding,  
and they that murmured shall learn doctrine. — Isaiah 29:24**

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## The Road into Bondage

Many of us have heard the proverb:

7 The rich rules over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender. -Proverbs 22

However, as we look around a world that is in economic turmoil, how many of us are really willing to believe this proverb? Nevertheless, economic hardship causes many of us to do things we would not otherwise have even considered doing.

Yahweh promised the land of Canaan to Abram. Nevertheless, Abram fled into Egypt to escape a famine:

10 And there was a famine in the land: and Abram went down into Egypt to sojourn there; for the famine was grievous in the land. -Genesis 12

Yahweh sent plagues upon the Pharaoh that caused him to release Abram (Abraham) and Sarai (Sarah), along with their newly acquired wealth, from Egypt (see Genesis 12:11-20). After Abraham demonstrated his faith in Yahweh by his willingness to obey Him, Yahweh confirmed His promised blessing:

18 And in your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because you have obeyed my voice. -Genesis 22

During the life of Abraham's son, Isaac, another famine came upon the promised land. This time, however, Yahweh warned Isaac not to flee into Egypt. Instead, He told him to stay in the land that had been given to him and that he and his seed would receive the promised blessing:

1 And there was a famine in the land, besides the first famine that was in the days of Abraham. And Isaac went to Abimelech king of the Philistines unto Gerar.

2 And Yahweh appeared unto him, and said, Go not down into Egypt; dwell in the land which I shall tell you of:

3 Dwell in this land, and I will be with you, and will bless you; for unto you, and unto your seed, I will give all these countries, and I will perform the oath which I swore to Abraham your father; -Genesis 26

Isaac obeyed Yahweh. He stayed in the land, where he planted crops and was blessed with great wealth:

12 Then Isaac sowed in that land, and received in the same year a hundred times: and Yahweh blessed him.

13 And the man became great, and went forward, and grew until he became very great: -Genesis 26

Isaac blessed his son, Jacob (also named Israel), with the same blessing that Yahweh had given to Abraham:

4 And give you the blessing of Abraham, to you, and to your seed with you; that you may inherit the land wherein you are a stranger, which God gave to Abraham. -Genesis 28

However, the sins of Jacob's sons (see Genesis 34, 37, and 38) demonstrated that they did not accept Yahweh's word. Consequently, He removed them from the promised land.

Ironically, it was Jacob's own son, Joseph, that orchestrated the economic plan which took Israel out of the promised land and brought them into Egypt. By Joseph's plan, the Pharaoh became the owner of all of the cattle, land, and people in Egypt. The Egyptian people first traded their livestock for bread:

16 And Joseph said, Give your cattle; and I will give you for your cattle, if money fails.

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

Then *they sold themselves, along with their land*, for bread:

19 Why shall 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 to Pharaoh: and give us seed, that we may live, and not die, that the land be not desolate.

20 And Joseph bought all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh; for the Egyptians sold every man his field, because the famine prevailed over them: so the land became Pharaoh's. -Genesis 47

Joseph had not only bought the land for the Egyptian Pharaoh, *he had also bought the people so that they could farm the land that they had once owned!*

23 Then Joseph said to the people, Behold, I have bought you this day and your land for Pharaoh: behold, *here is seed* for you, and you shall sow the land. -Genesis 47

**So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense,  
and caused them to understand the reading. — Nehemiah 8:8**

## Come to Understanding

Living in Egypt, Israel became part of the Egyptian economic system. After the death of Jacob and Joseph, Israel found themselves in slavery:

13 And the Egyptians made the children of Israel to serve with rigor: -Exodus 1

They remained the slaves of Egypt for more than four hundred years, until their freedom was finally purchased by the blood of lambs. Yahweh told them to demonstrate their faith in Him by keeping the Passover and He would give them the land that He had promised:

24 And you shall observe this thing for an ordinance to you and to your sons forever.

25 And it shall come to pass, when you have come to the land which Yahweh will give you, according as he has promised, that you shall keep this service. -Exodus 12

They eventually entered into the promised land, only to lose it again through their disobedience. Part of them, known as the house of Israel, were captured by the Assyrians as Amos had prophesied:

11 For thus Amos said, Jeroboam shall die by the sword, and Israel shall surely be led away captive out of their own land. -Amos 7

The rest of them, known as the house of Judah, were captured by the Babylonians:

27 And the king of Babylon smote them, and put them to death in Riblah in the land of Hamath. Thus Judah was carried away captive out of his own land. -Jeremiah 52

After seventy years of captivity in Babylon, Yahweh released Judah to return to the promised land to rebuild the temple and Jerusalem. However, because of their selfish priorities, Yahweh sent another drought upon them, which shut down the economy:

9 You looked for much, and, lo, *it came* to little; and when you brought *it* home, I did blow upon it. Why? says Yahweh of hosts. Because of my house that *is* waste, and you run every man to his own house.

10 Therefore the heaven over you is stayed from dew, and the earth is stayed *from* her fruit.

11 And I called for a drought upon the land, and upon the mountains, and upon the corn, and upon the

new wine, and upon the oil, and upon *that* which the ground brings forth, and upon men, and upon cattle, and upon all the labor of the hands. -Haggai 1

Even after the temple was eventually rebuilt, there was economic corruption among the Jews as they were rebuilding Jerusalem. The wealthy Jews were capitalizing on a famine to abuse those who were poor. They were implementing the same economic plan that had put the Egyptian people, as well as then the people of Israel, in bondage in Egypt!

In order to survive, entire families had to work the fields for their wealthy brethren:

1 And there was a great cry of the people and of their wives against their brethren the Jews.

2 For there were that said, We, our sons, and our daughters, *are* many: therefore we take up corn *for them*, that we may eat, and live. -Nehemiah 5

They mortgaged their land, vineyards, and houses in order to buy the food needed for survival:

3 *Some* also there were that said, We have mortgaged our lands, vineyards, and houses, that we might buy corn, because of the famine. -Nehemiah 5

In order to pay their taxes, the poor even had to borrow money against their land and vineyards, which were their means of production and survival:

4 There were also that said, We have borrowed money for the king's tribute, *and that upon* our lands and vineyards. -Nehemiah 5

Through debt, the sons and daughters of the poor became the servants of the wealthy. Having no money, no land, and no vineyards, they had no power to redeem them:

5 Yet now our flesh *is* as the flesh of our brethren, our children as their children: and, lo, we bring into bondage our sons and our daughters to be servants, and *some* of our daughters are brought unto bondage *already*: neither *is it* in our power to *redeem them*; for other men have our lands and vineyards. -Nehemiah 5

Because of their economic hardship, these people had mortgaged their property, and lost it. They even lost their children!

Yahweh commanded those who lend to their brethren not to charge usury (interest) (see Deuteronomy 23:19-20). Nehemiah pleaded, with the wealthy to leave off the usury if when lending to the poor:

10 I likewise, and my brethren, and my servants, might lend them money and corn: I pray you, let us leave off this usury. -Nehemiah 5

Yahweh cautioned Israel, to obey his commandment:

6 For Yahweh your God blesses you, as he promised you: and you shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow; and you shall reign over many nations, but they shall not reign over you. -Deuteronomy 15

Those who lend, Yahweh says, shall reign over those who borrow. Who is reigning over us?

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