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GENESIS 47:1 Then Joseph went in and told Pharaoh, and said, "My father and my brothers, with their flocks, their herds, and all that they own, have come out of the land of Canaan; and behold, they are in the land of Goshen."

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Joseph informs Pharaoh that his father and brethren are arrived in Goshen, Gen 47:1. He presents five of his brethren before the king, Gen 47:2, who questions them concerning their occupation; they inform him that they are shepherds, and request permission to dwell in the land of Goshen, Gen 47:3, Gen 47:4. Pharaoh consents, and desires that some of the most active of them should be made rulers over his cattle, Gen 47:5, Gen 47:6. Joseph presents his father to Pharaoh, Gen 47:7, who questions him concerning his age, Gen 47:8, to which Jacob returns an affecting answer, and blesses Pharaoh, Gen 47:9, Gen 47:10. Joseph places his father and family in the land of Rameses, (Goshen), and furnishes them with provisions, Gen 47:11, Gen 47:12. The famine prevailing in the land, the Egyptians deliver up all their money to Joseph to get food, Gen 47:13-15. The next year they bring their cattle, Gen 47:16, Gen 47:17. The third, their lands and their persons, Gen 47:18-21. The land of the priests Joseph does not buy, as it was a royal grant to them from Pharaoh, Gen 47:22. The people receive seed to sow the land on condition that they shall give a fifth part of the produce to the king, Gen 47:23, Gen 47:24. The people agree, and Joseph makes it a law all over Egypt, Gen 47:25, Gen 47:26. The Israelites multiply exceedingly, Gen 47:27. Jacob, having lived seventeen years in Goshen, and being one hundred and forty-seven years old, Gen 47:28, makes Joseph promise not to bury him in Egypt, but in Canaan, Gen 47:29, Gen 47:30. Joseph promises and confirms it with an oath, Gen 47:31.

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GENESIS 47:2 From among his brothers he took five men, and presented them to Pharaoh.

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## Verse 2

He took some of his brethren - There is something very strange in the original; literally translated it signifies "from the end or extremity (מִקְצֵה miktseh) of his brethren he took five men." This has been understood six different ways. 1. Joseph took five of his brethren that came first to hand - at random, without design or choice. 2. Joseph took five of the meanest-looking of his brethren to present before Pharaoh, fearing if he had taken the sightliest that Pharaoh would detain them for his service, whereby their religion and morals might be corrupted. 3. Joseph took five of the best made and finest-looking of his brethren, and presented them before Pharaoh, wishing to impress his mind with a favorable opinion of the family which he had just now brought into Egypt, and to do himself honor. 4. Joseph took five of the youngest of his brethren. 5. He took five of the eldest of his brethren. 6. He took five from the extremity or end of his brethren, i. e., some of the eldest and some of the youngest, viz., Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Issachar, and Benjamin - Rab. Solomon. It is certain that in Jdg 18:2, the word may be understood as implying dignity, valor, excellence, and pre-eminence: And the children of Dan sent of their family Five men מִקְצוֹתָם miktsotham, not from their coasts, but of the most eminent or excellent they had; and it is probable they might have had their eye on what Joseph did here when they made their choice, choosing the same number, five, and of their principal men, as did Joseph, because the mission was important, to go and search out the

land. But the word may be understood simply as signifying some; out of the whole of his brethren he took only five men, etc.

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GENESIS 47:3 Pharaoh said to his brothers, "What is your occupation?"

They said to Pharaoh, "Your servants are shepherds, both we, and our fathers."

GENESIS 47:4 They said to Pharaoh, "We have come to live as foreigners in the land, for there is no pasture for your servants' flocks. For the famine is severe in the land of Canaan. Now therefore, please let your servants dwell in the land of Goshen."

GENESIS 47:5 Pharaoh spoke to Joseph, saying, "Your father and your brothers have come to you.

GENESIS 47:6 The land of Egypt is before you. Make your father and your brothers dwell in the best of the land. Let them dwell in the land of Goshen. If you know any able men among them, then put them in charge of my livestock."

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#### Verse 6

In the best of the land make thy father and brethren to dwell; in the land of Goshen let them dwell - So it appears that the land of Goshen was the best of the land of Egypt.

Men of activity - אנשי חיל anshey chayil, stout or robust men - such as were capable of bearing fatigue, and of rendering their authority respectable.

Rulers over my cattle - מקנה mikneh signifies not only cattle, but possessions or property of any kind; though most usually cattle are intended, because in ancient times they constituted the principal part of a man's property. The word may be taken here in a more extensive sense, and the circumstances of the case seem obviously to require it. If every shepherd was an abomination to the Egyptians, however we may understand or qualify the expression, is it to be supposed that Pharaoh should desire that the brethren of his prime minister, of his chief favorite, should be employed in some of the very meanest offices in the land? We may therefore safely understand Pharaoh as expressing his will, that the brethren of Joseph should be appointed as overseers or superintendents of his domestic concerns, while Joseph superintended those of the state.

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GENESIS 47:7 Joseph brought in Jacob, his father, and set him before Pharaoh, and Jacob blessed Pharaoh.

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#### Verse 7

Jacob blessed Pharaoh - Saluted him on his entrance with Peace be unto thee, or some such expression of respect and good will. For the meaning of the term to bless, as applied to God and man, See Clarke on Gen 2:3 (note).

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GENESIS 47:8 Pharaoh said to Jacob, "How many are the days of the years of your life?"

GENESIS 47:9 Jacob said to Pharaoh, "The days of the years of my pilgrimage are one hundred thirty years. Few and evil have been the days of the years of my life, and they have not attained to the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage."

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Verse 9

The days of the years of my pilgrimage - מגורי megurai, of my sojourning or wandering. Jacob had always lived a migratory or wandering life, in different parts of Canaan, Mesopotamia, and Egypt, scarcely ever at rest; and in the places where he lived longest, always exposed to the fatigues of the field and the desert. Our word pilgrim comes from the French pelerin and pelegrin, which are corrupted from the Latin peregrinus, an alien, stranger, or foreigner, from the adverb peregre, abroad, not at home. The pilgrim was a person who took a journey, long or short, on some religious account, submitting during the time to many hardships and privations. A more appropriate term could not be conceived to express the life of Jacob, and the motive which induced him to live such a life. His journey to Padan-aram or Mesopotamia excepted, the principal part of his journeys were properly pilgrimages, undertaken in the course of God's providence on a religious account.

Have not attained unto the - life of my fathers - Jacob lived in the whole one hundred and forty-seven years; Isaac his father lived one hundred and eighty; and Abraham his grandfather, one hundred and seventy-five. These were days of years in comparison of the lives of the preceding patriarchs, some of whom lived nearly ten centuries!

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GENESIS 47:10 Jacob blessed Pharaoh, and went out from the presence of Pharaoh.

GENESIS 47:11 Joseph placed his father and his brothers, and gave them a possession in the land of Egypt, in the best of the land, in the land of Rameses, as Pharaoh had commanded.

GENESIS 47:12 Joseph nourished his father, his brothers, and all of his father's household, with bread, according to their families.

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 fainted by reason of the famine.

GENESIS 47:14 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.

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Verse 14

Gathered up all the money - i. e., by selling corn out of the public stores to the people; and this he did till the money failed, Gen 47:15, till all the money was exchanged for corn, and brought into Pharaoh's treasury. Besides the fifth part of the produce of the seven plentiful years, Joseph had bought additional corn with Pharaoh's money to lay up against the famine that was to prevail in the seven years of dearth; and it is very likely that this was sold out at the price for which it was bought, and the fifth part, which belonged to Pharaoh, sold out at the same price. And as money at that time could not be plentiful, the cash of the whole nation was thus exhausted as far as that had circulated among the common people.

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GENESIS 47:15 When the money was all spent 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 our money fails."

GENESIS 47:16 Joseph said, "Give me your livestock; and I will give you food for your livestock, if your money is gone."

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Verse 16

Give your cattle - This was the wisest measure that could be adopted, both for the preservation of the people and of the cattle also. As the people had not grain for their own sustenance, consequently they could have none for their cattle; hence the cattle were in the most imminent danger of starving; and the people also were in equal danger, as they must have divided a portion of that bought for themselves with the cattle, which for the sake of tillage, etc., they wished of course to preserve till the seven years of famine should end. The cattle being bought by Joseph were supported at the royal expense, and very likely returned to the people at the end of the famine; for how else could they cultivate their ground, transport their merchandise, etc., etc.? For this part of Joseph's conduct he certainly deserves high praise and no censure.

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GENESIS 47:17 They brought their livestock to Joseph, and Joseph gave them bread in exchange for the horses, and for the flocks, and for the herds, and for the donkeys: and he fed them with bread in exchange for all their livestock for that year.

GENESIS 47:18 When that year was ended, they came to him the second year, and said to him, "We will not hide from my lord how our money is all spent, and the herds of livestock are my lord's. There is nothing left in the sight of my lord, but our bodies, and our lands."

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Verse 18

When that year was ended - The sixth year of the famine, they came unto him the second year, which was the last or seventh year of the famine, in which it was necessary to sow the land that there might be a crop the succeeding year; for Joseph, on whose prediction they relied, had foretold that the famine should continue only seven years, and consequently they expected the eighth year to be a fruitful year provided the land was sowed, without which, though the inundation of the land by the Nile might amount to the sixteen requisite cubits, there could be no crop.

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GENESIS 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 to Pharaoh. Give us seed, that we may live, and not die, and that the land won't be desolate."

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Verse 19

Buy us and our land for bread - In times of famine in Hindostan, thousands of children have been sold to prevent their perishing. In the Burman empire the sale of whole families to discharge debts is very common - Ward's Customs.

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GENESIS 47:20 So Joseph bought all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh, for every man of the Egyptians sold his field, because the famine was severe on them, and the land became Pharaoh's.

GENESIS 47:21 As for the people, he moved them to the cities from one end of the border of Egypt even to the other end of it.

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#### Verse 21

And as for the people, he removed them to cities - It is very likely that Joseph was influenced by no political motive in removing the people to the cities, but merely by a motive of humanity and prudence. As the corn was laid up in the cities he found it more convenient to bring them to the place where they might be conveniently fed; each being within the reach of an easy distribution. Thus then the country which could afford no sustenance was abandoned for the time being, that the people might be fed in those places where the provision was deposited.

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GENESIS 47:22 Only he didn't buy the land of the priests, for the priests had a portion from Pharaoh, and ate their portion which Pharaoh gave them. That is why they didn't sell their land.

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#### Verse 22

The land of the priests bought he not - From this verse it is natural to infer that whatever the religion of Egypt was, it was established by law and supported by the state. Hence when Joseph bought all the lands of the Egyptians for Pharaoh, he bought not the land of the priests, for that was a portion assigned them by Pharaoh; and they did eat - did live on, that portion. This is the earliest account we have of an established religion supported by the state.

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GENESIS 47:23 Then Joseph said to the people, "Behold, I have bought you and your land today for Pharaoh. Behold, here is seed for you, and you shall sow the land.

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#### Verse 23

I have bought you this day and your land for Pharaoh - It fully appears that the kingdom of Egypt was previously to the time of Joseph a very limited monarchy. The king had his estates; the priests had their lands; and the common people their patrimony independently of both. The land of Rameses or Goshen appears to have been the king's land, Gen 47:11. The priests had their lands, which they did not sell to Joseph, Gen 47:22, Gen 47:26; and that the people had lands independent of the crown, is evident from the purchases Joseph made, Gen 47:19, Gen 47:20; and we may conclude from those purchases that Pharaoh had no power to levy taxes upon his subjects to increase his own revenue until he had bought the original right which each individual had in his

possessions. And when Joseph bought this for the king he raised the crown an ample revenue, though he restored the lands, by obliging each to pay one fifth of the product to the king, Gen 47:24. And it is worthy of remark that the people of Egypt well understood the distinction between subjects and servants; for when they came to sell their land, they offered to sell themselves also, and said: Buy us and our land, and we and our land will be servants unto Pharaoh, Gen 47:19.

Diodorus Siculus, lib. i., gives the same account of the ancient constitution of Egypt. "The land," says he, "was divided into three parts:

1. One belonged to the Priests, with which they provided all sacrifices, and maintained all the ministers of religion.
2. A second part was the King's, to support his court and family, and to supply expenses for wars if they should happen. Hence there were no taxes, the king having so ample an estate.
3. The remainder of the land belonged to the Subjects, who appear (from the account of Diodorus) to have been all soldiers, a kind of standing militia, liable, at the king's expense, to serve in all wars for the preservation of the state."

This was a constitution something like the British; the government appears to have been mixed, and the monarchy properly limited, till Joseph, by buying the land of the people, made the king in some sort despotic. But it does not appear that any improper use was made of this, as in much later times we find it still a comparatively limited monarchy.

GENESIS 47:24 It will happen at the harvests, that you shall give a fifth to Pharaoh, and four parts will be your own, for seed of the field, for your food, for them of your households, and for food for your little ones."

#### Verse 24

Ye shall give the fifth part unto Pharaoh - This is precisely the case in Hindostan; the king has the fifth part of all the crops.

GENESIS 47:25 They said, "You have saved our lives! Let us find favour in the sight of my lord, and we will be Pharaoh's servants."

GENESIS 47:26 Joseph made it a statute concerning the land of Egypt to this day, that Pharaoh should have the fifth. Only the land of the priests alone didn't become Pharaoh's.

#### Verse 26

And Joseph made it a law - That the people should hold their land from the king, and give him the fifth part of the produce as a yearly tax. Beyond this it appears the king had no farther demands. The whole of this conduct of Joseph has been as strongly censured by some as applauded by others. It is natural for men to run into extremes in attacking or defending any position. Sober and judicious men will consider what Joseph did by Divine appointment as a prophet of God, and what he did merely as a statesman from the circumstances of the case, the complexion of the times, and the character of

the people over whom he presided. When this is dispassionately done, we shall see much reason to adore God, applaud the man, and perhaps in some cases censure the minister. Joseph is never held up to our view as an unerring prophet of God. He was an honored instrument in the hands of God of saving two nations from utter ruin, and especially of preserving that family from which the Messiah was to spring, and of perpetuating the true religion among them. In this character he is represented in the sacred pages. His conduct as the prime minister of Pharaoh was powerfully indicative of a deep and consummate politician, who had high notions of prerogative, which led him to use every prudent means to aggrandize his master, and at the same time to do what he judged best on the whole for the people he governed. See the conclusion at Gen 50:26 (note).

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GENESIS 47:27 Israel lived in the land of Egypt, in the land of Goshen; and they got themselves possessions therein, and were fruitful, and multiplied exceedingly.

GENESIS 47:28 Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years. So the days of Jacob, the years of his life, were one hundred forty-seven years.

GENESIS 47:29 The time drew near that Israel must die, and he called his son Joseph, and said to him, "If now I have found favour in your sight, please put your hand under my thigh, and deal kindly and truly with me. Please don't bury me in Egypt,

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Verse 29

Put - thy hand under my thigh - See Clarke on Gen 24:2 (note).

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GENESIS 47:30 but when I sleep with my fathers, you shall carry me out of Egypt, and bury me in their burying place."

He said, "I will do as you have said."

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Verse 30

I will lie with my fathers - As God had promised the land of Canaan to Abraham and his posterity, Jacob considered it as a consecrated place, under the particular superintendence and blessing of God: and as Sarah, Abraham, and Isaac were interred near to Hebron, he in all probability wished to lie, not only in the same place, but in the same grave; and it is not likely that he would have been solicitous about this, had he not considered that promised land as being a type of the rest that remains for the people of God, and a pledge of the inheritance among the saints in light.

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GENESIS 47:31 He said, "Swear to me," and he swore to him. Israel bowed himself on the bed's head.

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Verse 31

And Israel bowed himself upon the bed's head - Jacob was now both old and feeble, and we may suppose him reclined on his couch when Joseph came; that he afterwards sat up erect (see Gen 48:2) while conversing with his son, and receiving his oath and promise; and that when this was finished he bowed himself upon the bed's head - exhausted with the conversation, he again reclined himself on his bed as before. This seems to be the simple meaning, which the text unconnected with any religious system or prejudice, naturally proposes. But because *שָׁחָה* *shachah*, signifies not only to bow but to worship, because acts of religious worship were performed by bowing or prostration, and because *מִטָּה* *mittah*, a bed, by the change of the points, only becomes *מַטֵּה* *matteh*, a staff, in which sense the Septuagint took it, translating the original words thus: *Και προσεκύνησεν Ισραηλ επι το ακρον της ραβδου αυτου*, and Israel worshipped upon the top of his staff, which the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, Heb 11:21, quotes *literatim*; therefore some have supposed that Jacob certainly had a carved image on the head or top of his staff, to which he paid a species of adoration; or that he bowed himself to the staff or scepter of Joseph, thus fulfilling the prophetic import of his son's dreams! The sense of the Hebrew text is given above. If the reader prefers the sense of the Septuagint and the Epistle to the Hebrews, the meaning is, that Jacob, through feebleness, supported himself with a staff, and that, when he got the requisite assurance from Joseph that his dead body should be carried to Canaan, leaning on his staff he bowed his head in adoration to God, who had supported him all his life long, and hitherto fulfilled all his promises.