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The People Became Tenant Farmers on the Land that Belonged to Pharaoh

47: 23-26

The people became tenant farmers on the land that belonged to Pharaoh
DIG: When the seven years of famine was coming to an end, what was Joseph's plan for the people sustaining themselves thereafter? Was it fair for Pharaoh? Was it fair to the people? What was their response?

REFLECT: Are you a grateful person? Are you grateful for the eighty percent the Lord gives you in your life, or do you resent the twenty percent you have to give up? In what ways has ADONAI spared your life? How can you continue to find favor in the eyes of the LORD?

Yosef said to the people of Egypt, "Now that I have bought you and your land today for Pharaoh, here is seed for you so you can plant the ground" (47:23). After the seven years of famine were over, Joseph allowed the people to return to the land. They did not return as owners, however, but as tenant farmers working the land for Pharaoh.



In the fourth stage (to see link click [Kq](#) - Joseph and the Famine), the people were taxed. But when the crop comes in at the harvest, give a fifth of it to Pharaoh. The other four-fifths you may keep as seed for the fields and as food for yourselves and your households and your children (47:24). Now that Pharaoh owned most of the land, the plan was that when the crop was

reaped, **the people** would give twenty percent of it to **Pharaoh**. The other eighty percent they could keep as **seed** and **as food for themselves**. **Their** rent for **the land**, twenty percent of the produce, was lower than normal in the ancient world. This was a progressive tax in that it was proportioned according to income. In all likelihood, a similar arrangement was made for those who had occupations other than farming, like **Joseph's** brothers.

The people did not complain about these terms. **They** said: **You have saved our lives**. **They** recognized that **they** were being treated fairly and generously and that there could really be no other plan which would work as well under the circumstances. **They** would work the same **land** as before and live in the same house. **They** would have no overhead expenses, **their** lives were spared, and **they** kept eighty percent of what **they** harvested. **Their** only desire was to continue to **find favor in the eyes of Yosef**. Despite the personal hardship, they were grateful for their **lives** and willing to be **Pharaoh's** servants.⁷³⁷ **So Joseph established it as a law concerning the land in Egypt - still in force** during the time of Moses - **that a fifth of the produce belongs to Pharaoh. It was only the land of the priests that did not become Pharaoh's (47:25-26)**.