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Grazing rights there, they're going to provide care for Pharaoh's flocks. Jacob tells Pharaoh that the days of his life have been few and evil, and of course by evil this doesn't mean moral evil so much as he's had many hardships and afflictions. He's had a lot of bad experiences.

He has lived in fear, he's lived in oppression, he has lived in heartache, he has suffered losses in a lot of different ways over the bulk of his life. And he says, my years have not attained to the days of the years of the life of my fathers and the days of their pilgrimage. You get the idea that he's talking not only about longevity there, but also quality.

He doesn't feel like he hasn't had a mountaintop experience such as Abraham had on two or three different occasions. Abraham walked with God and ate with God and was on Mount Moriah and God spoke to him and stayed his hand when he was prepared to sacrifice Isaac. Jacob saw the vision at Bethel, he has heard from God on different occasions, but you get the idea that the quality of his walk with the Lord came at a great price.

He had to go through a lot to reach the place of faith and the place of peace. One of the ways we know this is through Jacob's attitude toward death. Keep your finger in chapter 47 here and turn back to chapter 37 verse 35.

What did Jacob think about death when they brought the tunic, the coat of many colors back stained with blood? Verse 34 of Genesis 37, Jacob tore his clothes, put sackcloth on his waist and mourned for his son many days. All his sons and all his daughters arose to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted. And he said, I shall go down into the grave to my son in mourning.

Thus his father wept for him. So he figured when he did die, it was going to be a miserable death. He would be mourning all the way to his grave and then he would join his son in death.

Turn to chapter 42 verse 38 when the brothers tell Jacob that they are required to take Benjamin back with them. Jacob says, my son shall not go down with you for his brother is dead and he is left alone. If any calamity should befall him along the way in which you go, you would bring down my gray hair with sorrow to the grave.

So he's already going to mourn all the way to his grave because of Joseph. And he says, you'll bring me right down there in a hurry with sorrow. So Jacob sees nothing but misery ahead of him to his death.

What is it that resurrects his hope and gives him peace concerning his death? We'll take

a look at chapter. You remember here in chapter 46 where when he stopped at Beersheba and God spoke to him and said, I will go down with you to Egypt. In verse four, I will bring you up again and Joseph will put his hand on your eyes.

So now Jacob is reconciled and he knows that he's going to be blessed. And in verse 27, if you skip ahead a little bit in chapter 47, Israel dwelt in the land of Egypt and the country of Goshen. They grew and multiplied exceedingly.

Jacob lived in the land of Egypt 17 years. So the length of his life was 147 years. When the time drew near that he must die, he called his son Joseph to him and said, now, if I found favor in your sight, put your hand under my thigh and deal kindly and truly with me.

Please do not bury me in Egypt, but let me lie with my fathers. You shall carry me out of Egypt and bury me in their burial place. He said, I will do as you have said.

He said, swear to me. He swore to him. So Israel bowed himself on the head of the bed, but Jacob has now laid his eyes on Joseph and he is going to now go to his grave in peace.

You see this in chapter 46 in verse 30, Israel said to Joseph, now, let me die since I have seen your face because you are still alive. So he no longer dreads his death. He no longer says, well, I'm going to go down in sorrow and mourning to the grave and go down to Sheol.

My gray hairs are going to be brought down to the grave in sorrow. Now that he sees Joseph, he's reconciled to his death and he can think about it calmly and in peace. And Gordon Wenham, who has written an excellent commentary on Genesis, had this to say about this change because of this promise from God, because of being able to see Joseph, who he thought was dead, actually alive.

Wenham says, Joseph's resurrection allows Jacob to die in peace, just as the resurrection of a greater Joseph has allowed many to face death with courage and hope. And you can go to passages like first Peter chapter one, verse three in Philippians 1, 21 and following where, because Christ has been raised from the dead, we have life and hope both here and in the age to come. Jesus said, the one who believes in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.

And the one who believes in me will never die in one sense. So in the same way that Joseph, who seemed to be dead and yet is now alive, comforts Jacob, the same is true for us. But we want to return for a moment to this idea of the treatment of those who are in need.

Jacob and his sons are certainly in need. This is why Joseph was so anxious to send grain back with them to Canaan and care for them and then ultimately to bring them down

into the land after he has tested them, after he has determined that they are capable of faith and obedience, that they have a different attitude toward their brother Benjamin than they had toward him so many years before. Because at first he does send them back to the land of famine with temporary supplies and he tests them by means of the cup and by means of putting the money in the mouth of the sack, by means of setting the condition that they must return with Benjamin and so forth.

And once he satisfies himself that they have had a change of mind, a change of heart, then they are brought down to the place of provision. But even that provision is not a free gift, it is an opportunity to sustain themselves. And so he is careful to tell them and to tell Pharaoh that it is their own flocks and herds that they are going to care for.

If they are going to care for them. So then beginning in verse 11, it says, Joseph situated 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 Ramses, as Pharaoh had commanded. So they have the best of opportunities here, don't they? Now even in the best of the land, there is still a famine, right? It isn't like Egypt said, well, let's all just go to Goshen because there is plenty of grain and food and livestock in Goshen.

Everyone still needs provision from what Joseph has stored up during the seven fat years. But the brethren of Joseph and his father settled there, and in verse 12, Joseph provided his father, his brothers, and all his father's household with bread, according to the number in their families. So provision is still needed, even in the land of Goshen, which is the best that Egypt has to offer, they still need their bread from Joseph.

And that is what sustains them so that they can begin to sustain themselves. Verse 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. 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.

Notice, not only the Egyptians are able to come and buy grain from the storehouses, but also those who dwell in Canaan. It wasn't restricted to just Joseph's family, but any of the other dwellers. This would be the people dwelling in Gerar or Beersheba or any of the other, probably the southern regions of what we would call the holy land there in Canaan, traveled down to Egypt and bought grain.

But of course, the money is going to run out after a year or two. And sure enough, in verse 15, 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. So now the Egyptians are saying, give it, give us a handout, give us bread for free.

We don't have any money to buy it, so just give it to us for free. What does Joseph do?

Verse 16, Joseph said, give me your livestock and I will give you bread for your livestock if the money is gone. So he's transferring ownership of the livestock, but he's not transferring possession of the livestock.

There's a difference between ownership and possession. Ownership is transferred to Pharaoh, but they keep this, he's going to give them the food to feed the livestock, but the ownership of the livestock reverts to Pharaoh. Verse 17, 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. But obviously he can't just corral these and try to keep them up and feed them himself. The people bring them to demonstrate that they have ownership and he says, okay, I'll give you credit for these 12 head of cattle that you've brought to me, we'll transfer ownership to Pharaoh.

Now you take them back home and feed them, here's some grain and so forth. And so they now owe Pharaoh these 12 cattle, but they're going to keep them. And so they, in essence, are contract laborers caring for the Pharaoh's livestock.

But look at verse 18, when that year had ended, they came to him the next year and said, we will not hide from my Lord that our money is gone. My Lord also has our herds of livestock. He owns all their herds.

They have no animals left to mortgage, if you will. There is nothing left in the side of my Lord, but our bodies and our lands. Why should we die before your eyes, both we and our land? By us and our land for bread, we and our land will be the servants of Pharaoh.

Give us seed that we may live and not die that the land may not be desolate. So 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. As for the people, he moved them into the cities from one end of the borders of Egypt to the other end. 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 land. Isn't it interesting how closely this is paralleled in Deuteronomy and Leviticus, where the Levites, as the priests, were not required to sell their land. In fact, we're not even allowed to sell their land to provide for themselves.

So 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. Now let's stop here and think for a moment.

Three different times the people have come to Joseph. The first time they came with money, and what did they get in exchange? The Hebrew here is sheber, which means rations, foodstuffs. This is all different kinds of provision of food that they purchased for money.

That's in verse 14. When the money ran out, they came back in verse 17 and sold their livestock to Pharaoh in exchange for lechem. You remember the old little town of Bethlehem? Beit lechem is the house of bread.

So this is bread, lechem in verse 17. Then when the livestock have all been mortgaged and the money has all been spent, they come and they sell themselves and their land. They mortgage their land and they indenture themselves.

So they give their freedom, in other words, their land, their independence, themselves and their land all goes to Pharaoh in exchange for seed, zera, Z-E-R-A in Hebrew, in verse 23. So for money, they receive rations. For their livestock, they receive bread.

For their land and their freedom, they receive seed. You'll notice that as time goes on, what they are given goes to an earlier stage. Rations, this is the full-orbed produce of the land.

This is the finished product, if you will, that they receive for their money. When the money runs out and they begin to sell their livestock to Pharaoh, they receive bread. This is the staple.

This doesn't include all the niceties, the fruit, the dates, the vegetables, the meat or whatever else might have been included in rations. This is just the staple of bread. And then when they sell their land and their freedom, what are they given? Seed.

Seed by itself, this grain is not so much something that's edible. They're not going to just sit around living on porridge. What do you do with seed? You plant it and produce the crops that you're going to be able to harvest to produce bread.

And sustaining yourself on the bread, you're going to be able to rebuild to the point where you can provide your own rations. So you might think, well, or somebody with a jaundiced eye might look at this and say, it seems like Joseph is really kind of exploiting these people. He's kind of hitting them when they're down.

He's taking advantage of the famine and their poverty to take everything that they own. He gets all their money. He gets all their livestock.

He gets their land. He even gets themselves. He owns them.

He can now gather them up and move them into the cities if he wants to, because he's brought everything into the household of Pharaoh. So it seems pretty mean and rude to

do that. Well, how did the Egyptians view it? Look at verse 25.

Actually, verse 24, it shall come to pass in the harvest that you shall give one-fifth to Pharaoh, 20%. Well, you say, my goodness, Joseph has taken away all their money, all their livestock, all of their land, and even taken themselves and just made them all abject slaves in Egypt. Well, how bad of a slavery is it? How bad of a serfdom is it when the serfs get to keep 80% of what belongs to Pharaoh? Pharaoh doesn't say, well, I'm going to take 80% and you can have 20, or I'm going to take 90% and you can have 10.

Joseph, speaking for Pharaoh, says, I own you. I own your land. I own your livestock.

But when you work the land, when you plant crops, when you bring in the crop of livestock, if you will, not a crop, but when the herds multiply and so forth, you can keep 80% of everything you do. This is the same principle that applied in Israel, isn't it? Where they're not treated as abject slaves from a foreign country. They become more like contract labor, and they get to keep 80%.

This is not unlike what we have in this country today, is it? Where taxes for the average person run somewhere on the order of 20, 25, 30% of everything you make by the time they take out Social Security and everything else. Our taxes run somewhere in that general range, at least 20%. So we don't consider ourselves to be an abject slavery.

We can complain about taxes and the way they're spent, but we're not suffering and being crippled up and made to feel like slaves because we pay taxes. Well, this is basically a very benevolent system, and one of the greatest things about it is it allows, whether you look at it in Israel or in Egypt, it allows the people to retain their self-respect. They are treated with respect.

They're treated as citizens, as people who are independent and autonomous, who are not being sustained by a freebie, dole system. They are earning their keep. They earn the right to keep 80% of what they produce.

Everything that they are using belongs to Pharaoh, but what they produce with those things, 80% of that they get to keep, which is a very benevolent system. And that's how they viewed it. Look at what they say in verse 25.

You have saved our lives. Let us find favor in the sight of my Lord, and we will be Pharaoh's servants. This is a good deal.

We'll take it. You've saved our lives. What a great idea.

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. And to this day, if Moses is writing Genesis, this must have been a pretty good system because long after the famine ended, hundreds of years later, Egypt is still happily functioning on this

system. So it wasn't odious or oppressive.

In fact, it was very balanced, very fair, and indeed very generous. And the same is true of the system in Israel. And if the years of Jubilee had been observed the way God intended, that system would have worked very well.

You find in the later history of Israel that they failed to observe the Sabbath years of rest for the land. They failed to observe the years of Jubilee, and God took those Sabbath years out of the life of Israel, literally. When they went into captivity, the length of that captivity corresponded to the number of years that they had failed to give the land its rest.

And God just took them off the land and said, since you didn't give it its rest, I will. And that is what determined the length of the Babylonian captivity. And God told them explicitly, you did not give the land its Sabbath rests, so now I'm going to force you to.

And it's going to get them all at once. So this is a wonderful system, but it does require that people sustain themselves. They don't get rations and rations and rations.

They get bread to sustain themselves so that they can produce rations. They get seed so that they can plant and produce their own bread and produce their own rations. And Joseph, whether he's dealing with his own brethren or whether he's dealing with the Egyptians, never gives them free handouts with nothing required in return.

Joseph doesn't even consider bringing his family to Egypt until he sees that they can function with integrity, that they have had a change of heart from the way they were when they sold him into slavery. He doesn't give the people of Egypt handouts from the granaries. Instead, he gives them the ability to sustain themselves.

And we find this throughout the word of God. It is important to have balance because the giver or the ones who are making these things available need to have a generous heart and a generous spirit. You find this throughout the word of God.

You find it in Psalm 41 where David says, Blessed is he who considers the poor. The Lord will deliver him in time of trouble. The Lord will preserve him and keep him alive and he will be blessed on the earth.

You will not deliver him to the will of his enemies. The Lord will strengthen him on his bed of illness. You will sustain him on his sick bed.

There's a great deal of blessing associated with the one who considers the poor. Psalm 112 verse 9 talks about the blessing that comes to one who gives. He has this godly man who's described in verse 1, Blessed is the man who fears the Lord, who delights greatly in his commandments.

Talks about his descendants being mighty in the earth, wealth and riches in his house, righteousness that endures forever, light in the darkness. And then it says in the middle of verse 4, He is gracious and full of compassion and righteous. A good man deals graciously and lends.

Notice it doesn't say he gives, it says he lends. He will guide his affairs with discretion. Surely he will never be shaken.

The righteous will be in everlasting remembrance. He will not be afraid of evil tidings. His heart is steadfast, trusting in the Lord.

His heart is established. He will not be afraid until he sees his desire upon his enemies. He has dispersed abroad.

He has given to the poor. His righteousness endures forever. His horn will be exalted with honor.

And the wicked are going to see it and gnash their teeth and so forth. But the idea here, even when you see the scriptures talking as they sometimes do about giving to the poor, when you take that on balance with all of the other passages, it talks about the fact that yes, there is generosity, yes, there is giving in time of need, but not as an enduring pattern. You can give in a moment of disaster or in a time of trial, but the long-term pattern is to give people the ability to help themselves.

This has been, you know, the old saw that says, well, you give the man a fish and you've given him a meal, but teach him how to fish and then he can make his own meals or words to that effect. To give people the ability to sustain themselves, that is the goal of biblical charity. Sometimes you have to give so that someone can be sustained long enough to reach the point where they can start to sustain themselves.

There's certainly nothing wrong with that, and that's what these verses talk about. But the Bible talks equally about lending as well as giving because lending gives someone the ability to fulfill that obligation and go on to sustain themselves. Proverbs chapter 3 verse 27 and 28 talk about the fact that, do not withhold good from those to whom it is due.

This is the answer to the question, what about the man with the cardboard sign on the curb? Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due when it is in the power of your hand to do so. Do not say to your neighbor, go and come back and tomorrow I will give when you have it with you. This is taking advantage of someone and manipulating them because you can sort of put the relief that they need as a carrot on the end of a stick.

You can say, well, go through the following hoops and you're sort of lording it over them and manipulating them with the prospect of giving them something that they need. God says, don't do that. If you have the wherewithal to help them, then help them.

Don't say, well, go and come back and tomorrow I will give. You turn over a few pages in Proverbs to chapter 25 and look at Proverbs 25, 21. If your enemy is hungry, give him bread to eat.

If he is thirsty, give him water to drink. For so you will heap coals of fire on his head, and the Lord will reward you. People have trouble with the idea of heaping coals of fire on someone's head, especially when they're needy.

They've tried to say, well, what this is, is having fire. They didn't have matches and butane lighters and things in the ancient world and people needed fire and so forth. In addition to giving someone bread when they're hungry or water when they're thirsty, you could give someone fire.

Maybe their fire went out and they're all cold and huddled and miserable and thirsty and hungry. You can give them water, give them bread, and you can give them a fire. The problem is it doesn't say, if your enemy is hungry, give him bread to eat.

If he's thirsty, give him water to drink. If his fire has gone out, heap coals of fire on his head. These would be carried on some kind of a platform on your head.

Well, I wouldn't carry coals of fire on my head, first of all. The Bible doesn't say, if his fire has gone out, give him coals of fire. It says, by giving him something to eat, by giving him something to drink, you will heap coals of fire on his head.

Why would you want to heap coals of fire on someone's head? Are you trying to torture them? Are you trying to make them miserable? Is that your goal? Well, everything in the Bible runs counter to that. It is going to heap coals of fire on his head. If you had coals of fire on your head, what would you do? You'd change your head.

You'd get your head out of there. It would force you to make a change. And coals of fire, fire speaks of judgment.

And what is the purpose of judgment? God's judgment is designed to change people's minds. If you're still alive and you've been under discipline or judgment from God, the purpose of it is not to punish, not to exact pain as a payment for malfunctioning. It is to turn.

It is to change someone. If this person is your enemy and you return good for evil, it's going to heap coals of fire on their head. It's going to bring them into the place where they have to confront their evil, and hopefully it will be an occasion for change.

It's not an opportunity to torture your enemy. That's not doing good to those who hate you. You're saying, oh, I'm going to do you some good, and I hope it really just makes you miserable.

It's an opportunity for them to change. Well, in Isaiah chapter 58, we have a great passage on the idea of biblical charity. Isaiah 58, beginning in verse 6, talking about the way that we worship, the way that we fast.

Fasting was a legitimate means of expressing devotion to God in Old Testament days. And beginning in verse 3 there of Isaiah 58, why have we fasted, they say, and you have not seen. We've afflicted our souls, and you take no notice.

We're penalizing ourselves. We're wearing a hair shirt. We're going without food.

We're fasting, and God's not paying any attention. In fact, in the days of your fast, you find pleasure, and you exploit all your laborers. You fast for strife and debate and to strike with the fist of wickedness.

You will not fast as you do this day to make your voice heard on high. You think you're fasting, but you're really not. Is this the fast that I have chosen, a day for a man to afflict his soul? Is it to bow down his head like a bulrush and to spread out sackcloth and ashes? You're just going to go through the external motions of a fast and expect God to honor it? Would you call this a fast and an acceptable day to the Lord? Is this not the fast that I have chosen, he says in verse 6, loose the bonds of wickedness, undo the heavy burdens, let the oppressed go free, and break every yoke? If you want to do something self-sacrificial that impresses God, do something that is not only sacrificial to self but beneficial to others.

In other words, love your neighbor. That's the kind of fast that God has chosen. Is this not the fast that I have chosen, to share your bread with the hungry and to bring your house to your house the poor who are cast out? When you see the naked, you cover him, and you do not hide yourself from your own flesh.

This would be your own relatives, your own kinsmen. Then your light will break forth like the morning. Your healing will spring forth speedily, and your righteousness shall go before you.

The glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard. Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer. You shall cry, and he will say, Here I am.

So the expression of genuine contrition before God, the expression of genuine service to God is to love one another. The greatest expression of love toward God is to love one another. Break the yoke, undo the heavy burdens, let the oppressed go free, share your bread with the hungry, bring to your house the poor who are cast out, and so forth.

If you take away the yoke from your midst, he says in verse 9, the pointing of the finger and speaking wickedness, if you extend your soul to the hungry and satisfy the afflicted soul, then your light shall dawn in darkness, and your darkness shall be as the noonday. The Lord will guide you continually and satisfy your soul in drought and strengthen your

bones. You shall be like a watered garden and like a spring of water whose waters do not fail.

Those from among you shall build the old waste places. You shall raise up the foundations of many generations, and you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to dwell in. So this is the attitude, this is the thinking behind biblical charity.

You want to do these things heartily as unto the Lord and not unto men. You want to do it in a way where you can raise up and restore. What's going to happen when you repair the breach and restore the streets to dwell in? You're giving people a place to dwell.

You're giving them the opportunity to return to their own independent ability to sustain themselves. This is the great principle that has been misunderstood, especially in some of our social programs that require nothing of the recipient. If your circumstances are bad enough, you get a handout.

And in many cases, it's not designed to rehabilitate. It doesn't have as its goal returning someone to independent function. And thankfully, in recent years, we've had some efforts to reform the welfare system and some of the other things in our country to try to get people back to work and back to independent living because that's better for them and it's better for us.

It's a good kind of charity. And I like some of the ideas that have been put forward. When you see the man with the cardboard sign on the curb, instead of handing him some money, you don't know what on earth he's going to do with it.

Is he going to go buy a couple of bottles of rum and sit behind a building somewhere? If he says, well, I have no money and need food. Well, take him for a meal, sit down with him and buy him the meal. Make sure that that your charity goes for what it's intended for.

And you have the opportunity to talk. Maybe you'll have the opportunity to speak the truth to that person in love, might even learn something. I had a very interesting experience one time talking to a homeless man and he knew a lot of things that I didn't know about raising, growing things in gardens and making methane and all kinds of bizarre things that he encountered in his travels.

But if someone says, well, I'm out of work and can't get a job, well, find him some work, hire him to do some work. Interestingly, a lot of these people with the signs, when you say, well, I'm not going to give you a handout, but I will let you come over to my house and do some work. They don't want to do that because they are actually professional panhandlers and their 1995 Buick Skylark is parked around the corner there.

And panhandling can be very lucrative and you don't know what you're contributing to

when you blindly give to someone who purports to be in need. If you want to know for sure, spend some time with that person, take them for a meal, provide them work that you'll pay for, give them the chance to earn it and keep their self-respect. If they are someone to whom good is due, they will leap on that opportunity and they'll exploit it.

They'll be glad, even back in the Depression, people didn't, most good people that were hard times and down on their luck, were very willing to do work in exchange for their keep and would gladly sleep out in a shed or something and do odd jobs and things. They didn't want a handout and that's the difference in the fabric of our society today. So these are some of the principles that we see brought out when Jacob's family comes to Egypt.

The Egyptians don't put them on the dole, they earn their keep. Joseph himself, dealing with the Egyptians and the Canaanites, by the way, gives them the wherewithal to sustain themselves. He gives them seed, he gives them bread to get by, but the idea is get back to independence and you keep four-fifths of what you earn.

This encourages work. Four-fifths is a fraction. How hard do you work? How big is your harvest? How great is your flock and herd growing? Well, it's to your benefit to work because you keep four-fifths of everything you produce.

And this ought to be the principle that guides our charity as believers. There is a time to give outright, but our goal should always be in the long term to give them the opportunity to be self-sustaining and not erode that by giving them... You see this elsewhere in the law where the fields were left unharvested in the corners and so forth. And what was the purpose? Let people gather their own grain, grind their own grain, make their own bread.

Israel never had a bread handout system, but they left the gleanings and the corners for the poor. That's the principle that we should follow. Well, that's where we're going to stop for this morning.

We will pick up next time and move into a new chapter in Genesis and we'll begin to see the conclusion of this wonderful book that we've studied for so long. But let's close here in a word of prayer. Father, we thank you for the fact that you've presented these great principles and doctrines to us in your Word.

We thank you that in your dealings with us, you have not given us righteousness for free. You've given us the resources to produce righteousness by faith, and we pray that we will make use of that opportunity, that God the Holy Spirit will make it real to us, and that as a result we will produce the harvest, the eternal fruit that reflects your glory both now and in the ages to come. We ask these things in Jesus' name.

Amen.