

10. This failure of the men to pay them for their labors as promised was considered treacherous by the workers—duplicitous, deceitful, and specifically perfidious, the latter adjective summarizing the circumstance: “not true to duty or obligation; failure to adhere to promises or obligations; connotes vile or contemptable behavior.”<sup>6</sup>
12. They were justified in their displeasure according to Moses in:  

**Deuteronomy 24:14** “You shall not oppress a hired servant who is poor and needy, whether he is one of your countrymen or one of your aliens who is in your land in your towns.

**v. 15** “You shall give him his wages on his day before the sun sets, for he is poor and sets his heart on it; so that he will not cry against you to the Lord and it become sin in you.” (NASB)
13. This Mosaic passage is part of the laws of divine establishment with emphasis on the economy. Principles include the relationship between management and labor especially with regard to laborers’ rights to their wages.
14. The more money owners make in free enterprise, the greater becomes their responsibility to the system by which they become wealthy.
15. They have the responsibility to continue to create and to perpetuate business systems under free enterprise thus perpetuating the system for all concerned.
16. When this approach is adopted by all in the free-enterprise system, then prosperity is realized by everyone, although to varying degrees.
17. In the situation we are now studying, the owners of the crops are in reversionism characterized by their anti-establishment mental attitudes and in doing so damage the very system that has made them prosperous.
18. Yet, in doing so, they cruelly withheld the money they promised the men at the beginning of the harvest.
19. These men were trusted to live up to their obligations to the workforce they had hired to harvest their crops.
20. There is more to this story than what is revealed in this passage. In a free-enterprise system, there are other components to the success of all those evident in our passage.

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<sup>6</sup> See: “faithless”: synonyms under *perfidious*, et al., *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, fifth edition (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Co., 2016), 635.

21. People must be free to engage in establishment functions within the various aspects of the overall system.
22. The food harvested, sold to grocers, and made available to their customers inserts another aspect into the system and that is the customers who depend on the availability of food to feed their families.
23. For all of these components to work consistently is the freedom for everyone to go about their daily duties, each contributing to the overall function and eventual prosperity of the entire population of Israel.
24. For this to continue uninterrupted, the politicians of Israel must be prepared to defend her borders and her shores from predator nations which is the duty of a military organization trained to do battle when necessary.
25. When all components function in sync, prosperity is enjoyed by all Israelites. When one component fails to perform its duty, then the freedom, prosperity, and safety of all the citizens of Israel suffer accordingly.
26. A breakdown in just one of the components in the free-enterprise system negatively impacts the stability of the others. When it occurs in several areas of the system, then Priest-Nation Israel finds herself in desperate straits.
27. When multiple facets of the system fail to function, then socialism, “a stage of society in Marxist theory transitional between capitalism and communism and distinguished by unequal distribution of goods and pay according to work done.”<sup>7</sup>
28. The two rich men are reversionists. They have a lot of money but do not want to part with it. Therefore, they lie to their workforce since they do not plan to pay them for the work they perform.
29. When the harvest is completed, they do not pay the workforce. They are believers, but in reversionism, their god is their money. Money is more important to them than an honorable reputation.
30. This is made evident since once the harvest is in the hands of the grocers, they refuse to pay the laborers. Their lust for happiness is thus dependent upon the possession of money and more of it.
31. If they had, for example a million dollars in gold and silver at the beginning of the harvest and the pay scale for the harvest was 15¢ a day, regardless of how many men were hired, the payout for the entire harvest would have been a pittance by comparison.
32. Here is a synopsis of the value of gold and silver as compared to a day’s labor during the Roman Empire from 27 BC to 14 AD:

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<sup>7</sup> Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary, eleventh ed. (Springfield: Merriam-Webster, Inc.,2014), “socialism.”



**The question: What would an ounce of gold get you in ancient Rome?**

The purity of precious metal varied in the coins produced during ancient Rome, so let's consider the time of Augustus (27 BC–14 AD) when the aureus, Rome's gold coin, weighed about 8 grams. A troy ounce of gold is 31 grams, so let us call a troy ounce the equivalent of 4 aureii.



A Roman Gold Aureus

The value of the gold aureus was fixed at the rate of 25 silver denarii to 1 aureus, making the ounce of gold worth about 100 denarii. [(today would be worth about \$300)].



A Roman Silver Denarius (ca 10–14 AD)

During the time of Augustus a single denarius was roughly, very roughly, equivalent to a day's wages for a skilled laborer or [\\$50 in modern terms](#).

So that ounce of gold would have the buying power of roughly \$5000, or about 4x what the current price of gold is today.

The problem is that it is almost impossible to equate the cost of an item back then to its cost today. 2000 years ago, people got by with only a fraction of the goods we have, including clothes, food, and shelter. The quality of many of those items were also much poorer than modern day equivalents.

And while wealth inequality is a hot topic today it was horrendous back then with roughly 95% of people living on the cusp of starvation. Those that worked at the trades likely worked much longer than 8-hour days due to the fact the 8-hour day is a 20th century invention.

So perhaps a better way of considering it is in terms of gross wages of a skilled worker - one of the top 5% [gold coins]. Since a skilled laborer could make 7 aureii a year [gold coins], that ounce of gold would be the equivalent of 4/7th or 57% of a year's pay. But for that pay you worked much longer than you would today, and you could buy much less with it after you received it.

**Update:** It's worth noting the implied difference in the ratio between silver and gold the above calculations expose. If an ounce of gold = 100 denarii at Rome's exchange rate, this means each denarius should contain (spot price of an ounce of gold on 10/19/18 at \$1,223/100 denarii) \$12.23 worth of silver in each denarius.

The denarii during this period were supposed to contain 3.9g of pure silver. 31 grams to the troy ounce of silver. Eight denarii to the troy ounce. Eight denarii x \$12.23 worth of silver = \$97.84 for an ounce of silver at the Roman exchange rate. So, the Romans valued silver about 7x more than we do today.



Commemorating the Deification of Empress Julia Domna (217 AD). The current price of gold is around \$1,500, so you would be going back with 1/15th of an ounce of gold.

The 400-year period of Rome between the 2nd Punic war (216 BC) and the end of the Severian Dynasty (235 AD), is the period when Rome reached the pinnacle of power and the empire its greatest extent. The gold coin at the time was known as the aureus ['ôr-ē-es: "golden"]:<sup>8</sup>



(End JAS5-06. See JAS5-07 for continuation of study at p. 61.)

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.quora.com/What-would-an-ounce-of-gold-get-you-in-Ancient-Rome?share=1>

The aureus weighed about 8g and equaled 25 of the silver coins known as the denárius. A troy ounce is equal to 31.1g, or about 4 aurēī. Four aurei = 100 denárii.

So, your 1/15th of an ounce of gold can be translated into (100 denárii).

A single denárius is thought to be what a skilled worker would earn in a day such as a carpenter, a mason, or a legionnaire.

**Denarius (δηνάριον [*dēnárion*]): A Roman silver coin, 25 of which went to the aureus, the standard gold coin of the empire in the time of Augustus. The value of the denarius would be about 20 cents and this was the ordinary wage of a soldier and a day laborer.<sup>1</sup>**

So, you'd be going back with roughly a week's pay for a skilled worker. In other words, not that much. You'll have enough for a vacation but don't expect to live there long-term.<sup>2</sup>

33. The information above is noted to be the case during the reign of Augustus (27 14 AD), known then as Augustus Julius Caesar, the first Roman emperor.
34. About twenty years later, James, the half-brother of Jesus, wrote his *Letter of James* during which time the following information refers to that period's policies regarding wages.

**James 5:4** Look! The wages [ μισο (*misthós*)] you failed to pay [ perfect passive participle of the verb ἀποστρεπέω (*apostrepéō*): fraud; criminality ] the workers who mowed your fields are crying out [ present active indicative of supplication of the verb, κράζω (*krázō*) ] against you. The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty. (NIV)

35. This takes us to an excerpt that addresses the Israelite standards regarding the payment of wages:

**Wages, μισθός (*misthós*). The old Levitical Law was insistent on honesty in wages and on promptness in payments: "The wages of a hired man are not to remain with you all night until morning." (Leviticus 19:13b NASB) The Bible refers to wages actual and wages figurative. Of actual wages there are three kinds: (1) money wages, (2) provision (usually food) wages, and (3) what may be called "exchange" wages. Often laborers and soldiers received both money and "keep" wages.**

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<sup>1</sup> H. Porter, "Denarius," in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, gen. ed. James Orr (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1956), II: 830.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.quora.com/What-would-an-ounce-of-gold-get-you-in-Ancient-Rome> .



**The laborer in New Testament times received about 15 cents per day, besides in some cases for his provisions. The incidents in the Old Testament and in the New Testament show that the laborer was at the caprice of the employer.<sup>3</sup>**

36. The men in the James 5:4 context not only withheld payment throughout the night but did not do so the following day when the produce was delivered to the grocers.
37. From this analysis of the greedy and even criminal behavior of what the passage indicates are these “men,” referred to in James 5, verse 1 as “you rich,” by the plural masculine of address of the noun, **πλούσιος (plouísios)**: “wealthy men.” By this we can identify the culprits who are the antagonists in Chapter 5.
38. They are at least two men and, according to verse 3, financially flush with possessions of gold and silver. The translation of verse 4, above, from the *New International Version*, is fine, but we will now expand it further:

**James 5:4** Observe this, the wages of the workers [ plural aorist active participle of the verb, ἐργάτης (*ergátēs*): agricultural laborers ] who have harvested your fields, the ones having been defrauded of wages by you rich reversionists, keep screaming [ present active indicative of κράζω (*krázō*) an urgent protest for help ]; and the outcries [ the plural βοή (*boē*): screams ] of the ones having harvested has reached the ears of [ יהוה צבאות (Yehowah *Sevao*’th (Hebrew) or Κύριος Σαβαώθ (Greek) ] the Lord of the Armies [ Jesus Christ ].<sup>4</sup> (EXT)

**James 5:5** You have lived luxuriously on the earth and led a life of wanton pleasure; you have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter. (NASB)

1. Verse 5 begins a description of the lifestyle of the reversionistic believers we have observed in verse 1–4. Their souls’ modus operandi functions from the standards of *cosmos diabolicus* instead of the grace orientation from the Word of God.

<sup>3</sup> William Edward Raffety, “Wages,” in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, gen. ed. James Orr (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1956), IV: 3063.

<sup>4</sup> The Hebrew letter “b” (ב) (*Bet*) contains a “dot” named *holem* and pronounced: “b.” However, when the *holem* is absent (ב), the pronunciation changes to a “v.” Therefore, the Hebrew title of the Lord is pronounced, “*Sevao*’th”. Yet, in the Greek of the New Testament, the “β” or *beta* is not so affected and remains unchanged in the English translation. Both are translated, “the Lord of the Armies.” (See: J. Weingreen, *A Practical Grammar for Classical Hebrew* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959), 3. [NOTE: More later about this nuance.]



2. Their lifestyle is one of opulence and pleasure. They aggrandize themselves while taking advantage of others. Money is their major motivation. They have **plenty** of cash, but no **capacity** for gratitude nor of personal integrity.
3. This exposes their reverse process reversionism in their business relationships which is also associated with their frantic search for happiness.
4. Now that these workers have been used by these men to accomplish their financial objectives, they now consider them as slaves who are no longer useful—out of sight, out of mind.
5. These men were not slaves. They had homes and families, they are citizens of Israel, they are men who make their living by contributing to the overall progress of a Priest Nation under a free-enterprise system. Yet, regardless of these attributes, they are used, lied to, and finally denied payment for a job professionally completed.
6. This verse opens with the statement, “You have lived luxuriously on the earth.” “Lived luxuriously” is the aorist active indicative of the verb, **τροφάω (trupháō)**.
7. Yet, in this context, it indicates their luxurious lifestyle was one of self-indulgence which resulted in taking advantage of men who accomplished honest days’ work yet without being paid.
8. This is why in verse 4, the workers are described as continuously screaming their protests because they were defrauded. In those days there was no Harvesters’ Union to which they could take their complaints.
9. Their luxurious lifestyle is described by the culminative aorist active indicative of the verb, **σπαταλάω (spataláō)**: “to live in luxury and pleasure in eating, drinking, and self-indulgence or a “wanton” lifestyle. “Wanton” is defined by *Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary* (11th ed.) as: “undisciplined, lustful, sensual, merciless, malicious, unduly lavish, and extravagant.”
10. Back in my days of yore such men’s behavior was described as “playboys: men who live a life devoted chiefly to the pursuit of pleasure.” [M-WCD, 11].
11. The culminative aorist tense is constative for past completed actions in the status of monetary reversionism which is emphasized by the indicative mood for self-indulgence.
12. Although in the depths of reversionism these men have, by means of their wealth, developed sophisticated tastes especially in the field of early-day haute cuisine [ ót kwi-zén ], a term which over the last century has been used to describe the elaborate French cuisine.

