

Deuteronomy 26:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And thou shalt speak and say before the LORD thy God, A Syrian ready to perish was my father, and he went down into Egypt, and sojourned there with a few, and became there a nation, great, mighty, and populous:

Analysis

The firstfruits confession begins: 'And thou shalt speak and say before the LORD thy God, A Syrian ready to perish was my father, and he went down into Egypt, and sojourned there with a few, and became there a nation, great, mighty, and populous.' This credal statement rehearses Israel's history from Abraham/Jacob ('Syrian'—referring to Paddan Aram origin) through Egyptian sojourn to nationhood. The phrase 'ready to perish' emphasizes vulnerability and God's gracious preservation. This confession, recited at firstfruits offering, grounds gratitude in historical memory—Israel's existence is miraculous, depending entirely on divine intervention.

Historical Context

The 'Syrian ready to perish' likely refers to Jacob, who fled to Paddan Aram (Syria/ Aram) to escape Esau and later fled famine by going to Egypt. The 'few' (70 persons, Exodus 1:5) becoming 'great, mighty, and populous' (perhaps 2 million at the Exodus) demonstrates God's fulfillment of Abrahamic promises. This confession functioned as catechism, teaching covenant history to each generation. The liturgical context (firstfruits offering) connected present blessing to past deliverance, fostering gratitude.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does rehearsing God's past faithfulness in your history strengthen present faith and gratitude?
2. What role should corporate memory of God's acts play in worship and discipleship?

Interlinear Text

וְעַתָּה יֵאָמֶר	וְעַתָּה יֵאָמֶר	לִפְנֵי יְהוָה	לִפְנֵי יְהוָה	אֱלֹהֵי יִצְחָק	אֱלֹהֵי יִצְחָק
And thou shalt speak	and say	before	the LORD	thy God	A Syrian
H6030	H559	H6440	H3068	H430	H761
אֵלָּהּ דָּ	אֵלָּהּ דָּ	וַיֵּרָד	וַיֵּרָד	מִצְרַיִם	וַיֵּרָד
ready to perish	was my father	and he went down	into Egypt	and sojourned	
H6	H1	H3381	H4714	H1481	
שָׁם	בְּמִתְּיָא	מְעַט	וַיְהִי	שָׁם	לִגְדֹל
H8033	there with	a few	H1961	H8033	and became there a nation
	H4962	H4592			H1471
וְעַתָּה	וְעַתָּה				
mighty	and populous				
H6099	H7227				

Additional Cross-References

Genesis 46:27 (References Egypt): And the sons of Joseph, which were born him in Egypt, were two souls: all the souls of the house of Jacob, which came into Egypt, were threescore and ten.

Deuteronomy 10:22 (References God): Thy fathers went down into Egypt with threescore and ten persons; and now the LORD thy God hath made thee as the stars of heaven for multitude.

Genesis 31:20 (Parallel theme): And Jacob stole away unawares to Laban the Syrian, in that he told him not that he fled.

Genesis 45:11 (Parallel theme): And there will I nourish thee; for yet there are five years of famine; lest thou, and thy household, and all that thou hast, come to poverty.

Genesis 43:12 (Parallel theme): And take double money in your hand; and the money that was brought again in the mouth of your sacks, carry it again in your hand; peradventure it was an oversight:

Genesis 45:7 (References God): And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance.

Genesis 31:24 (References God): And God came to Laban the Syrian in a dream by night, and said unto him, Take heed that thou speak not to Jacob either good or bad.

Acts 7:15 (References Egypt): So Jacob went down into Egypt, and died, he, and our fathers,

Genesis 25:20 (Parallel theme): And Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah to wife, the daughter of Bethuel the Syrian of Padan-aram, the sister to Laban the Syrian.

Genesis 24:4 (Parallel theme): But thou shalt go unto my country, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son Isaac.