

Deuteronomy 26:6

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the Egyptians evil entreated us, and afflicted us, and laid upon us hard bondage:

Analysis

The Egyptians evil entreated us, and afflicted us, and laid upon us hard bondage—the firstfruits liturgy shifts from present blessing to past suffering, reciting salvation history. The threefold Hebrew intensification—vayare'u (dealt harshly), vayannunu (afflicted), vayyitnu avodah qashah (imposed hard labor)—recalls Exodus 1:11-14's account of Egyptian oppression. This isn't generic hardship but specific historical persecution of God's covenant people.

The phrase avodah qashah (hard/harsh service) refers to the brutal forced labor of brick-making without straw (Exodus 5:6-19). The same root avad means both "serve/work" and "worship"—Israel's bondage to Pharaoh prevented their service to YHWH, making the exodus a liberation for worship. Significantly, this confession occurs during worship, transforming avodah from slavery into joyful service.

Including slavery's memory in a harvest celebration prevents historical amnesia. Israel must never forget they were slaves, lest they oppress others (Deuteronomy 15:15, 24:18, 22) or attribute prosperity to their own strength. The basket of firstfruits held by free hands once made bricks under the taskmaster's whip.

Historical Context

Egyptian oppression intensified under a pharaoh 'who knew not Joseph' (Exodus 1:8), likely Seti I or Ramesses II (13th century BCE). Israel's enslavement lasted over 400 years (Genesis 15:13), making the exodus generation's grandparents

born into bondage. The hard labor built store cities Pithom and Rameses (Exodus 1:11), likely Pi-Ramesse in the Nile Delta. This historical memory shaped Israel's identity permanently—they were slaves redeemed by grace, not a naturally free people.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does remembering your spiritual bondage before Christ's deliverance shape your gratitude and humility?
2. In what ways should memory of oppression or hardship influence how you treat vulnerable people today?

Interlinear Text

עָלָיִךְ	תִּלְתֵּן	עַלְתָּה	תִּלְעַבְדֵּנִי	עַתָּה	תִּמְצֵא	בְּמִצְרָיִם	אַתָּה	תִּמְצֵא	עַלְתָּה	תִּלְעַבְדֵּנִי
evil entreated	And the Egyptians	us and afflicted	us and laid							
H7489	H4713	H6031	H5414							

עַבְדָּה	קָשָׁה:	עַבְדֵּנִי
bondage	upon us hard	
H5656	H7186	

Additional Cross-References

Exodus 1:11 (Parallel theme): Therefore they did set over them taskmasters to afflict them with their burdens. And they built for Pharaoh treasure cities, Pithom and Raamses.

Exodus 1:14 (Parallel theme): And they made their lives bitter with hard bondage, in morter, and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field: all their service, wherein they made them serve, was with rigour.

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