

Exodus 1:14

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And they made their lives bitter with hard bondage, in mortar, and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field: all their service, wherein they made them serve, was with rigour.

Analysis

And they made their lives bitter with hard bondage, in mortar, and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field (וַיַּמְרְרוּ אֶת־חַיֵּיהֶם בַּעֲבֹדָה קָשָׁה, vayemareru et-chayeiheim ba'avodah kashah)—**Made bitter** (מָרַר, marar) connects to the later Passover's maror (bitter herbs, 12:8), memorial of this suffering. **Mortar and brick** describes clay brick production, confirmed by Egyptian tomb paintings showing Semitic slaves making mud bricks. **All their service, wherein they made them serve, was with rigour**—the repetition of "rigour" (בְּפָרֶךְ, befarekh) bookends the verse, emphasizing relentless cruelty. This bitterness prepares Israel to appreciate deliverance and shapes their identity as a redeemed people.

Historical Context

Brick-making required mixing Nile mud with straw, forming bricks in wooden molds, and drying them in the sun—backbreaking work under Egypt's intense heat. Field service included irrigation, planting, and harvesting for Pharaoh's estates. The comprehensive nature ("all manner of service") indicates total subjugation.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How does understanding Israel's bitter slavery deepen your appreciation for redemption imagery throughout Scripture?
2. When life's circumstances feel bitter, how can you trust that God is preparing a greater deliverance?

Interlinear Text

וַיַּמְרֹר ו	אֶת	חַיָּהֶם	עַבְדָּתָם	קָשָׁה	בַּחֲמֹר	
And they made	H853	their lives	all their service	with hard	in mortar	
H4843		H2416	H5656	H7186	H2563	
וּבִלְבֵּן יִם	וּבְכֹל	עַבְדָּתָם	בַּשָּׂדֶה	אֵת	כָּל	עַבְדָּתָם
and in brick	H3605	all their service	in the field	H853	H3605	all their service
H3843		H5656	H7704			H5656
אֲשֶׁר	עָבַד ו	בָּהֶם	בְּפָרֹךְ:			
H834	wherein they made them serve	H0	was with rigour			
	H5647		H6531			

Additional Cross-References

Acts 7:19 (Parallel theme): The same dealt subtilly with our kindred, and evil entreated our fathers, so that they cast out their young children, to the end they might not live.

Numbers 20:15 (Parallel theme): How our fathers went down into Egypt, and we have dwelt in Egypt a long time; and the Egyptians vexed us, and our fathers:

Exodus 2:23 (Parallel theme): And it came to pass in process of time, that the king of Egypt died: and the children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage.

Exodus 6:9 (Parallel theme): And Moses spake so unto the children of Israel: but they hearkened not unto Moses for anguish of spirit, and for cruel bondage.

Isaiah 58:6 (Parallel theme): Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?

Acts 7:34 (Parallel theme): I have seen, I have seen the affliction of my people which is in Egypt, and I have heard their groaning, and am come down to deliver them. And now come, I will send thee into Egypt.

Psalms 81:6 (Parallel theme): I removed his shoulder from the burden: his hands were delivered from the pots.