

Exodus 4:22

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith the LORD, Israel is my son, even my firstborn:

Analysis

And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith the LORD, Israel is my son, even my firstborn —(*וְאָמַרְתָּ אֶל־פְּרָעָה כִּי אָמַרְתִּי בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל*)—God's message to Pharaoh establishes covenant relationship: **Israel is my son, even my firstborn** (*בְּנֵי וְקָהָרִי יִשְׂרָאֵל*). **Firstborn** (*בָּכֹר*, *bekhor*) carries legal rights—inheritance, honor, special status. God claims Israel as His chosen son, deserving freedom and worship. This father-son language anticipates Israel's covenant sonship (Deuteronomy 14:1, Hosea 11:1) and ultimately Christ as God's unique Son (Matthew 3:17). Pharaoh oppressing Israel oppresses God's firstborn—a grave offense demanding parental response (v. 23). The Exodus is God acting as Father to rescue His son from slavery.

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern suzerains called vassal nations "son" in treaty language. But YHWH's relationship with Israel transcends political metaphor—it's covenantal, paternal, elective love. This firstborn designation sets up the tenth plague's bitter irony—Egypt's firstborn will die (v. 23) because Pharaoh won't release God's firstborn. Hosea 11:1 reflects on this: "When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt."

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. How does God's identification of Israel as 'My son, My firstborn' shape your understanding of covenant relationship as adoption into God's family?
2. What does God's paternal action to rescue His son Israel teach about His commitment to deliver those He calls His own?

Interlinear Text

וְאַתָּה תֹּאמֶר אֶל פְּרַעַה כִּי אֶתְּנָא אֱלֹהִים רַבִּים	And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, I am the LORD God of the Egyptians, and I have	וְאַתָּה תֹּאמֶר אֶל פְּרַעַה כִּי אֶתְּנָא אֱלֹהִים רַבִּים	And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, I am the LORD God of the Egyptians, and I have
וְאַתָּה תֹּאמֶר אֶל פְּרַעַה כִּי אֶתְּנָא אֱלֹהִים רַבִּים	And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, I am the LORD God of the Egyptians, and I have	וְאַתָּה תֹּאמֶר אֶל פְּרַעַה כִּי אֶתְּנָא אֱלֹהִים רַבִּים	And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, I am the LORD God of the Egyptians, and I have
וְאַתָּה תֹּאמֶר אֶל פְּרַעַה כִּי אֶתְּנָא אֱלֹהִים רַבִּים	And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, I am the LORD God of the Egyptians, and I have	וְאַתָּה תֹּאמֶר אֶל פְּרַעַה כִּי אֶתְּנָא אֱלֹהִים רַבִּים	And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, I am the LORD God of the Egyptians, and I have

Additional Cross-References

Hosea 11:1 (References Israel): When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt.

Romans 9:4 (References Israel): Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises;

Hebrews 12:23 (Parallel theme): To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect,

Jeremiah 31:9 (References Israel): They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them: I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters in a straight way, wherein they shall not stumble: for I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my firstborn.

Isaiah 63:16 (References Lord): Doubtless thou art our father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not: thou, O LORD, art our father, our redeemer; thy name is from everlasting.

Isaiah 64:8 (References Lord): But now, O LORD, thou art our father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand.

Deuteronomy 14:1 (References Lord): Ye are the children of the LORD your God: ye shall not cut yourselves, nor make any baldness between your eyes for the dead.

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