

Genesis 47:19

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Wherefore shall we die before thine eyes, both we and our land? buy us and our land for bread, and we and our land will be servants unto Pharaoh: and give us seed, that we may live, and not die, that the land be not desolate.

Analysis

Wherefore shall we die before thine eyes, both we and our land? buy us and our land for bread, and w... This passage is part of the Joseph narrative, a masterfully crafted account demonstrating God's sovereign providence working through human choices and circumstances to accomplish His redemptive purposes. The Joseph cycle shows how God transforms evil intentions into instruments of salvation.

Central themes include divine providence orchestrating events toward redemptive ends, the testing and refinement of character through suffering and success, forgiveness overcoming betrayal and injustice, and the preservation of God's covenant people through famine. Joseph's rise from slavery to second-in-command of Egypt illustrates how God exalts the humble and uses seeming disasters for ultimate good.

Theologically, these chapters reveal:

1. God's meticulous sovereignty over all events, even evil human actions
2. suffering as preparation for future service rather than punishment
3. forgiveness as reflecting divine character and enabling reconciliation
4. God's covenant faithfulness across generations ensuring the survival and blessing of His people

5. how present suffering gains meaning when viewed from the perspective of God's larger purposes.

Joseph's words "you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good" (50:20) epitomize biblical theodicy and providence.

Historical Context

The patriarchal narratives (Genesis 12-50) reflect the cultural, social, and legal customs of the ancient Near East during the Middle Bronze Age (2000-1500 BCE). Archaeological discoveries including the Mari tablets, Nuzi tablets, and Egyptian records confirm many details: nomadic pastoralism, covenant-making ceremonies, marriage customs, property laws, and international travel patterns described in Genesis.

The cultural practices reflected include: treaty/covenant forms (Genesis 15), bride-price customs (Genesis 24, 29), inheritance laws favoring firstborn sons (Genesis 25, 27), adoption practices (Genesis 15, 30), levirate-type arrangements (Genesis 38), and Egyptian administrative systems (Genesis 41, 47). These parallels confirm Genesis's historical reliability while showing how God worked within ancient cultural frameworks to accomplish His purposes.

For later Israelites, these narratives established their identity as Abraham's descendants, explained their claim to Canaan, justified their possession of Joseph's bones (Exodus 13:19), and provided models of faith despite imperfection. The patriarchs' failures and God's faithfulness encouraged Israel that covenant relationship depended on God's grace rather than human merit. The movement from Mesopotamia to Canaan to Egypt set the stage for the Exodus and conquest narratives.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. How does this verse contribute to the biblical doctrine of creation, fall, or redemption?
2. How should this truth about Jacob's Last Days shape our daily decisions and priorities?
3. How does this passage point forward to Christ and the gospel of redemption?

Interlinear Text

לָמָּה	נָמּוּת	לְעֵינֶיךָ	גַּם	אֲנִי חַיִּי	גַּם
H4100	Wherefore shall we die	before thine eyes	H1571	H587	H1571
	H4191	H5869			
וְהָאָדָמָה	קִנְיָה	אֶתְנוּ	וְהָאָדָמָה	בִּלְחֶם	
and we and our land	buy	H853	and we and our land	for bread	
H127	H7069	H853	H127	H3899	
וְהָאָדָמָה	אֲנִי חַיִּי	וְהָאָדָמָה	עֲבָדִים	לְפָרֹעַ	וְתֵן
H1961	H587	and we and our land	will be servants	unto Pharaoh	and give
		H127	H5650	H6547	H5414
זֶרַע	וְנִחְיָה	וְלֹא	נָמּוּת	וְהָאָדָמָה	
us seed	that we may live	H3808	Wherefore shall we die	and we and our land	
H2233	H2421		H4191	H127	
לֹא	תִשָּׁמֵ:				
H3808	be not desolate				
	H3456				

Additional Cross-References

Job 2:4 (Parallel theme): And Satan answered the LORD, and said, Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life.

Lamentations 5:6 (Parallel theme): We have given the hand to the Egyptians, and to the Assyrians, to be satisfied with bread.

Lamentations 1:11 (Parallel theme): All her people sigh, they seek bread; they have given their pleasant things for meat to relieve the soul: see, O LORD, and consider; for I am become vile.

Lamentations 5:9 (Parallel theme): We gat our bread with the peril of our lives because of the sword of the wilderness.

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