

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

ל פה נם ות לעין יג גם אן חנו גם אן חנו
H4100 Wherefore shall we die before thine eyes H1571 H587 H1571
H4191 H5869

וְאַתָּה קָנָה וְאַתָּה אַתָּה וְאַתָּה וְאַתָּה בְּלָם
and we and our land buy and we and our land and we and our land for bread
H127 H7069 H853 H853 H127 H3899

וְאַתָּה עֲבָד יְמִינָה וְאַתָּה לְפָרָעָה וְאַתָּה וְאַתָּה
and we and our land will be servants unto Pharaoh and give
H1961 H587 H127 H5650 H6547 H5414

וְאַתָּה יְלָא יְתַחַיה וְאַתָּה נִמְוְתָה וְאַתָּה
us seed that we may live Wherefore shall we die and we and our land
H2233 H2421 H3808 H4191 H127

ל א תְּשִׁמְתָּ
be not desolate
H3808 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.

From KJV Study • kjvstudy.org