

Genesis 47:24

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And it shall come to pass in the increase, that ye shall give the fifth part unto Pharaoh, and four parts shall be your own, for seed of the field, and for your food, and for them of your households, and for food for your little ones.

Analysis

And it shall come to pass in the increase, that ye shall give the fifth part unto Pharaoh, and four ... 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

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. What theological truths about Settlement in Goshen emerge from this passage?
2. How can we apply the principles from this passage to contemporary challenges in family, work, or church?
3. How does understanding Christ as the ultimate fulfillment illuminate this passage's meaning?

Interlinear Text

וְהָיָה H1961	בְּתֵבוֹאָתָם H8393	וְנָתַתָּם H5414	חֲמִישֵׁית יֵת H2549
And it shall come to pass in the increase	that ye shall give	the fifth	
לְפָרֹעַ הַ	וְאַרְבַּע H702	הַיָּדָה H1961	לְזֶרַע H2233
part unto Pharaoh	and four	parts	shall be your own for seed
הַשָּׂדֶה H7704	וְלֶאֱכֹלְכֶם H400	וְלֶאֱשֵׁר H834	בְּבֵתֵיכֶם H1004
of the field	and for your food	and for them of your households	
וְלֶאֱכֹל לְ H398	לְטַפְּכֶם: H2945		
and for food	for your little ones		

Additional Cross-References

Genesis 41:34 (Parallel theme): Let Pharaoh do this, and let him appoint officers over the land, and take up the fifth part of the land of Egypt in the seven plenteous years.

Psalms 41:1 (Parallel theme): Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the LORD will deliver him in time of trouble.

Psalms 112:5 (Parallel theme): A good man sheweth favour, and lendeth: he will guide his affairs with discretion.

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