

Genesis 47:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

They said moreover unto Pharaoh, For to sojourn in the land are we come; for thy servants have no pasture for their flocks; for the famine is sore in the land of Canaan: now therefore, we pray thee, let thy servants dwell in the land of Goshen.

Analysis

They said moreover unto Pharaoh, For to sojourn in the land are we come; for thy servants have no pa... 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

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

1. What does this passage reveal about God's sovereignty and human responsibility?
2. How should this truth about Jacob's Last Days shape our daily decisions and priorities?
3. How does understanding Christ as the ultimate fulfillment illuminate this passage's meaning?

וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵל	פָּרַע ה	לָג ור	בָּא רֶץ	בָּאנוּ
They said	moreover unto Pharaoh	For to sojourn	in the land	are we come
H559	H413 H6547	H1481	H776	H935
כִּי יֵן מִרְעָה	לְצֹאן	אֲשֶׁר	עֲבַד יְב	כִּי
have no pasture	for their flocks		for thy servants	
H3588 H369	H4829 H6629	H834	H5650	H3588
כִּבֹּד	הָרָעָב	בָּא רֶץ	כֵּן עַן	וַעֲתָה
is sore	for the famine	in the land	of Canaan	
H3515	H7458	H776	H3667	H6258
				יִשְׁבוּ
				דwell
				H4994 H3427
עֲבַד יְב	בָּא רֶץ	גֹּשֶׁן:		
for thy servants	in the land	of Goshen		
H5650	H776	H1657		

Genesis 46:34 (Parallel theme): That ye shall say, Thy servants' trade hath been about cattle from our youth even until now, both we, and also our fathers: that ye

may dwell in the land of Goshen; for every shepherd is an abomination unto the Egyptians.

Genesis 15:13 (Parallel theme): And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not their's, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years;

Deuteronomy 26:5 (Parallel theme): And thou shalt speak and say before the LORD thy God, A Syrian ready to perish was my father, and he went down into Egypt, and sojourned there with a few, and became there a nation, great, mighty, and populous:

Genesis 43:1 (Parallel theme): And the famine was sore in the land.

Acts 7:11 (Parallel theme): Now there came a dearth over all the land of Egypt and Chanaan, and great affliction: and our fathers found no sustenance.

Psalms 105:23 (Parallel theme): Israel also came into Egypt; and Jacob sojourned in the land of Ham.