

Genesis 47:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And Jacob said unto Pharaoh, The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage.

Analysis

And Jacob said unto Pharaoh, The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years:... 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. How does this verse deepen our understanding of God's character and His relationship with creation?
2. What specific changes in thinking or behavior does this verse call us to make?
3. How does this passage point forward to Christ and the gospel of redemption?

Interlinear Text

מְגוּרֵיהֶם:	שָׁנֵי	בַיָּמִי	פָּרַעַ הַ	אֶל יַעֲקֹב	וַיֹּאמֶר
of my pilgrimage	of the years	The days	unto Pharaoh	And Jacob	said
H4033	H8141	H3117	H6547	H3290	H559
בַּיָּמִי	הָיוּ	וְרָעִים	מְעַט	שָׁנֵי	וּמֵאָה ת
The days	H1961	and evil	few	of the years	are an hundred
H3117		H7451	H4592	H8141	H3967
בַּיָּמִי	אֶת	הַשָּׁ יָגוּ	וְלֹא	חַיִּי	שָׁנֵי
The days	H853	been and have not attained	H5381	of my life	of the years
H3117				H2416	H8141
מְגוּרֵיהֶם:	בַּיָּמִי	אֲבֹתַי	חַיִּי	שָׁנֵי	
of my pilgrimage	The days	of my fathers	of my life	of the years	
H4033	H3117	H1	H2416	H8141	

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 39:12 (Parallel theme): Hear my prayer, O LORD, and give ear unto my cry; hold not thy peace at my tears: for I am a stranger with thee, and a sojourner, as all my fathers were.

Psalms 39:5 (Parallel theme): Behold, thou hast made my days as an handbreadth; and mine age is as nothing before thee: verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity. Selah.

Job 14:1 (Parallel theme): Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble.

Genesis 35:28 (Parallel theme): And the days of Isaac were an hundred and fourscore years.

Psalms 119:19 (Parallel theme): I am a stranger in the earth: hide not thy commandments from me.

Psalms 119:54 (Parallel theme): Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage.

James 4:14 (Parallel theme): Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.

1 Peter 2:11 (Parallel theme): Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul;