

# Genesis 50:23

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And Joseph saw Ephraim's children of the third generation: the children also of Machir the son of Manasseh were brought up upon Joseph's knees.

## Analysis

**And Joseph saw Ephraim's children of the third generation: the children also of Machir the son of Ma...** 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

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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

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**Matthew 25:31** — Final judgment

**Romans 2:1** — Judging others

## Study Questions

1. What does this passage reveal about God's sovereignty and human responsibility?
2. How can we apply the principles from this passage to contemporary challenges in family, work, or church?
3. How does this verse fit into the broader biblical story culminating in Christ?

## Interlinear Text

וְיָרָא	לְאַפְbִּים	בְּנֵי	שְׁלִשִּׁים	בְּנֵי
<b>saw</b>	<b>And Joseph</b>	<b>Ephraim's</b>	<b>children</b>	<b>of the third</b>
H7200	H3130	H669	H1121	H8029
מִכִּיר	בְּנֵי	מִנְשָׁה	בְּנֵי	בְּרִכִּים
<b>also of Machir</b>	<b>children</b>	<b>of Manasseh</b>	<b>were brought up</b>	<b>knees</b>
H4353	H1121	H4519	H3205	H1290
וּסְף:				H3130

## Additional Cross-References

**Numbers 32:39** (Parallel theme): And the children of Machir the son of Manasseh went to Gilead, and took it, and dispossessed the Amorite which was in it.

**Job 42:16** (Parallel theme): After this lived Job an hundred and forty years, and saw his sons, and his sons' sons, even four generations.

**Genesis 30:3** (Parallel theme): And she said, Behold my maid Bilhah, go in unto her; and she shall bear upon my knees, that I may also have children by her.

**Psalms 128:6** (Parallel theme): Yea, thou shalt see thy children's children, and peace upon Israel.

**Genesis 48:19** (Parallel theme): And his father refused, and said, I know it, my son, I know it: he also shall become a people, and he also shall be great: but truly his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his seed shall become a multitude of nations.

**Joshua 17:1** (Parallel theme): There was also a lot for the tribe of Manasseh; for he was the firstborn of Joseph; to wit, for Machir the firstborn of Manasseh, the father of Gilead: because he was a man of war, therefore he had Gilead and Bashan.

**Numbers 32:33** (Parallel theme): And Moses gave unto them, even to the children of Gad, and to the children of Reuben, and unto half the tribe of Manasseh the son of Joseph, the kingdom of Sihon king of the Amorites, and the kingdom of Og king of Bashan, the land, with the cities thereof in the coasts, even the cities of the country round about.

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