

Genesis 37:7

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For, behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and, lo, my sheaf arose, and also stood upright; and, behold, your sheaves stood round about, and made obeisance to my sheaf.

Analysis

For, behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and, lo, my sheaf arose, and also stood upright; ... 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

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How does this verse contribute to the biblical doctrine of creation, fall, or redemption?
2. What obstacles prevent us from living out the truths presented in this verse?
3. How does this verse fit into the broader biblical story culminating in Christ?

Interlinear Text

בַּת וּנְאַלְמָתִין מְאַלְמָם יְמִין אָבְןָן וְהַבָּה
H2009 H587 For behold we were binding and behold your sheaves H481 H485 H8432

בְּאַלְמָתִין וְגַם נָא בָה קָרְבָּה וְהַבָּה הַשְׁדָּה
in the field H2009 arose and behold your sheaves H1571 and also stood upright H5324 H7704 H6965 H485

וְתִשְׁתַּחַוו יְמִין תִּסְבַּב יְנָה לְאַלְמָתִין
stood round about and behold your sheaves and made obeisance H7812 H5437 H485 H2009

לְאַלְמָתִין

and behold your sheaves
H485

Additional Cross-References

Genesis 42:6 (Parallel theme): And Joseph was the governor over the land, and he it was that sold to all the people of the land: and Joseph's brethren came, and bowed down themselves before him with their faces to the earth.

Genesis 44:14 (Parallel theme): And Judah and his brethren came to Joseph's house; for he was yet there: and they fell before him on the ground.

Genesis 42:9 (Parallel theme): And Joseph remembered the dreams which he dreamed of them, and said unto them, Ye are spies; to see the nakedness of the land ye are come.

Genesis 43:26 (Parallel theme): And when Joseph came home, they brought him the present which was in their hand into the house, and bowed themselves to him to the earth.

From KJV Study • kjvstudy.org