

Genesis 39:6

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And he left all that he had in Joseph's hand; and he knew not ought he had, save the bread which he did eat. And Joseph was a goodly person, and well favoured.

Analysis

And he left all that he had in Joseph's hand; and he knew not ought he had, save the bread which he ... 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

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. What does this passage reveal about God's sovereignty and human responsibility?
2. How should this truth about Divine Presence shape our daily decisions and priorities?
3. In what ways does this narrative foreshadow or typify aspects of Christ's redemptive work?

Interlinear Text

וַעֲזַב ב	כָּל	אֲשֶׁר	לוֹ	בְּיַד	יוֹסֵף	וְלֹא	יָדַע	אֶתֹ
And he left	H3605	H834	H0	hand	And Joseph	H3808	and he knew	H854
H5800				H3027	H3130		H3045	
לֹא	כָּיִי	אִם	הֵלֶךְ	אֲשֶׁר	הָיָא	אֹכֵל	וַיֵּה	
not ought	H3588	he had save	the bread	H834	H1931	which he did eat	H1961	
H3972		H518	H3899			H398		
יוֹסֵף	וַיֵּה	תֵּה	וַיֵּה	מְרֻאָה:				
And Joseph	person and well	was a goodly	person and well	favoured				
H3130	H3303	H8389	H3303	H4758				

Additional Cross-References

Proverbs 31:11 (Parallel theme): The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil.

Genesis 29:17 (Parallel theme): Leah was tender eyed; but Rachel was beautiful and well favoured.

1 Samuel 16:12 (Good): And he sent, and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, and withal of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look to. And the LORD said, Arise, anoint him: for this is he.

Luke 19:17 (Good): And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities.

Acts 7:20 (Parallel theme): In which time Moses was born, and was exceeding fair, and nourished up in his father's house three months:

Genesis 43:32 (Parallel theme): And they set on for him by himself, and for them by themselves, and for the Egyptians, which did eat with him, by themselves: because the Egyptians might not eat bread with the Hebrews; for that is an abomination unto the Egyptians.

Genesis 39:4 (Parallel theme): And Joseph found grace in his sight, and he served him: and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he had he put into his hand.

Genesis 39:8 (Parallel theme): But he refused, and said unto his master's wife, Behold, my master wotteth not what is with me in the house, and he hath committed all that he hath to my hand;

Genesis 39:23 (Parallel theme): The keeper of the prison looked not to any thing that was under his hand; because the LORD was with him, and that which he did, the LORD made it to prosper.

Luke 16:10 (Parallel theme): He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much.