

Genesis 41:26

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The seven good kine are seven years; and the seven good ears are seven years: the dream is one.

Analysis

The seven good kine are seven years; and the seven good ears are seven years: the dream is one.... 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

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

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

שׁ	בָּעֵ	הַ	בָּהֵ	שׁ	נִימָ	שׁ	בָּעֵ	הַ	בָּהֵ	שׁ	בָּעֵ
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הַ	בָּהֵ	שׁ	נִימָ	שׁ	בָּעֵ	הַ	בָּהֵ	שׁ	נִימָ	שׁ	בָּעֵ
הַוָּא:	אַ	כָּל	וּמָ	הַ	בָּהֵ	שׁ	נִימָ	שׁ	בָּעֵ	הַ	בָּהֵ
ears	good	The seven	years		H2007	the dream	is one				

הַ	בָּהֵ	שׁ	נִימָ	שׁ	בָּעֵ	הַ	בָּהֵ	שׁ	נִימָ	שׁ	בָּעֵ
הַוָּא:	אַ	כָּל	וּמָ	הַ	בָּהֵ	שׁ	נִימָ	שׁ	בָּעֵ	הַ	בָּהֵ
ears	good	The seven	years		H2007	the dream	is one				

Additional Cross-References

Genesis 41:47 (Parallel theme): And in the seven plenteous years the earth brought forth by handfuls.

Genesis 41:2 (Parallel theme): And, behold, there came up out of the river seven well favoured kine and fatfleshed; and they fed in a meadow.

1 John 5:7 (Parallel theme): For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.

Exodus 12:11 (Parallel theme): And thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste: it is the LORD'S passover.

1 Corinthians 10:4 (Parallel theme): And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.

Genesis 41:29 (Parallel theme): Behold, there come seven years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt:

Genesis 41:53 (Parallel theme): And the seven years of plenteousness, that was in the land of Egypt, were ended.

Genesis 41:5 (Good): And he slept and dreamed the second time: and, behold, seven ears of corn came up upon one stalk, rank and good.

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