

Genesis 41:27

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the seven thin and ill favoured kine that came up after them are seven years; and the seven empty ears blasted with the east wind shall be seven years of famine.

Analysis

And the seven thin and ill favoured kine that came up after them are seven years; and the seven empt... 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

Study Questions

1. How does understanding this verse shape our doctrine of humanity, sin, or salvation?
2. What obstacles prevent us from living out the truths presented in this verse?
3. How does understanding Christ as the ultimate fulfillment illuminate this passage's meaning?

Interlinear Text

אַחֲרֵיכֶם	פָּעַלְתָּ	וְבָעֵת	בָּעֵשׂ	זֹהַת	בָּקָרֶת	וְבָקָרֶת	בָּעֵשׂ	בָּעֵשׂ
And the seven	kine	thin	and ill favoured	that came up	after them			
H7651	H6510	H7534	H7451	H5927	H310			
שָׁבֵד וְזֹהַת	בָּקָרֶת	וְזֹהַת	בָּקָרֶת	בָּשְׂבָלִים	שָׁבֵד וְזֹהַת	בָּקָרֶת	בָּשְׂבָלִים	בָּשְׂבָלִים
And the seven	years	H2007	And the seven	ears	empty	blasted		
H7651	H8141		H7651	H7641	H7386	H7710		
בָּשְׂבָלִים	שָׁבֵד וְזֹהַת	בָּקָרֶת	בָּקָרֶת	בָּקָרֶת	בָּקָרֶת	בָּקָרֶת	בָּקָרֶת	בָּקָרֶת
with the east wind	H1961	And the seven	years	of famine				
H6921		H7651	H8141	H7458				

Additional Cross-References

2 Kings 8:1 (Parallel theme): Then spake Elisha unto the woman, whose son he had restored to life, saying, Arise, and go thou and thine household, and sojourn wheresoever thou canst sojourn: for the LORD hath called for a famine; and it shall also come upon the land seven years.