

Genesis 41:30

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And there shall arise after them seven years of famine; and all the plenty shall be forgotten in the land of Egypt; and the famine shall consume the land;

Analysis

And there shall arise after them seven years of famine; and all the plenty shall be forgotten in the... 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 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. How does this verse deepen our understanding of God's character and His relationship with creation?
 2. What specific changes in thinking or behavior does this verse call us to make?
 3. How does understanding Christ as the ultimate fulfillment illuminate this passage's meaning?

Interlinear Text

וְנִשְׁכַּח חָמָס	אֲפָרִים	בְּרִכַּת	שָׁנִים שְׁבָע	וְשָׁנִים שְׁבָע	וְנִשְׁכַּח!
And there shall arise	seven	years	and the famine	after them	shall be forgotten
H6965	H7651	H8141	H7458	H310	H7911
בָּל	בְּשָׁבֵע ע	מִצְרַיִם	וְאֶתְנָזֵן	וְאֶתְנָזֵן	בְּרִכַּת
H3605	and all the plenty	in the land	of Egypt	shall consume	and the famine
H7647	H776	H4714	H3615	H7458	
את	בָּאָרֶץ:				
H853	in the land				
H776					

Additional Cross-References

Genesis 47:13 (References Egypt): And there was no bread in all the land; for the famine was very sore, so that the land of Egypt and all the land of Canaan fainted by reason of the famine.

Genesis 41:54 (References Egypt): And the seven years of dearth began to come, according as Joseph had said: and the dearth was in all lands; but in all the land of Egypt there was bread.