

# Genesis 41:55

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And when all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread: and Pharaoh said unto all the Egyptians, Go unto Joseph; what he saith to you, do.

## Analysis

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**And when all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread: and Pharaoh said...** 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

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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

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**Ephesians 2:8** — Salvation by grace through faith

**Romans 10:9** — Confession and belief for salvation

## Study Questions

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1. What does this passage reveal about God's sovereignty and human responsibility?
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

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וַתִּרְעַב	כָּל	אֶרֶץ	מִצְרַיִם	וַיֶּצַע קוֹ	הָעָם	אֱלֹ
was famished	H3605	And when all the land	of Egypt	cried	the people	H413
H7456		H776	H4714	H6817	H5971	
פַּרְעֹה	לֶלֶחֶם	יָאמַר	פַּרְעֹה	לְכָל	מִצְרַיִם	אֱלֹ
and Pharaoh	for bread	said	and Pharaoh	H3605	of Egypt	H413
H6547	H3899	H559	H6547		H4714	
יֹסֵף	אֲשֶׁר	יָאמַר	לָךְ	תַּעֲשׂוּ:		
unto Joseph	H834	said	H0	to you do		
H3130		H559		H6213		

## Additional Cross-References

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**Matthew 17:5** (Parallel theme): While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.

**Matthew 3:17** (Parallel theme): And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.