

Genesis 45:6

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For these two years hath the famine been in the land: and yet there are five years, in the which there shall neither be earing nor harvest.

Analysis

For these two years hath the famine been in the land: and yet there are five years, in the which 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

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Revelation 20:12 – Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does this verse contribute to the biblical doctrine of creation, fall, or redemption?
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

וְאֵת	בְּקָרְבָּן	שְׁנַת יְמִים	בְּקָרְבָּן	שְׁנַת יְמִים	בְּקָרְבָּן	וְאֵת
H3588	H2088	For these two years	hath the famine	been in	the land	H5750
		H8141	H7458	H7130	H776	
וְאֵת	בְּקָרְבָּן	שְׁנַת יְמִים	בְּקָרְבָּן	שְׁנַת יְמִים	בְּקָרְבָּן	וְאֵת
and yet there are five	For these two years	H834	in the which there shall neither			
H2568	H8141		H369			
וְאֵת	בְּקָרְבָּן	שְׁנַת יְמִים	בְּקָרְבָּן	שְׁנַת יְמִים	בְּקָרְבָּן	וְאֵת
וְאֵת	בְּקָרְבָּן	שְׁנַת יְמִים	בְּקָרְבָּן	שְׁנַת יְמִים	בְּקָרְבָּן	וְאֵת
וְאֵת	בְּקָרְבָּן	שְׁנַת יְמִים	בְּקָרְבָּן	שְׁנַת יְמִים	בְּקָרְבָּן	וְאֵת

Additional Cross-References

Genesis 47:23 (Parallel theme): Then Joseph said unto the people, Behold, I have bought you this day and your land for Pharaoh: lo, here is seed for you, and ye shall sow the land.

Genesis 41:56 (Parallel theme): And the famine was over all the face of the earth: And Joseph opened all the storehouses, and sold unto the Egyptians; and the famine waxed sore in the land of Egypt.

Genesis 41:54 (Parallel theme): 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.

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