

Genesis 49:27

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Benjamin shall ravin as a wolf: in the morning he shall devour the prey, and at night he shall divide the spoil.

Analysis

Benjamin shall ravin as a wolf: in the morning he shall devour the prey, and at night he shall divid... 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

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How does this verse deepen our understanding of God's character and His relationship with creation?
2. How does this passage challenge modern cultural assumptions about identity, purpose, or morality?
3. How does this passage point forward to Christ and the gospel of redemption?

Interlinear Text

						ע	ת
						וְאָכַל	בְּתִימָן
Benjamin	as a wolf	shall ravin	in the morning	he shall devour	the prey		
H1144	H2061	H2963	H1242	H398	H5706		
						שְׁלָל:	
and at night	he shall divide	the spoil					
H6153	H2505	H7998					

Additional Cross-References

Genesis 46:21 (Parallel theme): And the sons of Benjamin were Belah, and Becher, and Ashbel, Gera, and Naaman, Ehi, and Rosh, Muppim, and Huppim, and Ard.

Genesis 35:18 (Parallel theme): And it came to pass, as her soul was in departing, (for she died) that she called his name Ben-oni: but his father called him Benjamin.

Ezekiel 22:27 (Parallel theme): Her princes in the midst thereof are like wolves ravening the prey, to shed blood, and to destroy souls, to get dishonest gain.

Judges 20:25 (Parallel theme): And Benjamin went forth against them out of Gibeah the second day, and destroyed down to the ground of the children of Israel again eighteen thousand men; all these drew the sword.

Judges 20:21 (Parallel theme): And the children of Benjamin came forth out of Gibeah, and destroyed down to the ground of the Israelites that day twenty and two thousand men.

