

Genesis 18:17

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the LORD said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do;

Analysis

And the LORD said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do;... This passage is part of the Abrahamic narratives which shift from universal human history to God's particular covenant people. The Abraham cycle (Genesis 12-25) demonstrates God's sovereign election, covenant faithfulness, and the development of faith through testing and promise fulfillment.

Central themes include God's unconditional covenant promises (land, descendants, blessing to nations), the call to faith and obedience, the testing of faith through delays and impossibilities, the contrast between divine promises and human schemes, and God's gracious persistence despite human failures. Abraham emerges as the father of faith whose trust in God's promises becomes the model for all believers (Romans 4, Galatians 3, Hebrews 11).

Theologically, these narratives establish:

1. salvation by grace through faith rather than works
2. covenant as God's gracious initiative binding Himself to His people
3. the necessity of patient trust when promises seem impossible
4. the consequences of attempting to fulfill God's promises through human effort
5. the pattern of divine testing producing mature faith.

The Abraham cycle foreshadows Christ as the ultimate seed through whom blessing extends to all nations (Galatians 3:16).

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

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How does understanding this verse shape our doctrine of humanity, sin, or salvation?
2. How does this passage challenge modern cultural assumptions about identity, purpose, or morality?
3. How does this verse fit into the broader biblical story culminating in Christ?

Interlinear Text

אָשֶׁר מִאָבָבָה מִן אָבִי אָמַת רַבְמַכְפֵּה הַיְהוּנִי
And the LORD said Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which
H3068 H559 H3680 H589 H85 H834

עֲשָׂה אָנֹכִי
I do
H589 H6213

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 25:14 (References Lord): The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant.

Amos 3:7 (References Lord): Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets.

John 15:15 (References Lord): Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.

Genesis 19:24 (References Lord): Then the LORD rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven;

James 2:23 (References Abraham): And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God.

2 Kings 4:27 (References Lord): And when she came to the man of God to the hill, she caught him by the feet: but Gehazi came near to thrust her away. And the man of God said, Let her alone; for her soul is vexed within her: and the LORD hath hid it from me, and hath not told me.

2 Chronicles 20:7 (References Abraham): Art not thou our God, who didst drive out the inhabitants of this land before thy people Israel, and gavest it to the seed of Abraham thy friend for ever?

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