

Genesis 39:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

There is none greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back any thing from me but thee, because thou art his wife: how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?

Analysis

There is none greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back any thing from me but thee, be... 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

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

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. What connections can we trace from this verse to Jesus' life, death, and resurrection?

Interlinear Text

| | | | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|------------------|--------------|----------------|
| אֵין | בְּגָדְלָה | בַּבְּיִתְּהָאָה | מִתְּפִיבָּה | לֹא |
| H369 | There is none greater | in this house | H2088 | than I neither |
| H1419 | | H1004 | H4480 | H3808 |
| רָשַׁב | מִתְּפִיבָּה | אָמַת | אָמַת | אָמַת |
| hath he kept back | any thing | H3588 | H518 | H853 |
| H2820 | H4480 | H3972 | | |
| בָּאֵשׁ | אָשָׁתָּה | אָשָׁתָּה | אָשָׁתָּה | בָּרָע |
| from me but thee because | thou | art his wife | H349 | wickedness |
| H834 | H859 | H802 | H6213 | H7451 |
| בְּגָדְלָה | בְּזַעַט | לְאֱלֹהִים | | |
| There is none greater | and sin | against God | | |
| H1419 | H2063 | H2398 | H430 | |

Additional Cross-References

2 Samuel 12:13 (Sin): And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the LORD. And Nathan said unto David, The LORD also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die.

Genesis 42:18 (References God): And Joseph said unto them the third day, This do, and live; for I fear God:

Genesis 20:6 (Sin): And God said unto him in a dream, Yea, I know that thou didst this in the integrity of thy heart; for I also withheld thee from sinning against me: therefore suffered I thee not to touch her.

Psalms 51:4 (Sin): Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.

1 John 3:9 (Sin): Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.

Job 31:23 (References God): For destruction from God was a terror to me, and by reason of his highness I could not endure.

Jeremiah 28:16 (Parallel theme): Therefore thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will cast thee from off the face of the earth: this year thou shalt die, because thou hast taught rebellion against the LORD.

Jeremiah 50:7 (Sin): All that found them have devoured them: and their adversaries said, We offend not, because they have sinned against the LORD, the habitation of justice, even the LORD, the hope of their fathers.

1 Corinthians 4:2 (Parallel theme): Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.

Luke 12:48 (Parallel theme): But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.