

Genesis 42:36

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And Jacob their father said unto them, Me have ye bereaved of my children: Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away: all these things are against me.

Analysis

And Jacob their father said unto them, Me have ye bereaved of my children: Joseph is not, and Simeon... 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

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

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 passage point forward to Christ and the gospel of redemption?

Interlinear Text

אָתָּה	יְ	אָבִיכֶם	וְיַעֲקֹב	בְּ	אֶלְפָתָם	וְיִאמְרָ
said		And Jacob	their father			H853
H559	H413	H3290		H1		
שְׁפָלַת	מִ	וּסְדָּקָה	וְ	אֵיכֶן	וְשָׁמַע	וְ
unto them	Me have ye bereaved	of my children	Joseph		H369	is not and Simeon
	H7921		H3130			H8095
כִּלְנָה:	קַיְיָ	וְ	עַלְ	וְ	אֵיכֶן	וְ
H369	H853				H1961	H3605
Benjamin	is not and ye will take		H3947			
H1144						

Additional Cross-References

Genesis 43:14 (Parallel theme): And God Almighty give you mercy before the man, that he may send away your other brother, and Benjamin. If I be bereaved of my children, I am bereaved.

Isaiah 38:10 (Parallel theme): I said in the cutting off of my days, I shall go to the gates of the grave: I am deprived of the residue of my years.

Isaiah 27:9 (Parallel theme): By this therefore shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged; and this is all the fruit to take away his sin; when he maketh all the stones

of the altar as chalkstones that are beaten in sunder, the groves and images shall not stand up.

Isaiah 41:10 (Parallel theme): Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.

Job 7:7 (Parallel theme): O remember that my life is wind: mine eye shall no more see good.

Ecclesiastes 7:8 (Parallel theme): Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof: and the patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit.

Romans 8:31 (Parallel theme): What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?

Romans 8:28 (Parallel theme): And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

1 Corinthians 10:13 (Parallel theme): There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

Matthew 14:31 (Parallel theme): And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?