

Genesis 43:11

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And their father Israel said unto them, If it must be so now, do this; take of the best fruits in the land in your vessels, and carry down the man a present, a little balm, and a little honey, spices, and myrrh, nuts, and almonds:

Analysis

And their father Israel said unto them, If it must be so now, do this; take of the best fruits in th... 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

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How does this verse contribute to the biblical doctrine of creation, fall, or redemption?
2. How does this passage challenge modern cultural assumptions about identity, purpose, or morality?
3. What connections can we trace from this verse to Jesus' life, death, and resurrection?

Interlinear Text

אָמַר	וַיֹּאמֶר	אָבִיכֶם	יִשְׁרָאֵל	אֶל	יְהֹוָה	וְיִשְׁרָאֵל
said	H413	Israel	And their father		H518	H3651
H559		H3478		H1		
אָפֹואָ		זֶה	עֲשֵׂו	קְרַב	תְּ	מִזְמֶבֶת
unto them If it must be so now	H2063	do	this take	of the best fruits		
H645		H6213	H3947	H2173		
אָרִי		לֹא	וְהַוָּרְיָדָן	בְּכָלְיכֶם	מִנְתָּחָה	וּמְעֵט
in the land	in your vessels	and carry down	H582	a present	a little	balm
H776	H3627	H3381		H4503	H4592	H6875
וְשְׁקָדִים:	וְלֹט	נְכָתָב	דְּבָשָׁה	וּמְעֵט	בְּטָןֵיָם	וְשְׁקָדִים:
a little	honey	spices	and myrrh	nuts	and almonds	
H4592	H1706	H5219	H3910	H992	H8247	

Additional Cross-References

Genesis 37:25 (Parallel theme): And they sat down to eat bread: and they lifted up their eyes and looked, and, behold, a company of Ishmeelites came from Gilead with their camels bearing spicery and balm and myrrh, going to carry it down to Egypt.

Jeremiah 8:22 (Parallel theme): Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there? why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?

Proverbs 18:16 (Parallel theme): A man's gift maketh room for him, and bringeth him before great men.

Ezekiel 27:17 (References Israel): Judah, and the land of Israel, they were thy merchants: they traded in thy market wheat of Minnith, and Pannag, and honey, and oil, and balm.

1 Samuel 9:7 (Parallel theme): Then said Saul to his servant, But, behold, if we go, what shall we bring the man? for the bread is spent in our vessels, and there is not a present to bring to the man of God: what have we?

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