

Genesis 43:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the men were afraid, because they were brought into Joseph's house; and they said, Because of the money that was returned in our sacks at the first time are we brought in; that he may seek occasion against us, and fall upon us, and take us for bondmen, and our asses.

Analysis

And the men were afraid, because they were brought into Joseph's house; and they said, Because of 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

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

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. How does understanding Christ as the ultimate fulfillment illuminate this passage's meaning?

Interlinear Text

וַיִּירְאֶל	בְּיַת	מִזְבֵּחַ	בְּאֶנְשָׁה	יְמִינָה	בְּקָנְשָׁה	כִּי	מִזְבֵּחַ	בְּיַת	וַיִּירְאֶל
were afraid	H376	H3588	are we brought in	H935	house	H1004	into Joseph's	H3130	
H3372			H935		H1004		H3130		
וַיֹּאמֶר	בְּאַמְתַּחַת	בְּנֵי	בְּנֵי	בְּנֵי	בְּנֵי	בְּנֵי	בְּנֵי	בְּנֵי	וַיֹּאמֶר
and they said	H5921	Because	of the money	that was returned	in our sacks	H7725	H572	H572	H5921
H559	H1697	H3701	H7725	H572					
בְּתַחַל	לְהַתְגִּל	לְהַתְגִּל	לְהַתְגִּל	לְהַתְגִּל	לְהַתְגִּל	לְהַתְגִּל	לְהַתְגִּל	לְהַתְגִּל	בְּתַחַל
at the first time	H587	are we brought in	that he may seek occasion	H1556	H5921		H5921		H5921
H8462		H935	H1556						
וְלֹא	לְעָבֵד	לְעָבֵד	לְעָבֵד	לְעָבֵד	לְעָבֵד	לְעָבֵד	לְעָבֵד	לְעָבֵד	וְלֹא
against us and fall	H5921	upon us and take	H853	H853	us for bondmen	H853	H853	H853	H853
H5307		H3947			H5650				
בְּמִרְינָה									
and our asses	H2543								

Additional Cross-References

Genesis 42:35 (Parallel theme): And it came to pass as they emptied their sacks, that, behold, every man's bundle of money was in his sack: and when both they and their father saw the bundles of money, they were afraid.

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