

Genesis 43:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And Judah spake unto him, saying, The man did solemnly protest unto us, saying, Ye shall not see my face, except your brother be with you.

Analysis

And Judah spake unto him, saying, The man did solemnly protest unto us, saying, Ye shall not see my ... 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

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. How does this verse contribute to the biblical doctrine of creation, fall, or redemption?
2. How should this truth about Feast shape our daily decisions and priorities?
3. What connections can we trace from this verse to Jesus' life, death, and resurrection?

Interlinear Text

לֵאמֹר	אֵל יוֹ	יְהוּדָה	לֵאמֹר	הָעֵד	הָעֵד	בְּנוֹ
spake	H413	And Judah	spake	did solemnly	did solemnly	H0
H559		H3063	H559	H5749	H5749	
הָאִישׁ	לֵאמֹר	לֹא	תִּרְאֶנּוּ	כְּפָנַי	בְּלֹתִי	אֶחָיִךְ
The man	spake	H3808	Ye shall not see	my face	except	your brother
H376	H559		H7200	H6440	H1115	H251
אֶתְכֶם:						
H854						

Additional Cross-References

Genesis 44:23 (Parallel theme): And thou saidst unto thy servants, Except your youngest brother come down with you, ye shall see my face no more.

Genesis 43:5 (Parallel theme): But if thou wilt not send him, we will not go down: for the man said unto us, Ye shall not see my face, except your brother be with you.