

Genesis 43:7

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And they said, The man asked us straitly of our state, and of our kindred, saying, Is your father yet alive? have ye another brother? and we told him according to the tenor of these words: could we certainly know that he would say, Bring your brother down?

Analysis

And they said, The man asked us straitly of our state, and of our kindred, saying, Is your father ye... 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 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 – Judgment according to deeds

Genesis 1:1 – Creation of heavens and earth

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

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

וְאֶתְּנָאָמַרְתָּ	לְכָה	בָּאִישׁ	שָׁאַל	שָׁאַל	וְאֶתְּנָאָמַרְתָּ
And they said	asked	asked	The man	H0	of our state and of our kindred
H559	H7592	H7592	H376		H4138
וְאֶתְּנָאָמַרְתָּ	בְּעֵד	אָבִיךְ מֶ	סִי	שְׁנִי	לְכָה מֶ
And they said	H5750	Is your father	yet alive	have ye	H0
H559		H1	H2416	H3426	H251
וְאֶתְּנָאָמַרְתָּ	לְזִנְוֹן	עַל	פִּי	בְּדָבָר יִם	בְּאַלְהָה
and we told	H0	him according	to the tenor	of these words	H428
H5046		H5921	H6310	H1697	
וְאֶתְּנָאָמַרְתָּ	בְּנֵדָע	רִמְאָן	כִּי	וְאֶתְּנָאָמַרְתָּ	הַזְּרָעָה
could we certainly	could we certainly	H3588	And they said	Bring	H853
H3045	H3045		H559	H3381	
וְאֶתְּנָאָמַרְתָּ					
another brother					
H251					

Additional Cross-References

Genesis 43:3 (Parallel theme): 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.

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