

Genesis 50:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

My father made me swear, saying, Lo, I die: in my grave which I have digged for me in the land of Canaan, there shalt thou bury me. Now therefore let me go up, I pray thee, and bury my father, and I will come again.

Analysis

My father made me swear, saying, Lo, I die: in my grave which I have digged for me in the land of Ca... 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

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. What theological truths about Jacob's Death and Burial emerge from this passage?
2. What specific changes in thinking or behavior does this verse call us to make?
3. How does this passage point forward to Christ and the gospel of redemption?

Interlinear Text

אָבִי	הַשְׁבִּיעַ נִ	לְאמֹר	הִנֵּה	אָנֹכִי	מֵת	בָּקָרְבָּן
My father	made me swear	saying	Lo	I die	in my grave	
H1	H7650	H559	H2009	H595	H4191	H6913
אֲשֶׁר	לִ	בָּאָרֶץ	שָׁמָה	כִּי	עַ	
which I have digged	H0	for me in the land	of Canaan			
H834	H3738	H776	H3667	H8033		
וְאַלְכְּבָרְךָ הִ	וְעַפְתָּה	אָעַלָה	בְּאָ			
I pray thee and bury	H6258	Now therefore let me go up				
H6912		H5927		H4994		
וְאַשְׁוְבָה:						
I pray thee and bury	H853	My father	and I will come again			
H6912		H1	H7725			

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 22:16 (Parallel theme): What hast thou here? and whom hast thou here, that thou hast hewed thee out a sepulchre here, as he that heweth him out a sepulchre on high, and that graveth an habitation for himself in a rock?

2 Chronicles 16:14 (Creation): And they buried him in his own sepulchres, which he had made for himself in the city of David, and laid him in the bed which was filled with sweet odours and divers kinds of spices prepared by the apothecaries' art: and they made a very great burning for him.

Matthew 27:60 (Parallel theme): And laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock: and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and departed.

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