

Genesis 21:23

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Now therefore swear unto me here by God that thou wilt not deal falsely with me, nor with my son, nor with my son's son: but according to the kindness that I have done unto thee, thou shalt do unto me, and to the land wherein thou hast sojourned.

Analysis

Now therefore swear unto me here by God that thou wilt not deal falsely with me, nor with my son, no... This passage is part of the Abrahamic narratives which shift from universal human history to God's particular covenant people. The Abraham cycle (Genesis 12-25) demonstrates God's sovereign election, covenant faithfulness, and the development of faith through testing and promise fulfillment.

Central themes include God's unconditional covenant promises (land, descendants, blessing to nations), the call to faith and obedience, the testing of faith through delays and impossibilities, the contrast between divine promises and human schemes, and God's gracious persistence despite human failures. Abraham emerges as the father of faith whose trust in God's promises becomes the model for all believers (Romans 4, Galatians 3, Hebrews 11).

Theologically, these narratives establish:

1. salvation by grace through faith rather than works
2. covenant as God's gracious initiative binding Himself to His people
3. the necessity of patient trust when promises seem impossible
4. the consequences of attempting to fulfill God's promises through human effort

5. the pattern of divine testing producing mature faith.

The Abraham cycle foreshadows Christ as the ultimate seed through whom blessing extends to all nations (Galatians 3:16).

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

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. What does this passage reveal about God's sovereignty and human responsibility?
2. How should this truth about Beersheba Covenant shape our daily decisions and priorities?
3. In what ways does this narrative foreshadow or typify aspects of Christ's redemptive work?

Interlinear Text

וְעַתָּה הֵאָמַר	הָשָׁב בְּעָה לִּי	בְּאֱלֹהִים	הֵנֵּה נָה	אֵם
H6258	Now therefore swear	H0	by God	H518
	H7650		H430	H2008
וְלֹא תִשָּׁקֵר	לִּי	וְלִבְנִי	וְלִבְנִי	וְלִבְנִי
that thou wilt not deal falsely	H0	with me nor with my son	nor with my son's son	
H8266		H5209	H5220	
כִּי סֶדֶק	אֲשֶׁר	תַּעֲשֶׂה הֵאָמַר	עִמָּךְ	תַּעֲשֶׂה הֵאָמַר
but according to the kindness	H834	that I have done	H5973	that I have done
H2617		H6213		H6213
וְעַתָּה	הָאֵל רִץ	אֲשֶׁר	גַּרְתָּהּ	בֵּיתָהּ:
H5978	H5973	H834	H1481	H0
	unto me and to the land		wherein thou hast sojourned	
	H776			

Additional Cross-References

Joshua 2:12 (Parallel theme): Now therefore, I pray you, swear unto me by the LORD, since I have shewed you kindness, that ye will also shew kindness unto my father's house, and give me a true token:

Genesis 20:14 (Parallel theme): And Abimelech took sheep, and oxen, and menservants, and womenservants, and gave them unto Abraham, and restored him Sarah his wife.

