

Genesis 26:11

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And Abimelech charged all his people, saying, He that toucheth this man or his wife shall surely be put to death.

Analysis

And Abimelech charged all his people, saying, He that toucheth this man or his wife shall surely be ... This passage belongs to the Jacob narratives which demonstrate God's sovereign election overriding human merit and the transformation of a deceiver into Israel, the father of the twelve tribes. The Jacob cycle shows how divine purposes advance through flawed individuals whom God graciously transforms.

Key themes include God's sovereign choice ("the older shall serve the younger"), the consequences of deception and family dysfunction, exile and return patterns, wrestling with God leading to blessing, and covenant renewal across generations. Jacob's character development from manipulative deceiver to mature patriarch demonstrates sanctification's lifelong process.

Theologically significant aspects include:

1. divine election based on grace not merit (Romans 9:10-13)
2. God's faithfulness to covenant promises despite human unfaithfulness
3. discipline as evidence of divine love and means of transformation
4. generational patterns of sin requiring divine intervention to break
5. prayer and wrestling with God as legitimate expressions of faith.

Jacob's limp after wrestling God symbolizes how divine encounters leave permanent marks, transforming our approach to life and dependence on God rather than our own cunning.

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

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. What does this passage reveal about God's sovereignty and human responsibility?

2. How can we apply the principles from this passage to contemporary challenges in family, work, or church?
3. How does this verse fit into the broader biblical story culminating in Christ?

Interlinear Text

לְאָמֵן רְבָעָם כָּל אֶת אָבִים לְגַזְעַת	הַנֶּגֶג עַ
charged And Abimelech	H853 H3605
H6680 H40	all his people
saying	He that toucheth
H559	H5060
וְמֻתָּה בְּאִישׁ וּבְאִשָּׁה וְמֻתָּה בְּאִישׁ וּבְאִשָּׁה	וְמֻתָּה בְּאִישׁ וּבְאִשָּׁה
this man or his wife be put to death be put to death	H2088 H802 H4191 H4191
H376	H4191

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 105:15 (Parallel theme): Saying, Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm.

Genesis 20:6 (Parallel theme): And God said unto him in a dream, Yea, I know that thou didst this in the integrity of thy heart; for I also withheld thee from sinning against me: therefore suffered I thee not to touch her.

Proverbs 6:29 (Parallel theme): So he that goeth in to his neighbour's wife; whosoever toucheth her shall not be innocent.

Zechariah 2:8 (Parallel theme): For thus saith the LORD of hosts; After the glory hath he sent me unto the nations which spoiled you: for he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye.