

Genesis 26:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And Isaac digged again the wells of water, which they had digged in the days of Abraham his father; for the Philistines had stopped them after the death of Abraham: and he called their names after the names by which his father had called them.

Analysis

And Isaac digged again the wells of water, which they had digged in the days of Abraham his father; ... 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

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. What does this passage reveal about God's sovereignty and human responsibility?
2. What specific changes in thinking or behavior does this verse call us to make?
3. How does understanding Christ as the ultimate fulfillment illuminate this passage's meaning?

Interlinear Text

וַיִּשָּׁב	וַיִּצַּח ק	חָפְרוּ	אֶת	בְּאֵר ת	הַמַּיִם	אֲשֶׁר	חָפְרוּ
again	And Isaac	digged	H853	the wells	of water	by which	digged
H7725	H3327	H2658		H875	H4325	H834	H2658
בְּיָמֵי	אֲבִרְהָם	אָבִיו:	וַיִּסְתָּם	וּמִ	פְּלִשְׁתִּים	אֲחֵרֵי	
in the days	of Abraham	his father	had stopped		for the Philistines	them after	
H3117	H85	H1	H5640		H6430	H310	
מִן	אֲבִרְהָם	קָרָא	לָהֶן	כְּשֵׁם	כְּשֵׁם		
the death	of Abraham	and he called	H0	after the names	after the names		
H4194	H85	H7121		H8034	H8034		
אֲשֶׁר	קָרָא	לָהֶן	אָבִיו:				
by which	and he called	H0	his father				
H834	H7121		H1				

Additional Cross-References

Zechariah 13:2 (Parallel theme): And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD of hosts, that I will cut off the names of the idols out of the land, and they shall no more be remembered: and also I will cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to pass out of the land.

Psalms 16:4 (Parallel theme): Their sorrows shall be multiplied that hasten after another god: their drink offerings of blood will I not offer, nor take up their names into my lips.

Genesis 21:31 (Parallel theme): Wherefore he called that place Beer-sheba; because there they sware both of them.

Hosea 2:17 (Parallel theme): For I will take away the names of Baalim out of her mouth, and they shall no more be remembered by their name.

Numbers 32:38 (Parallel theme): And Nebo, and Baal-meon, (their names being changed,) and Shibmah: and gave other names unto the cities which they builded.

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