

Genesis 26:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the LORD appeared unto him, and said, Go not down into Egypt; dwell in the land which I shall tell thee of:

Analysis

And the LORD appeared unto him, and said, Go not down into Egypt; dwell in the land which I shall te... 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. How does this verse deepen our understanding of God's character and His relationship with creation?

2. How can we apply the principles from this passage to contemporary challenges in family, work, or church?
3. In what ways does this narrative foreshadow or typify aspects of Christ's redemptive work?

Interlinear Text

וַיֵּרָא אֵל	אֵלָיו	יְהוָה	אֵלֶיךָ	אֵל	וְלֹא תִסָּדֵד
appeared	H413	And the LORD	unto him and said	H408	Go not down
H7200		H3068	H559		H3381
מִצֵּרְתִּי מִצְרָיִם	שָׁכֵן	בְּאֶרֶץ	אֵלֶיךָ	אֵלֶיךָ	אֵלֶיךָ:
into Egypt	dwelt	in the land	H834	unto him and said	H413
H4714	H7931	H776		H559	

Additional Cross-References

Genesis 12:7 (References Lord): And the LORD appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto the LORD, who appeared unto him.

Genesis 17:1 (References Lord): And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect.

Genesis 18:1 (References Lord): And the LORD appeared unto him in the plains of Mamre: and he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day;

Genesis 12:1 (References Lord): Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee:

Psalms 37:3 (References Lord): Trust in the LORD, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed.