

Genesis 26:33

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And he called it Shebah: therefore the name of the city is Beer-sheba unto this day.

Analysis

And he called it Shebah: therefore the name of the city is Beer-sheba unto this day.... 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 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How does understanding this verse shape our doctrine of humanity, sin, or salvation?

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

וַיִּקְרָא א	אֶת־ה	שֶׁבַע־ה	עַל־	כִּן־	שֵׁם־	הָעִיר־
And he called	H853	it Shebah	H5921	H3651	therefore the name	of the city
H7121		H7656			H8034	H5892
בְּיֶרֶם	שֶׁבַע־	עַד־	הַיּוֹם־	הַזֶּה־		
H0	is Beersheba	H5704	unto this day	H2088		
	H884		H3117			

Additional Cross-References

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

Genesis 26:28 (Parallel theme): And they said, We saw certainly that the LORD was with thee: and we said, Let there be now an oath betwixt us, even betwixt us and thee, and let us make a covenant with thee;