

Genesis 26:34

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And Esau was forty years old when he took to wife Judith the daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Bashemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite:

Analysis

And Esau was forty years old when he took to wife Judith the daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Bash... 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

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How does understanding this verse shape our doctrine of humanity, sin, or salvation?
2. What obstacles prevent us from living out the truths presented in this verse?
3. How does this verse fit into the broader biblical story culminating in Christ?

Interlinear Text

וְיָהִי י' H1961	עֵשָׂו H6215	בֶּן H1121	אֲרֻבַּע יָמִים H705	שָׁנָה H8141	וְקָח H3947	אִשָּׁה H802	אֶת H853
	And Esau	old	was forty	years	when he took	to wife	
יְהוּדָה יִת H3067	בִּת H1323	בְּאֵרִי י' H882	הַחִתִּי: H2850	וְאֶת H853	בְּ שִׁמְת H1315	בִּת H1323	
Judith	the daughter	of Beeri	the Hittite		and Bashemath	the daughter	
אֵיל H356	הַחִתִּי: H2850						
of Elon	the Hittite						

Additional Cross-References

Genesis 36:2 (Parallel theme): Esau took his wives of the daughters of Canaan; Adah the daughter of Elon the Hittite, and Aholibamah the daughter of Anah the daughter of Zibeon the Hivite;

Exodus 34:16 (Parallel theme): And thou take of their daughters unto thy sons, and their daughters go a whoring after their gods, and make thy sons go a whoring after their gods.

Genesis 36:13 (Parallel theme): And these are the sons of Reuel; Nahath, and Zerah, Shammah, and Mizzah: these were the sons of Bashemath Esau's wife.

Genesis 36:5 (Parallel theme): And Aholibamah bare Jeush, and Jaalam, and Korah: these are the sons of Esau, which were born unto him in the land of Canaan.

Genesis 28:9 (Parallel theme): Then went Esau unto Ishmael, and took unto the wives which he had Mahalath the daughter of Ishmael Abraham's son, the sister of Nebajoth, to be his wife.

Genesis 24:3 (Parallel theme): And I will make thee swear by the LORD, the God of heaven, and the God of the earth, that thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell:

Hebrews 12:16 (Parallel theme): Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright.

1 Corinthians 7:2 (Parallel theme): Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband.

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