

Genesis 28:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And Jacob rose up early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put for his pillows, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it.

Analysis

And Jacob rose up early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put for his pillows, and set ... 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

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How does this verse deepen our understanding of God's character and His relationship with creation?
2. How should this truth about Stone Pillar shape our daily decisions and priorities?
3. In what ways does this narrative foreshadow or typify aspects of Christ's redemptive work?

Interlinear Text

| | | | | | | |
|---------------|-----------------|--------------------|-----------|--------------|------------|--------|
| וַשָּׁכַח | וַיַּעַן ב | בַּבֹּקֶר | וַיִּקַּח | אֶת | הָאֶבֶן | אֲשֶׁר |
| rose up early | And Jacob | in the morning | and took | H853 | the stone | H834 |
| H7925 | H3290 | H1242 | H3947 | | H68 | |
| וַיָּשָׂם | מִזְבֵּחַ לְיָ | וַיָּשָׂם | אֶת־הָ | מִצְבֵּה | וַיַּצֵּק | |
| and set it up | for his pillows | and set it up | H853 | for a pillar | and poured | |
| H7760 | H4763 | H7760 | | H4676 | H3332 | |
| עַל שֵׁן מֶן | רֹאשָׁהּ: | | | | | |
| oil | H5921 | upon the top of it | | | | |
| H8081 | | H7218 | | | | |

Additional Cross-References

Genesis 35:14 (Parallel theme): And Jacob set up a pillar in the place where he talked with him, even a pillar of stone: and he poured a drink offering thereon, and he poured oil thereon.

Genesis 31:45 (Parallel theme): And Jacob took a stone, and set it up for a pillar.

Genesis 31:13 (Parallel theme): I am the God of Beth-el, where thou anointedst the pillar, and where thou vowedst a vow unto me: now arise, get thee out from this land, and return unto the land of thy kindred.

Genesis 35:20 (Parallel theme): And Jacob set a pillar upon her grave: that is the pillar of Rachel's grave unto this day.

Isaiah 19:19 (Parallel theme): In that day shall there be an altar to the LORD in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar at the border thereof to the LORD.

Psalms 119:60 (Parallel theme): I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments.

Ecclesiastes 9:10 (Parallel theme): Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.

Genesis 22:3 (Parallel theme): And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him.

Numbers 7:1 (Parallel theme): And it came to pass on the day that Moses had fully set up the tabernacle, and had anointed it, and sanctified it, and all the instruments thereof, both the altar and all the vessels thereof, and had anointed them, and sanctified them;

1 Samuel 7:12 (Parallel theme): Then Samuel took a stone, and set it between Mizpeh and Shen, and called the name of it Eben-ezer, saying, Hitherto hath the LORD helped us.