

Genesis 29:10

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And it came to pass, when Jacob saw Rachel the daughter of Laban his mother's brother, and the sheep of Laban his mother's brother, that Jacob went near, and rolled the stone from the well's mouth, and watered the flock of Laban his mother's brother.

Analysis

And it came to pass, when Jacob saw Rachel the daughter of Laban his mother's brother, and the sheep... 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 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

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. What connections can we trace from this verse to Jesus' life, death, and resurrection?

Interlinear Text

בָּאָה	כִּאָשָׁר	יָמָם	בְּ	יָעַקְרָבָן	לְ	אֶת	רָחֵל
H1961	H834	H7200		And it came to pass when Jacob	H853		Rachel
the daughter	of Laban	brother	his mother's	H853	and the sheep	of Laban	
H1323	H3837	H251	H517	H6629	H3837		
אָחָה	אֶתְמוֹן	וַיֵּשֶׁת	בְּ	יָעַקְרָבָן	לְ	אֶת	יָרְכָל
brother	his mother's	went near	And it came to pass when Jacob	H853	and rolled	H853	
H251	H517	H5066	H3290	H1556			
בָּאָבָן	מַעַל	פִּי	בְּבָאָרָה	וַיִּשְׁקַע	אֶת	אֶת	צָא
the stone	mouth	from the well's	and watered	H8248	H853	and the sheep	
H68	H5921	H6310	H875			H6629	
לְ	אָחָה	אֶתְמוֹן					
of Laban	brother	his mother's					
H3837	H251	H517					

Additional Cross-References

Exodus 2:17 (Parallel theme): And the shepherds came and drove them away: but Moses stood up and helped them, and watered their flock.

