

Genesis 29:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And Jacob loved Rachel; and said, I will serve thee seven years for Rachel thy younger daughter.

Analysis

And Jacob loved Rachel; and said, I will serve thee seven years for Rachel thy younger daughter... 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

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

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 Children shape our daily decisions and priorities?
3. How does understanding Christ as the ultimate fulfillment illuminate this passage's meaning?

Interlinear Text

וְאָהָב	וַיֵּלֶךְ	אֶת	רָחֵל	וַיֹּאמֶר	אֶעֱבֹדָךְ	שִׁבְעָה	שָׁנִים
loved	And Jacob	H853	Rachel	and said	I will serve	thee seven	years
H157	H3290		H7354	H559	H5647	H7651	H8141

רָחֵל	בִּתּוֹ	הַקְטָנָה:
Rachel	daughter	thy younger
H7354	H1323	H6996

Additional Cross-References

Hosea 12:12 (Parallel theme): And Jacob fled into the country of Syria, and Israel served for a wife, and for a wife he kept sheep.

Genesis 34:12 (Parallel theme): Ask me never so much dowry and gift, and I will give according as ye shall say unto me: but give me the damsel to wife.

Genesis 31:41 (Parallel theme): Thus have I been twenty years in thy house; I served thee fourteen years for thy two daughters, and six years for thy cattle: and thou hast changed my wages ten times.

Genesis 29:20 (Love): And Jacob served seven years for Rachel; and they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her.

Genesis 29:30 (Love): And he went in also unto Rachel, and he loved also Rachel more than Leah, and served with him yet seven other years.

Hosea 3:2 (Parallel theme): So I bought her to me for fifteen pieces of silver, and for an homer of barley, and an half homer of barley:

2 Samuel 3:14 (Parallel theme): And David sent messengers to Ish-bosheth Saul's son, saying, Deliver me my wife Michal, which I espoused to me for an hundred foreskins of the Philistines.

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