

Genesis 29:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And he looked, and behold a well in the field, and, lo, there were three flocks of sheep lying by it; for out of that well they watered the flocks: and a great stone was upon the well's mouth.

Analysis

And he looked, and behold a well in the field, and, lo, there were three flocks of sheep lying by it... 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

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of 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 does this passage challenge modern cultural assumptions about identity, purpose, or morality?
3. What connections can we trace from this verse to Jesus' life, death, and resurrection?

Interlinear Text

וְיָרַא	וְהִנֵּה	בְּשָׂמֶחֶת	שָׁמֶן
And he looked	and behold	a well	in the field
H7200	H2009	H875	H7704
וְיָרַא	וְהִנֵּה	בְּשָׂמֶחֶת	שָׁמֶן
and lo there were three	flocks	of sheep	lying
H7969	H5739	H6629	H7257
וְיָרַא	וְהִנֵּה	בְּשָׂמֶחֶת	שָׁמֶן
and behold a well	they watered	flocks	stone
H1931	H8248	H5739	H68
וְיָרַא	וְהִנֵּה	בְּשָׂמֶחֶת	גָּדוֹל
mouth	and behold a well		and a great
H5921	H6310		H1419
וְיָרַא	וְהִנֵּה	בְּשָׂמֶחֶת	
and behold a well			
H875			

Additional Cross-References

Revelation 7:17 (Parallel theme): For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.

Isaiah 49:10 (Parallel theme): They shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat nor sun smite them: for he that hath mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall he guide them.

Psalms 23:2 (Parallel theme): He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.

John 4:6 (Parallel theme): Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus on the well: and it was about the sixth hour.

John 4:14 (Parallel theme): But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.

Genesis 24:13 (Parallel theme): Behold, I stand here by the well of water; and the daughters of the men of the city come out to draw water:

Genesis 24:11 (Parallel theme): And he made his camels to kneel down without the city by a well of water at the time of the evening, even the time that women go out to draw water.