

Genesis 31:10

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And it came to pass at the time that the cattle conceived, that I lifted up mine eyes, and saw in a dream, and, behold, the rams which leaped upon the cattle were ringstraked, speckled, and grisled.

Analysis

And it came to pass at the time that the cattle conceived, that I lifted up mine eyes, and saw in a ... 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

Study Questions

1. What does this passage reveal about God's sovereignty and human responsibility?
2. How should this truth about Covenant at Mizpah shape our daily decisions and priorities?
3. In what ways does this narrative foreshadow or typify aspects of Christ's redemptive work?

Interlinear Text

וַיְהִי י' H1961	בָּעֵת H6256	וַיִּהְיֶה H3179	הַצֹּאן H6629	וַיִּשָּׂא H5375	
And it came to pass at the time	conceived	that the cattle	that I lifted up		
עֵינַי י' H5869	וַיַּרְא H7200	בְּחֵלֹם H2472	וַיִּהְיֶה ה' H2009	הַעֲתָדִים H6260	הָעֹלִים H5921
mine eyes	and saw	in a dream	and behold the rams	which leaped	
הַצֹּאן H6629	וְהָיוּ H6124	נִקְדָּם H5348	וְהָיוּ H1261		
that the cattle	were ringstraked	speckled	and grisdled		

Additional Cross-References

Genesis 30:39 (Parallel theme): And the flocks conceived before the rods, and brought forth cattle ringstraked, speckled, and spotted.

Genesis 28:12 (Parallel theme): And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it.

Genesis 20:6 (Parallel theme): And God said unto him in a dream, Yea, I know that thou didst this in the integrity of thy heart; for I also withheld thee from sinning against me: therefore suffered I thee not to touch her.

Genesis 31:24 (Parallel theme): And God came to Laban the Syrian in a dream by night, and said unto him, Take heed that thou speak not to Jacob either good or bad.

Deuteronomy 13:1 (Parallel theme): If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder,

1 Kings 3:5 (Parallel theme): In Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night: and God said, Ask what I shall give thee.

Numbers 12:6 (Parallel theme): And he said, Hear now my words: If there be a prophet among you, I the LORD will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream.

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