

Genesis 31:13

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

I am the God of Beth-el, where thou anointedst the pillar, and where thou vowedst a vow unto me: now... 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

1 John 4:8 — God is 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. What obstacles prevent us from living out the truths presented in this verse?
3. How does understanding Christ as the ultimate fulfillment illuminate this passage's meaning?

Interlinear Text

שְׁמָךְ מַשְׁחִית אָנֹכִי אֱלֹהִים בֵּית בְּאֵל אֵל אָשָׁר
H595 I am the God H410 of Bethel H1008 where thou anointedst H4886 H8033

עַתָּה שָׁם לְיִלְאֵל מִצְבָּה הַמִּזְבֵּחַ אָשָׁר
the pillar H834 and where thou vowedst H5087 H0 H8033 a vow H6258 H5088

אֶל וְשׁוּב בְּזִזְבַּח מִן אֶצְבָּע אֶצְבָּע אֶל
unto me now arise get thee out H4480 from this land H2063 and return H413
H6965 H3318 H776 H7725

אֶצְבָּע מִזְלְדָתֶךָ
from this land of thy kindred
H776 H4138

Additional Cross-References

Genesis 31:3 (Parallel theme): And the LORD said unto Jacob, Return unto the land of thy fathers, and to thy kindred; and I will be with thee.

Genesis 32:9 (References God): And Jacob said, O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, the LORD which saidst unto me, Return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee:

Genesis 35:7 (References God): And he built there an altar, and called the place El-beth-el: because there God appeared unto him, when he fled from the face of his brother.

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