

Genesis 31:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And he carried away all his cattle, and all his goods which he had gotten, the cattle of his getting, which he had gotten in Padan-aram, for to go to Isaac his father in the land of Canaan.

Analysis

And he carried away all his cattle, and all his goods which he had gotten, the cattle of his getting... 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

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. How does understanding this verse shape our doctrine of humanity, sin, or salvation?
2. What specific changes in thinking or behavior does this verse call us to make?
3. What connections can we trace from this verse to Jesus' life, death, and resurrection?

Interlinear Text

רְכָשׁוֹ	כָּל	וְאַתָּה	מִקְנָה	כָּל	וְאַתָּה	תִּטְבֹּעַ	גַּ
And he carried away	H853	H3605	all his cattle	H853	H3605	and all his goods	H7399
	H5090		H4735				
אֲשֶׁר	בְּכָל	שֶׁ	מִקְנָה	וְקִנְיָן	אֲשֶׁר	רְכָשׁ	
H834	which he had gotten	H7408	all his cattle	H4735	of his getting	H834	
					H7075		
אֲבִיךָ	אֶל	לְבָבְךָ	בְּפִתְחָה	אֶל	לְבָבְךָ	אֲבִיךָ	
which he had gotten	H0	H6307	in Padanaram	H935	for to go	H413	to Isaac
	H7408					H3327	his father
							H1
בְּקָנָן	אֲ	רָצָה					
in the land	of Canaan	H776	H3667				

Additional Cross-References

Genesis 27:41 (Parallel theme): And Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing wherewith his father blessed him: and Esau said in his heart, The days of mourning for my father are at hand; then will I slay my brother Jacob.

Genesis 28:21 (Parallel theme): So that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the LORD be my God: