

Genesis 31:29

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

It is in the power of my hand to do you hurt: but the God of your father spake unto me yesternight, saying, Take thou heed that thou speak not to Jacob either good or bad.

Analysis

It is in the power of my hand to do you hurt: but the God of your father spake unto me yesternight, ... 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 this verse deepen our understanding of God's character and His relationship with creation?
2. How should this truth about Covenant at Mizpah shape our daily decisions and priorities?
3. What connections can we trace from this verse to Jesus' life, death, and resurrection?

Interlinear Text

בָּשָׁ	לֹא	לֹ	אֵلִ	זֶה	עַמְּךָ	מִ	לְעַשׂ	זֶה	אֵלִ	בָּעֵ	אֵלָהִ	אֵלִ	
It is	in the power	of my hand	to do		H5973	or bad	but the God						
H3426	H410	H3027	H6213			H7451						H430	
מִן	אָבִיךָ	מִן	אָמֵשָׁ	רָא	לְאָמֵן	רָא	לְאָמֵן	רָא	מִן	הָשָׁ	מִן		
of your father	unto me yesternight		saying		H413	saying				Take thou heed			
H1	H570		H559			H559				H8104			
לֹ	מִדְבָּר	מִדְבָּר	בְּ	עַם	בְּ	יַעֲקֹ	בְּ	מַט	זֶה	עַד	בָּעֵ		
H0	that thou speak not		H5973	to Jacob		H3290	either good	H2896	H5704	or bad	H7451		
H1696													

Additional Cross-References

Genesis 31:42 (References God): Except the God of my father, the God of Abraham, and the fear of Isaac, had been with me, surely thou hadst sent me away now empty. God hath seen mine affliction and the labour of my hands, and rebuked thee yesternight.

Genesis 31:53 (References God): The God of Abraham, and the God of Nahor, the God of their father, judge betwixt us. And Jacob sware by the fear of his father Isaac.

Genesis 28:13 (References God): And, behold, the LORD stood above it, and said, I am the LORD God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed;

Genesis 31:24 (Good): 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.

Acts 9:5 (Parallel theme): And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.

Psalms 52:1 (Good): Why boastest thou thyself in mischief, O mighty man? the goodness of God endureth continually.

2 Kings 19:10 (References God): Thus shall ye speak to Hezekiah king of Judah, saying, Let not thy God in whom thou trustest deceive thee, saying, Jerusalem shall not be delivered into the hand of the king of Assyria.

Daniel 6:20 (References God): And when he came to the den, he cried with a lamentable voice unto Daniel: and the king spake and said to Daniel, O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?

Daniel 3:28 (References God): Then Nebuchadnezzar spake, and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who hath sent his angel, and delivered his servants that trusted in him, and have changed the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God.

Daniel 2:47 (References God): The king answered unto Daniel, and said, Of a truth it is, that your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, seeing thou couldest reveal this secret.