

Genesis 31:37

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Whereas thou hast searched all my stuff, what hast thou found of all thy household stuff? set it here before my brethren and thy brethren, that they may judge betwixt us both.

Analysis

Whereas thou hast searched all my stuff, what hast thou found of all thy household stuff? set it her... 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

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. What theological truths about Jacob's Flight from Laban emerge from this passage?
2. What specific changes in thinking or behavior does this verse call us to make?
3. How does understanding Christ as the ultimate fulfillment illuminate this passage's meaning?

Interlinear Text

כִּי	תְּחַשׁ שְׂתָה	אֶת	כָּל	כְּלִי	מֵה	מָצָה אֵת
Whereas	thou hast searched			all my stuff		what hast thou found
H3588	H4959	H853	H3605	H3627	H4100	H4672
מִכָּל ל	כְּלִי	בֵּיתֶךָ	שָׁם	כֵּן	נִגְדָה	וְאֶתְּ יָךְ
H3605	all my stuff	of all thy household	set	it here	H5048	and thy brethren
	H3627	H1004	H7760	H3541		H251
וְאֶתְּ יָךְ	וְיִזְכּוּ יָחִיד	בֵּין	שְׁנֵינוּ:			
and thy brethren	that they may judge	betwixt	us both			
H251	H3198	H996	H8147			

Additional Cross-References

Hebrews 13:18 (Parallel theme): Pray for us: for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly.

Matthew 18:16 (Parallel theme): But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.

Genesis 31:32 (Parallel theme): With whomsoever thou findest thy gods, let him not live: before our brethren discern thou what is thine with me, and take it to thee. For Jacob knew not that Rachel had stolen them.

1 Thessalonians 2:10 (Parallel theme): Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe:

Joshua 7:23 (Parallel theme): And they took them out of the midst of the tent, and brought them unto Joshua, and unto all the children of Israel, and laid them out before the LORD.

1 Peter 3:16 (Parallel theme): Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ.

1 Peter 2:12 (Parallel theme): Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.