

Genesis 31:41

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Thus have I been twenty years in thy house; I served thee fourteen years for thy two daughters, and six years for thy cattle: and thou hast changed my wages ten times.

Analysis

Thus have I been twenty years in thy house; I served thee fourteen years for thy two daughters, and ... 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

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. How does this verse contribute to the biblical doctrine of creation, fall, or redemption?
2. How can we apply the principles from this passage to contemporary challenges in family, work, or church?
3. What connections can we trace from this verse to Jesus' life, death, and resurrection?

Interlinear Text

זֶה	לִי	עָשָׂר יָמִים	שְׁנֵי יָמִים	בְּבֵיתְךָ	עַבַדְתָּ יְיָ	אַרְבָּעַ
H2088	H0	Thus have I been twenty	years	in thy house	I served thee	fourteen
		H6242	H8141	H1004	H5647	H702
הַ	עָשָׂר יָמִים	שְׁנֵי יָמִים	בְּשָׁנֶיךָ	בָּנוּתְךָ	וְשֵׁשׁ שָׁנֵי יָמִים	בְּצֹאֲנְךָ
H6240	years	for thy two	daughters	and six	years	for thy cattle
	H8141	H8147	H1323	H8337	H8141	H6629
וַתִּגְדַּלְךָ	אֶת	מִשְׁכָּרְךָ	יָמִים	עָשָׂר	מִיָּמִים:	
and thou hast changed	H853	my wages	ten	times		
H2498		H4909	H6235	H4489		

Additional Cross-References

Genesis 31:7 (Parallel theme): And your father hath deceived me, and changed my wages ten times; but God suffered him not to hurt me.

1 Corinthians 15:10 (Parallel theme): But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

2 Corinthians 11:26 (Parallel theme): In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren;

Genesis 31:38 (Parallel theme): This twenty years have I been with thee; thy ewes and thy she goats have not cast their young, and the rams of thy flock have I not eaten.

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