

Genesis 31:50

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

If thou shalt afflict my daughters, or if thou shalt take other wives beside my daughters, no man is with us; see, God is witness betwixt me and thee.

Analysis

If thou shalt afflict my daughters, or if thou shalt take other wives beside my daughters, no man is... 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

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. What theological truths about Jacob's Flight from Laban emerge from this passage?
2. What obstacles prevent us from living out the truths presented in this verse?
3. How does this passage point forward to Christ and the gospel of redemption?

Interlinear Text

אַם	כִּי	בָּנָת	וְ	וְ	אִם	תִּקְרַב	לְ
H518	If thou shalt afflict	H853	my daughters	H518	or if thou shalt take		
	H6031		H1323		H3947		
רְאֵה	עַמְּךָ	אִישׁ	בָּנָת	וְ	עַל	נְשָׁיִם	
other wives	beside	my daughters	H369	no man	H5973	is with us see	
H802	H5921	H1323		H376		H7200	
אֱלֹהִים	בָּיִת	וְ	בֵּין	וְ	אֱלֹהִים		
God	is witness	H996	H996				
H430	H5707						

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 42:5 (Witness): Then they said to Jeremiah, The LORD be a true and faithful witness between us, if we do not even according to all things for the which the LORD thy God shall send thee to us.

Jeremiah 29:23 (Witness): Because they have committed villany in Israel, and have committed adultery with their neighbours' wives, and have spoken lying words in my name, which I have not commanded them; even I know, and am a witness, saith the LORD.

Judges 11:10 (Witness): And the elders of Gilead said unto Jephthah, The LORD be witness between us, if we do not so according to thy words.

Micah 1:2 (Witness): Hear, all ye people; hearken, O earth, and all that therein is: and let the Lord GOD be witness against you, the Lord from his holy temple.

1 Thessalonians 2:5 (Witness): For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloke of covetousness; God is witness:

Leviticus 18:18 (Parallel theme): Neither shalt thou take a wife to her sister, to vex her, to uncover her nakedness, beside the other in her life time.

Malachi 3:5 (Witness): And I will come near to you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow, and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger from his right, and fear not me, saith the LORD of hosts.

Malachi 2:14 (Witness): Yet ye say, Wherefore? Because the LORD hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously: yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant.

1 Samuel 12:5 (Witness): And he said unto them, The LORD is witness against you, and his anointed is witness this day, that ye have not found ought in my hand. And they answered, He is witness.

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