

Genesis 32:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And he delivered them into the hand of his servants, every drove by themselves; and said unto his servants, Pass over before me, and put a space betwixt drove and drove.

Analysis

And he delivered them into the hand of his servants, every drove by themselves; and said unto his se... 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

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

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

לְבָדָק	וְעִזָּרָה	עִזָּרָה	עִזָּרָה	לְבָדָק	וְעִזָּרָה	וְעִזָּרָה
And he delivered	them into the hand	of his servants	drove	drove		H905
H5414	H3027	H5650	H5739	H5739		
בַּיִד	בַּיִד	עַבְדִּי	עַבְדִּי	עַבְדִּי	עַבְדִּי	לְבָדָק
by themselves and said	H413	of his servants	Pass over	before me	a space	
H559		H5650	H5674	H6440	H7305	
אֶל	אֶל	עַבְדִּי	עַבְדִּי	עַבְדִּי	עַבְדִּי	לְפָנֵי
and put	and	drove	and	drove		בְּיַד
H7760	H996	H5739	H996	H5739		וְבְּיַד
וְבְּיַד	וְבְּיַד	וְבְּיַד	וְבְּיַד	וְבְּיַד	וְבְּיַד	עִזָּרָה
וְבְּיַד	וְבְּיַד	וְבְּיַד	וְבְּיַד	וְבְּיַד	וְבְּיַד	וְבְּיַד

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