

Genesis 32:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And say ye moreover, Behold, thy servant Jacob is behind us. For he said, I will appease him with the present that goeth before me, and afterward I will see his face; peradventure he will accept of me.

Analysis

And say ye moreover, Behold, thy servant Jacob is behind us. For he said, I will appease him with th... 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

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. What theological truths about Jacob Prepares to Meet Esau emerge from this passage?
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

רַ	אַמְרֵ	רַ	גַּם	הִנֵּה	עֲבָדָךְ	בְּ	יַעֲקֹב	בְּ	כִּי	אַפְרֵ	יַעֲקֹב	בְּ	אַפְרֵ	וְ	כִּי	
And say ye	moreover			H2009	Behold thy servant		Jacob	and afterward								H3588
H559	H1571				H5650		H3290	H310								
רַ	אַמְרֵ	רַ	גַּם	הִנֵּה	עֲבָדָךְ	בְּ	יַעֲקֹב	בְּ	כִּי	אַפְרֵ	יַעֲקֹב	בְּ	אַפְרֵ	וְ	כִּי	
And say ye	I will appease			H6440	before me	with the present	that goeth	before me								H6440
H559	H3722				H4503		H1980	H6440								
רַ	אַפְרֵ	רַ	כִּי	אַרְאָה	הִ	פָּנֵי	אַוְלֵי	רַ	אַ	יְשַׁ	אַ	יְשַׁ	אַ	יְשַׁ		
and afterward		H3651	I will see		before me		H194		peradventure	he will accept						
H310			H7200		H6440											
פָּנֵי																
before me																
H6440																

Additional Cross-References

Proverbs 21:14 (Parallel theme): A gift in secret pacifieth anger: and a reward in the bosom strong wrath.