

Genesis 33:17

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And Jacob journeyed to Succoth, and built him an house, and made booths for his cattle: therefore the name of the place is called Succoth.

Analysis

And Jacob journeyed to Succoth, and built him an house, and made booths for his cattle: therefore 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

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. How does understanding this verse shape our doctrine of humanity, sin, or salvation?
2. How does this passage challenge modern cultural assumptions about identity, purpose, or morality?
3. What connections can we trace from this verse to Jesus' life, death, and resurrection?

Interlinear Text

וַיֵּעָקֹב	נָסַע	סֻכּוֹת:	וַיִּבְנֶה	לֹא	בָּנוֹת	וּלְמִקְנֵה הָיוֹ
And Jacob	journeyed	Succoth	and built	H0	him an house	for his cattle
H3290	H5265	H5523	H1129		H1004	H4735
וַיַּעַשׂ	סֻכּוֹת	עַל	כֵּן	קָרָא	שֵׁם	סֻכּוֹת:
and made	booths	H5921	H3651	is called	therefore the name	of the place Succoth
H6213	H5521			H7121	H8034	H4725 H5523

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 60:6 (Parallel theme): God hath spoken in his holiness; I will rejoice, I will divide Shechem, and mete out the valley of Succoth.

Joshua 13:27 (Parallel theme): And in the valley, Beth-aram, and Beth-nimrah, and Succoth, and Zaphon, the rest of the kingdom of Sihon king of Heshbon, Jordan and his border, even unto the edge of the sea of Chinnereth on the other side Jordan eastward.

Judges 8:5 (Parallel theme): And he said unto the men of Succoth, Give, I pray you, loaves of bread unto the people that follow me; for they be faint, and I am pursuing after Zebah and Zalmunna, kings of Midian.

Judges 8:16 (Parallel theme): And he took the elders of the city, and thorns of the wilderness and briers, and with them he taught the men of Succoth.

Judges 8:8 (Parallel theme): And he went up thence to Penuel, and spake unto them likewise: and the men of Penuel answered him as the men of Succoth had answered him.

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