

Genesis 34:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And when Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, prince of the country, saw her, he took her, and lay with her, and defiled her.

Analysis

And when Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, prince of the country, saw her, he took her, and lay w... 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

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

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. How does understanding Christ as the ultimate fulfillment illuminate this passage's meaning?

Interlinear Text

וַיֵּרָא	אֶתְּ הַ	שָׂכָם	בֶּן	חַמּוֹר	הַחִוִּי	נָשִׁיאַ	הָאֶרֶץ
saw	H853	H7928	the son	of Hamor	the Hivite	prince	of the country
H7200			H1121	H2544	H2340	H5387	H776
וַיִּקַּח	אֶתְּ הַ	וַיִּשָּׁכַב	אֶתְּ הַ	וַיַּעֲזֹבָהּ:			
her he took	H853	her and lay	H854	with her and defiled her			
H3947		H7901		H6031			

Additional Cross-References

Job 31:9 (Parallel theme): If mine heart have been deceived by a woman, or if I have laid wait at my neighbour's door;

Job 31:1 (Parallel theme): I made a covenant with mine eyes; why then should I think upon a maid?

Proverbs 13:20 (Parallel theme): He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed.

Matthew 5:28 (Parallel theme): But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.

Judges 14:1 (Parallel theme): And Samson went down to Timnath, and saw a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines.