

PATRIARCHS- PART 2A: JACOB

Read: Genesis 25-36 -(Particularly Chapters 25, 28, 29, 32)

Corresponds to Workbook pp 35-37, 39

The Biblical narrative now moves on to chronicle the lives of Isaac, Jacob, and Jacob's 11th son Joseph. Family intrigue, deception, and growth in faith are experienced by all of the generations, but God remains faithful in protecting and shepherding His chosen ones to preserve His salvific plan. (Specifically, Isaac, Jacob, and Jacob's 4th son Judah are in the direct line of Christ). God continues to reveal Himself as the loyal, merciful, and forgiving God of Israel as He maneuvers to protect the family from pagan neighbors and then cataclysmic famine.

Gen 25:5,11

How does the story focus now upon Isaac, the son of Abraham and Sarah? _____

Gen 25:20-22

How is 40-year old Isaac described as a prayerful, righteous man? James 5:16 _____

How often do you pray for your spouse? (Rebekah had been childless for 20 years). When was the last time you "consulted the Lord" over a distressing family matter? _____

Gen 25:23-28

What was the fruit of Isaac and Rebekah's prayers? What prophecy is given concerning the twins? How did parental favoritism surface? _____

Why did God "favor" Jacob, according to Romans 9:1-16? Why has God been so good to you and favored you all these years? _____

Gen 25:29-34

The fraternal rivalry between the twin brothers continues, but Scripture paints a clear portrait of Esau as one who does not value his birthright or spiritual authority. For what does Esau trade his birthright? Whom does he later marry (Gen 26:34-35; Gen 28:8-9)? What does this tell you about what he values and his disregard of being "equally yoked"? Hebrews 12:16-17 _____

"In the Early World, the father's blessing bestowed the family authority, including the roles of priesthood and kingship, upon the one blessed. This blessing was handed down from father to firstborn son, but all too often the firstborn sons in Israel's history cut themselves off

from this blessing by their sinfulness. Cain, Adam's firstborn, kills his brother and is exiled, cut off from the family blessing that is given instead to Seth. Isaac's firstborn Esau despises and sells his birthright. At the end of Genesis it will be Jacob's 4th son, the repentant Judah, who receives the blessing of kingship for his line, when his older three brothers are passed over because of their sinful acts. In Genesis, there is only one preeminent, faithful, firstborn son, Noah's firstborn Shem, who prefigures the eternal, faithful, firstborn Son of God, Jesus Christ."¹

"As a follower of Christ, what is your birthright? John 1:12; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 4:5-7; 2 Peter 1:4; CCC 1996. Do you value it?"² _____

Gen 26

What does Isaac's response to Abimelech tell you about his character? What reassurance does God give Isaac in Gen 26:24? (This is a reassuring verse to memorize!)

Again, remember that Isaac is the only Patriarch who remains in the Promised Land his entire life and is faithful to his wife. As such, he is particularly blessed.

Gen 27

How does Jacob, prompted by Sarah, deceive Isaac for the paternal blessing? (Keep in mind later the principle found in Galatians 6:7-8). _____

Jacob then flees to his maternal uncle's family to escape the murderous threats of his enraged brother Esau, never to see his mother alive again. What does Esau vow in Gen 27:41? _____

Looking ahead: The prophecy in Gen 27:29 will be fulfilled when King David (who rules Israel) conquers the Edomites (Esau's descendants) in 2 Samuel 8:13-14. The Edomites lived outside of Israel proper (apart from the blessings of the Promised Land), in the rugged hills south of the Dead Sea.

Gen 28: Jacob's Ladder

What dream does Jacob experience as he flees? What promise does God give to Jacob in Gen 28:15 that is particularly reassuring at this moment and which he will remember 20 years later with gratitude and humility? _____

¹ Gray, Tim and Jeff Cavins. *Walking with God: A Journey Through the Bible*. © 2010 by Ascension Press, West Chester, PA, pp 48.

² Hahn, Scott and Jeff Cavins. *Study Guide: Our Father's Plan: A Catholic Bible Study of Salvation History*. © 2002 by Ignatius Press, San Francisco, CA, pp 14.

Jacob responds in “solemn wonder” (Gen 28:17), but what does the wording of his prayer in Gen 28:20-21 reveal about his level of trust and faith? When have you bargained with God or tried to barter with Him, giving God conditions to meet? _____

God has work cut out for Him to mature His future servant!

Gen 29

How does Laban, Jacob’s uncle, deceive him? Of the two sisters, whom is Jacob’s favorite? (Gratefully, later in Israel’s history, they shall enact a law prohibiting the marriage of sisters- Leviticus 18:18) _____

Jacob, wily and not adverse to deception, has met his match!

Gen 30-31

Does God bless Jacob? Gen 30:43 _____

What do you learn about Rachel’s character? Does she whine and blame (Gen 30:1), follow false gods (Gen 31:19)? Is she kind to her uglier sister Leah? _____

The Bible paints clear portraits of the Patriarchs and their wives, withholding nothing! How would you and your family hold up under such an honest rendition of the facts of family life?

Does this give you hope that God can work through any and all families for His higher purposes?

Jacob decides to escape his father-in-law Laban’s iron control (Gen 31:17-21) and flees with his herds and family, which now include:

- Leah and her sons Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun-and daughter Dinah
- Servant girl Bilhah: with sons Dan and Naphtali
- Servant girl Zilpah with sons Gad and Asher
- Rachel: son Joseph (and later will die at birth of Benjamin)

Jacob had endured two long decades at the hands of a difficult father-in-law, who has taken advantage of him again and again. “Are you today perplexed over continuing unhappy circumstances which still remain in your daily life? Is it possible that, as for Jacob so for you, there are unholy, unlovely, un-Christlike traits of disposition which God seeks to remove from your character? Could it be that He deliberately allows these ‘injustices,’ ‘hard labor,’ to occur in your life and has even placed you alongside of a mean, grasping personality (in business or home situation) *because* this is the only way in which He can correct these traits in you which grieve Him and *force you* to cling trustingly to Him and *discover in Him* your chief delight?”³ _____

³ Johnson, A. Wetherell. *Bible Study Fellowship: Genesis*. Lesson 24, Series II. © 1988 by BSF Founder’s Trust, San Antonio, TX, pp 2.

Gen 31:24

How will God work to bring first Laban and then Esau (Gen 33) to be at peace with Jacob? How does Jacob learn the lesson of God’s undeserved protective care? _____

On his deathbed in Gen 49:24-25, Jacob will profess his faith in “the Mighty One, the Shepherd, the Rock of Israel,” but he learns this lesson through years of watching God repeatedly deliver, guide, and correct him. Are you teachable like Jacob? _____

Gen 32: *Jacob Wrestles with God*

Gen 32:8-13

How does Jacob’s anxious prayer in Gen 32:10-13 profoundly differ from his original prayer of bargaining with God in Gen 28:20-21? _____

Note: This prayer is the first recorded in detail in the Bible!

Closely examine Jacob’s prayer of supplication in Gen 32:8-13. Which of the following three parts of his supplicatory prayer do you often omit? _____

- (1) Confession of unworthiness;
- (2) Gratitude for past mercies;
- (3) Pouring forth honest, raw emotions (i.e., fear) to God.

Jacob was just on the edge of entering the Promised Land, but God needed to make some key points clear to Jacob before he was permitted to enter. What details are found in Hosea 12:5-7 that are not found in the Genesis 32 account? _____

Imagine Jacob’s situation. He is on the cusp of returning to his family, who last experienced him as a deceptive coward. Jacob had to take a long, uncomfortable look at himself and wrestle with what he saw. In the wrestling match that followed, Jacob was literally “broken” (hip) or injured by God to show him who was really in control. When have you had to honestly face yourself and your past in order to be fully used and blessed by God? _____

How is such discipline really a sign of God’s tender love for you? Hebrews 12:7-13 _____

Gen 32:26

This is the moment of final surrender when helpless Jacob clings to the neck of his opponent, stubbornly crying: “I will not let you go until you bless me” (Gen 32:27). Jacob has now moved to dependence on God rather than reliance on self; rather than grasping aggressively for a blessing, he pleads for it—and God complies. The lesson learned is that *power with God comes with surrender*. How has God both broken and blessed you recently? _____

How might you make the case that Jacob wrestled with Jesus Himself? Note that the one with whom Jacob contends describes himself as both man and divine, and afterwards Jacobs concludes that he has indeed seen “the face of God” (Gen 32:29,31). _____

Conclusion: This wrestling match was a turning-point in the life of Jacob and ultimately the chosen people of God. Prior to it, Jacob had relied on his cleverness, schemes, even lies, but he then realizes the way in which had has lived and his reliance on self was not pleasing to God. God desires for His people to walk with Him in humility and obedience, by “faith not by sight.”

Moreover, “God’s blessing is always undeserved (Zechariah 4:6). It cannot be grasped by intelligence, determination, personality, or position (1 Corinthians 1:27-29). God chooses those who consider themselves weak or foolish in order that no flesh shall boast of how he obtained God’s blessing by the glory of his own merit...How often is this true of us? Do you try to push things through in your own strength, or do you seek with a quiet inward trust in God to work out the difficult situations by His Spirit and in His way? You may wonder why God seems to oppose you even as you seek to receive that blessing of being filled with the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18), of continuously walking in the Spirit (Galatians 5:16) and experiencing the power of the Holy Spirit (1 Thessalonians 1:5). Could it be that God is waiting for your full surrender? Perhaps God may even have to take from you some source of strength upon which you most rely.”⁴

Do you primarily depend on your own resources, talents, ‘pulling strings,’ or insight to meet challenging life situations? Trusting in your own strength, you may be fighting the Lord Himself! _____

Faults of Jacob we should seek to correct in ourselves:

- *Purge a deceitful heart before we reap the bitter tasting consequences.
- *Be content with the mate God has chosen for us.
- *Not try to hurry God’s timetable or interfere by inserting our own schemes and plans to further His work.
- *Depend on God and not our own strength.
- *Not ‘play favorites’ among our children.
- *Not fear enemies but trust God to continually protect us.

Which of the above do you need to confront in your own life? _____

Gen 32:29

What is the significance of Jacob’s name change to Israel? _____

Keep in mind that for the Hebrew, to name something implied you had dominion over that thing or person. Who is in control of Jacob now? How is this in sharp contrast to independent Jacob, surviving by his own scheming and competitive nature? _____

⁴ Johnson, A. Wtherell. *Bible Study Fellowship: Genesis: Lesson 25, Series II.* © 1988 by BSF Founder’s Trust, San Antonio, TX, pp 4-5.

Historical note: From this point in time, Jacob's new name will be applied to collectively refer to all 12 tribes. In the 10th century BC the term Israel will be given to the Northern Kingdom that breaks away from the Southern Kingdom of Judah (see 1 Kings 12:20; Amos 1:1).

Life application: There is great hope in this name change of Jacob. With God, you are not defined by your past! Have you let God bless you in a life-changing, new way? _____

Gen 33: The Reconciliation of Jacob and Esau

After 20 years of exile, Jacob offers Esau 550 animals as an acknowledgement that he 'owes Esau,' and to show his good will and remorse for having been deceitful. This is quite extravagant! Esau, having prospered in Jacob's absence, does not need the gift and initially refuses.

What family member do you need to make amends with? What can you do to show your sincerity or reparation? (Jacob's sign of contrition was a large herd of animals. What form might your sign of contrition take?) Proverbs 16:7. Will you do so today? _____

Note: Shechem was not located in the land promised to Abraham. One cannot expect God's full blessing if you are located where he has not directed you! (The incident with Dinah follows).

New Testament connection: Jesus would later speak to the Woman at the Well at Shechem.

Gen 34: The rape of Dinah

Jacob lingered at Shechem for ten years rather than leaving immediately. Why would Jacob tarry? Did he harbor residual fear or was he hesitant to accept forgiveness? _____

Dinah, the daughter of Leah and Jacob, evidently has developed close friendships with female members of a Canaanite tribe, the Hivites. What occurs next? _____

How do the actions of her brothers Simeon and Levi bring Jacob's rebuke? Gen 34:30-31

This violent vengeance will later disqualify them from receiving their father's birthright.

Is God mentioned even once in the entire chapter of Gen 34? _____

This time period is a spiritual low for Jacob! He then repents, casts aside idols, and renews friendship with God—but what tragedy must first occur to drive him to do this. Dinah's fraternization with the neighbors and the Judah/Tamar account shows that Jacob's family is not yet strong enough to withstand the strong pagan influences surrounding them, so God will remove them to Egypt.

Gen 35

Jacob realizes that his family has been unduly influenced by neighbors, and to protect them from possible retaliation, quickly leaves for Bethel. What act of consecration of his entire family does he do there? Gen 35:1-5 _____

What idols do you or children/grandchildren refuse to put away? How can you consecrate your family more fully to God? _____

Gen 35:18-20

Who is Rachel's second-born son? What happens to Rachel, and where is she buried? How is her burial place referenced in Matthew 2:16-18? _____

Gen 36:6-8

This chapter describes what happens to Esau and his descendants, as they part ways with Jacob (due to overcrowding of the herds). The narrative will then return to the Messianic line (through Jacob) and pick up the story thread with Joseph.

PATRIARCHS: PART 2B: JOSEPH

Read Genesis 37-50

Corresponds to Workbook pages 37-40

Summary thus far: Jacob has become the father of twelve sons, who shall become the twelve tribes of Israel. Joseph is the eldest son of two by Jacob's beloved wife Rachel. The remainder of the Genesis account will look at the cycle of fraternal competition spiral again into the depths of dangerous envy. In many ways Joseph's virtuous life will mimic that of the Messiah, Jesus.

The question that will first be addressed in this section: From which of the twelve tribes will the Messiah come?

Gen 37-50: Joseph

Gen 37:1-4

For what two major reasons did Joseph's brothers despise him? _____

How did the family generational pattern of favoritism play into this? _____

How have you seen sibling rivalry work its havoc in your family or family of origin? _____

Gen 37:6-12

What two dreams did Joseph share with his family? How was it later fulfilled in Gen 42:6-8? Why did this enrage his older brothers? _____

Although Joseph earned an indignant rebuke from his father, Jacob nevertheless “pondered the matter.” Why might this have been the case, given that Jacob had experienced dreams himself that were prophetic and life-changing? See Gen 28:10-17. _____

Gen 37:19-28

What do the brothers do to Joseph? What detail is given later in Gen 42:21? Who purchases Joseph in Egypt (Gen 37:36)? _____

Gen 38: Judah and Tamar

How do the actions of the fourth born son Judah compare to those of Joseph? God works through messy families nevertheless, as Jesus will come from the line of Judah, by means of the twin Perez. _____

Also, Judah will change dramatically, as will be evidenced at the end of Genesis. Stay tuned!

Now, back to the story of Joseph....

Gen 39: Joseph in Potiphar’s House

Whenever a phrase is repeated in Scripture, it is the literary technique used for emphasis, as the Hebrews did not have italics or exclamation points or bold font as we now do. What key point is made about Joseph in this chapter, that is reiterated in Gen 39:2,20-21? How did God work to make Joseph’s life easier with first Potiphar and then the chief jailer, in Gen 39:5-6, 21-22? _____

In these details can be found the first hint of the fulfillment of God’s promise (in a small way) that the Jews will bless all of the world (Gentiles). Joseph’s presence blessed both Potiphar and the jailer—and eventually even the Pharaoh!

Gen 39:6-20

What specific reason does Joseph give Potiphar’s wife on why he cannot submit to her seductive invitation, in Gen 39:9b? What would happen if we weighed every temptation with the horror of offending God and earning His condemnation? _____

Side note on genetics: It is not surprising that Joseph is “strikingly handsome,” as his maternal great-grandmother, grandmother, and mother were all described as beautiful! And Jacob must have been strong in his youth, as he removed the shepherd’s well cover by himself, when it usually took several men to do so (Gen 29:10)—although he was also trying to show off for beautiful Rachel, whom he had just noticed!

Gen 41:15-46

What had Pharaoh been told of Joseph in Gen 41:15? How does Joseph correct Pharaoh, a bold statement, in Gen 41:16? _____

What warning does Joseph give Pharaoh? _____

What high compliment does Pharaoh give Joseph in Gen 41:37? _____

How does Joseph find himself elected to second in command in all of Egypt? (Gen 41:40-41)

What is his task, and how will it save the Jewish people? _____

Whom does Joseph marry, at what age, in Gen 41:45-46? What are the names of his two sons, and how does the meaning of their names hint at how Joseph is faring in Egypt? (Gen 41:50-52) _____

Note that Jacob will later officially adopt these two half-Egyptian sons of Joseph (Gen 48:5-30).

Ponder the faith development that has occurred in Joseph's life at this point. Can you say with Joseph: "God has made me forget entirely the sufferings I endured at the hands of my family" or "God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction" (that is, whatever area has caused you the most pain)? If not, pray for God to bring healing to the places and memories that most need His powerful touch. _____

Gen 42-44

Why do Joseph's brothers go to Israel? What do they do in Gen 42:6 that harkens back to Joseph's dream as a 17-year old? _____

How does Joseph determine if his brothers have changed in character in Chapters 42-44? _____

How does Judah's plea to Joseph in Gen 44:18-34 prove how much the brothers have changed? How is Judah a "type" of Christ here? _____

"The brothers have changed. Judah, the very one who had proposed selling Joseph into slavery, has been humbled by the grace of God over the years (which is why his seemingly irrelevant story is inserted into the narrative in Genesis 38). Judah is now willing to become a slave and make an offering of himself to save his brother Benjamin."⁵

Gen 45

Why is Joseph not bitter towards his brother? How has he recognized God's hand at work in the entire affair (Gen 45:5-9)? _____

⁵ Gray, Tim and Jeff Cavins. *Walking with God: A Journey Through the Bible*. © 2010 by Ascension Press, West Chester, PA, pp 56.

How can you grow in confidence that God has you exactly where you are to be, for His purposes—or are you tarrying in a place outside of His command and will, as Jacob did in Shechem? _____

Five more years of famine are still to be endured; only two have passed. How does Joseph provide for his family in Gen 45:10-11, 18-20; Gen 47:12? _____

Gen 46:26-27

How many people were involved in Jacob's family's migration to Egypt? Counting Joseph and his sons, how many total? _____
Over 400 years later, over a million Jews will leave in the Exodus!

Gen 47:27-29

How does the family of Jacob fare in Egypt initially? _____
What does Jacob demand of his son Joseph? _____
Does Joseph later keep his oath? Gen 50:4-13 _____

Gen 49:1-27

Jacob blesses all of his sons, giving the primary blessing to Judah. What disqualifies his eldest son Reuben from receiving the birthright? (Gen 35:22; 49:3-4) _____

What disqualified Simeon and Levi (Gen 34:25-30)? _____

The Simeonites will eventually be absorbed into the tribe of Judah (Joshua 19:1-9), and the Levites will become the order of priesthood and live scattered in 48 cities (Joshua 21:1-42).

What do you learn about the line of Judah? (Gen 49:8-12) How does Jacob's final blessing hint of the coming Messiah? _____

Gen 49:9-10- Jesus will be the universal King!

“Genesis gives considerable attention to families and family life. Time and again the storyline twists and turns around the action of fathers and mothers, husbands and wives, uncles and nephews, brothers and sisters. This is not extraordinary in itself, but a distinct pattern emerges in Genesis that, for the most part, runs counter to the social and domestic customs of the biblical world. Several times we read in Genesis that God bypasses a first-born son and blesses one of his younger siblings instead. This was highly irregular in ancient tribal societies, where first-born sons were entitled by their position in the birth order to numerous family privileges not shared by their other siblings. The firstborn, for example, was destined to receive a special blessing from his father and to inherit the largest share of his father's estate. He was seen as a father figure to his brothers because he stood in line to be the next leader,

protector, and teacher of the family. In all essential respects, the eldest son who became the patriarch was the social and spiritual mainstay of the kinship group gathered around him.

Often the eldest sons in Genesis are prideful and unworthy of the honors that await them; in effect, they disqualify themselves from their natural birthright. Other times, the question of guilt or culpability goes unmentioned, and God simply elects the younger son over the older to carry his plans forward. Whatever the case, God's preference for the younger and weaker brother over the older and stronger is pronounced and forms a significant subplot in the book. Six times this pattern repeats itself in Genesis.

1. Abel is favored over Cain, the first-born of Adam (Gen 4:1-7).
2. Isaac is favored over Ishmael, the first-born of Abraham (Gen 17:18-21; 21:8-14).
3. Jacob is favored over Esau, the first-born of Isaac (Gen 25:19-34; 27:1-45).
4. Perez is favored over Zerah, the first-born of Judah by Tamar (Gen 38: 24-30).
5. Joseph is favored over Reuben, the first-born of Jacob (Gen 35:22; 1 Chronicles 5:1).
6. Ephraim is favored over Manasseh, the first-born of Joseph (Gen 48:1-20)."⁶

50:13

Note that Jacob is buried at Mach-pelah, near Hebron, where all the patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, and now finally Jacob) are laid to rest with their first wives (Sarah, Rebekah, and Leah).

50:15-21

Joseph's brothers now fear that Joseph will seek justifiable vengeance on them, now that their father is buried. How does Joseph reassure them? _____

How do you "take the place of God" when you refuse to forgive family members/others? _____

50:20

Ponder this verse. How might what you have suffered been necessary for the benefit of others, in God's bigger plan? How did Joseph's suffering at the hands of his brothers literally preserve the family line of Christ from extinction? _____

Case Study:

Joseph has been seen as a "type" of Christ from the early days of the Church. In what ways do their lives parallel? _____

⁶ *Catholic Ignatius Study Bible: Genesis*. Commentary by Scott Hahn and Curtis Mitch. © 2010 by Ignatius Press, San Francisco, pp 77.

See Gen 37:14 and Matthew 1:21b; Gen 37:18 and Matthew 26:24-25; Gen 37:28 and Matthew 26:14-16; Gen 41:46 and Luke 3:23, etc.

Summary: Why was it necessary for Jacob's family to migrate to Egypt?

1. "To give them opportunity to increase.

Jacob's family numbered less than a hundred. They found themselves in Canaan, among numerous pagan tribes who had lived there for quite a long time. They numerically could not yet wage combat with them and succeed.

2. To alleviate the danger of deterioration of God's revelation to them.

The longer they stayed in Canaan, the more possible it became that God's original revelation to man might become infiltrated with the pagan religions of their neighbors. Jacob's sons were rapidly entering into the moral corruption around them. (This is particularly evidenced in the events recorded in Genesis 38, which are possibly included in Scripture for this reason).

3. To allow segregation from other people.

Seeing that the Israelites were shepherds and the Egyptians despised shepherds, this meant that when Joseph had authority in Egypt, Jacob's family lived by themselves in Goshen and became established in the basic elements of their religious beliefs. Therefore, there was less danger of social, moral, and religious contamination from outside influences.

4. For cultural development

It would seem that Israel needed the education, culture, and civilization of Egypt for the purpose of committing God's laws to writing and so preserving His revelation in the Old Testament. The initial writing or editing of the Pentateuch was given to Moses, the descendent of Leah's son Levi. However, God ordained that some of Moses' human educational equipment for that work was through the 'wisdom of the Egyptians' (Acts 7:21-22)."⁷

Summary:

God continued to interact directly with the Patriarchs, who learn more about the faithfulness of the God of Abraham in spite of their personal sin and failures. God blesses the Patriarchs Isaac and Jacob with prosperity and children, even against a backdrop of family favoritism and sibling rivalry. Finally, the small tribe of Israel is brought to Egypt to escape famine conditions in Canaan that had griped the entire area. They will grow in number and faith in the next 400 years before the next chapter of the Story of Salvation takes place, the dramatic Exodus.

© Glenda Canfield, March 2021.

⁷ Johnson, A. Wetherell. *Bible Study Fellowship: Genesis*. Lesson 27, Series II. © 1988 by BSF Founder's Trust, San Antonio, TX, pp 1-2.