

Through the Bible — Genesis 27-36 — 11/30/2022

Introduction to Jacob

- Today we are going to tell the story of Jacob, the son of Isaac.
- Last week we were introduced to Jacob when we heard the story of him being born "right on the heels" of his twin brother Esau, and later convincing Esau to sell his birthright for a bowl of soup.
- When the boys were still in the womb, Jacob's mother, Rebekah, heard a prophecy from God telling her that (Genesis 25:23)
 - "Two nations are in your womb;
 - And two peoples will be separated from your body;
 - And one people will be stronger than the other;
 - And the older will serve the younger."
- Let's dig into the story of Jacob's life, and see how this prophecy comes true.

Isaac's Blindness

- Genesis 27:1 -- "when Isaac was old and his eyes were too dim to see"
- Just to put some context around the players in our story here, Isaac was 137 years old when this event occurred. Jacob and Esau were around 77 years old.
 - We get to this number by counting backwards from the ages and dates we do know in Jacob's life.
 - Isaac lived to be 180 years old, so he was old, but not completely gone.
- Rabbis and commentators have discussed a variety of reasons for Isaac's blindness, and most opinions have something to do with his relationship to Esau.
 - God took away his sight to spare him the pain of seeing Esau's wicked deeds
 - God took away his sight as punishment for failing to restrain Esau
 - God took away his sight so that Jacob's ruse would be successful
 - God took away his sight to spare him the pain of seeing the wickedness of his Canaanite daughters-in-law
- Unlike Isaac, Rebekah saw the wickedness of Esau's wives:
 - Genesis 27:46 -- And Rebekah said to Isaac, "I am tired of living because of the daughters of Heth; if Jacob takes a wife from the daughters of Heth like these from the daughters of the land, what good will my life be to me?"
 - Isaac had to be willfully blind to miss their wickedness.
 - Based on how Abraham and Isaac found their wives, Esau had compromised the inheritance by marrying women of the land, people God had promised to displace
 - Despite that fact, Isaac still planned to pass along the inheritance to his wicked son.
- Why did Isaac prefer Esau?
 - Genesis 25:28 -- Now Isaac loved Esau because he had a taste for game
 - Isaac admired Esau because he was a strong man, a manly man, a great hunter
 - The description here sounds similar to the reaction the prophet Samuel had with the brothers of David:

- 1 Samuel 16:6–7 -- When they entered, he looked at Eliab and thought, “Surely the LORD’S anointed is standing before Him.” But the LORD said to Samuel, “Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for God does not see as man sees, since man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.”
- Isaac did not look at, or chose to ignore, the heart of his son
- An important lesson for us as parents: we should encourage and admire our children's spiritual prowess more than their physical prowess.

The Deception is Conceived

- Why did Rebekah set up this deception of Isaac?
- Remember, she knew from the prophecy that the Abrahamic blessing belonged to Jacob.
 - Genesis 25:23 -- And the LORD said to her,

“Two nations are in your womb;
And two peoples will be separated from your body;
And one people will be stronger than the other;
And the older will serve the younger.”
- It looked like Isaac was about to thwart God's plan, so she decided to make sure that didn't happen.
- This looks similar to the reaction Sarah had to the Divine Plan when she told Abraham to have a baby with Hagar. They both decided that God needed a little help along the way.
- But Rebekah's deceit was not what God intended, and it had ramifications for generations.
 - If she had allowed God to do what He was going to do, it is unlikely that the blessing would have gone to Esau anyway.
 - Remember that Isaac's blessing over Jacob was a prophecy, spoken at the behest of God. If you know the story of Balaam (Bilam).
 - If Esau had been there instead, God would have had Isaac speak the blessing intended for him, and Isaac would have seen that the true blessing was intended for Jacob.
- We should not commit transgressions in order to fulfill God's will. That goes against the very nature of God. He has the Plan, and knows what he wants to see happen.
- Jacob was not convinced by his mother Rebekah. Ge 27:12 -- "I will be like a deceiver in his sight, and I will bring upon myself a curse and not a blessing."
- But Rebekah commanded him to obey her:
 - Genesis 27:8 -- "So now, my son, listen to me as I command you."
 - Genesis 27:13 -- "obey my voice"
- Just like Abraham following Sarah's instructions, Jacob obeyed his mother's commands.

The Blessing is Stolen

- According to the Midrash (*Pirke DeRebbi Eliezer* 32) the story of this blessing being given happened on Passover, the 15th of Nissan on the Hebrew calendar. That would be appropriate given the fact that the covenant God made with Abraham happened on that same day, and given the fact that that was Isaac's birthday.
- Remember what we said before, as well, about our own deeds coming back to haunt us, and about the deeds of the fathers being portents for the sons.
 - Jacob here conceals his identity from his father, and later he is deceived by the identity of Leah being concealed during their marriage.
 - Jacob deceived his father with a goat, and his own sons later deceived him with a goat (the blood on Joseph's coat)
 - Jacob deceived his father with his brother's garment, and he will later be deceived by his son's garment.
- Was Isaac actually deceived?
 - Some commentators say that he may have been going along with the ruse.
 - But the text seems to indicate that he was actually deceived.
- The blessing he spoke was a prophecy, given by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, not just a blessing he came up with
 - That's why he could not rescind it later
- Genesis 27:27-29 -- Read the Blessing
- The agricultural aspect of the blessing has an interesting later Messianic interpretation.
 - In the second-century, a believer named Papias, who was a friend of Polycarp, a disciple of the Apostle John, wrote a book that is now almost completely lost called *An Exposition of the Oracles of the Lord*. In one of the fragments that was preserved, he expands on Jesus' words about drinking from the fruit of the vine in the Messianic Era. The passage takes the form of a midrash on Genesis 27:28–29 and 49:11–12.
 - The Master said [in Matthew 26:29], “I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.” *When will that day be? When God will give Jacob “the dew of heaven, and of the fatness of the earth, and an abundance of grain and new wine” [Genesis 27:28].* The elders who saw John the disciple of the Master remembered that they had heard from him how the Master taught concerning those times, and said: “The days will come in which vineyards shall grow, having each ten thousand vines, and in each vine ten thousand branches, and in each branch ten thousand shoots, and in every one of the shoots ten thousand clusters, and on every one of the clusters ten thousand grapes, and every grape when pressed will give five-and-twenty measures of wine. And when any one of the saints shall lay hold of a cluster, another shall cry out, ‘I am a better cluster, take me; bless the LORD through me.’” In like manner, He said, “A grain of wheat would produce ten thousand ears, and that every ear would have ten thousand grains, and every grain would yield ten pounds of clear, pure, fine flour. And all other fruits and seeds and grass will bring forth in similar proportions, and all animals, feeding then only on the products of the earth,

will become peaceable and harmonious, and be in perfect subjugation to man. These things are credible to those who believe.” And when Judas the traitor did not believe these things and asked the question, “How then can things about to produce so abundantly be brought forth by the LORD?” the Master replied, “Those who come to these times shall see them.” (*Chronicles of the Messiah*, FFOZ, p.1461, insertions in italics and brackets)

- The second part of Jacob's blessing reaffirms the prophecy given to Rebekah, "And one people will be stronger than the other; and the older will serve the younger" (25:23)
 - This blessing also has messianic implications. "And may your mother's sons bow down to you." Note that the blessing does not say "son" (singular), it says "sons" (plural).
 - This prophecy looks forward to the day when all the nations of the earth will be subject to Israel under the King Messiah.
 - Zechariah 14:9, 16 -- And the LORD will be King over all the earth; on that day the LORD will be one, and His name one.... Then it will come about that any who are left of all the nations that came against Jerusalem will go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of armies, and to celebrate the Feast of Booths
- The third part of the blessing is a reiteration of the Abrahamic promise:
 - Genesis 27:29 -- Cursed be those who curse you, And blessed be those who bless you.
 - Genesis 12:3 -- And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.

Esau's Blessing, and Jacob's Second Blessing

- Esau comes home, makes his meal for Isaac, and eagerly enters the tent to receive his blessing.
- But it has already been given away!
- The first part of the blessing Esau gets is ambivalent in the Hebrew. It can just as easily be read as a curse: (Genesis 27:39)
 - NASB -- “Behold, away from the fertility of the earth shall be your dwelling, And away from the dew of heaven from above.”
 - KJV -- "Behold, thy dwelling shall be the fatness of the earth, and of the dew of heaven from above;"
- The rest of the blessing is not much better...
- So Esau held a grudge against his brother, but he decided to wait until his father was dead before killing him.
 - reminds me of Michael and Fredo from *The Godfather Part 2*...
- Rebekah heard about this and decided it was best to send Jacob away to live in safety with her brother Laban.
- Read Genesis 28:3–4 -- Before Isaac sent him away, he blessed Jacob with the fullness of the Abrahamic blessing. By this point, Isaac had at least acclimated to the idea that Jacob was now the chosen son.

- The stated reason for Jacob to go to Haran was not just a ruse. Remember, his brother's wives were wicked, and it was important that the promise of the land not be passed on through the Canaanites.
 - Is there a Hurrian connection here, too?
 - A cultural custom unique to the Hurrians was the practice of adopting a wife as one's sister. This had to do with property and marriage laws.
 - At the very least, it was understood that there needed to be a family connection.
 - Even Esau saw that this was important to his father, and took his cousin (Ishmael's daughter) as a third wife.

Jacob's Journey

- Jacob journeyed north on the way to Haran
- Genesis 28:11 -- "And he happened upon *the* place" -- This was Bethel, where his grandfather Abraham had called on the name of the Lord and built an altar, but he did not know!
- "because the sun had set" - Note the connection to Abraham's covenant encounter with God in Genesis 15:17, when he was told about the coming exile of his descendants in Egypt
 - Jacob was about to leave the land that he was promised as the descendant of Abraham. He was, in essence, being sent into exile.
- The ladder can be seen as a metaphor of the connection between us humans and God, between heaven and earth.
 - God is transcendent, how can we possibly connect with him?
 - By Prayer, by Faith, by Obedience, by Revelation, and by the Messiah
 - **Prayer:** The angels are like the words of our prayers ascending to God and his responses returning.
 - **Faith:** Though we live on earth, with our feet on the ground, faith allows us to ascend to heaven and bring back spiritual life.
 - **Obedience:** God's commandments allow us to see His nature, to understand Him more, and to enact His will on the earth. When we obey God's commandments, it is as if we are ascending to meet Him.
 - **Revelation:** God is too lofty to be understood without His revelation. As we study His holy scriptures, he reveals himself to us and helps us ascend to greater spiritual heights.
 - The Messiah is the true ladder between heaven and earth, the one who descended from heaven, ascended back to the Father, and calls us to ascend to the Father based on our faith in His merit.
- Yeshua makes this connection himself, based on an interesting reading of the Hebrew of Genesis 28:12:
 - "and behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on **it**. Then behold, the LORD was standing above **it**..."
 - The Hebrew pronoun **בּוֹ** (a variant of **הוּא**) can actually be read either as "it" or as "him"

- So, it could be translated as, "and behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on **him**. Then behold, the LORD was standing above **him**..."
- The rabbis in the Midrash Rabbah actually argue about the best way to translate this verse, too.
- In John 1:51, Jesus told His disciple Netanel, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man."
- To see the "heavens opened" is to receive a prophetic, apocalyptic vision.
- Perhaps this was the very Torah passage Netanel had been contemplating whilst he sat beneath the fig tree.
- The ascent and descent of the angels on the Son of Man refer to the miraculous power of God that Yeshua commands. He has at His "disposal more than twelve legions of angels" (Matthew 26:53). The angels are "ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation" (Hebrews 1:14). Messiah is the true ladder between heaven and earth.
- God's covenant with Jacob (Genesis 28:13–15)
 - A covenant is a legally binding contract between 2 or more parties. Covenants have some very important elements, which are true for all of the covenants in the Bible.
 - Covenants are binding
 - Covenants are inter-generational
 - Earlier covenants do not get overridden by later covenants
 - Breaking a covenant has consequences
 - A broken covenant requires atonement
 - Covenants come with signs that are obligatory for the covenant makers.
 - "I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac"
 - I have a reputation, and the covenant I give with you has a solid foundation.
 - "the land on which you lie I will give to you and to your descendants. Your descendants will also be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, and to the north and to the south, and in you and in your descendants shall all the families of the earth be blessed."
 - These are a reiteration of the covenant He cut with Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3; 13:14-17), and the covenant He cut with Isaac (Genesis 26:2-5).
 - "Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you."
 - This is the addition that comes with this covenant with Jacob: Protection on the journey and a promise to bring him back home.
 - Jacob's response to the Covenant
 - **Awe:** He was not aware of where he was, but he was struck with awe that he had encountered "the gate of heaven".
 - **Memorial stone:** (מַצֵּיבָה *matzeivah*) This is a common practice in the ancient middle east. The stone stands as a memorial because stone is hard to remove.

- **Vow:** IF God will take care of me, and IF I return to my Father's house safely, and IF the Lord will be by God, THEN, this stone will be a memorial of this covenant, and I VOW to return here and give you a tenth of everything you have given me.
- The Hebrew says "AND the Lord will be my God", not "THEN". The sense is that if God fulfills all of these promises, then he will give him a tithe of his possessions. Not that if God does these things, then Jacob will accept Him as his God.
- In chapter 35, we will see God calling Jacob to come back to Bethel and fulfill this vow.
- The entire Bible focuses on resolving the problems of the exile. It is all about finding your way home, finding your way back to God's presence.
 - Adam and Eve are exiled from the garden
 - Cain is exiled "from the presence of the Lord" to the land of Nod, east of Eden.
 - The people of Babel are exiled from their land and scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth
 - Abraham is forced to leave Canaan because of a famine and descend to Egypt
 - Jacob flees to Haran
 - As we study the rest of the Bible, try to watch for the signs of the exile. Look for the times when God's people are warned about exile, when the exile comes, when they return, and when they are warned again. It's a common pattern that bears much on our own state of exile from the presence of God, as our souls live in this world apart from his glory.

Jacob Meets Rachel, and Laban's Treachery

- Jacob continues his journey and eventually reaches Haran.
- Laban was his mother's brother, so Rachel was his cousin.
- He did not kiss Rachel out of love, but out of greeting, just like Laban kissed him in verse 13
- But he did fall in love with her, and worked for 7 years to earn the right to marry her. That was an exorbitant cost!
- Laban was a polytheist, not a monotheist. He did not have the same scruples as Jacob or his family.
- Leah's eyes were "weak". The Hebrew רַכּוּת (*rakot*) means "tender, delicate, or soft", not just weak. The implication of the text is that while "Rachel was beautiful in figure and appearance," Leah had beautiful eyes.
- If you look at it from the ancient perspective, remember that the firstborn son, Esau, was supposed to marry from within the family, too. It would make sense that Leah, the other firstborn, would be the choice for that son. However, Jacob took the birthright, and therefore the responsibility for marrying the firstborn daughter.
- In a sense, Laban was right, but his methods of manipulating and deceiving Jacob were wrong.

- So, Jacob was destined to marry Rachel either way, however, the destiny of the family line, the birthright, came through the children of Leah.

The Sons of Jacob

- So, who were the children of Leah?
 - Reuben (*ra'ah* "see", *ben* "son"), Simeon (*shama*, "heard"), Levi (*lava*, "joined"), Judah (*yadah*, "praise")
 - Notice those last two. In the future we will see that the line of priesthood comes through Levi and the line of kingship comes through Judah.
 - Genesis 29:31 -- "Hated" is a statement of preference, not a statement of actual hatred.
 - Then later, Leah gave birth to three more children:
 - Issachar (*sachar*, "wages"), Zebulun (*zaval*, "dwell"), one daughter Dinah (no reason given)
 - Mandrakes are a small fruit that were widely thought to be an aphrodisiac and a fertility drug.
- Bilhah (Rachel): Dan (*din*, "vindicated, judged"), Naphtali (*niftali*, "wrestling")
- Zilpah (Leah): Gad (*gad*, "fortunate"), Asher (*asher*, "happy")
- Rachel: Joseph (*yasaf*, "add")

Jacob Tries to Leave, Laban convinces him to stay

- Laban was not a good employer. He deceived Jacob and changed his wages, requiring more work from him for the second wife he deceived Jacob into marrying.
- While Jacob just wanted to leave, Laban knew that he was being blessed through Jacob (remember God's covenant? It works!). So, Laban tried to convince Jacob to stay.
- Jacob wanted to set up his growing family for success, so he needed to have a way to build his own wealth. He offered to take the striped sheep because striped sheep are less common, meaning the deal would be in Laban's advantage and show that Jacob was being righteous in the agreement.
- According to Jacob's complaint six years later, Laban changed the deal multiple times after it was made. We don't know the full extent of Laban's duplicity, but Jacob was trying to do the right thing in this initial setup of the agreement.
- That being said, Jacob was no pushover. The Talmud, Megillah 13b, discusses this in the following midrash (remember, a Midrash is not necessarily meant to be taken literally):
 - When Jacob met Rachel, he said to her: Will you marry me? She said to him: Yes, but my father, Laban, is a swindler, and you will not be able to outwit him. Jacob alleviated her fears, as he said to her that he is her father's brother, referring not to their familial affiliation but rather to his ability to deal with her father on his level, as if to say: I am his brother in deception. She said to him: But is it really permitted for the righteous to be involved in deception? He said to her: Yes, it is permitted when dealing with deceptive individuals, as the verse states: "With the pure you will show yourself pure, and with the perverse you will show yourself subtle"

(II Samuel 22:27), indicating that one should deal with others in the manner appropriate for their personality.

- This is not to say that a righteous person should steal or lie, one must protect himself from thieves and con-men.

Jacob Leaves, Laban Pursues, Covenant

- Finally, Jacob had enough, and decided that it was time to leave
- This was 20 years after he had gone away, so he was now 97 years old.
- He made the case to his wives, and they agreed
 - Notice Genesis 31:16 -- "Surely all the wealth which God has taken away from our father belongs to us and our children; now then, do whatever God has told you."
 - They were aware of their father's deceit and they considered their husband to be the true heir of the family.
- So, "Rachel stole the household idols that were her father's" (31:19).
- I mentioned a few weeks ago that there are some interesting connections between the Hurrians of Urkesh and the stories in the Bible. (see [this source](#) and [this one](#))
- In 1925 some tablets were found during the excavation of a town in northern Iraq called Nuzi. At the time of the tablets' creation, Nuzi was part of the Hurrian Mitanni Empire, the height of the Hurrians' power. The information contained in the tablets discloses considerable data regarding the laws and customs of the Hurrians.
- For example, according to the Nuzi tablets he who possessed the household gods was the legitimate heir. Thus, a Nuzi tablet of adoption of one guy named Wullu by someone named Nashwi says:
 - If Nashwi has a son of his own he shall divide (the estate equally) with Wullu, but the son of Nashwi shall take the gods of Nashwi.
- Rachel's reason for taking her father's household gods may well have been to secure the inheritance for Jacob.
- We are not told anywhere in the scripture about specific sons of Laban. The reference to the "sons of Laban" in 31:1 could just be translated as relatives. Look at what Laban says when he finally catches up with Jacob
 - Genesis 31:43 -- Then Laban replied to Jacob, "The daughters are my daughters, the **sons** are my **sons**, the flocks are my flocks, and everything that you see is mine.
- Laban was trying to build his posterity through Jacob.
- But he sees the writing on the wall and in the end, Laban agrees to let them leave, and sets up a covenant with Jacob.
- Notice what Laban is worried about: Genesis 31:52 -- "I will not pass by this heap to you for harm, and you will not pass by this heap and this memorial stone to me, for harm."
- He is also worried that his daughters will be taken care of. He warned Jacob (Genesis 31:50):
 - If you mistreat my daughters, or if you take wives besides my daughters, although no one is with us, see, God is witness between you and me.
- The same Nuzi tablet as provides for Wullu's adoption also makes provision for his marriage to Nashwi's daughter and to no other woman:

- If Wullu takes another wife he shall forfeit the lands and buildings of Nashwi.

Jacob prepares to meet Esau

- Jacob continued on his way, and encountered angels of God at Machanaim (from מַחֲנֶה, *machaneh*, camp)
 - The rabbis say that this was a changing of the guard. That there were angels who had accompanied him and protected him while he was outside the Land of Israel, but now that he was coming back to the land his protection was handed back over to the local angels.
- Why was he worried about Esau? Well, the last time he was around, Esau was planning to kill him.
- Jacob took the initiative to seek out peace with his brother.
- So he sent some messengers to let his brother know he was coming home.
 - Interesting note, the word here in the Hebrew is מַלְאָכִים *malakhim*, angels. He just had an encounter with some angels, so this actually makes sense.
 - Or HaChaim, a Moroccan rabbi in the early 1700's gives a bunch of reasons for why Jacob might have sent angels instead of human messengers.
 - For example, he says, "The Torah says לְפָנָיו [*l'fanav*, "before his face"], to tell us that since Jacob had already met with these angels and they had obviously come to help him, he was permitted to use them as messengers for a task that human messengers might prove inadequate for. Jacob reasoned that seeing that these messengers would meet an important man such as Esau, he might not consider messengers of a lower order as appropriate to his stature."
 - Oh HaChaim also mentions some other possibilities:
 - Esau might have just killed some regular human messengers.
 - Jacob might have wanted to make Esau rethink his potential attack because Jacob had control of celestial beings.
 - Jacob needed messengers that could assess Esau's state of mind and address him appropriately.
 - Jacob wanted to catch Esau before he had a chance to hear about Jacob's approach, and angels travel more quickly than humans
 - He postulates, based on the fact that the Hebrew does not say the angels went "to the land of Seir" it just says "land of Seir" (without the "to"). This indicates that the angels didn't actually have to go anywhere, all they had to do was to face in a different direction.
 - Anyway, whether they were angels or people, Jacob sent some messengers.
 - They came back and said that Esau was coming with an army of 400 men.
- Jacob prepared for the impending confrontation in three ways: He prepared for battle to the death, he prayed for God's mercy, and he sent ahead a lavish tribute to his brother.
 - Prepared for battle by splitting up his forces and putting the family at the rear. If Esau attacked the first group, the second would be able to escape
 - Read the prayer in Genesis 32:9-12

- He reminded God of His previous promises and asked for deliverance.
- The tribute was actually a series of tributes, and all of the servants were told exactly what to say:
 - Genesis 32:18 -- "then you shall say, 'These belong to **your servant** Jacob; it is a gift sent to **my lord** Esau. And behold, he also is behind us.'"

Jacob Wrestles with Someone

- The ancient sages and medieval rabbis argue extensively about who Jacob wrestled.
 - "It did not really happen; Jacob was dreaming. Not a dream, he saw a vision. Not a dream of a vision, he wrestled with an angel of God, the angel Michael, the Angel of God. Not an angel of God, an evil angel. Not just any evil angel, the evil angel that was supposed to guard over Edom, the land of Esau. He wrestled with the spirit of Esau."
- Christian interpretations are also all over the place.
 - "Jacob wrestled with himself, that is with his unredeemed nature. God disciplined him for sneaking around and stealing people's birthrights. The assailant was the Angel of the Lord, reforming Jacob's character. The assailant was not the Angel of the Lord, it was Jesus. Jesus is the angel of the Lord. Jesus wrestled with the trickster Jacob and replaced his old nature with a new nature, symbolized by the name change to Israel." etc.
- These interpretations all have some value as homiletic devices, but let's look at the plain meaning of the text.
- The assailant was clearly supernatural in nature.
- Jacob wrestled with this supernatural assailant for a long time, and would not let go.
- The assailant finally touched his hip and dislocated it.
 - The word in Hebrew for "touch" (נָגַח *naga*) can also mean "strike"
 - Dislocated sockets are painful! But Jacob still did not let go.
- The assailant did not want to be seen. This is in keeping with one of the themes of the latter half of Genesis: Concealed identities
 - Jacob from Isaac, Leah from Jacob, Tamar from Judah, and Joseph from his brothers.
 - Apparently the assailant did not want Jacob to be able to see his face in the dawn's light -- "You cannot see My face, for mankind shall not see Me and live!" (Exodus 33:20)
- The prophet Hosea (12:3–4) says that Jacob wrestled with an angel.
 - He also says that Jacob "wept and implored" the messenger from God for a blessing: "In the womb he took his brother by the heel, And in his mature strength he contended with God. Yes, he wrestled with the angel and prevailed; He wept and implored His favor."
- Jacob held on with the goal of receiving a blessing before he encountered his angry brother.
- Name Change:

- Ya'akov comes from the root word עָקַב (*akev*, "heel") and means "heel-grabber". It is also similar in sound to אָבַק (*avak*, "wrestle").
- The name Yisrael means "He struggles with God" (from the words יִשְׂרַיִל *yisar* and אֱלֹהִים *El*)
- We all think of Jacob as a deceiver, but really Jacob should be known as an overcomer. Why did he struggle with Isaac, with Esau, and with Laban? Because he saw the true value of God's blessing. He was willing to struggle his whole life to obtain something that his brother was willing to sell for a bowl of soup.
- We should all strive to be like Jacob. He was unwilling to let go of God or to let go of God's blessings.
- The assailant did not want to tell Israel his name.
 - His response is "Why is it that you ask my name?" (32:29), but the implication is "You know who I am."
 - This is, again, reminiscent of the story of Moses' encounter with God on Mount Sinai.
- Jacob did receive a blessing from God that day. We don't know the content of the blessing, but given the circumstances and the fact that Jacob was praying for a miracle, we can assume that it had to do with the upcoming confrontation with Esau.
- Genesis 32:30 -- So Jacob named the place Peniel (פְּנֵי־אֵל), for he said, "I have seen God face to face, yet my life has been spared."
 - Did he see the face of God? Was there a glimpse of the face in the pre-dawn light? Jacob seems to think that he did, in some way, encounter God, see Him in some form, and still survive.
- "The sun rose" - remember that the sun was setting on Jacob as he left the Land of Promise. Now, as he returns, he sees the sun rising again.
- Genesis 32:32 -- Therefore, to this day the sons of Israel do not eat the tendon of the hip which is on the socket of the hip, because he touched the socket of Jacob's hip in the tendon of the hip.
 - This is still true to this day.

Meeting Esau, Avoiding Living Near Him

- Read 33:1-3
- Jacob shows us the proper response to making peace.
- Jacob did many things to try to make peace:
 - He committed the matter to earnest prayer, he sent generous gifts to compensate for past wrongs, and he demonstrated true humility and affection toward his brother.
- Paul's advice is relevant here: Romans 12:18 "If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all people."

- However, despite that reconciliation, Jacob also knew when it was appropriate to put boundaries around the relationship.
- He graciously demurred when Esau asked him to go down to Seir with him, instead saying that he would follow along more slowly. However, knowing that a long term relationship with Esau was not possible, he did not try to go all the way down to Seir.
- Instead, he went to Succoth and built a house, along with *sukkot* (booths) for his livestock.
- Then, apparently about a year, later he moved back across the Jordan to Shechem, camping again in his tents close to the city, and bought some land from Hamor, the city's leader and the father of Shechem.

The Dinah Incident

- Dinah went out to see the daughters of the land. She made a grave mistake trying to hang out with the other teenage girls of the town. The text says that she is "the daughter of Leah", and the sages relate this back to Genesis 30:16, where Leah shows herself to have an outgoing personality, as well.
- Shechem raped her, but he professed love for her.
 - The text does not really say anything about what Dinah wanted, but it is not uncalled for to assume that she was also smitten by the young prince. She apparently didn't try to escape even after the rape.
 - Regardless of what she might have thought, we are told clearly that he raped her. He went around the standard and appropriate practice of getting permission to marry her, and instead took her for himself.
- The act was shameful, and Dinah's older brothers were not happy
- Hamor (his name means "donkey") tried to smooth things over, offering a covenant relationship and intermarriage. His goal was to assimilate Jacob and his family into the people of Shechem (33:22) and to gain access to all of the family's wealth.
- The sons responded that the men of Shechem had to be circumcised, and proposed that all the men do that before a covenant was created.
 - How did Shechem convince all of the men of the city to be circumcised? By using their greed.
- The implication of the text is that the brothers just wanted to bring Dinah back while the men were recovering.
- But Shimon and Levi, the second and third sons of Leah, and big brothers of Dinah, sneaked into the city, killed every man, and took Dinah back home.
- When the rest of the brothers found out what had happened, they used the opportunity to loot the city, including the children, women, livestock, and wealth
 - This belies a force larger than just 10 brothers (Joseph was still too young to participate, and Benjamin had not yet been born), but as we'll see, not too large.
 - Remember Abraham had 319 men, so it can be assumed that Jacob had a decent number of men in his camp, as well. They would have all been angry about what happened to "little Dinah."

- Jacob was very critical of Shimon's and Levi's actions. Genesis 34:30 -- "You have brought trouble on me by making me repulsive among the inhabitants of the land, among the Canaanites and the Perizzites; and since my men are few in number, they will band together against me and attack me, and I will be destroyed, I and my household!"
- Their defense was that the evil that Shechem should not go unpunished. Jacob does not give a response here, but this comes back later when he curses their anger and steps over them in the giving of the birthright.
- To be clear, this is not a story about the value of retribution. It is a cautionary tale about allowing children to be influenced by the unrighteous world around us, and a reminder that two wrongs don't make a right.

Back to Bethel

- After all of this, Jacob heard from God that it was time for him to fulfill his part of the covenant and return to Bethel.
 - Genesis 28:20–22 -- Jacob also made a vow, saying, "If God will be with me and will keep me on this journey that I take, and give me food to eat and garments to wear, 21 and I return to my father's house in safety, then the LORD will be my God. 22 And this stone, which I have set up as a memorial stone, will be God's house, and of everything that You give me I will assuredly give a tenth to You."
- Genesis 35:2 -- "Remove the foreign gods which are among you"
 - Rachel probably still had her father's idols. One has to wonder if Jacob even knew about them.
- "purify yourselves and change your garments"
 - Changing or washing your garments in the Torah is a reference to טְבִילָה (*tevilah*, baptism)
 - This is the first instance of an act of ritual purification in the Torah, which we will talk about much more when we get into Leviticus.
- "Rings in their ears" - these were used for idol worship, as we see in the story of the golden calf.

Covenant Renewal, Benjamin Born, Rachel Dies

- The covenant was renewed at Bethel, and God reaffirmed the key elements of his covenant:
 - Jacob's name change to Israel.
 - A nation and a multitude of nations shall come from you,
 - kings shall come from you
 - The land which I gave to Abraham and Isaac, I will give to you, and I will give the land to your descendants after you."
- Rachel died giving birth to Benjamin.
 - The sages say that Rachel died because Jacob unknowingly cursed her.
 - Genesis 31:32 -- "The one with whom you find your gods shall not live"
- Ephrath = Bethlehem

- Ben-oni = "son of my sorrow"
- Benjamin = "son of my right hand"
- Migdal Eder = "tower of the flock", somewhere between Bethlehem and Mamre (Hebron).

Reuben's Betrayal, Isaac's Death

- Reuben slept with Rachel's servant Bilhah
- This was especially grievous since Rachel had just died not long before, and Bilhah was ostensibly taking care of the 8-year-old Joseph and the infant Benjamin on her behalf.
- The Torah tells us this story, along with the story of Shimon and Levi killing the men in Shechem, to explain how the first three sons of Jacob had the rights of the firstborn taken away from them.
 - 1 Chronicles 5:1–2 gives the full explanation: "Now the sons of Reuben, the firstborn of Israel (for he was the firstborn, but because he defiled his father's bed, his birthright was given to the sons of Joseph, the son of Israel; so he is not enrolled in the genealogy according to the birthright. Though Judah prevailed over his brothers, and from him came the leader, yet the birthright belonged to Joseph)"
 - Genesis 48:5 -- Now your two sons, who were born to you in the land of Egypt before I came to you in Egypt, are mine; Ephraim and Manasseh shall be mine, as Reuben and Simeon are.
- When Isaac died, he was buried by both of his sons.
- He was buried in Machpelah, near Mamre, in the same cave his father Abraham had bought from the Hittite for Isaac's mother Sarah, and where Abraham himself had been buried.

Edom

- We don't need to go into the whole genealogy of Esau here, but the key things to know are:
 1. The fact that Esau is also called Edom
 2. Esau was, therefore, the ancestor of the Edomites
 3. Edom is located southeast of the dead sea
- The Edomites will come back into the picture, and will be a thorn in Israel's side once again.

Map:

<https://biblemapper.com/web/?lat=33.2456&lon=31.1651&zoom=210&photolimit=125&photohide=1&bmid=gilead~20023~&locids=222~649~263~645~491~888~861~264~&>