

Sunday, July 16, 2023 pm

JOURNEY THROUGH THE BIBLE (16)

Patriarchal Period - 5

Jacob (1)

Tonight, we continue our monthly study of the 17 time periods of Bible history. We continue in the Patriarchal age (4th period). We examined Abraham and in our last lesson we examined Isaac. We now begin a study of Jacob.

I. Introduction to Jacob

- a. Introduced to Jacob in our last lesson, associated with the life of Isaac and Rebekah.
- b. He was a twin, younger than Esau. He was described as mild dwelling in tents (Esau was a hunter). We noted how he obtained Esau's birthright for a bowl of stew, and how, with the help of Rebekah, he took Esau's firstborn blessing.
- c. He was Isaac's son of prophecy.
- d. His name (according to Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary) was connected to the Hebrew word for "heel" (he clutched the heel of Esau as he was born) and with the Hebrew verb for "cheat", which we know he did to Esau, and will continue his ways as our account unfolds.
- e. His name was changed to Israel (which means Prince of God), and he becomes the father of the 12 tribes of Israel (Genesis 32:28 – when he was striving with the angel of the LORD on his way back to Canaan).
- f. His life is recorded in Genesis 25 where Jacob and Esau are born twins. We read about him throughout Genesis until his death at 147 years of age (Genesis 47:28) in Egypt and was buried in the Cave of Machpelah (Genesis 49:29-33). Much of the latter half of his time centers around Joseph in Egypt (Genesis 37ff).
- g. Jacob is mentioned in the New Testament about 25 times (NKJV).
 - i. Matt. 1:1 (2x), Luke 3:34, Acts 7:8 - lineage
 - ii. Matt. 8:11, 22:32, Mark 12:26, Luke 13:28, 20:37, Acts 3:13 – the trio;
 - iii. Luke 1:33 – Jesus would reign over the "house of Jacob forever"
 - iv. John 4:6 – a plot of land that he gave to Joseph (in Samaria); John 4:12 – Samaritans related to Jacob
 - v. Acts 7:12ff – mentioned by Stephen 7x in his lesson.
 - vi. Romans 9:13 – Jacob I have loved, Esau I have hated.
 - vii. Romans 11:26 – quoting Isaiah 59:20-21 in reference to Israel the nation
 - viii. Hebrews 11:9, 20, 21 – his faith. Mentions his blessing the sons of Joseph and worshipping, leaning on his staff.

II. The life of Jacob (1)

- a. Previously, we noted how Jacob interacted with his father Isaac. In our last lesson we discussed his birth, his competitive relationship with his brother and his deceit that resulted in stealing his brother's blessing.
- b. Gen. 27:41-28:5 finds that Esau hated Jacob and said in his heart that after his father died and the period of mourning passed, he would kill Jacob. Word comes to Rebekah, and she goes to Jacob and then Isaac with her concern. Tells Jacob to flee to Haran where her brother Laban resided and promised to call for him when Esau's anger subsided (we never read about this happening). THEN, she goes to Jacob. NOTICE the reasoning she gives – 27:46 – she is concerned that Jacob might marry a "daughter of Heth" (a Canaanite) and grieves at that thought. (Recall the remembrance of what Abraham had done for Isaac AND the grief that Esau's wives were to them – 26:34-35). Isaac agrees and sends Jacob away and blesses him again (28:1-4).

- c. Gen. 28:10-23 – Jacob’s vow on his way to Bethel.
- i. This is a significant spiritual event in his life. This is likely where we see a change in Jacob’s relationship with God – that moment where we take a serious look at where we are and how much we need God. Consider that his life is a wreck – he is hated by his brother, fleeing for his life with “nothing”.
 - ii. He finds a rock and lays his head on it – indicating he has nothing.
 - iii. He has a dream of a ladder ascending to heaven with angels ascending and descending. Note 28:12-15. The LORD speaks to Jacob and tells him he will return and that the land would be given to him. The promise to Abraham is repeated to him.
 - iv. When he awakes, he names the place, “Bethel” (house of God) because of this dream.
 - v. 28:20-22 - He also marks the stone and makes a vow that if God returned him safely to that place, he would give a tenth of all he had to Him. In this request, he asks for God’s **presence** (if God is with me), **provisions** (gives me bread and clothing), and **protection** (if I return to this place), “then the LORD will be my God.”
 - vi. This is where the beginning of “tithing” is mentioned – he will give a 10th of everything he has to Him. Remember, Jacob here likely has very little. He is starting over.
 - vii. QUESTION: Is this Isaac setting conditions with God for his loyalty, or is it Jacob humbly making a promise WHEN these things happen? Likely, this is more of the latter.
 1. He already knows YHWH (because of Isaac – in his life there is NO mention of worshipping anyone but YHWH),
 2. He has heard and seen God fulfilling promises and blessings in Isaac and possibly his life.
 3. What he says is a RESPONSE to what YHWH had just told him.
 4. IF this is that turning point with Jacob’s faith, he is humbled and making changes.
- d. Genesis 29:1ff – Jacob meets Rachel, and the 20 year “game” begins. NOTE: Jacob is likely in his 70s when he meets Rachel and Leah. We do not think in these terms of age. He meets Rachel at a well and rejoices. He then meets Laban and after a short period of time agrees to work for him for 7 years for Rachel’s hand in marriage. Laban agrees, but at the end of 7 years, he is given Leah instead (who is the deceiver now?). When confronting Laban, after the customary week, he is given Rachel also for another 7 years of work.
- e. Gen. 29:31ff - With Laban’s 2 daughters, Jacob’s family begins. The LORD is in control of who conceives and who does not. Jacob loved Rachel and Leah (his first wife) feels neglected. So Rachel is barren and Leah begins conceiving.
- i. **Leah** gives birth to the first 4 sons – **Reuben** (He has seen my affliction); **Simeon** (He has heard); **Levi** (attracted to), and **Judah** (Praise). NOTE: We have here Jacob’s first born, PLUS the tribe of the priests AND the tribe of the king (and future Messiah).
 - ii. Rachel is jealous and goes to Jacob DEMANDING that he give her a son. Jacob is angry with her knowing she is making demands he has no control over. “Am I in the place of God?” So Rachel gives to Jacob her handmaid, **Bilhah** and supposedly conceives through her. To Bilhah is born a son that is named **Dan** (He judged). Then **Naphtali** is born (wrestlings),
 - iii. Leah, not bearing children now, gives her handmaid, **Zilpah** to Jacob and 2 more sons are born – **Gad** (Fortune) and **Asher** (Happy).
 - iv. There is rivalry between these sisters – so one day Rachel is hungry and asks of Leah some mandrakes her son Reuben had found. They are granted and Leah is promised the night with Jacob. Again Leah conceives and **Issachar** is born (wages). This is followed by **Zebulun** (dwelling). We now have 10 sons born to Jacob. Following this, Dinah is born to Leah.
 - v. Final, God remembered **Rachel** and she conceives and gives birth to **Joseph** (He will add). **Benjamin** will come later, tragically.

- vi. NOTE: We read of these sons in the order they are born, BUT it is likely that there is some overlap in time. Most, if not all of these were likely born during the 7 year period after Jacob was given his 2 wives. Maybe a little into the next 6 years of wages.
- f. Gen 30:25 – After 14 years Jacob agrees to work for Laban (what would be 6 years) for flocks. Terms are made and the flocks are separated, but Jacob is deceitful to enhance his flocks (and so is Laban). But after 6 years, Jacob has prospered greatly, and Laban’s livelihood is depleted.
- g. Jacob decides it is time for him to leave and return home. In a night, he sneaks away and heads back toward Canaan. We also learn that this is the will of God (31:3). We are also told that Rachel took his “household idols”, which had more significance than we think. Some attributed to these idols deed to property and the firstborn blessings, etc.
- h. Laban, after 3 days, returns from shearing his sheep and finds that Jacob and his clan are gone. He proceeds to pursue Jacob, but on the way, the LORD appears to him and warns him in a dream to let Jacob go and do him no harm. Laban catches Jacob after 7 days and accuses him of leaving without letting him say goodbye. He also wants to know who stole his “idols”. Jacob declares Laban’s deceit and practices, but also declares that whoever has his idols would not live. Rachel hid them and got away with it – for the moment. Jacob rebukes Laban for his behavior but note also 31:42 where Jacob acknowledges his blessings were the result of *“the God my father, the God of Abraham and the Fear of Isaac”*. Jacob attributes God with sparing him.
- i. 31:43ff - Finally, as Laban prepares to leave, he makes a covenant with Jacob. The place they were at, an agreement was made that neither one would pass that place to do harm to each other.
 - i. (47-48) The vow is made and Laban called it Jager (witness - Aramaic) and Jacob called it Galeed (Hebrew) – Jacob maintains his heritage.
 - ii. Jacob also names the place Mizpah (Watch) as this request is made, and a memorial is set up. Vs. 52-54 – YHWH is the God before whom they make this vow. Jacob offers a sacrifice to Him on the occasion.
 - iii. (55) After their covenant, Laban bids his family goodbye and returns home.
- j. 32:1ff – Jacob proceeds toward the land of Canaan again. We read that “the angel of God” meets him as he prepares to meet his brother Esau. He divides his family into 4 groups and sends servants to appease Esau with gifts. The strategy – first send servants with gifts, then the sons of his concubines, and finally the sons of Leah and Rachel.
- k. 32:22ff – it is here we read about Jacob wrestling with God.
 - i. Jacob has sent his family away and a “man” wrestles with him until the breaking of day. He refuses to let go until he receives a blessing.
 - ii. The angel touches the socket of his hip out of joint. Jacob continue to wrestle.
 - iii. When completed, Jacob’s name is changed to Israel. Consider vs. 27-28. The angel asks, “What is your name?” Jacob HAS TO admit his name is Jacob (supplanter, deceiver). God changes his name to Israel (Prince of God), because he strove with God and man and prevailed.
 - iv. Jacob is then blessed by Him.
 - v. 32:30-31 - He names the place, Peniel – “The face of God”.
- l. 33:1ff – we find that Jacob and Esau finally meet. Esau’s anger is gone and he has accepted his place before the LORD. Jacob will slowly proceed toward the land of his inheritance where he will settle. Isaac is still alive. In time, Esau, will accept his place and leave while Jacob remains in the promised land.
- m. We will end our journey here. In our next lesson, we will discuss the enmity of his children, and Dinah, his daughter.
- n. 35:1 – We conclude by noting that God appears to Jacob and tells him to return to Bethel. Remember what happened there. God has kept his promise to Israel.

III. Lessons from Jacob

- a. Again, he has some serious character flaws – partiality, deceit, shrewdness in business practices. But with all his flaws, he still trusts in God. And in time he grows closer to God.
- b. Names mean things – whenever a name is assigned, learn and remember its meaning – this will help you remember the person AND occasion/character of that person.
- c. Do we go to God with our needs? That is what prayer is about? 1 John 5:14, James 5:13-16.
- d. God works in His time – Like Abraham and Isaac, these things take place over YEARS! 20 years with Laban, and many years prior to that.
- e. God does not need our help – when Jacob deceived Isaac, did he think it was what God wanted? Could God have fulfilled His desire in some other, noble way?
- f. Do we find ourselves “wrestling with God”? Much could be said, but WHY would we “wrestle” with Him? Is it in anger or bitterness because we do not like what He tells us? OR is it a fervent cry for Him TO HELP us? Determination that you are not going to quit until He blesses you as you need.
- g. Can you call yourself “Bethel”? Genesis 28:19 – Bethel means “House of God” indicating that is where God is to be present. God is dwell in us and make His home within us - John 14:23, Galatians 2:20, etc.
- h. Are we willing to take God seriously? The “anchor points” in Jacob’s life are as he flees to Laban and later wrestles with the angel (God). Until we take God seriously, we will NOT make the needed changes in our lives.
- i. Finally, there is something to be said about family. Husbands need to take their role with their wives seriously. You need to love your wife in a way that she KNOWS she is loved. Consider the family problems Jacob has to deal with (we won’t even discuss his polygamy). Why did Leah feel unloved? Why did Rachel act like she did? Etc. We need to obey God and husbands need to step up and be the head God expects them to be (Ephesians 5:25-29). There is also something to say about fathers protecting their children, but we will address that in our next lesson.

In conclusion, we can learn much the patriarchs. We see real people with real problems and just trying to live their lives – hopefully with a desire to please God. We see that as we look at our lives and see where we are at, THAT IS THE PLACE, where we need to start. What have you learned when you think about Jacob? Think about it!