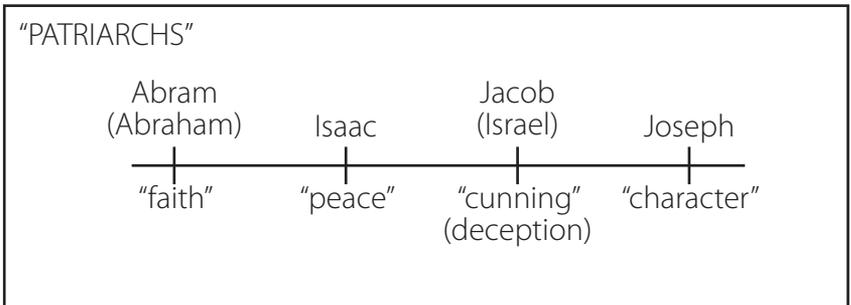


# SESSION 4

## (JACOB)

### I. PRAYER

### II. PANORAMA TIMELINE: MOVEMENT 2



### III. "TOLEDOT" OUTLINE: GENESIS

1. Creation (1:1-2:3)
2. Toledot of the Heavens and the Earth (2:4-4:26)
3. Toledot of Adam (5:1-6:8)
4. Toledot of Noah (6:9-9:29)
5. Toledot of Shem, Ham, and Japheth (10:1-11:9)
6. Toledot of Shem (11:10-26)
7. Toledot of Terah (11:27-25:11)
8. Toledot of Ishmael (25:12-18)
9. Toledot of Isaac (25:19-35:29)
10. Toledot of Esau, the father of Edom (twice) (36:1-8; 36:9-37:1)
11. Toledot of Jacob (37:2-50:26)

IV. PATRIARCHS: Horizontal Chart

Abraham		Isaac		Jacob		Joseph	
12	25	25	26	27	36	37	50

V. LIFE OF JACOB: OVERVIEW (Genesis 27-36)

A. Horizontal Chart

LIFE OF JACOB									
Theft of Blessing		Flight & Sojourn		Flight from Laban		Reunion: Esau		Settlement	
Isaac & Esau vs. Rebekah & Jacob		Dream: Bethel Arrival		Departure		Prayer		At Shechem	
-----						Wrestling		At Bethel	
Esau vs. Jacob		Marriages (Children)		Pursuit		Meeting		Death: Rachel Sons (12)	
27	28	28	30	31		32	33	33	35
Near Beersheba		To Paddam-Aram (Haran)		From Paddam-Aram to Gilead		Trans-Jordan Peniel to Shechem		Shechem to Bethel	

## B. Chiastic (Mirror) Structure

Following the theft of the blessing (27:1 – 28:9), Jacob’s life can be seen as follows:

A Jacob Flees Esau (27-28)

B Angels of God Meet Jacob  
at Bethel (28)

C Jacob (an Exile) in Paddam-Aram (29-31)

B<sup>1</sup> Angels of God Meet Jacob  
at Mahanaim (32)

A<sup>1</sup> Jacob Reconciles to Esau (32-33)

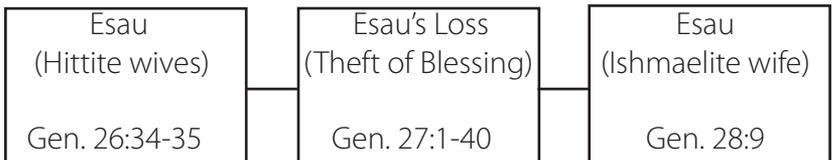
(Taken from Waltke, Genesis, p. 386)

## VI. LIFE OF JACOB: EXPOSITION

### A. Theft of Blessing (Gen. 27:1–28:9)

#### 1. Introduction

- a. This event continues the strife between twin brothers. Esau had “despised” and sold his birthright (first-born son privilege) to his brother (25:29-34).
- b. Esau, though the first-born, consistently demonstrates his lack of regard for the covenantal promises (e.g. “sells” his birthright because of hunger). Jacob (and his mother, Rebekah) covet the promise, though seek to gain it by dubious means.
- c. The story of the stolen blessing is bracketed by Esau’s separate procurement of wives. It forms an “inclusio” (bookend) to frame the story.



## 2. Exposition

Genesis 27:1-4

*“When Isaac was old and his eyes were so weak that he could no longer see, he called for Esau his older son and said to him, ‘My son.’ ‘Here I am,’ he answered. <sup>2</sup> Isaac said, ‘I am now an old man and don’t know the day of my death. <sup>3</sup> Now then, get your equipment—your quiver and bow—and go out to the open country to hunt some wild game for me. <sup>4</sup> Prepare me the kind of tasty food I like and bring it to me to eat, so that I may give you my blessing before I die.”*

- a. Isaac is 100 years old (cf. 25:26 and 26:34). He is blind and uncertain how long he will live (though, in fact he lives to be 180 – 35:28). His request is for “tasty food” before the formal pronouncement of blessing. Isaac’s favored son, Esau, was also driven by his appetites (sold his birthright).
- b. The blindness of Isaac (common to older age) is matched by his spiritual blindness. The older was to serve the younger by prophetic declaration. Isaac attempts to circumvent by blessing the older but his blindness will contribute to blessing the younger.
- c. Isaac and Esau apparently believe that the birthright and the blessing are separate. That is not the conclusion of the inspired New Testament writer.

Hebrews 12:16-17

*“See that no one is sexually immoral, or is godless like Esau, who for a single meal sold his inheritance rights as the oldest son. <sup>17</sup> Afterward, as you know, when he wanted to inherit this blessing, he was rejected. Even though he sought the blessing with tears, he could not change what he had done.”*

Genesis 27:5

***“Now Rebekah was listening as Isaac spoke to his son Esau. When Esau left for the open country to hunt game and bring it back...”***

- a. “She (Rebekah) is the chief actor. Her spiritual values are sound (see 25:23, 29-34; 26:35; 27:46), but her method is deplorable” (Waltke, Genesis, 377).
  - b. This is a dysfunctional family. Rebekah urges her son, Jacob, to deceive his father. She will prepare the “tasty food” (27:6-9), “Then take it to your father to eat, so that he may give you his blessing before he dies” (27:10).
- (1) Blessings in the patriarchal period were given at significant departures (cf. 24:60) or at imminent death. The blessing was binding, it could not be altered, and it had the sanction/approval of the Lord. This is seen in the forthright statement of Hebrews 11:20:

***“By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau in regard to their futures.”***

After the giving of the Mosaic Law, priests mediated the blessings to the people (cf. Num. 6:22-27).

- (2) Rebekah’s failure is in the deception. The promise of birthright/blessing had been announced to her (25:22-23). She should have trusted God to act in a timely manner. Instead, she acts in a sinful way.

Genesis 27:11-13

***“Jacob said to Rebekah his mother, ‘But my brother Esau is a hairy man while I have smooth skin.<sup>12</sup> What if my father touches me? I would appear to be tricking him and would bring down a curse on myself rather than a blessing.’<sup>13</sup> His mother said to him, ‘My son, let the curse fall on me. Just do what I say; go and get them for me.’”***

- a. Jacob is a realist. If this ruse does not work, he will not be blessed, but rather cursed by his father. The issue of smooth skin (Jacob) and hairy (Esau) is problematic.
- b. Rebekah counters that she is willing to take the curse. Jacob must act quickly.

(1) Rebekah prepared the “tasty food” (27:14).

(2) Rebekah dressed Jacob in Esau’s clothes; she covers his smooth skin with goat’s hair. Jacob smells and feels like his brother.

- c. Jacob takes the food to his father (27:18-21).

Genesis 27:21

***“Then Isaac said to Jacob, ‘Come near so I can touch you, my son, to know whether you really are my son Esau or not.’”***

- a. Blind Isaac desires to verify the identity of supposed Esau.
- b. “The voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau” (27:22).

(1) Isaac asks Jacob, “Are you really my son Esau?” (27:24).

(2) After Jacob lies and purports to be Esau, Isaac desires to eat, then gives his blessing.

Genesis 27:27-29

*“So he went to him and kissed him. When Isaac caught the smell of his clothes, he blessed him and said, ‘Ah, the smell of my son is like the smell of a field that the Lord has blessed.’<sup>28</sup> May God give you heaven’s dew and earth’s richness—an abundance of grain and new wine.<sup>29</sup> May nations serve you and peoples bow down to you. Be lord over your brothers, and may the sons of your mother bow down to you. May those who curse you be cursed and those who bless you be blessed.”*

- a. This blessing takes on the characteristic of an oracle. It will be binding and irrevocable.
- b. This blessing echoes Abrahamic Covenant aspects:
  - (1) Land (“field,” “earth’s richness,” “abundance”)
  - (2) Descendants (“nations,” “peoples,” “brothers”)
  - (3) Blessing (“those who bless you will be blessed” – cf. Gen. 12:3).
- c. The renewal and reaffirmation of covenantal promises will follow the lineage of Jacob.

Genesis 27:30

*“After Isaac finished blessing him, and Jacob had scarcely left his father’s presence, his brother Esau came in from hunting.”*

- a. Esau returns and brings food, only to discover that an elaborate deception has taken place (27:32-35).
- b. Isaac realizes that Esau’s brother has taken the blessing that Isaac had hoped to bestow on Esau.

- c. Esau's request to also be blessed will be given, but it is not the blessing Isaac intended. Esau laments,

Genesis 27:36

*"Esau said, 'Isn't he rightly named Jacob? This is the second time he has taken advantage of me: He took my birthright, and now he's taken my blessing!' Then he asked, 'Haven't you reserved any blessing for me?'"*

Genesis 27:39-40

*"His father Isaac answered him, 'Your dwelling will be away from the earth's richness, away from the dew of heaven above.<sup>40</sup> You will live by the sword and you will serve your brother. But when you grow restless, you will throw his yoke from off your neck.'"*

- a. Esau's dwelling place will be desolate and stark.
- b. Esau's descendants will be warlike. They "would subsist by hunting people, just as Esau had subsisted by hunting game" (Constable, 194).

Genesis 27:41

*"Esau held a grudge against Jacob because of the blessing his father had given him. He said to himself, 'The days of mourning for my father are near; then I will kill my brother Jacob.'"*

- a. Esau's planned revenge will coincide with Isaac's soon-to-be, expected death.
- b. Rebekah urges Jacob to flee to Rebekah's family until the anger of Esau subsides (27:42-45).

(1) Genesis 27:46

*“Then Rebekah said to Isaac, ‘I’m disgusted with living because of these Hittite women. If Jacob takes a wife from among the women of this land, from Hittite women like these, my life will not be worth living.’”*

(2) Isaac blesses Jacob, commands him to marry a Canaanite woman, and sends him north to the family of Rebekah (Bethuel, her father; Laban, her brother) (28:1-2).

Genesis 28:3-4

*“May God Almighty bless you and make you fruitful and increase your numbers until you become a community of peoples. <sup>4</sup> May he give you and your descendants the blessing given to Abraham, so that you may take possession of the land where you now reside as a foreigner, the land God gave to Abraham.”*

- a. Note the Abrahamic Covenant implications: blessings, descendants, land.
- b. Note the response of Esau: marry Ishmaelite wives. This completes the “inclusio” (see earlier chart, p. 87). Esau has despised his birthright, lost his preferred blessing, married foreign women, married again an Abrahamic descendant by Ishmael. He is “a marginalized family member who deeply wanted to belong” (Waltke quoting Roop, Genesis, 383). He is the man of flesh who has been the rejected son who marries into the family of the discarded Ishmael.

B. Flight and Sojourn (Gen. 28:10 – 30:24)

1. Dream at Bethel (28:10-22)

Genesis 28:10-15

*“Jacob left Beersheba and set out for Harran. <sup>11</sup> When he reached a certain place, he stopped for the night because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones there, he put it under his head and lay down to sleep.*

*<sup>12</sup> He had a dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.*

*<sup>13</sup> There above it stood the Lord, and he said: ‘I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying. <sup>14</sup> Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring. <sup>15</sup> I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.’”*

- a. This event marks God’s first revelation to Jacob. It is also the first of two significant, life-changing encounters which occur at night (Bethel in Gen. 28; Peniel in Gen. 32). God takes the initiative. There is no scheming by Jacob.
- b. Haran lies far north of Beersheba in the land of Paddam-Aram (Northwest Mesopotamia). Bethel is about 45 miles due north of Beersheba. In effect Jacob is retracing back to Haran the very path that his grandfather, Abraham, followed when leaving Ur to journey to Haran and then to Bethel.

- c. "Stairway" (or ladder, but better, stairs) connects the abode of God (heaven) with the abode of man (earth). Ross (quoted by Matthews, 442) sees "how a place became a shrine, a stone became an altar, and a fugitive became a pilgrim – God in His grace revealed Himself to Jacob in that place." The stairway speaks of divine mediation and presence.

New Testament Insight:

John 1:51

*"He then added, 'Very truly I tell you, you will see "heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on" the Son of Man.'"*

John 14:6

*"Jesus answered, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.'"*

I Timothy 2:5

*"For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus,"*

- d. God reveals Himself as "the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac" (28:13). Following the personal identification, the aspects of the Abrahamic Covenant are reaffirmed to Jacob.

(1) "Land" (13)

(2) "Descendants" (14)

(3) "Blessed" or Blessing (14)

- e. God's promise to Jacob (28:15) included these elements:
- (1) "I am with you"..... God's presence
  - (2) "I will watch over you" ..... God's protection
  - (3) "I will bring you back to this land" ... God's promise
  - (4) "I will not leave you" ..... God's faithfulness

Genesis 28:16-17

***"When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought, 'Surely the Lord is in this place, and I was not aware of it.'<sup>17</sup> He was afraid and said, 'How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven.'"***

- a. This is the beginning of the turning point in Jacob's life. His faith is weak, but the dream awakened in him a personal awareness of God's guidance. His fear may have been occasioned by a sense of sin or guilt (conduct of previous deception).
- b. Bethel means "house" (Hb. Beth) of "God" (Hb. El); this is a seemingly insignificant place that is revealed as the place where God is. "Gate of heaven" speaks again of the dream's meaning; it assures Jacob of God's presence and nearness.

Insight:

Babylon was understood by the Semitic people as meaning "gate of God." Here, Jacob names this significant place, Bethel, or "house of God." This may be an intentional counterpoint.

- c. If God would fulfill His promise, Jacob vowed to return and (1) the Lord will be his God, (2) the stone/pillar will be the beginning of a sanctuary/shrine, (3) he will give the Lord one tenth of the blessings that God might give him.

Insight:

The preferred vows “should not be construed as cheap bargaining but rather as a vow of gratitude.”

(Vos, Genesis, 110)

## 2. Arrival at Paddam-Aram (29:1-14a)

Genesis 29:1

***“Then Jacob continued on his journey and came to the land of the eastern peoples.”***

Jacob arrives in an unfamiliar place; the narrator simply calls it “the land of the eastern peoples.” The story line builds to a sense of uncertainty. What will happen next?

### a. Jacob with the shepherds (1-8)

Jacob spies a well with sheep nearby. The scene reminds the reader of a similar setting when Abraham’s servant sought a wife from Abraham’s relatives (Gen. 24).

Jacob inquires and discovers the shepherds are from Haran (29:4) and, indeed, know Laban. They point out that Laban’s daughter, Rachel, was just then arriving (29:6). This is a providential “defining moment.”

b. Jacob with Rachel (9-12)

Genesis 29:10-11

***“When Jacob saw Rachel daughter of his uncle Laban, and Laban’s sheep, he went over and rolled the stone away from the mouth of the well and watered his uncle’s sheep. <sup>11</sup> Then Jacob kissed Rachel and began to weep aloud.”***

- (1) Jacob is overcome with emotion. His long journey of some 400 miles has successfully come to an end. He has reached his relatives of the Haran region.
- (2) Jacob rolls the large stone away, one of such size that it normally took several to do so (29:3,8). Jewish tradition accords Jacob the status of giant, a man of unusual strength. After watering the sheep of his uncle, he kisses Rachel, informs her of his identity, and weeps at his good fortune.
- (3) “So she ran and told her father” (29:12).

c. Jacob with Laban (13-14a)

Genesis 29:13-14a

***“As soon as Laban heard the news about Jacob, his sister’s son, he hurried to meet him. He embraced him and kissed him and brought him to his home, and there Jacob told him all these things. <sup>14</sup> Then Laban said to him, ‘You are my own flesh and blood.’”***

- (1) Laban’s kiss was customary between family members; as the story continues, this initial kiss will not prepare Jacob for the future mistreatment by his uncle. It is as empty as Jacob’s kiss of deception for his father (27:27).

- (2) What is Laban thinking? Could it be that such a hearty welcome (hurried, embraced, kissed, brought home) was conditioned upon the memory of the last distant visitor (Abraham's servant) who brought lavish gifts for Rebekah?
- (3) Jacob recounted "all these things," probably a reference to his encounter at Bethel. This would frame the meeting as a part of God's guidance (even as Abraham's servant had also suggested).
- (4) Laban's response was a recognition of Jacob as his own kinsman. But this relationship will not prevent Laban from taking advantage of Jacob (as the unfolding story will clearly show).

### 3. Marriages to Leah and Rachel (29:14b-30)

#### a. Agreement with Laban (14b-20)

Genesis 29:14b-18

*"After Jacob had stayed with him for a whole month, <sup>15</sup> Laban said to him, 'Just because you are a relative of mine, should you work for me for nothing? Tell me what your wages should be.' <sup>16</sup> Now Laban had two daughters; the name of the older was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel. <sup>17</sup> Leah had weak eyes, but Rachel had a lovely figure and was beautiful. <sup>18</sup> Jacob was in love with Rachel and said, 'I'll work for you seven years in return for your younger daughter Rachel.'"*

- (1) After a month, Laban broaches the question of payment for Jacob's work in the family enterprise. As will be demonstrated later in the story, Laban intends to exploit the situation. Jacob's response was seven years of labor for Laban in return for marriage to the younger daughter, Rachel.

- (2) The older sister, Leah, is described as having “weak eyes” (17). This may have been an allusion to the fact that her eyes were dull and lacking in luster, not bright-eyed so treasured by ancient near-eastern culture. Or, as some suggest, she had poor vision. Rachel, on the other hand, was pictured as “lovely in form and beautiful.” On the surface there is no comparison. Not surprising, Jacob suggests the seven years of labor for Rachel.
- (3) Laban agrees to the bargain (in public and with words); Jacob faithfully served seven years for beautiful Rachel. The text is silent as to Rachel or Leah’s interest in Jacob. Later, the sisters will vent their emotions toward their father (31:14-16), but nothing else is recorded. Jacob has bargained in good faith. He, “the deceiver” of father and brother, may have met his match in his Uncle Laban.

b. Deception by Laban (21-30)

Genesis 29:21-22

***“Then Jacob said to Laban, ‘Give me my wife. My time is completed, and I want to make love to her.’  
22 So Laban brought together all the people of the place and gave a feast.”***

- (1) “Wife” speaks of the binding betrothal (cf. Deut. 22:23-24; Matt 1:18-19).
- (2) “Feast” would have been a part of the marriage celebration, though the word implies a drinking feast. This may have contributed to Jacob’s mistaking of Leah for Rachel. Add the custom of the bride being veiled and the darkness of the tent and it is plausible that the deceptive plan worked without Jacob knowing.

- (3) The deception and complications of this event are captured in chiasmic structure (Ross, 498).

- |                |  |
|----------------|--|
| A              | Jacob's payment for his wife (20)  |
| B              | Consummation of marriage to Leah<br>by deception (21-24)                       |
| C              | Jacob's accusation against Laban (25)  |
| C <sup>1</sup> | Laban's defense to Jacob (26)  |
| B <sup>1</sup> | Consummation of the marriage to Rachel<br>by negotiation (27-30 <sup>a</sup> ) |
| A <sup>1</sup> | Jacob's payment for his wife (30b)   |

Genesis 29:30

***“Jacob made love to Rachel also, and his love for Rachel was greater than his love for Leah. And he worked for Laban another seven years.”***

- (1) Jacob immediately receives Rachel for his wife though he must now labor seven more years for Laban.
- (2) Jacob “loved Rachel more than Leah.” This fact will cause much tension in the household (29:31, “Leah not loved” and 30:1, the jealousy of Rachel over Leah’s children).
- (3) Laban has shamelessly used his older daughter, intentionally “hidden” the custom of marrying the older first, and deceived Jacob at every turn. Laban has “blinded” Jacob to get what he wants; Jacob’s mother “blinded” Isaac (by deception) to get what she wanted. This lengthy sojourn among his relatives (and particularly the deceptive Laban) will begin the process of slowly strengthening Jacob’s faith (keeping his word, working hard, no immediate retaliation).

- (4) Laban, however, is pictured as “cunning, deceptive, heartless, greedy and ambitious”.  
(Waltke, Genesis, 404)

Galatians 6:7

***“Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows.”***

4. Children of Jacob (29:31-30:24)

The story of the married life of Jacob with two wives is complicated by the birth of children to Leah, the barrenness of Rachel and the giving of handmaidens to produce more children. Finally, even Rachel bears a son.

Genesis 30:22-24

***“Then God remembered Rachel; he listened to her and enabled her to conceive.”<sup>23</sup> She became pregnant and gave birth to a son and said, ‘God has taken away my disgrace.’<sup>24</sup> She named him Joseph, and said, ‘May the Lord add to me another son.’”***

- a. Rachel is a daughter of the covenant, though she will not bear the son through whom the “seed of the woman” covenantal promise will come.
- b. Joseph is her only son and will be treated in a special way (37:3-4). Her prayer for another son will be granted, though it will cost her life (35:16-18).

Insight:

“God chose the despised mother, Leah, and exalted her to be the first mother. The kingly tribe of Judah and the priestly tribe of Levi trace back to her, in spite of Jacob’s love for Rachel and her son Joseph.”

(Ross, “Genesis” (BKC), 77)

- c. Note the following listing of sons (and one daughter) that will eventually be born to Jacob.

Twelve Tribes (Sons) of Israel			
Leah	Bilhah	Zilpah	Rachel
#1 Reuben			
#2 Simeon			
#3 Levi			
#4 Judah			
	#5 Dan		
	#6 Naphtali		
		#7 Gad	
		#8 Asher	
#9 Issachar			
#10 Zebulon (Dinah)			
			#11 Joseph
			#12 Benjamin

- d. The unfolding story will show the bypassing of Leah's first three sons as the "seed of the woman" fulfillment (Gen. 3:15). Judah will eventually take that role.

C. Flight from Laban (30:25-31:55)

1. The departure from Laban (30:25-31:21)

- a. Jacob's intention to leave (30:25-28)

Genesis 30:25-28

*"After Rachel gave birth to Joseph, Jacob said to Laban, 'Send me on my way so I can go back to my own homeland.<sup>26</sup> Give me my wives and children, for whom I have served you, and I will be on my way. You know how much work I've done for you."<sup>27</sup> But Laban said to him, 'If I have found favor in your eyes, please stay. I have learned by divination that the Lord has blessed me because of you.'<sup>28</sup> He added, 'Name your wages, and I will pay them.'"*

- (1) The previous narrative has demonstrated how God had provided “descendants” per Abraham’s Covenant promise. This part of the story will show how Jacob will be “blessed” (made wealthy).
- (2) Jacob is ready to return to his true home. (Later to his wives he will report on a dream he had – 31:10-13.) He has labored 14 years for his wives; he will labor 6 more for his wealth (flocks), a total of 20 years in Paddam-Aram (31:38). He still requires the consent of the patriarch to leave the household.
- (3) Deceptive Laban is not prepared to send Jacob and his clan away with the expected, generous supply of gifts. Jacob is nothing more than an indentured servant in the eyes of Laban.

Deuteronomy 15:12-14

***“If any of your people—Hebrew men or women—sell themselves to you and serve you six years, in the seventh year you must let them go free. <sup>13</sup> And when you release them, do not send them away empty-handed. <sup>14</sup> Supply them liberally from your flock, your threshing floor and your winepress. Give to them as the Lord your God has blessed you.”***

Laban counters by inviting Jacob to name his wages (cf. 29:15 where Laban spoke the same at the beginning of their relationship—one marred by deceit).

b. Jacob's agreement to stay (30:29-43)

Genesis 30:29-30

*"Jacob said to him, 'You know how I have worked for you and how your livestock has fared under my care.<sup>30</sup> The little you had before I came has increased greatly, and the Lord has blessed you wherever I have been. But now, when may I do something for my own household?'"*

- (1) Jacob acknowledges and declares to Laban that the Lord is the one who has brought blessing to Laban. Yet, while Laban prospers, Jacob has nothing of his own.
- (2) Two men, both practitioners of deception, began to bargain. Jacob has a dream (31:10-13) to guide him. Laban has his devious bargaining. Jacob asks for the abnormally colored sheep, normally but a small percentage of the expected coloration of the flock. Greedy Laban readily agrees. **"Whoever digs a hole and scoops it out falls into the pit they have made." (Ps. 7:15).**
- (3) God sovereignly blesses Jacob. His personal schemes to increase streaked or spotted sheep are not the cause of the phenomenon. His dream (31:10-12) reinforced God's hand of protection and blessing upon him.

c. Jacob's resolve to leave (31:1-21)

- (1) Spurred on by Laban's sons (1-3)

Genesis 31:1-3

*"Jacob heard that Laban's sons were saying, 'Jacob has taken everything our father owned and has gained all this wealth from what belonged to our father.'<sup>2</sup> And Jacob noticed that Laban's attitude toward him was not what it had been.<sup>3</sup> Then the Lord said to Jacob, 'Go back to the land of your fathers and to your relatives, and I will be with you.'"*

(2) Spurred on by explanations to his wives (4-13)

(3) Spurred on by his wives' support (14-21)

Genesis 31:14-16

*"Then Rachel and Leah replied, 'Do we still have any share in the inheritance of our father's estate?'<sup>15</sup> Does he not regard us as foreigners? Not only has he sold us, but he has used up what was paid for us.<sup>16</sup> Surely all the wealth that God took away from our father belongs to us and our children. So do whatever God has told you.'"*

- (a) Rachel and Leah are obviously angry with their father's treatment; as he has cheated Jacob, he in effect has cheated them.
- (b) Rachel and Leah acknowledge God's hand in the decision to leave.
- (c) Rachel steals her father's "household gods" (31:19), supposedly useful for protection and blessing. Her motive in doing so is uncertain: spite or personal gain or evidence of legitimate heirship? The text is unclear.

## 2. The pursuit of Laban (31:22-55)

Genesis 31:22-24

***“On the third day Laban was told that Jacob had fled.<sup>23</sup> Taking his relatives with him, he pursued Jacob for seven days and caught up with him in the hill country of Gilead.<sup>24</sup> Then God came to Laban the Aramean in a dream at night and said to him, ‘Be careful not to say anything to Jacob, either good or bad.’”***

- (1) Jacob now flees “to” the very place twenty years earlier he fled “from.”
- (2) Laban pursued for seven days bringing his “relatives,” that is the clan prepared for military-style conflict. Yet God speaks to him in a dream to curtail impulsive actions (or words).
- (3) When Laban’s party catches up to Jacob’s, Laban twice asks “Why did you deceive me so?” (31:25-30). Portraying himself as the offended party, he does not realize (or choose to acknowledge) that he has consistently deceived or cheated Jacob, that his daughters are not hostages but supportive of the flight and that Jacob is well within his moral right to leave.
- (4) Laban also poses the question of his “stolen gods.” The text affirms Jacob’s lack of knowledge that Rachel had stolen the gods (31:30-32). After a fruitless search, Jacob responds.

Genesis 31:36-37

*“Jacob was angry and took Laban to task. ‘What is my crime?’ he asked Laban. ‘How have I wronged you that you hunt me down?’<sup>37</sup> Now that you have searched through all my goods, what have you found that belongs to your household? Put it here in front of your relatives and mine, and let them judge between the two of us.”*

- (a) Twenty years of repressed frustration breaks forth in angry rebuttal (cf. 31:38-42).
  - (b) Jacob demands the proof of his thievery; his reputation is at stake, both in Haran and in the tense encounter.
- (5) Laban, having no proof of Jacob’s guilt in anything, proposes a parity covenant (31:43-45).
- (a) Laban in effect concedes that he has lost his lawsuit-challenge.
  - (b) A pillar will mark the ratification of the agreement (31:45-47).
  - (c) This covenant is not an amicable agreement among friends but rather the reluctant agreement among antagonists with warnings implied (31:48-55).

Genesis 31:55

*“Early the next morning Laban kissed his grandchildren and his daughters and blessed them. Then he left and returned home.”*

D. Reunion with Esau (32:1-33:17)

An individual like Jacob can try to run from his past, but often a day of reckoning must come. Jacob needs two things:

- (1) An assurance of God's presence and favor with him (present time forward);
- (2) An ability to face the uncertainty of a dreaded reunion with an angered brother (past grievances). Both will require brokenness.

Genesis 32:1-2

*"Jacob also went on his way, and the angels of God met him. <sup>2</sup> When Jacob saw them, he said, 'This is the camp of God!' So he named that place Mahanaim."*

- This is the second of three encounters that Jacob has with angels (Bethel – 28:19; Mahanaim – 32:2; Peniel – 32:30). The first prepares him to meet Laban; the second prepares him to meet Esau. Their presence lends a protective note to an uncertain future. But their presence is not benign. Jacob must have a life-change experience; his faith in God must be based not simply upon heredity, but personal experiential faith.
- "Mahanaim" means two camps. "The narrator (author) employs the number two throughout the scene: two camps, two families, two meetings—one with God and Esau—and two brothers" (Waltke, Genesis, 441).

## 1. Prayer (32:3-21)

Genesis 32:3-5

*“Jacob sent messengers ahead of him to his brother Esau in the land of Seir, the country of Edom. <sup>4</sup> He instructed them: ‘This is what you are to say to my lord Esau: ‘Your servant Jacob says, I have been staying with Laban and have remained there till now. <sup>5</sup> I have cattle and donkeys, sheep and goats, male and female servants. Now I am sending this message to my lord, that I may find favor in your eyes.’”*

- a. Prudently Jacob sends messengers to his brother, Esau, in the land of Seir (Esau has either displaced or is close to displacing the former inhabitants; the fact indicates a measure of his military strength).
- b. In the carefully worded message, Jacob refers to himself as “your servant” and addresses his brother as “master.” The arrogance of Jacob’s past must be righted. Jacob’s future must lie in God’s hand, not in Esau’s forfeited birthright or blessing.

Genesis 32:6

*“When the messengers returned to Jacob, they said, ‘We went to your brother Esau, and now he is coming to meet you, and four hundred men are with him.’”*

- a. Will this reunion be for war or for a royal reception? Jacob does not appear to know.
- b. Jacob’s emotional response is “great fear and distress.” He divides his company into two groups, clearly showing that he was preparing for a less than friendly reunion. Jacob has no fighting men; all he has is the protection of God.

Psalm 34:7

*“The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and he delivers them.”*

Genesis 32:9a

*“Then Jacob prayed...”*

- a. This is Jacob’s first recorded prayer (not to be confused with his vow of 28:20-22).
- b. This prayer is evidence of the growing faith of the patriarch. Only a right relationship with God can prepare him to restore a right relationship with his brother.
- c. The prayer resembles the later “penitential” prayers in the Book of Psalms. It provides a guide for such praying; note the chart (taken from Cupp, “Panorama,” 40).

JACOB’S MODEL PRAYER	
Text: Genesis 32	
Context: Esau’s coming with 400 men to meet Jacob/his clan (years after Jacob has deceived/stolen Esau’s birthright)	
Components	Scripture
1. Who God Is	1. O God of my father Abraham... Isaac, O Lord who said to me...” (32:9)
2. Who I Am	2. “I am unworthy” (32:10)
3. What I Need	3. “Save me...” (32:11)
4. What I Feel	4. “...for I am afraid he will come and attack me... mothers with their children...” (32:11)
5. What You Said	5. “...I will surely make you prosper...” (32:12)

- d. After the prayer Jacob spent the night. The next day he sent gifts in more than three parties (32:19) to his brother. This appears to be a diplomatic way of softening what may be a hard-hearted, brother-adversary.

Genesis 32:19-21

*"He also instructed the second, the third and all the others who followed the herds: 'You are to say the same thing to Esau when you meet him.'<sup>20</sup> And be sure to say, 'Your servant Jacob is coming behind us.' For he thought, 'I will pacify him with these gifts I am sending on ahead; later, when I see him, perhaps he will receive me.'<sup>21</sup> So Jacob's gifts went on ahead of him, but he himself spent the night in the camp."*

2. Wrestling (32:22-32)

Genesis 32:22-24

*"That night Jacob got up and took his two wives, his two female servants and his eleven sons and crossed the ford of the Jabbok.<sup>23</sup> After he had sent them across the stream, he sent over all his possessions.<sup>24</sup> So Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him till daybreak."*

- a. Jacob stays at the rear with his immediate family; after sending them across the Jabbok stream with all his possessions, the Biblical text notes, "So Jacob was left alone." This aloneness is significant.

Insight:

"Jacob must encounter God alone, without possessions or protection."

(Waltke, 445)

- b. In this night-time testing, Jacob has nothing to protect him, no one to protect him. For the complete life-change to occur, Jacob must face “the man” alone (pre-incarnate Christ? cf. Hos. 12:4-5).

Insight:

“Though the wrestling was physical, it symbolized a spiritual struggle between Jacob and God to determine whether Jacob, in self-will and self-reliance and guile, was able to manage his own affairs or whether he was to bow completely to God’s management of his life.”

(Vos, Genesis, 125).

- c. By touching the hip socket the Divine Wrestler rendered Jacob incapable of physical wrestling or pivoting strength (32:25). Defeated physically, Jacob continues to “wrestle in prayer” pleading for God to bless him (prevailing prayer).
- d. Jacob (“deceiver”) now becomes Israel (“striver” or “prevailer”). It marks a change in the man, not full or complete, but a new direction by a new man.

Genesis 32:30-31

*“So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, ‘It is because I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared.’<sup>31</sup> The sun rose above him as he passed Peniel, and he was limping because of his hip.”*

3. Meeting (with Esau) (33:1-17)

Genesis 33:1-3

*“Jacob looked up and there was Esau, coming with his four hundred men; so he divided the children among Leah, Rachel and the two female servants.<sup>2</sup> He put the female servants and their children in front, Leah and her children next, and Rachel and Joseph in the rear.<sup>3</sup> He himself went on ahead and bowed down to the ground seven times as he approached his brother.”*

- a. Note the arrangement of wives and maidservants. Jacob holds the most beloved closest to him.
- b. Jacob's prostration shows the submissiveness of an inferior before a superior. It was a customary royal symbol of a vassal before his king or patron.

Genesis 33:4

***"But Esau ran to meet Jacob and embraced him; he threw his arms around his neck and kissed him. And they wept."***

- a. Esau "ran;" at best, Jacob limped to meet his brother.
- b. The verbs are telling: "ran"... "embraced"... "threw"... "kissed"... "wept." This sequence speaks of deep, filial solidarity. Jacob is a new man; Esau's heart of revenge has also melted; his forgiveness of his brother is complete.
- c. Esau appears reluctant to accept his brother's gifts (33:9) but by the reception of the extravagant gifts, it would indicate Esau's satisfaction that the previous wrongs had been covered and accepted. The 400 men of Esau along with Jacob's family attested to the reconciliation.
- d. Esau offers to travel slowly back to Seir (the home of Esau) but Jacob politely declines (33:12-14). While he does not say so directly, Jacob plans to settle elsewhere (first, Succoth, then later to Shechem). This may be timid caution or a recognition that together the land could not sustain them both (cf. 36:6-7). Whatever the unstated reasons may have been, Jacob is soon to cross the Jordan to the Promised Land.

## E. Settlement in the Land (33:18-35:29)

### 1. First settlement (33:18-20)

Genesis 33:18

***“After Jacob came from Paddan Aram, he arrived safely at the city of Shechem in Canaan and camped within sight of the city.”***

- a. Jacob has moved from Paddam-Aram (Northwest Asia Minor) to Succoth (briefly near the Jabbok River) to Shechem where he purchases land (permanency).
- b. Shechem places Jacob in the footsteps of his grandfather, Abraham. He is in the land promised by Abrahamic Covenant stipulations. Here also, though unstated, he will build a well that will be functional in the days of Jesus (cf. Jn. 4:5-6).
- c. Note also that Jacob sets “up an altar” for sacrifice and as a memorial. He calls it El Elohe Israel (“God, the God of Israel”).

### 2. Interlude: Dinah’s tragedy (34:1-3)

Jacob’s return should have led him to Bethel (cf. 28:20-22) but the commercial lure of Shechem as a trading city may have slowed his earlier resolve.

After ten years or so of life in Shechem, the story takes a sordid, horrifying turn. Dinah, the daughter of Jacob by Leah, was raped (“violated”) by a prince of the Hivites who further wanted to marry her (34:1-4). Jacob did not respond immediately; his passivity and lack of emotion contrasts sharply with Dinah’s brothers (34:5, 7).

Shechem (the rapist) demands that his father (Hamor) arrange the marriage. The brothers of Dinah deceitfully

resist by noting that in order to intermarry, the men of the city would need to be circumcised (34:13-17). Agreeing to do so led to the murder and plunder of the city as revenge enacted by the brothers (Simeon and Levi) (34:24-25).

Jacob's emotional outburst was not about his daughter's defilement (still being held in the house of Hamor and in Shechem) but over possible retaliation or loss of prestige among neighboring peoples (34:30). The brothers have avenged a moral outrage with one of their own. Their consequence for such rash action will be felt in Jacob's final blessings on his sons (49:5-7).

### 3. Second settlement (35:1-15)

#### a. To Bethel (1-15)

Genesis 35:1

***"Then God said to Jacob, 'Go up to Bethel and settle there, and build an altar there to God, who appeared to you when you were fleeing from your brother Esau.'"***

- (1) God commands Jacob to fulfill his earlier vow (28:20-22) and return to Bethel. The time spent in Shechem has not developed and matured the family clan. It has led to rape, murder, deception, plunder.
- (2) God commands that an altar be built.

Genesis 35:2-4

***"So Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him, 'Get rid of the foreign gods you have with you, and purify yourselves and change your clothes.'<sup>3</sup> Then come, let us go up to Bethel, where I will build an altar to God, who answered me in the day of my distress and who***

*has been with me wherever I have gone.’<sup>4</sup> So they gave Jacob all the foreign gods they had and the rings in their ears, and Jacob buried them under the oak at Shechem.”*

Jacob commands his family:

- (1) “Get rid of the foreign gods”.....Rededication
- (2) “Purify yourselves”.....Consecration
- (3) “Change your clothes”..... Purification

Genesis 35:11-13

*“And God said to him, ‘I am God Almighty; be fruitful and increase in number. A nation and a community of nations will come from you, and kings will be among your descendants.’<sup>12</sup> The land I gave to Abraham and Isaac I also give to you, and I will give this land to your descendants after you.’<sup>13</sup> Then God went up from him at the place where he had talked with him.”*

Note the Abrahamic Covenant aspects:

- (1) “Nations” ... “Kings” ... “Descendants”
- (2) “Land”
- (3) “Blessing” (implied)

b. Deaths (16-22)

- (1) Rachel dies giving birth to Benjamin (16-20).
- (2) Deborah, Rebekah’s nurse, dies near Bethel (35:8).
- (3) Sons of Israel (23-26)

- See the chart, p. 103 for the listing.

## VII. "TOLEDOT" OF ESAU (Genesis 36)

### A. Outline of Genesis

1. This is the ninth "toledot" comprising the Book of Genesis (counting the two "toledots" of Esau in Gen. 36 as one).
2. Esau (son of Isaac) and Ishmael (son of Abraham) were not of the elect line, the "seed of the woman" (Gen. 3:15). They were, however, promised blessing (Gen. 17:20; 27:38-40). In the composition of Genesis, their genealogies follow the death of their fathers.

### B. Overview (Genesis 36)

The chapter outlines in two genealogical lists the blessings and prosperity of Esau in the land of Seir. God had promised Abraham that his son, Ishmael, would be a great nation. Therefore, it is reasonable to believe that a like promise was made to Isaac's other son, Esau. Genesis 36 and the impressive genealogical lists demonstrate this strength and growth into a powerful people/nation.

Insight:

"In spite of Esau's unbelief, his descendants have a future. Under God they too have a story (cf. Deut. 23:7: 'Do not abhor an Edomite, for he is your brother:')."

(Waltke, 489)