

The Book of Genesis

The Story

Jacob - Israel

Wednesday 07 July 2021

6:30 PM-8:00 PM

Opening Prayer

Reading Assignment – Genesis Chapters 31 - 38

Background

The story of Jacob continues. After Jacob deceived his brother Esau and stole his birthright and his blessing, he fled to his uncle Laban in Aram. There he married two of Laban's daughters, Leah and Rachel. Altogether he had four wives who were the mothers of his twelve sons. Only one of his daughters, Dinah, is mentioned. In Aram he worked for his uncle for many years and became wealthy. Eleven of the sons were born there. As always with Jacob, there was trouble. This time with his relatives in Aram and it was over belongings. So, Jacob stole away at night with his wives, children, and servants and all that he claimed to be his, and was returning to Canaan, the land of his father.

Laban was furious and caught him before he made his way back to Canaan. But God comes to Jacob's rescue and tells Laban not to harm Jacob. The two make a peace agreement, and Jacob continues on to Canaan. During this trip back to Canaan, the famous wrestling with God event occurs, and Jacob's name is changed by God to Israel. But there is another problem, Esau who may hold Jacob's actions from years ago against him. Fortunately for Jacob, Esau does not seem to hold a grudge. So, Jacob continues on to Canaan, where his last son, Benjamin, is born, and Rachel dies in childbirth. Shortly after this Isaac dies at 180 years of age and Jacob and Esau come together to bury him.

The remainder of this section tells about the twelve sons of Jacob. The next youngest, Joseph, was disliked by his older brothers because he was Jacob's favorite and seemed arrogant. This conflict ultimately leads to the brothers deciding to rid themselves of him.

Questions to Consider

1. Explain why God is presented as favoring Jacob, even though he is deceitful.
2. Why would Rachel steal Laban's household gods? What is a household god?
3. Is the covenant between Laban and Jacob similar or dissimilar to the covenant between God and Abraham?
4. What is the interpretation of Jacob wrestling with a "man" at Peniel?
5. How do you interpret Esau's greeting of Jacob? Is it what you expected? Did Jacob deserve such a greeting?
6. What is the spiritual lesson of Chapter 34?
7. Once again, we have a story of a favored child, Joseph. Is it wise for parents to have favorites? How does it affect family relationships?
8. What is the point of inserting Chapter 38 in this narrative? Why did God put Onan to death? What are we to learn from the deception by Tamar?

Closing Prayer

