

STORY

Jacob Flees from Esau; Jacob's Dream - Gen. 27:41 - 28:22

TEACHER PRAYER

Dear Lord, strengthen me in desire, in skill, and in all gifts of the Spirit so that the good work You have begun in me will be carried forward for Your glory and blessings to Your kingdom. As always, in Jesus' name. Amen.

VOCABULARY

Padan Aram - "The tableland of Aram" = Mesopotamia

Beersheba - city at the southern limit of Palestine

Haran - Abraham's home (after he left Ur), north of Palestine

Bethel - "House of God," city in central Palestine

Heth - son of Canaan, forefather of the Hittites

Bethuel - father of Rebekah and Laban

Ishmael - Abraham's son by Hagar

OUTER AIM

When Jacob had to flee from his angry brother, God stayed with him.

INNER AIM

In God's master plan, for saving sinners, He makes all things work together for good, because He can overrule our counterproductive sinful mistakes.

BACKGROUND (Text commentary)

Ch. 27 tells us which twin would be the transmitter of the Messianic promise. Isaac sinned in wanting it to be Esau; Rebekah and Jacob also sinned in using lies and deception to outsmart Isaac, which is not the way in which the LORD opens His hands to bless us.

Ch 27: vs.41-46

(This section shows that there was plenty of guilt to go around.) Naturally, Esau was irate at having been outmaneuvered by Jacob, even though he had already sold his birthright to Jacob (26:29-34). Evidently he said something that reflected his evil plan-(We detect no sign of repentance on the part of Esau, or of Jacob, or of Rebekah, or of Isaac.)-so Rebekah thought that she could smooth over the troubled waters if Jacob was out of sight for a while. (By the way, she died before Jacob ever got home again.)

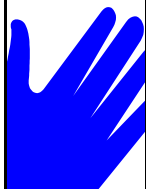
The way she made the request of Isaac was another half-truth, a subterfuge that Isaac might swallow. Surprisingly, the text gives no hint that he perceived the strife between his sons.

Ch. 28: vs. 1-5

Isaac agreed with the plan that Jacob should marry a cousin.

Isaac repeated some of God's blessings carried over from Abraham, especially to settle in Canaan, which was part of the Messianic blueprint.

So Jacob, aged seventy-one, left his mother, father and revengeful brother. He went all alone on a dangerous 500-mile trek, perhaps wondering if his selfish actions had ruined his future.



vs.6-9

Esau was willing to stay at home. Trying to find a way to recoup his losses by ingratiating himself in his father's good favor, he married an Abrahamic girl.

vs. 10-22 This episode is a watershed for Jacob's spiritual renewal, fitting him for God's hand.

v.10-12

By time Jacob had traveled a few days, he came to a spot twelve miles north of Jerusalem. The ladder pictures an access route for angels to come and go on God's business with humans. Some interpret it as a Messianic symbol, the grand staircase of open access to the Father.

vs.13-15

We note that there is no scolding, no reprimand, no LAW! So apparently Jacob was repentant over his cheating of Esau and his deceiving of Isaac.

At that juncture, God gave him good news for the future: His promise regarding the land, the increase of progeny, and the Seed--all due to His loving guidance and protection. Evidently Jacob needed this assurance that the LORD God was on his side and had not abandoned him in his needs.

vs.14-16

He is wonderfully surprised that Jehovah has been at his side all along, even under the scary and shameful conditions under which he had left his father's house.

Afraid = overawed, almost benumbed at such a miracle of grace. [Jacob jumped to the conclusion that geography was an issue behind the LORD's appearance, but we recognize that just then he needed a place to call "home."]

Evidently Jacob also needed the sevenfold assurances of grace that God gave him:

- Clear identification of the LORD as being the same God of Abraham and Isaac;
- Clear indication that this location was destined for Jacob's descendants [thus he could deduce that Esau would not murder him, for God promised him future children!];
- Assurance that his family tree would become innumerable and spread in all directions;
- The Jacob-sired family tree would produce the Savior ("bless all nations");
- God would be close to Jacob no matter where he went as an exile;
- God would manipulate Jacob's future to get bring back home again (to Canaan);
- God would provide His supportive presence during the time of fulfillment.

vs.18-22

This is the first voluntary vow recorded in Scripture; in this dedicatory ceremony Jacob changed the placename from Luz to Bethel ("house of God"), pledged himself to the LORD for his life, his future, his church, and his stewardship.

(Since the King James translation sounds too "iffy" to exhibit Jacob's good attitude, we prefer Leupold's Commentary here: "*If God will be with me...in this way which I am going...and I shall return in peace...and Yahweh will be God to me--**then** this stone...shall be a house of God.*" That he carried out this vow is reported in ch. 35:1-7.)

STUDENT PRAYER

My Father in heaven, I am just beginning my journey in life. I know I have already made mistakes in the way I have treated my Mom, Dad, brother, sister. So I realize the value of having Your blessing to fix my mistakes. Since I do not know what awaits me in life--but You do--please take me and my future into Your hands. In Jesus' love I am safe. Amen.

PRESENTATION (Helps and Hints)

1. The teacher will use his/her skills to preserve the aliveness of the Scriptural narrative. Jacob's life (lessons #9 and #10) crackles with human drama. In reading the text aloud, practice the craft of dramatic presentation (rising/falling intonation--as in music--with dramatic pauses, etc., to reveal the nervous tension between Jacob and Esau, or to portray the ominous nature of Rebekah's "sting operation."

2. In upper classes, perhaps capable students could be given the "roles" of Isaac, Rebekah, Jacob, and Esau in order thus to get more deeply in touch with them. (Teacher can be the voice of the LORD!)

3. Nonetheless, maintain a focus on Jacob is becoming the next section of the Messianic bridge ("From Abraham to Bethlehem to Calvary" form some Scriptural ABC's).

APPLICATIONS

1. God keeps His promises: "If you abide in Me, and my words abide in you,, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you." Jn.15:7, etc.

2. The loss of a brother's/sister's good will is a bitter fruit on the family tree--and can sour relationships for years to come. (Any teacher anecdote here...?)

3. An intelligent and resourceful child can fall into the sin of playing one parent against the other, especially in order to gain advantage over a sibling. What result can be expected?

4. Anger, the fun of hating, the pleasure of despising others are some of Satan's best tools to ensnare teens into sins they can't ever cure. The Columbine massacre is but the tip of a familiar mountain range from which a volcano can erupt.

PASSAGES

These passages can be assigned as memory work or simply discussed in class as to how they fit the lesson.

Lower

Ps. 91:11 - *He shall give His angels charge over you, To keep you in all your ways.*

Jn. 1:51 - *"Hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man."*

Middle any of the above and...

Ps. 91:9-10 - *Because you have made the LORD, who is my refuge, even the Most High, your habitation, No evil shall befall you...For He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways.*

I Tim. 2:5 - *For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.*

Upper any of the above and...

Heb. 1:14 - *Are they [angels] not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?*

Ps. 50:14-15 - *Offer to God thanksgiving, and pay your vows to the Most High. Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me.*

Ps. 121:7-8 - *The Lord shall preserve you from all evil; He shall preserve your soul. The Lord shall preserve your going out and your coming in from this time forth, and even forevermore.*

Deut. 31:6-8 - *"Be strong and of good courage, do not fear nor be afraid of them; for the Lord your God, He is the One who goes with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you."*

Heb. 13:5 - *Let your conduct be without covetousness, and be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."*

HYMN CHOICES

"All Depends On Our Possessing" (TLH #425, 5)

"Commit Whatever Grieves Thee" (TLH #520, 3-5)

"Built On the Rock The Church Doth Stand" (TLH #467, 1-3)