

GROUNDS OF FAITH CAFÉ: “Genesis” (Subtitled: Is there a snake in your Garden too?) Further subtitled: Lessons from the Garden! Lesson 19. (Gen 25:1 – 34). For lesson copies, go to <http://www.montgomerychurch.org/resources8.html>

Overview: We are entering the Jacob cycle of God’s plan to bless the nations through Abraham and his descendants. Here, we move from “faithful Abraham” through “compliant Isaac” to “scheming Jacob.” The cycle consisting of chapters 25-36 revolves around 4 key appearances of God: the womb (25:23); the first Divine appearance to Jacob at Bethel (28:10-22); the realization of the presence of God in the wrestling match at the Jabbok River (32:22-32); the final Divine appearance to Jacob at Bethel (35:9-15). Genealogies of outsiders bracket the narrative. The opening scene of the narrative, the birth of Jacob and Esau, is immediately preceded by the genealogy of Ishmael (25:12-18), the son not chosen. Immediately following the final scene of the Jacob narrative in chapter 36 is an extensive genealogy of Esau (36:1-43), another son not chosen.

Genesis chapters 25 – 36, like earlier chapters, reveal a literary structure called “ring composition.” As we move through the chapters, the structure points out that we see deceit, but we also find reconciliation – powerful lessons for us all. Perhaps this revelation may help us partially answer the question: “How could God choose such a deceitful person as Jacob to bestow His blessings on mankind?”

- (A) Prologue (25:19-24)
- (B) Isaac and the Canaanites: Conflict and Covenant (26)
- (C) JACOB AND ESAU: DECEPTION (27)
- (D) Bethel: Departure from promised land (28:10-22)
- (E) Jacob and Laban: Deception and Reconciliation (29-31)**
- (D) Mananaim: Return to promised land (32:1-2)
- (C) JACOB AND ESAU: RECONCILIATION (32-33)
- (B) Jacob and the Canaanites: Deception and Enmity (34)
- (A) The Edomites (36)

Chapter 25: The birth of Jacob & Esau (Round # 1). Read 25:1-34 completely through.

- **Re-read 25:1-18.** This part concludes Abraham’s journey and provides a genealogy for Ishmael (Abraham’s son by his Egyptian maid Hagar who Abraham drove into the wilderness with Hagar after Isaac, the son of promise, was born – 21:10-21).
 - Abraham breathes his last in verses 1-10 and is buried with Sarah in the promised land. What do you conclude about God’s faithfulness to Abraham as you read his end? Discuss
 - Look again at 25:12-18. Previously, God promised to bless Ishmael and make him a great nation (16:10-12; 21:18), but added that Ishmael would live “*to the east of his brothers*” (16:12) – a reference to perpetual conflict between Ishmael’s descendants and those of Isaac. Strife: brother against brother – contests where elder brother persecutes the younger – a pattern begun with Cain and Able and one that will continue with Esau and Jacob – a pattern that has not only physical but spiritual dimensions. As you read 25:12-18, what do you think God is doing by allowing this to happen? Discuss.
- **Re-read 25:19-21.** As seen earlier with Abraham’s wife, Sarah (11:30), Rebekah (like Sarah) is barren. But Isaac prays to the LORD on her behalf and she conceives (25:21).
 - How long before Isaac’s prayer is realized? [Hint: re-read 25:20 & 26 to get a timeline]. What does this say about Isaac’s character and relationship with God and in what way, if any, does it differ from Abraham’s reaction in 16:1-2 to a similar situation? Discuss.
 - With Abraham’s wife Sarah, Isaac’s wife Rebekah, and later Jacob’s wife Rachel (29:31), we seem to be seeing a subtheme in Scripture of the Godly seed being born of a barren woman. Do you think this is true? If so, what significance could this have? Discuss.
- **Re-read 25:22-26:** Conflict, embodied in Ishmael, now emerges in Rebekah’s womb as her twins seemingly engage in battle. What does Rebekah do to figure out her maternal dilemma? Note: Rebekah seems to understand all human activity has a firm relationship to God’s control. Do you agree or not? Have you any similar events in your life that you have taken before God? Discuss.
 - What does God state in response to her question? Describe specifically.
 - Now read Galatians 4:22-31. What spiritual application does Paul make about this birth?
- **Re-read 25:27-34.** Esau, the older, spurns his birthright, satisfying short term desires over his long term heritage. Jacob’s stew secures the *birthright* for him. In a short time, Isaac’s *blessing* will also be secured by his mother’s stew (27:14, 25). This activity continues a subtheme: God can and does use the younger/ weaker/ most unlikely person to carry out His will. It is also played out in the New Testament in Jesus’ selection of His apostles. Read 1 Cor 1:27-29. What do you learn from these verses that is applicable to you? Discuss.