

GROUNDS OF FAITH CAFÉ: “Genesis” (Subtitled: Is there a snake in your Garden too?) Further subtitled: Lessons from the Garden! Lesson 22. (Gen chapter 28). For lesson copies, go to <http://www.montgomerychurch.org/resources8.html>

Overview: As a reminder, Genesis chapters 25 – 36 are composed in a literary structure called “ring composition.” They point out a fairly stark contrast in Jacob’s walk with God. First, we see deceit; second, we find reconciliation! Note the chapter construction again; then read the text in chapter 28 for discussion.

- (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)

Read chapter 28 completely through. This chapter follows directly after Jacob deceives his brother Esau a second time. You will recall that in 25:29-34 Jacob first bargained for and received Esau’s rightful *birthright* which Esau was entitled to by custom as the “first-born-son.” Then in 27:1-29, Jacob, per his mother’s advice, continues to plot against Esau and secures his father’s *blessing* through deception. Not surprisingly, Esau is extremely mad. All his so-called “entitlements” have disappeared. He threatens to kill his brother Jacob (27:41). As a consequence, Jacob and his mother, Rebekah, determine that Jacob must flee for his very survival (or at least that is his and presumably her perception). As we look again at chapter 28, this lesson will center on a couple of key points:

- The first is Jacob’s vision of who God is – a lesson we all desperately need to learn. Re-read 27:20 for the setting that depicts Jacob’s deceptive act in claiming the blessing from his father Isaac – one where Jacob did not claim his father’s God as his own – for context.
- The second point is how the God of Abraham, Isaac (and soon Jacob) can and does work, even with and toward those whose life patterns appear to include manipulation and deception.

As you read, remember that God appears to Jacob at a truly strategic point in his flight (the juncture or crossroad at which Jacob departs God’s “promised land” to journey back to Haran where God first issued His call to Abraham). As we noted last week, this actually begins Jacob’s transition on a couple of levels:

- Like Abraham, Jacob begins a new part of his journey – a journey guided by God – a journey which will be marked by a release of his past (including his deceptive ways), i.e., a character shift.
- More importantly, Jacob (like the rest of us) must learn that the path he is taking is not a journey simply for survival. Instead, it is a journey toward faith – a journey he will not take alone! For the God of his grandfather, Abraham, who called Abraham out of Haran, and the God of his father Isaac is the God who will escort him back to Haran.
- Finally, pay particular attention to God’s promises to Jacob in 28:15.

Re-read 28:1-5. Isaac offers a second blessing to Jacob. Now re-read 12:1-3 to re-acquaint you with God’s promises to Jacob’s grandfather, and Isaac’s father, Abraham.

- In light of God’s promise to Abraham of land and descendants (12:1-3), what specifically does Isaac desire God to do for Jacob? What is your impression of Isaac’s relationship to God in light of this blessing? Discuss.
- What do you learn about God in these and previous verses that comforts or disturbs you? Discuss.

Re-read 28:6-9. Previously, Esau had chosen wives “*from the daughters of the land (Canaan)*” (27:46). Scripture tells us these choices were unfavorable to his parents.

- What does Esau now determine to do?
- What do you think his motivation is for his choice? Discuss.

Re-read 28:10-17. On his journey for survival, the God of Jacob’s forefathers meets him in a vision. Two aspects of this meeting seem to stand out:

- What visual aspects of Jacob’s dream strike you as significant and in what way? Discuss.
- What specifically does God promise Jacob in the dream? What parts of this seem similar to God’s promises in His Gospel message to Christians (compare Matt 28:16-20, particularly v20)? Discuss.

Re-read 28:18-22. How does Jacob react to God’s Promises, i.e., what specific actions does he take?

- Note Jacob’s five “ifs” (28:20-21) as preconditions for accepting Yahweh as *his* God. Have you bargained with God to get what you want? Discuss. When God revealed Himself, Jacob acted. What has it taken for God to get your attention? Has your response differed from Jacob? Discuss.