

Jacob

Isaac Blesses Jacob. A Parting of the Ways. Jacob's Dream at Bethel. Jacob and the Daughters of Laban. Jacob's Return to Canaan. Jacob Wrestles at Peniel. The Tragedy of Dinah. Final Phases of the Jacob Story—Return to Bethel, Birth of Benjamin and Death of Rachel, Death of Isaac.

Isaac Blesses Jacob (27:1–40)

- Isaac Grows Blind, Loves Esau (27:1–5)
- Rebekah Helps Jacob Fool Isaac (27:6–18)
 - “upon me be thy curse” (27:13): she never sees Jacob again!
- Jacob Impersonates Esau (27:19–27)
- Isaac's Blessing (27:28–29)
- Esau's Lost Blessing (27:30–40)
 - “Is he not rightly named Jacob? For he hath supplanted me these two times” (27:36)
 - **Esau may have lost his blessing because he did not value his birthright and married outside the covenant**
- **Theme of Sibling Rivalry**
 - Why does the younger brother often end up on top in Genesis?
 - **Righteousness over birthright – our action and choices determine our blessings**
 - **Those who are chosen or firstborn may not stay there if they are unrighteous**
- Regardless if Isaac was fooled, God is not fooled – **Jacob received the blessing meant for him**

A Parting of the Ways

- Jacob Escapes Esau's Fury (27:41–46)
 - Isaac blesses Jacob again, no longer fooled
 - **Just because things happen for seemingly worldly reasons does not mean they aren't following God's plan**
- Jacob's Flight to Mesopotamia (28:1–5)
- Esau Marries Ishmael's Daughter (28:6–9)
 - Attempt to please his parents after earlier poor marriages
- **Jacob's Dream at Bethel** (28:10–22)
 - Receives the Abrahamic covenant at “the House of God”
 - Set up a stone pillar (altar) and anoints it!
 - Symbolism of the rock
 - Dream of Angels
 - explains the sacred origins of this later Israelite holy city
 - Vows to tithe

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Jacob and the Daughters of Laban (29:1–30:43)

- Jacob Meets Rachel (*Rāḥēl*, “ewe”) (29:1–14)
 - Another meeting at a well
 - *Righteous women at wells of living water/life-giving water*
 - He loved her at first sight . . . And kissed her! (29:11)
- Jacob Marries Leah (29:15–24)
 - She is, ehem, “tender-eyed”
 - Jacob serves seven years thinking that he is getting Rachel
 - **He is deceived in the dark of his wedding night, but he had deceived his blind father!**
- Jacob Marries Rachel (29:15–30)
 - Works another seven years!
- Jacob Begets Children (29:31–30:24; [detail below](#))
- Jacob Prospers at Laban's Expense (30:25–43)
 - Superstitious animal husbandry—*really God is blessing him*

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Jacob's Children

- By **Leah**: **Reuben** (look, a son), **Simeon** (hear), **Levi** (joined), and **Judah** (praise) (29:31–35)
 - The Lord's mercy is again seen for Leah
- By **Bilhah** (Rachel's handmaid): **Dan** (judged), **Naphthali** (wrestled) (30:1–8)
- By **Zilpah** (Leah's handmaid): **Gad** (troop), **Asher** (blessed) (30:9–13)
- By **Leah again**: **Issachar** (hired), **Zebulon** (exalt), Dinah (30:14–21)
- At last, by **Rachel**: **Joseph** (added) (30:22–24)

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Jacob's Return to Canaan (31:1–33:20)

- Jacob Flees with Family and Flocks (31:1–21)
 - Explained to his wives that his stock-breeding plan was actually a vision
 - *Typical of OT narrative to omit critical information until the moment is ripe*
 - Rachel steals Laban's *teraphim* or images—why?
- Laban Overtakes Jacob (31:22–42)
- Laban and Jacob Covenant (31:43–55)
- Jacob Sends Presents to Appease Esau (32:1–21)
- **Jacob Wrestles at Peniel** (32:22–32; more below)
- Jacob and Esau Meet (33:1–17)
- Jacob Reaches **Shechem** (33:18–20)
 - Erects an altar; *explains the sacred origins of this later Israelite holy city*

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Jacob Wrestles at Peniel (32:22–32)

- Jacob was anxious about meeting Esau, preoccupied about the whole blessing deception of ch. 27
- Meets who—a man? An angel? The Lord?
- **Symbolism of “wrestling”** (cf. Book of Enos)
 - Will not give up until he gets a blessing
 - Does Jacob's wrestle parallel with Abraham's struggle at Moriah in ch. 22?
- “And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed.” (32:38)
 - Jacob's name change to *Yīsrā'ēl*, “one who prevails with God”
- Etiology (explanation): Jacob walked away from the experience changed (limping) → *explains why Jews did not eat “the sinew that shrank”*

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The Tragedy of Dinah (34:1–31)

- Rape of Dinah (34:1–24)
 - A sexual assault turns into “love”
 - Shechem, Hamor, and military-aged men are circumcised
- Dinah's Brothers Avenge Their Sister (34:25–31)
 - Violent brothers take advantage of the disability of Hamor's men
 - Explains why Simeon and Levi later do not have tribal holdings (Simeon is absorbed by Judah, Levi scattered among the tribes)

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Final Phases of the Jacob Story

- **Jacob Returns to Bethel (35:1–15)**
 - Has his family sanctify itself to go up to “the House of God”
 - As with Abraham returning to Canaan after Egypt, Jacob enters to “Promised Land” (sc. heaven) through the house of God!
 - Deborah, “Rebekah’s nurse,” dies (35:8)
 - **What about Rebekah?** Why is her death not mentioned?
 - Perhaps a cover-up to disguise the fact that Esau was present for her death but Jacob was not!
 - **Covenant of 28:10–22 renewed**
 - Cf. Abraham’s 15:1–21 covenant renewed 17:1–27
- **Birth of Benjamin and the Death of Rachel (35:16–26)**
 - “son of my sorrow” changed to “son at the right hand”
- **Death of Isaac (35:27–29)**
 - Continuing theme of Death throughout Genesis – perhaps emphasis on the fallen state of man
- **Descendants of Esau (36:1–40) another *toletot* or “generations list”**