

Jacob's faith (Gen 28-36)

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Outline of Jacob's life

Gen 25:20-26 Son of Isaac and Rebekah, he was born in answer to prayer
Gen 25:27-28 He was the favorite son of Rebekah
Gen 25:29-34 Obtains Esau's birthright
Gen 27:1-40 Obtains Isaac's blessing
Gen 27:41-46 He was hated by Esau
Gen 28:1-5 He departs for Haran; has vision of a heavenly ladder & makes a vow (28:10-22)
Gen 29:1-14 Meets Rachel and Laban
Gen 29:15-30 Serves Laban for his daughters
Gen 29:31 – 30:24 Has 11 children through them and their maids
Gen 30:25-43 God prospers Jacob
Gen 31:1-55 He flees from Laban, is overtaken and makes a covenant with Laban
Gen 32:1-2 He meets angels; sends a message (32:3-8) and gifts (32:13-21) to Esau
Gen 32:9-12 He prays, wrestles with the angel and his name is changed to Israel (32:22-32)
Gen 33:1-16 Esau and Jacob are reconciled; he makes an altar at Shechem (33:17-20)
Gen 34:1-31 His family troubles within (Dinah raped) and without (his sons revenge)
Gen 35:1-15 He fulfills his vow at Bethel and receives new name and covenant with God
Gen 35:16-20 Rachel dies, Reuben disqualifies himself from the birthright (35:21-22)
Gen 35:22-26 His 11 sons and death of Isaac his father (35:27-29)
Gen 37:1-35 His favoritism toward Joseph, the jealousy and betrayal of brothers
Gen 42:1-5 Famine and sending of sons to Egypt for food
Gen 43:1-15 He allows Benjamin to go to Egypt
Gen 45:25-28 He is revived at the news about Joseph
Gen 46:1-27 He goes to Egypt to be with Joseph and meets Pharaoh (46:28-34)
Gen 47:28-31 He makes Joseph swear to bury him in Canaan
Gen 48:1-22 He blesses the sons (Ephraim [the younger] and Manasseh) of Joseph
Gen 49:1-28 He speaks prophetic blessings over all his sons
Gen 49:29-33 He dies in Egypt and is buried in Canaan (50:1-14)

Attributes of Jacob's faith

Jacob walked by faith; he encountered many struggles and had to fight hard for each victory. The carnal nature was strong in him, he had many faults and failings, but He also has some attributes.

Jacob valued the birthright.

Though his weakness led Jacob to be manipulative in getting it, yet his heart valued it, which immoral Esau despised (Gen 25:27-34; Heb 12:16).

Heb 12:16-17 that there be no immoral or godless person like Esau, who sold his own birthright for a single meal. 17 For you know that even afterwards, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought for it with tears.

Jacob greatly desired God's blessings.

Though he yielded to the foolish advice of his mother to deceive Isaac, yet he greatly desired the promise of God's blessings (Gen 27:1-29).

Jacob wanted the Lord to be his God

Though there may have been carnal desire for blessing in making the vow to God when he woke from his dream (Gen 28:10-22), yet Jacob was anxious for the Lord to be his God (Gen 28:21).

Jacob gave praise to God for his prosperity

Though he secretly left his father-in-law in fear, when Laban overtook him, Jacob gave glory to God in the tribute he paid Him (Gen 31:4-9, 53).

Jacob wrestled with God and man and prevails

Though he was terrified of Esau, nevertheless he sought the Lord, pleaded His promises and obtained an answer (Gen 32:9-12).

Though he later cowers at the feet of his brother, in wrestling with the angel of the Lord, we find him prevailing (Gen 32:28).

Jacob followed the example of Abraham and Isaac

Like Abraham and Isaac, "By faith he lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, dwelling in tents" (Heb 11:9).

Jacob overcomes fear as he uses the name "God Almighty"

When giving permission for Benjamin to go with his brothers to Egypt, he said "God Almighty (or "God the Sufficient One") give you mercy before the man" (Gen 43:14).

This was the title under which the Lord had blessed Abraham (Gen 17:1). It was also the one Isaac employed when he blessed Jacob (Gen 28:3). By using it here, we see how Jacob rested on the covenant promise. When he arrived in Egypt, he was presented before Pharaoh, instead of cringing before the ruler of the world, "Jacob blessed Pharaoh" (Gen 47:7).

Heb 11:21 By faith Jacob, as he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, leaning on the top of his staff.

Jacob gives a double blessing to Joseph in taking Ephraim and Manasseh as his own.

In Deuteronomy 21:17 we read, "But he shall acknowledge the son of the hated for the first-born, by giving him a double portion of all that he hath: for he is the beginning of his strength; the right of the firstborn is his." It was the right of the firstborn to have a double portion, and this is exactly what we find Jacob bestowing upon Joseph, for both Ephraim and Manasseh were allotted a distinct tribal part and place in the promised inheritance. This, by right, belonged unto Joseph, though the Devil had tried to cheat him out of it, using Laban to deceive Jacob by substituting Leah in Rebekah's place, and Joseph was her firstborn; and now by the providence of God the primogeniture is restored to him. So too God permitted Reuben to sin so that the way might be open for this: "Now the sons of Reuben, the firstborn of Israel, (for he was the firstborn) but, forasmuch as he defiled his father's bed, his birthright was given unto the sons of Joseph" (1Chr 5:1).

Earlier in this interview, Jacob had said, "And now thy two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, which were born unto thee in the land of Egypt, before I came unto thee into Egypt, are mine" (Gen 48:5). Those two sons of Joseph had been borne to him by an Egyptian wife, and in a foreign land, but now they were to be adopted and incorporated into the body of the holy seed. For note, when Jacob blessed them he said, "The Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; and let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers, Abraham and Isaac" (Gen 48:16). By that blessing he sought to draw their hearts away from Egypt and their kinsfolk there, that they might share with the people of God [from Pink].

Jacob blessed both the sons of Joseph.

When Joseph brought his two sons before their grandfather to receive his patriarchal blessing, he placed Manasseh the elder, to his right hand, and Ephraim the younger to his left. His object in this was that Manasseh might receive the first and superior portion. Right there it was that the faith of Jacob was most tested. At this time Joseph was governor over all Egypt, and second

only to Pharaoh himself in authority and power; moreover, he was Jacob's favorite son, yet the dying patriarch had now to withstand him.

But Israel stretched out his right hand and laid it on the head of Ephraim, who was the younger, and his left hand on Manasseh's head, crossing (literally, consciously directing) his hands, although Manasseh was the firstborn [from Pink].

Jacob worshipped

Gen 47:29-30 When the time for Israel to die drew near, he called his son Joseph and said to him, "Please, if I have found favor in your sight, place now your hand under my thigh and deal with me in kindness and faithfulness. Please do not bury me in Egypt, 30 but when I lie down with my fathers, you shall carry me out of Egypt and bury me in their burial place." And he said, "I will do as you have said."

It was not the pomp and pageantry of his burial which concerned Jacob, but the place that he was so concerned about. Not in Egypt among idolaters would his bones be laid to rest, but it was in the burying-place of his fathers he wished to be laid.

Why did he make this request?

To exhibit his union with Abraham and Isaac in the covenant.

To express his faith in the promises of God, which concerned Canaan, and not Egypt. Third

To help his descendants resist from being content to stay in Egypt.

He was setting before them an example, that they should also think of returning to the promised land at the appropriate time.

To symbolically go before them and, as it were, take possession of the land on their behalf.

Jacob as he was dying

Jacob was in bed at the time, but gathering together his little remaining strength, he raised himself to sit upright, and then bowing his body, and so that it might be supported, he leaned upon his staff, worshipping God.

Notes:

Jacob is the inheritor of the patriarchal **promises** to Abraham concerning possession of the land of Canaan (Gen 12:7; 28:3-4, 13).

God identifies Himself as the "God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob" (Ex 3:6, 15; 4:5; 1Ki 18:36; 1Chr 29:18)

New Testament references

Jacob is listed in the genealogies of Jesus (Mt 1:2; Lk 3:34).

Jesus quotes Ex 3:6, 'I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob' (Mt 22:32; Mk 12:26; Lk 20:37).

Jesus says we will see "Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the Kingdom of heaven" (Mt 8:11; Lk 13:28). Peter (Ac 3:13), Stephen (Ac 7:12, 14-15, 46), Paul (Rom 9:11-13; 11:26), and Hebrews (Heb 11:9, 20) speak about Jacob.

Jacob name means supplanter, deceiver, trickster

Supplant = to supersede (another) by or as if by force, trickery, or treachery (Merriam-Webster's collegiate thesaurus)

Hos 12:2-5 The LORD also has a dispute with Judah and will punish Jacob according to his ways; He will repay him according to his deeds. 3 In the womb he took his brother by the heel, and in his maturity he contended with God. 4 Yes, he wrestled with the angel and prevailed; He wept and sought His favor. He found Him at Bethel And there He spoke with us, 5 Even the LORD, the God of hosts, The LORD is His name.

Israel means

He will be a prince with God; prince with God; contender of God; he strives with God; soldier of God; God will rule; God ruled man; ruling with God; one that prevails with God.

Summary:

God did not choose Jacob because of what he was but because of what he could become. His life is a long history of discipline, chastisement, and purification by affliction. Not one of his misdeeds went unpunished. He sowed deception and reaped the same, first from Laban and then from his own sons.

Jacob's story is a story of conflict. The note of conflict is even heard before his birth (Gen. 25:22–23). However, in the midst of the all-too-human quarrels over family and fortune, God was at work protecting and prospering His blessed.

With the other patriarchs God acted directly, but with Jacob God seemed to be withdrawn at times. Yet, God was no less at work. He worked through unsavory situations and unworthy persons. Even in Jacob's web of conflict and tragedy, God's hand guided, though half hidden. [From Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary (p. 864) by Gary D. Baldwin]

References used:

An Exposition of Hebrews; by A. W. Pink
The Lexham Bible Dictionary
Nelson's Topical Bible
The Exhaustive Dictionary of Bible Names
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