

Review: *From your experience at the Cornerstone meeting last week, share something that helped build your faith.*

DAY ONE

Read Genesis 28:1-9

NOTE: A glimpse of Rebekah's shrewdness is provided by 27:42-28:2. She is aware of Esau's murderous plot against Jacob but realizes the episode of the stolen blessing is still painful to Isaac; she therefore uses another motive to persuade him to send Jacob away--he must marry within the family, unlike Esau. Esau, unreflective as usual, realizes too late he also should marry within the family but, significantly, marries from Abraham's rejected line. *NABRE*

1. Chapter 28 continues the story of Jacob. Isaac blessed Jacob and sent him to find a wife among Rebekah's family so he would not marry a Canaanite woman (verses 1-2). He left without any of the resources that accompanied Abraham's servant who searched for Isaac's wife from among the same people (see Genesis 24). Why do you think that was and what problems might that present for Jacob?

NOTE: The reason which is implicitly given here for why the blessing should fall on Jacob and not to Esau is that Esau had contracted marriage with women of Canaan, against what Abraham told Isaac to do. Marriage with Canaanite women will always be very much frowned on in Israel because it brought with it idolatry and the worship of Baal. *Navarre*

2. In verses 3-4 Isaac blessed Jacob. Compare this to the blessing Isaac thought he was giving to Esau when Jacob deceived him (Genesis 27:28-29). Comment on which more closely resembles the original Abrahamic blessing (Genesis 17:1-8).

3. Isaac passed on the blessings to Jacob and his descendants promised by God to Jacob's grandfather, Abraham. How would you answer the question, "How can God's blessing be given to such an unworthy schemer?" (*NABRE*)

4. According to verse 5, Jacob obeyed Isaac and went away to the ancestral home of his Uncle Laban. Esau, who remained at home with his father, took notice of all that transpired between Isaac and Jacob. Paraphrase what he observed and the actions he took (verses 6-9).

NOTE: This detail indicates the relationship between the Edomites (descendants of Esau) and the Arabs (descendants of Ishmael), distinguishing them both more clearly from the future chosen people. *Navarre*

5. In verse 9 we learned that Esau already had other wives from the local peoples. Esau hoped to please his parents by adding another wife who was a "kinswoman." This marriage was a source of conflict in the family. What is one thing parents can do if they disapprove of their child's choice of partner?

6. **CONNECTION:** "Thus Isaac sent Jacob away..." After Jacob received his blessing and reconciled with his father, Isaac sent him into exile with few resources far from home. In spite of all his faults, Jacob was heir to the promises of God and, with God's help, he would return in time. Jacob's story fills half the Book of Genesis and he is a source of courage and reassurance for others who find themselves in exile. Has there been a time in your life when you left loved ones behind to face loneliness and uncertainty? Or sent away someone you loved? What prayer or act of faith sustained you during this time of exile?

Read [Isaiah 58:11](#) and record a few verses that reassure you that God will be with you in times of exile.

DAY TWO

Read Genesis 28:10-22

NOTE: Twice on his journey, once on the way to Haran and once on the way back home, Jacob encounters God. *Collegeville*

7a. Jacob left Beer-sheba and went toward Haran, but he spent the first night at a certain place still in Canaan. When the sun had set, he put a stone under his head and lay down (verses 10-11). He fell asleep and began to dream. Describe the details of his dream recorded in verse 12.

b. "We often gain valuable insights while dreaming: ancient people understood these as revelations from God." (*Collegeville*) Describe an insight or revelation you may have had from a dream.

NOTE: The Hebrew envisions, not a ladder with rungs, but an ascending stairway. It is used by a host of angels, walking up and down, ministering to the will of Yahweh. The dream convinces Jacob that he is lying near the "gate" where heaven touches down to earth. *Ignatius Study Bible*

8. "Jacob's ladder" is a well-known image that has influenced art and literature. The dream may have inspired Jesus to remark, "Very truly, I tell you, you will see heaven open and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man" ([John 1:51](#)). What does the symbolism of this passage mean to you?

9. First appearing to Jacob in a dream, "the LORD stood beside him" and repeated the covenant promises as he had to Abraham and Isaac (verses 13-14). Record the words of God's personal promise to Jacob to comfort him on this journey by completing the phrases below (verse 15). (Good memory verse)

Know that I am with you

and will bring you back

for I will not leave you

NOTE: The gifts of the covenant include land (15:18) multiple descendants (22:17) and blessings for all families of the world (22:18). Jacob is thus confirmed as the heir of the covenant promises just as Isaac was in 26:3-5 [and thereby recognized as the third patriarch]. *Ignatius Study Bible*

10. When Jacob awoke, he was afraid but filled with wonder and said, "Surely the LORD is in this place" and called it the "gate of heaven" (verses 16-17). Why was his talk of *heaven* a new idea for the Jewish people? Read the Commentary, page 58, for your answer.

NOTE: (Verses 18-19) When Jacob realizes that he has met the Lord he takes the stone pillow, sets it up vertically, and pours oil on it to designate it as holy because his head rested on it during his revelatory dream. Jacob does not build an altar, as his grandfather Abraham did, to mark places where he met the Lord. Instead, he consecrates the stone, then formally accepts the terms of his encounter with God. He names the place Bethel, or House of God, the place near where Abraham once built an altar (12:8). *Collegeville* (refer to your bible map for Bethel/Luz)

11. After Jacob set up the altar to worship, he made a vow to the LORD. He began his vow with the word “if” and continued with the word “then.” Summarize the terms of Jacob’s vow after the appropriate word (verses 20-22).

If:

then:

THINK: Do you think the words “if”... then” are the language of a sincere faith?

12. CONNECTION: In today’s reading Jacob stated: “Surely the Lord is in this place and I did not know it.” Jacob encountered God in Bethel, a long-known sacred sanctuary, a holy place. Experiencing the blessing and grace of God means being in the place where God dwells. We may find God in our church or faith community. It is also true that God is a part of every ordinary life experience, but the gate of heaven refers to a *sanctuary*, a place where we encounter God in a unique way, as Jacob did in his dream. Do you have in mind one such special place where God dwells, a refuge that is perhaps a gate of heaven for you? Can you share that with your group?

Read and record John 10:9. Offer thanks in your prayer time today for the times when you found comfort and sanctuary in the peace of God.

DAY THREE

Read Genesis 29:1-12

13. After Jacob met the LORD in his dream and heard God’s promises, he continued his journey to the land of the people of the east (verse 1). Paraphrase what he saw when he looked out over the land in verses 2-3.

NOTE: The people of the east were the Semitic peoples of Mesopotamia. Jacob is searching for Haran, where Abraham had moved with his family before venturing into Canaan (11:31). *Ignatius Study Bible* (refer to your bible map for Haran)

14. Jacob learned that the shepherds at the well were from Haran. They knew his uncle and identified his daughter Rachel coming with her sheep to the well (verses 4-6). Summarize the discussion Jacob had with the shepherds in verses 7-8.

NOTE: Apparently, the large stone blocking the well guaranteed equal access to the limited supply of water in the well.

15. It is interesting that Jacob gave the shepherds a directive (end of verse 7). Why was it unusual that he would issue a command to them?

16. When Jacob finished speaking to the shepherds, Rachel, Laban's daughter, arrived at the well with her father's sheep (verse 9). When Jacob saw Rachel, he went up and rolled the stone from the well's mouth and watered her flock (verse 10). What do these actions tell you about Jacob?

17. In verse 11 there is a surprising interchange between Jacob and Rachel. He kissed her and wept aloud. Then he told her who he was and she ran to tell her father (verse 12). There are many bible verses on weeping. Look up and record one of the following.

Psalm 56:8

Tobit 7:16

John 11:35

NOTE: Jacob is Rachel's cousin. He is happy that he has found his kinfolk. Laban will greet him the same way [with a kiss] (v.13). Most readers will assume that Jacob loved Rachel at first sight, but we actually do not know if this was the case. *Miller*

18. CONNECTION: In today's readings, Jacob traveled many miles to the land of his ancestors and was alone and weary. When he met Rachel, the daughter of his Uncle Laban, he kissed her and wept aloud. The fullness of emotion that allows us the expression of tears is a gift from God and not a sign of weakness. Emotions help us connect with others when words fail us. When was the last time you cried and that expression of emotion led you to a moment of grace? Share some thoughts with your group.

Pope Francis has said, "Certain realities of life are seen only with eyes that are cleansed by tears," and "If God could weep, then I too can weep, in the knowledge that he understands me." Let these words of papal wisdom lead you into prayer today.

DAY FOUR

Read Genesis 29:13-20

19. When Rachel's father, Laban, heard that his nephew had arrived, he ran to meet him and kissed him. When they came to his house, Jacob told him "all these things" (verse 13). Comment on whether you think Jacob explained the reason for his exile honestly or cast it in favorable terms.

20. Laban acknowledged Jacob as kin saying "my bone and my flesh" and he stayed with him a month (verse 14). Then Laban approached Jacob to discuss changing their living arrangements. In your own words, record what Laban told Jacob in verse 15.

NOTE: The new arrangement proposed by Laban effectively voided the familial bond with Jacob and replaced it with a master-servant relationship.

21. In verses 16-17 we read that Laban had two daughters. Record what you learn about the young women below.

Leah

Rachel

NOTE: Leah, the less attractive first born and Rachel, the younger and more beautiful one. In Hebrew, Leah means "wild cow" and Rachel means "ewe lamb". *Ignatius Study Bible*

NOTE: Rachel's appearance was described similarly to that of the other matriarchs of Genesis. Sarah was portrayed as "a woman beautiful in appearance" (Genesis 12:11) and Rebekah a girl "very fair to look upon" (Genesis 24:16).

22. Jacob loved Laban's younger daughter, Rachel, and offered to serve seven years in order to marry her (verse 18). Laban seemed to agree to Jacob's plan, but was his answer an unqualified yes? Explain in your own words what he actually said in verse 19.

NOTE: Jacob offers to work for Laban for seven years in exchange for Rachel's hand. (Jacob must work for the privilege of marrying Laban's daughter because he does not bring gifts with him, as did Abraham's servant.) *Collegeville*

23. Jacob happily kept his end of the bargain and his seven years of service were no hardship (verse 20). Among the ancient people of the Near East, intermarriage among first cousins was common. What might be some reasons that this was considered a desirable match for these two young people?

24. **CONNECTION:** Today we read that Jacob's years of service for Rachel "seemed to him like only a few days because of his love for her." As you've carried out your own obligations to other people, have you noticed the difference that love makes? Can you briefly describe a situation when a long period of time passed quickly in your life because of the interesting or joyful work you were doing? Record some thoughts to share with your group

As you pray today, be aware that "it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure"(see [Philippians 2:13](#)).

DAY FIVE

Read Genesis 29:21-29

NOTE: Jacob's marriage has special importance because from it will come the twelve tribes of Israel; the sacred writer identifies who is the mother of each son; the story is full of significant detail, odd nuances and little ironies. *Navarre*

25. When Jacob served Laban for seven years, he asked Laban for his wife. "So Laban gathered together all the people of the place, and made a feast." (verses 21-22). Once again, as in our last lesson, a deception occurred, but this time Jacob was the victim. Describe what happened in verse 23.

NOTE: Brides were customarily veiled until the wedding night. This, combined with the darkness of his tent, explains why Jacob is blind to the scheming of his uncle until the morning after. One senses that Jacob is paying the just penalty for deceiving his blind father, Isaac. *Ignatius Study Bible*

26. There were several characters and victims in this story. Select one or two of the characters below and describe the possible motives and feelings of each.

Jacob

Leah

Rachel

Laban

27. After the wedding night, Laban's treachery was discovered and Jacob questioned his deceit. Laban's reason for switching brides was that it was not their custom to give the younger in marriage before the firstborn (verses 25-26). Laban then tried to mollify Jacob. What did they agree to in verses 27-28?

NOTE: Complete the week: wedding festivities often ran for several days in biblical antiquity, a tradition that continued in Judaism well into the post-biblical period. *Ignatius Study Bible*

28. What lessons was Jacob learning by Laban's harsh treatment? How would this help him become a better, more compassionate man?

29. Compare the negotiations used by Abraham's faithful servant to outwit Laban when he negotiated for Rebekah and the marriage of Isaac with this deal struck by Jacob (see Genesis 24:33;49:56).

NOTE: Verses 24 and 29 name the maids given by Laban to Leah (Zilpah) and Rachel (Bilhah) because they are to become mothers of four of Jacob's sons.

30. CONNECTION: Exiled because he conspired against family members, Jacob has himself become the victim of an elaborate plot. A dark tent, one sibling posing as another, a sightless victim led astray by his sense of touch - it is a surprising replay of his own act of trickery. The consequences of deceitful acts are painful and long lasting. How can the grace of God counteract such negative feelings? One way to restore our trust in others after experiencing deceit is to seek out those whom we respect and admire. Is there someone you would turn to who embodies honesty and sincerity in your life? Describe that person for your group or another idea for countering acts of deceit.

Read and record Joshua 1:5. As you pray today, know that you are never alone in your struggles.

DAY SIX

Read Genesis 29:30-35

31. As we begin today, Rachel has become the second wife of Jacob. In your own words, describe Jacob's life in Haran for the next seven years according to verse 30.

32. What might have been some problems when sisters married the same man? (See [Leviticus 18:18](#) which later prohibited marriages with sisters.)

33. Though life seemed good for Jacob, we learn in verse 31 that the lives of his wives were troubled. Comment below on what their lives might have been like.

Leah

Rachel

34. In verses 32-35, we learn that after Leah had four children "she ceased bearing children." Record below why she chose their names.

Rueben

Simeon

Levi

Judah

35. Look up one of the following verses and record a few things you learn about Leah's children in the last words of Jacob to his grown sons.

[Genesis 49:3-4](#) (Reuben)

[Genesis 49:5-7](#) (Simeon and Levi)

[Genesis 49:8-10](#) (Judah)

NOTE: Jacob's marriages have special importance because from them will come the twelve tribes of Israel. Therefore, the sacred writer carefully identified who the mother of each son was and the names of each which involve wordplay related to the circumstances of their births. Of special note are Judah, who was the ancestor of David and was listed in the genealogy of Jesus ([Matthew 1:2](#)), and Levi, who was the ancestor of the priestly peoples of Israel.

36. CONNECTION: “When the Lord saw that Leah was unloved, he opened her womb.” The LORD saw that she was unloved and sought to ease her pain. It is often true that we don’t have to look far to see those who feel unloved. St. Teresa of Calcutta said, “The poverty of being unwanted, unloved and uncared for is the greatest poverty. We must start in our own homes to remedy this kind of poverty.” It is through us that God reaches out to ease the pain and loneliness of others. Mother Teresa’s words should challenge us to think of the unloved...who might they be? Who in your life might be alone and unwanted? Share with others how you could help.

Read and record Psalm 27:14. Today write a prayer for those in your life who are alone and unloved.

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