

# The Life & Times of Jacob

FROM FLIGHT TO RECONCILIATION  
GENESIS 28:10-36:43

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## General Structural Overview

REFERENCE	SECTION TITLE
28:10-22	The Journey to Haran
29:1-30:24	The "Birthing" of a Nation ... Literally!
30:25-43	Jacob's Prosperity in Haran
31:1-33:20	The Return and Reconciliation
34:1-35:22	Jacob's Days in Canaan
35:23-29	The Son's of Israel (i.e. Jacob)
36:1-43	Esau's Genealogy

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## Opening Thoughts

- \* Jacob is an amalgamation of the “best” and the “worst” of Abraham & Isaac
- \* While a “Momma’s Boy” Jacob was a capable individual
- \* He was leaving his father’s house, but the God of his fathers appeared, spoke to, and became his God
  - ◆ God’s assurances are striking considering Jacob’s behavior ...
  - 📖 Reminding us that our failures cannot overpower God’s grace

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## Opening Thoughts

- \* Jacob’s marital problems rival Abraham’s ... producing conflict & bitterness “in the camp”
- \* Excepting Moses, Jacob had the most vivid & frequent encounters with the LORD ... the ladder; the wrestling match
- \* Jacob reaped what he sowed — Reminding us of Gal 6:7ff

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# The Journey to Haran

GENESIS 28:10-22

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## Structure

- \* God's assurance — vv. 10-15
- \* Jacob's response — vv. 16-22
  - ◆ Worship — vv. 16-19
  - ◆ Vow — vv. 20-22

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## God's Assurance

- \* What is most notable about God's assurance?
  - ◆ The timing ... and, of course, on the heels of treachery
  - ◆ Jacob was likely having a moment of weakness 2-3 days into the journey ≈ 50 miles from Beersheba
    - ▶ Though in his 70's this is his first time alone away from home
- \* This is the 1<sup>st</sup> of 7 theophanies Jacob experiences
  - ◆ Cf. 31:3, 11-13; 32:1-2; 32:24-30; 35:1; 35:9-13; 46:1-4
- \* The dream has two parts — what are they?

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## God's Assurance

- ◆ The vision itself — vv. 10-13a
- ◆ The vision explained — vv. 13b-15
- \* The heavenly vision itself — vv. 10-13a
  - ◆ Having traveled 2-3 days, and the sun setting, Jacob “beds down” for the night
  - ◆ **Anyone ever slept on a “rock pillow?”** ... I'd at least have a neck ache — if not a dream!

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# God's Assurance

- ◆ What in vv. 10-13a tells us that Jacob is impressed or startled by the dream?
  - The word **BEHOLD** repeated three times in vv. 12 (2x's), 13a
  - Behold .. A ladder; Behold .. Angels; Behold .. THE LORD!!!!
- ◆ God led Jacob "to" or "near to" the site of God's appearance to Abram in Gen 12:7-9
- ◆ What does Jacob see in the vision?
  - A BIG ladder — or staircase ...
  - That extends from heaven to earth ...
  - An "angel shuttle" ...

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# God's Assurance

- **Yahweh Himself** — either above the ladder or beside Jacob ...  
"above" is probably better
- \* What does this "vision" symbolize?
  - ◆ Continuous communion between heaven & earth
  - ◆ Mediated by God through His holy angels
  - ◆ For the care of His children on earth!
- \* What later revelation does the Bible provide about the ladder?
  - ◆ It prefigures Christ and His mediating work - John 1:51 [TURN]

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# Angelology

AN EXCURSUS — NEXT WEEK

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# God's Assurance

- \* The vision explained — vv. 13b-15
  - ◆ As magnificent as the vision must have been ...
  - ◆ God's words of assurance provided the real comfort
- \* What do we learn about God in the assurance?
  - ◆ He is a **living God who exists** - v. 13b ("I am")
  - ◆ He is an **omnipresent God** - v. 15 ("wherever")
  - ◆ He is an **omnipotent God** - v. 15 ("until I have done ...")
  - ◆ He is a **gracious God** - v. 15 ("what I have promised you")

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# God's Assurance

\* What are God's assurance in vv. 13-14?

- ◆ The land and its extent - vv. 13c, 14b
- ◆ Numerous descendants - v. 14a
- ◆ General blessings to the families of the earth - v. 14c
- ◆ The specific "Seed" blessing - v. 14d
  - ▶ Hard to see in the EV's ... as they combine the blessing
  - ▶ Literally, v. 14 reads ... "And all the families of the earth will be blessed in you, AND in your seed."

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# God's Assurance

- ▶ I think it is constructed this way for emphasis —
- ▶ There will be general blessings flowing through the Abrahamic Covenant ...
- ▶ And, a very specific Messianic blessing ... THE SEED

\* These all repeat aspects of the Abrahamic Covenant — being passed on to Jacob

\* But God strings on something in addition ... What is it?

- ◆ Four very personal reassurances —
  - ▶ I am with you ... God's personal presence

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## God's Assurance

- » I will keep you — God's personal protection
- » I will bring you back — God's personal promise ... part 1
- » I will not leave you until I have fulfilled everything I have promised — God's personal promise .. part 2

### \* Why does God add these personal assurances to the Covenant promises?

- ◆ Because He is taking Jacob out of the land ...
- ◆ So God spoke to all of Jacob's unspoken insecurities

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## God's assurances

- \* I'm lonely God ... "I'll be with you"
- \* I'm afraid God ... "I'll keep you"
- \* Will I ever come home God ... "I'll bring you back"
- \* Will everything work out God ... "I'll do what I've promised"
- \* All marvelous and precious promises ... and a great reminder to us in times of trial!

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## Jacob's Worship

- \* Jacob responds as his forefathers did ... in worship
- \* His immediate reaction to the dream comes in vv. 16-17
- \* Likely waking from the dream in the night, Jacob first recognizes the significance ... **the LORD** is in this place!!!
- \* "... and I did not know it" suggests the full extent of the revelation made to Jacob — namely **God's omnipresence**
  - ◆ He experienced nothing less than God's presence in the dream — precisely where he was ...

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## Jacob's Worship

- ◆ Receiving and experiencing great relief that God has gone "with him," and not deserted him ...
- ◆ Which alone would be a great reassurance having left the safe confines of his home and his parents
- \* And then in v. 17 Jacob has the appropriate reaction of any sinner in God's presence
- \* **What is it?**
  - ◆ Fear first, followed by reverent awe

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# Jacob's Worship

\* Does this remind you of other occasions of God's presence?

- ◆ How about the transfiguration ... Matt 17:5-6
- ◆ Or Isaiah ... Isa 6:1ff
- ◆ Or Moses ... Exod 3:5-6

\* Jacob goes on to recognize the place as "God's house" and the "gate of heaven"

\* His lasting reaction comes in vv. 18-19 when he arises in the morning

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# Jacob's Worship

\* What are they?

- ◆ To place and anoint a memorial stone — note this is not an altar
- ◆ To give the place a memorial name ... בֵּית־אֵל ... which is a compound word meaning "House of God"

\* Jacob now moves to the second part of his response in vv. 20-22 ... which is to make a [vow](#)

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# Jacob's Vow

- \* What is going on here — is the wheeler dealer Jacob “making” a bargain with God?
  - ◆ NO ... but it is tricky to understand because of the “conditional clause” construction (i.e. “if/then”)
- \* We need to do a little background work on Biblical vows to understand
- \* The noun (נֶדָוָה) and verbal (נָדָה) forms of the Hebrew words “vow, to vow” occur 91x’s
  - ◆ 89x’s in the OT, 2 x’s in the NT — It is a OT concept!

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# Jacob's Vow

- \* NT use is found in Acts alone
  - ◆ Acts 18:18 of Paul shaving his head upon fulfillment of a vow
  - ◆ Acts 21:23 of Paul to appease “Jewish Christians” who felt he was denying the Law
  - ◆ In both instances, Paul is exercising his “liberties” fully knowing that he is not bound by the OT Law
    - In the one case he exercises his liberty to make & complete a vow ... shaving his head (18:18)
    - And in the other case he is giving us a liberty so as not to stumble Jewish believers (21:23)

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## Jacob's Vow

- \* The OT use of vow is far more extensive ...
- \* Falling into three categories
  - ◆ Laws about vows in general
  - ◆ Laws about the Nazirite vow
  - ◆ Actual vows made by OT people
- \* Laws about vows deal with the rituals associated with making and fulfilling a vow (votive offerings)
  - ◆ These are found in Lev, Num, Deut, 1 Sam, Eccl

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## Jacob's Vow

- \* Laws about the Nazirite vow (Num 6 ... [Turn])
  - ◆ This is a special vow to set oneself apart for the Lord for a particular service for a specific period of time
    - ▶ Though Samson and Samuel were lifetime examples
  - ◆ Verses 1-8 define the three rules of the Nazirite vow
    - ▶ You shall not shave the hair of your head
    - ▶ You shall not imbibe alcohol
    - ▶ You shall not come in to contact with a dead person

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## Jacob's Vow

- ◆ It goes on to define the remedy for unintentional impurity related to a dead person - vv. 9-12
  - Shave your head, make sacrifices, start over again ... no previous time credit given!
- ◆ And closes with the procedure for "closing" the vow once fulfilled - vv. 15-20
- \* Additional Naziritic vow laws are found in Deut 30 ... defining who can and cannot make a binding vow
  - ◆ A man ... presumably of age

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## Jacob's Vow

- ◆ A female widow
- ◆ An unmarried woman ... if not disapproved by her father
- ◆ A married woman ... if not disapproved by her husband (Hannah is an example)
- \* Actual vows in the OT
  - ◆ The first is found in our text today ... Jacob
  - ◆ Then we have the nation of Israel in Num 21:2
    - Vow to go to war against King Arad in the Negev

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## Jacob's Vow

- ◆ Followed by a VERY RASH vow ... anyone remember who this is?
  - ▶ Jephthah - Judg 11:30 ... 39 = fulfillment
- ◆ Samson is next ... actually set aside by God to be a Nazirite from birth - Judg 13:2ff
- ◆ Samuel ... offered by his Mother Hannah (and Elkanah's approval) for life - 1 Sam 1:11
- ◆ Absalom ... though used for trickery - 2 Sam 15-7-8

## Jacob's Vow

- \* OT vow formula ... "if/then"
  - ◆ Each of the aforementioned vows follow the same "grammatical construction"
  - ◆ In every case, the "if" is not a pure condition
  - ◆ Rather it is defining a request or supplication (petition) made to God to do something
  - ◆ The "then" part of the vow states what the supplicant will do in thanksgiving
  - ◆ **NOTE:** In every case, the one making the vow proceeds in anticipation of God fulfilling the supplication!

## Jacob's Vow

- \* Vows are not imposing a condition upon God ... rather they are appeals for Him to act in some particular way
  - ◆ Perhaps even an “acknowledgment” or a “confidence” that God WILL ACT in a particular way
  - ◆ To see this, substitute the word “since” for “if”
- \* So with that — let's look at Jacob's vow ...
- \* He has just finished worshipping in vv. 16-19

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## Jacob's Vow

- \* So it is incomprehensible to me that Jacob would follow this by “testing God” ... or attempting to bargain with God
- \* Rather, I believe it is Jacob's expression of thanksgiving and gratitude for God's assurances in vv. 13b-15
- \* OR ... it could be an expression of faith in what God will do!
- \* Either way, note how he connects his vow in v. 20 with the promise of v. 15
  - ◆ v. 15: Behold I am with you and will keep you ...
  - ◆ v. 20: If God will be with me and will keep me ...

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## Jacob's Vow

- ◆ And then Jacob goes on in v. 20 to enumerate temporal details like food & clothing
- \* Even though he focuses on the “personal and temporal” over the “grand and eternal” he is not ignorant of the greater promises ...
- \* Rather, he is unfolding in his mind the potentialities, in practical terms, of God's presence
- \* Jacob may be petty in his focus, but he does “[GET IT](#)”

## Jacob's Vow

- \* We work this out 1 of 3 ways grammatically ...
  - ◆ The first, and easiest, is to substitute the word “[since](#)” for the word “[if](#)” in v. 20 ...
    - This would suggest that Jacob is simply “owning” and further articulating the promises of God ...
    - With a particular focus on the final part of God's promise ... “[I am with you](#)”
  - ◆ This is acceptable, but a little “accommodating” because every vow follows the [if/then](#) structure



## Jacob's Vow

- ◆ The second way to address the “if” is to view it as an “if of assumption”
  - ▶ We do this all the time — for example ...
  - ▶ Lets say you tell me that you are going to the grocery store
  - ▶ I might say ... Well IF you are going to the grocery store, THEN would you pick up a gallon of milk for me.
  - ▶ I'm not bargaining or questioning, I'm simply affirming your statement and responding to its veracity with a request.
- ◆ This is also an acceptable grammatical solution that would fit all situations, but ...

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## Jacob's Vow

- \* There is a “best” grammatical solution
  - ◆ This solution identifies the protasis and apodosis differently than the text ...
    - ▶ This is fancy language for where you put the “if” and the “then” in a conditional clause
    - ▶ The if indicates the protasis ... i.e. the “condition”
    - ▶ And the then indicates the apodosis ... i.e. the “the result”

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# Jacob's Vow

- ◆ The forms of the verb give us strong support for moving the “then” from the final clause of v. 21 to the beginning of v. 22 [READ]
- ◆ Notice vv. 20-21
  - ▶ If God ... will be with me; will keep me; will give me; will return me; will be my God
  - ▶ The first “will be” uses a form that gives us the view of the person affected as the action of the verb develops ... i.e. looking at the action from the “inside-out”
  - ▶ The following “will be’s” use a form that expresses the action as a completed whole — here [expressing the certainty of occurrence](#) in the mind of the speaker ... also known as looking “outside-in”

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# Jacob's Vow

- ▶ Grammatically these two things are known as “aspect”
  - ◆ Hebrew verbs do not strictly indicate time — rather the nature of the action of the verb ... we get time from the context of the verse
- ◆ Now in v. 22 the grammatical construction changes to a different and abnormal construction
  - ▶ Normal Hebrew sentences follow [verb, subject, object](#) order
  - ▶ Verse 22 alters this with a [subject, adjective clause, verb](#) order ... indicating a “disjunctive relationship” with the prior verse — by disjunctive I mean a change in direction
  - ▶ The “disjunction” defines the switch from [conditions to results](#)

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