

Review

- * Last week we were looking at Gen 31 which records the events of Jacob's exodus from Haran ...
- * The exodus plays out in "3-scenes"
 - ◆ The flight from Laban - vv. 1-21
 - ◆ Laban's pursuit - vv. 22-42
 - ◆ Laban's release - vv. 43-55
- * We ended last week in the final stages of Laban's pursuit where he has completed his search of Jacob's tents after accusing him of stealing the family idols — leading to Jacob's response

The Diatribe

- * Jacob finally musters some "chutzpah" and the pent-up emotions of years finds its voice
- * Jacob's diatribe comes out in two parts
- * In part 1 in vv. 36-37 Jacob defends his core honor and integrity ... i.e. his innocence
- * And in part 2 in vv. 38-42 he defends his 20 years of service rendered to Laban

The Diatribe

- * He defends his honor and integrity with two questions — **What are they?**
 - ◆ **What is my transgression** ... posited in reference to the accusation of the stolen household gods
 - ◆ **What is my sin** ... posited in reference to his fleeing Haran
 - ◆ The two defenses — expressed in the “rhetorical offensive” — are responses to Laban’s initial browbeating and subsequent blustering

The Diatribe

- * He ends with a final challenge for Laban to produce the evidence of Jacob’s “infidelity”
 - ◆ Which, of course, we already know he cannot
- * Having defended his honor, Jacob now vindicates his years of faithful service in vv. 38-42, with several salvos
- * The first salvo covers the **term and quality of his service**
 - ◆ He served 20 years
 - ◆ And Laban experienced only INCREASE — suffering no losses by miscarriage, nor by rightful provision of food

The Diatribe

- * The second salvo identifies the **sacrificial nature** of Jacob's service
 - ◆ He unjustly bore the loss of torn animals, contrary to ...
 - ◆ ANE custom which allowed for the shepherd to be relieved of responsibility for a dead animal if he could produce the "torn" animal ... thus indicating he had driven-off the predatory animal
- * The third salvo articulates the **strenuous nature** of Jacob's service
 - ◆ He endured extreme heat and cold ... and long hours w/o sleep

The Diatribe

- * The fourth and final salvo spells out Laban's **dishonesty and deceit**
 - ◆ Despite 14 years of service for his two wives and 6 additional years for his own flocks ...
 - ◆ Laban changed Jacob's wages "time-after-time" (i.e. 10x's)
- * Jacob closes with a pious affirmation identifying the source of his prosperity and protection, and ...
- * God's judgment on Laban
- * Having been thoroughly upbraided, the text turns to Laban's response in vv. 43-55

Laban's Release

- * To which of Jacob's "salvos" does Laban respond?
 - ◆ NONE — Jacob's diatribe essentially asserts his just and fair treatment of Laban in all matters ... to which Laban has no credible rebuttal
 - ◆ So Laban responds by "redirecting" to another topic ...
 - ◆ Skillfully substituting one question for another in his reply
- * How does Laban do this?
 - ◆ He pontificates, then poses a new question that he wants to answer!
 - ◆ Velly sneaky ...

Laban's Release

- * How does he pontificate?
 - ◆ By asserting that everything that Jacob has belongs to him
- * What is the new question he poses?
 - ◆ What can I do to my daughters or their children? ... Suggesting by way of question that he will do nothing to harm or retain them
- * Having "reframed" the discussion, what does Laban propose?
 - ◆ A peace treaty — taking a play from the "Abimelech playbook"
- * Laban is tricky ... But he is not stupid

Laban's Release

- * How does Jacob signal his assent to making a treaty?
 - ◆ He builds the "memorial" — comprised of a pillar and a heap of stones
- * As with his father before him in his treaty with Abimelech in Gen 26:26ff ...
- * Jacob takes the initiative and overlooks Laban's "misrepresentations"
- * Why?
 - ◆ Also like his father before him he sees the value of peaceful coexistence in the land

Laban's Release

- * Both Laban and Jacob memorialize the heap with a name
 - ◆ Laban: Jegar-sahadutha — Aramaic for 'heap of witness'
 - ◆ Jacob: Galeed — Hebrew for 'heap of witness'
- * After Jacob has created the memorial stones, Laban once again takes the lead ...
- * What is characteristic about Laban's taking over?
 - ◆ Laban — as he has done for 20 years — appropriates Jacob's work as his own

Laban's Release

- * Laban first confirms the role of the memorial heap — it is to be a witness between Laban and Jacob “this very day!”
- * And he also gives the memorial a second functional name — Mizpah
 - ◆ The name means ‘watch-tower’ and is derived from the Hebrew root מִצַּח which means ‘to watch over’
 - ◆ So the heap is both a ‘witness’ and a ‘sentinel’ to their treaty

Laban's Release

- * With the ‘Treaty Markers’ in place, Laban moves on to the terms
 - ◆ May the LORD be our “watchman” when we are apart
 - ◆ Gen 31:49 is a sad case of a verse taken completely out of context — *Anyone heard of the Mizpah benediction or the Mizpah coin?*
 - ◆ It is spoken or presented as an expression of God to lovingly watch-over two close friends or a couple!
- * *What do you think — does this fit the context?*

Laban's Release

- * Sadly not — Rather, Laban is painting Jacob as an unsavory character who needs “punitive watching”
- * What does Laban want to be watched-over?
 - ◆ Jacob's treatment of his daughters ...
 - ◆ ARE YOU KIDDING ME!
 - ◆ Isn't Laban the one who gave them no inheritance and treated them like foreigners — cf. vv. 14-15
- * Well ... this is just a warm-up term
- * Laban gets to his real concern in v. 52 — What is it?

Laban's Release

- ◆ He wants to be protected from retribution ...
- ◆ Likely reflecting the very thing he would do were he in Jacob's shoes
- * What action from God does Laban invoke in this term of the agreement?
 - ◆ Not merely watch-over, but 'judge' between them!
- * With this little oratory, Laban hits the peak of hypocrisy — reminding us that ...
 - ◆ Pious speech cannot hide hypocrisy

Laban's Release

* Can you think of a NT example of this implication?

◆ How about ... the Scribes and the Pharisees

* Overlooking all of Laban's hubris, Jacob agrees to the deal ...

* Swearing by the 'fear of his father Isaac'

◆ By this Jacob means "the reverential awe" of his father Isaac for Yahweh

◆ And he neatly sidesteps any of Laban's pious concoctions ... and particularly the 'God of Nahor'

Laban's Release

* Jacob signals the close and ratification of the Treaty with a sacrificial meal ...

* Likely offered in "thanksgiving" to God that Laban's threat is removed ...

* Versus a joint offering of Jacob (a true follower) and Laban (an idolater)

* For his part, Laban closes and ratifies the deal with the very thing he chastised Jacob for withholding ...

◆ Namely he kisses his sons (grandsons) and daughters, and he blesses them — thus ending our encounters with Laban!

Closing Thoughts

- * With Laban behind him — Jacob looks forward to his remaining fear ... His reunion with Esau
- * We will take up this topic up in just a minute ...
- * But in preparation, I want to point out one more subtle aspect of the treaty with Laban
- * The heap of stones and the pillar represent a line of demarcation between Laban and Jacob

Closing Thoughts

- * Whoever passes over this demarcation point is now considered to be an invader
- * Now — in terms of his upcoming encounter with Esau ... **Why is this important?**
 - ◆ Because Jacob has no avenue of retreat ...
 - ◆ He has no option but to move forward to meet Esau
 - ◆ Jacob has passed the point of NO RETURN!

The Reunion with Esau

Gen 32-33

Opening Thoughts

- * There are two central themes in this section
 - ◆ Jacob's struggle for control — will he persist in self-sufficiency or surrender to God
 - ◆ God's faithfulness in fulfilling the last of his promises to Jacob — return to the land
- * While he left Laban "unannounced," Jacob "trumpets" his return to Esau
- * Jacob feared both Laban and Esau, but when he encountered Laban he was bold, yet with Esau timid — Why?
 - ◆ Because with Laban his conscience was clear — but not so with Esau!

Opening Thoughts

- * The **angels of God** appeared to Jacob upon his departure from the land and now greet him upon his return
 - ◆ Note Gen 28:12; 32:1 (only here in the OT in the plural form)
 - ◆ Surely Jacob made this connection!
- * God wrought miraculous change in the 2 brothers
 - ◆ Jacob went from a **"heel grabber"** to a **"giver"**
 - ◆ Esau went from seeking **"revenge"** to **"reconciliation"**

Structure of the Section

- * Preparation for the reunion - Gen 32
 - ◆ God's messengers ... An angelic army - vv. 1-2
 - ◆ Jacob's messengers - vv. 3-5
 - ◆ Jacob's fleshly response - vv. 6-8
 - ◆ Jacob's spiritual response - vv. 9-12
 - ◆ Jacob's fleshly plans - vv. 13-23
 - ◆ Jacob's spiritual encounter - vv. 24-32

Structure .. Continued

- * Gen 32 is the Romans 7 of the OT ...
 - ◆ We see the same struggle between the flesh and the spirit that Paul records in Rom 7 as Jacob prepares for his encounter with Esau
- * The key to understanding the chapter is to recognize how the narrative “see-saws” between walking in the flesh and walking in the spirit
 - ◆ First the spiritual army is revealed - vv. 1-2
 - ◆ Then the flesh dominates - vv. 3-8

Structure .. Continued

- ◆ Followed by the spiritual in Jacob's prayer - vv. 9-12
- ◆ Then back to the flesh with his scheming - vv. 13-23
- ◆ And culminating with Jacob's spiritual “Mt. Moriah experience” - vv. 24-32
- * The chapter is a marvelous tutorial on the practical reality of the battle between the flesh and the spirit in the believer

God's Messengers

- * Having been “released” by Laban — Jacob proceeds on his way to Canaan where God reveals that Jacob has an angelic escort
- * Likely recalling his dream in Gen 28 (Jacob's ladder), he recognized the escort as God's angels and declares it to be **God's camp ...**
 - ◆ To which Jacob responds with the memorial name **Mahanaim** from the Hebrew root **חננה** which means 'to camp or encamp'
 - ◆ The word is in the **dual form** which means 2 or a pair

God's Messengers

- ◆ By this name, Jacob is acknowledging that he is now **two camps ...** his human camp and God's angelic hosts as escort
- * This would obviously be both joyous and encouraging to Jacob
- * **But why would Jacob need this reassurance at this point of the story?**
 - ◆ Because of the treaty with Laban — The pillar and heap of witness marked a “line in the sand” ... Jacob had **NO RETREAT**
 - ◆ As he faced his fear of Esau he knew there was no turning back
 - ◆ So God gives Jacob a reminder of His promise to be with him!

Jacob's Messengers

- * God sent his messengers to assist Jacob and now Jacob sends his **messengers** (same Hebrew word translated angels in v. 1) to announce his arrival to Esau — **Why?**
 - ◆ He wants to “take Esau's temperature” ...
 - ◆ Because his mother “had not sent word” as to whether Esau had **cooled off** — cf. Gen 27:43-45
- * **Besides fear, what does this suggest about Jacob?**
 - ◆ He has some degree of conscience bothering him

Jacob's Messengers

- * **What is odd about v. 4?**
 - ◆ Jacob is switching the “ordained” roles
 - ◆ Tell my **lord** Esau that his **servant** Jacob ...
- * He then informs Esau of where he has been, along with his prosperity in vv. 4b & 5
- * **Why does he “highlight” his prosperity?**
 - ◆ Maybe to appeal to Esau's greed — but Esau has never displayed such

Jacob's Messengers

- ◆ Maybe to suggest to Esau that Jacob was a man to be reckoned with ... I left with nothing but I have a lot now (maybe even an army!)
- ◆ Maybe to suggest that he was not coming back to "mooch" off Esau
- ◆ Maybe its an attempt at full disclosure so as to demonstrate a new openness ... i.e. he has no deceitful intentions in coming back
- * It is hard to be certain from the text, but Esau's response makes me think he may have thought in terms of option 2
- * What is Jacob hoping for from Esau?
 - ◆ GRACE (text says favor ... it is the Hebrew word for grace)

Jacob's Fleshly Response

- * What is interesting about Esau's response?
 - ◆ There is none ...
- * Rather, Jacob's messengers return to inform him that Esau is already on his way — with a small army of men ...
- * To which news Jacob panics and assumes the worst about Esau's intentions ... just his father and grandfather before him
- * Why do you think Esau brought 400 men to meet Jacob?

Jacob's Fleshly Response

- ◆ Maybe Esau was leery of Jacob — he has reason to be!
- ◆ After all — Jacob's communication track record has been less than impeccable
- ◆ Maybe Esau thinks Jacob has left out some important details in his announcement ... like 400 men of his own!
- * We need to be careful not to accuse Esau unfairly
 - ◆ We will learn he was no longer angry, but he still has every reason to be distrustful of Jacob, and ...
 - ◆ Have legitimate concerns of his own — so he comes prepared

Jacob's Fleshly Response

- * How does Jacob's respond to the news of Esau's approaching "army?"
 - ◆ He employs a pretty standard, but fleshy, military tactic ...
 - ◆ He divides his forces so they won't all be wiped out in one attack
- * But then, perhaps realizing the futility of this response, Jacob turns to God in vv. 9-12

Jacob's Spiritual Response

- * What is Jacob's spiritual response?
 - ◆ He prays! ... This marks his first recorded prayer
- * And he prays well — though missing one thing
- * What are the 5 parts of Jacob's prayer?
 - ◆ Adoration - v. 9
 - ◆ Confession - v. 10a; and Thanksgiving - v. 10b
 - ◆ Supplication - v. 11
 - ◆ Pleading (maybe an extension of supplication) - v. 12

Jacob's Spiritual Response

- * What is the missing part?
 - ◆ How should I handle the encounter with Esau?
- * In vv. 7-8 he skipped prayer and moved directly to human planning
- * In vv. 9-12 he invoked prayer ... yet was in some ways still "double-minded"
 - ◆ Maybe it was double insurance?
 - ◆ I'll pray — but I'll also plan ... maybe concurrently working out the details of his plan while he was praying! You ever do this??

Jacob's Spiritual Response

- * Why would I say his prayer may have been half-hearted?
 - ◆ Because his next step was right back to scheming in v. 13ff
- * Now I understand there might be a fine line between the wisdom of Prov 16:9 ...
 - ◆ "The mind of man plans his way, But the LORD directs his steps"
 - ◆ But I think that Jacob's self-reliance is still ruling his life
- * So while making progress, Jacob still falls short of FULL RELIANCE on God ...

Jacob's Spiritual Response

- * Which has some good implications for us ...
 - ◆ Is our prayer earnest ... or perfunctory?
 - ◆ Do we REALLY trust that God hears and answers prayer?
 - ◆ Is prayer our primary — or secondary — response to trials?
 - ◆ What do we fear more ... God or man?
 - ◆ The core issue is surrender or maybe submission ... do we give up possessions but not ourselves?

Jacob's Fleshly Plans

- * Now “prayed-up” Jacob reverts to form
- * Verses 13-21 present an elaborate conciliatory plan to pacify Esau
- * Jacob prepares a “present” for Esau comprised of
 - ◆ 580 animals ... (assumes each camel has one calf)
 - ◆ Sent out in either 5 or 9 different “droves” — means groups
 - ◆ With the servant leading each drove instructed to deliver the same message when they encountered Esau

Jacob's Fleshly Plans

- * What is Jacob's hope?
 - ◆ That the overwhelming present will appease Esau
- * What's notable about the final clause of v. 20?
 - ◆ Perhaps this will work!
 - ☞ Which reminds us that with human effort we can never really know if it will work
- * What's fundamentally wrong with Jacob's approach?

Jacob's Fleshly Plans

- ◆ It treats what God intended to be **sufficient** (i.e. His promises and His angelic army) as mere **reinforcements**
- ◆ Causing Jacob to unnecessarily forfeit God's provision
- * So the droves go out "overnight"
- * And he did his final staging for the next day's journey by ...
 - ◆ Moving the remainder of his flocks and his entire camp across the Jabbok River — retreating for some quiet time

Jacob's Spiritual Encounter

- * **What is the point of the wrestling match?**
 - ◆ God would not let Jacob re-enter the land in his self-will and his own strength ... rather he must be wholly dependent on God
 - ⚡ **Self-sufficiency is incompatible with the work of God in any age!**
 - ◆ Some opine this is Jacob's "rebirth" — I disagree ... **Why?**
 - Rebirth is a NT concept ... don't read the old into the new
 - Jacob's struggle with sin is a sign of a believer (compare Rom 1:32)
- * **What is the victory that overcomes the world — the very thing that God wants Jacob to grasp?**
 - ◆ Our faith — 1 John 5:4

Jacob's Spiritual Encounter

- * Note the encounter starts with being alone
 - ◆ This is Jacob's "wilderness" experience ...
 - ☞ Which reminds us that God often needs to separate us from the hustle and bustle of life to get our attention
- * Who initiates the wrestling match?
 - ◆ GOD!!!!
- * What does this tell us about God?
 - ◆ He pursues us — what a wonderful thought ... particularly with regard to salvation

Jacob's Spiritual Encounter

- * What is the significance of wrestling ALL NIGHT?
 - ◆ Jacob fought hard to hold on to his self-sufficiency
 - ☞ Reminding us of three things: That we are at our fiercest when we are determined to have things our own way ...
 - ☞ That it takes time to break down our strongholds, and ...
 - ☞ The very nature of sin is that it resists God
- * What is the significance of the switch from fighting to clinging?
 - ◆ It signals his surrender and submission ... He is broken of self-will
 - ◆ Jacob remains a "grabber," but at least he clings to the right thing

Jacob's Spiritual Encounter

* What might be some good implications for us?

- 👉 Like Jacob, our self-sufficiency might need to be "crippled" in order to grow our "spiritual" strength
 - 👉 In God's eyes, Jacob was not yet ready to enter the land ... which might be why God is holding us back from somewhere we want to go
 - 👉 Like Jacob — God can break us at any time with a simple touch of His finger
- * Realizing he has wrestled with more than a man, Jacob demands a blessing before he will "let go"

Jacob's Spiritual Encounter

* Why does God ask Jacob to reveal his name?

- ◆ Jacob needed to be reminded of his nature (i.e. "heel grabber") — just as we must be reminded of our nature (i.e. "sinners"), teaching us that ...
- 👉 We must first understand what and who we are before we can be changed

* How does God bless Jacob?

- ◆ With a new name — ISRAEL (means "striving with God")

* What's the big deal with that?

- ◆ It signifies Jacob's "new nature"
- ◆ Here after ... When acting in the flesh he will be called **Jacob** — And when walking in the spirit ... **Israel**

Jacob's Spiritual Encounter

- * What NT figure has a similar pattern to his name?
 - ◆ Simon — Fleshly ... Peter — Spiritual
- * His new name signals that Jacob prevailed ... How did Jacob prevail — looks like he lost to me?
 - ◆ He won by losing — SAY WHAT??
- * What did he lose that made him a winner?
 - ◆ SELF ...
- * Ultimately we prevail as our will (i.e self) learns to ever more perfectly submit to God's will — eliminating ensuing struggle

Jacob's Spiritual Encounter

- * What should this make us mindful of?
 - ◆ The spirit and the flesh co-exist and they struggle against one-another!
- * Having been asked his name, Jacob now seeks to know the name of his "combatant"
- * Why does God answer as he does?
 - ◆ Because Jacob is asking for an unnecessary assurance ... Who else could it be other than God?
 - ◆ Instead, God goes on to bless him signaling that He is satisfied with Jacob's submission to His will!
 - ◆ NOTE: The content of the blessing is not important ... rather the fact OF the blessing which signals God's satisfaction with Jacob

Jacob's Spiritual Encounter

- * Indeed the name Jacob assigns to the place — Peniel — affirms that Jacob knew his combatant
 - ◆ It is a compound word comprised of the root noun פנה which means “face” and אל which means “God”
 - ◆ The two together give us the translation — “face of God”
- * Jacob marvels because he has encountered God “face to face” and lived ...
 - ◆ To which we know it was a “veiled view” because no one can see the full face of God and live (cf. Exod 33:20)

Jacob's Spiritual Encounter

- * The pericope ends with Jacob “limping away” ... *Is this a picture of pity or strength?*
 - ◆ I say STRENGTH
- * *Why?*
 - ◆ Turn to 2 Cor 12:7-10 [READ]
 - ◆ Ultimately God must break us — He needs to bring us to the end of ourselves ... as he did with Jacob and Moses and Paul
 - ◆ And then he can perfect his strength in our weakness
- * Here is the irony: *To the world we may look like cripples — but to God we look like GIANTS*
