

HE WRESTLES WITH GOD
A Study of the patriarch Jacob
Part 1 - The family lineage

Let's talk about it:

- 1) How did you meet your spouse?
 - * Was it a chance meeting? A formal introduction? Online / Dating app?
- 2) What role did / do parents play in partner selection for their children?
 - * Why do we still have a bride's father / family "give her away"?
 - * Prior to the 1840's (Victorian era) almost ALL marriages were arranged
 - * Do men still "ask for your daughter's hand in marriage"?
 - * What are some things, as a parent, you would look for in a spouse for your child?
- 3) What is consanguinity?
 - * Why would this be a problem (besides being the butt of rural jokes)?

I) Isaac needs a Bride

A) There's no good women around here - Genesis 24:1-9

- 1) Why couldn't Abraham just find "someone local"?
- 2) How important is spiritual / religious compatibility? (See I Cor. 7:12-17)
- 3) What was so bad about the Canaanites? Couldn't they "convert"?
- 4) "Put your hand under my thigh" - what?
 - * "Thigh" is an euphemism for "the loins"
 - * Our English word "testify" comes from an oath on the "testicles"
 - * Abraham is entering a covenant concerning his "seed" and the promise of that seed
 - * The covenant of circumcision also deals with the anatomy of the "loins"
 - * To have one's hand sat on was a sign of total submission
 - * In **James 5:12** we are told not to make oaths; our "yes" or our "no" should carry the weight of an oath
- 5) Why can't Isaac travel with Eliezer?
- 6) How can Eliezer of Damascus be sure he will find a wife for Isaac?
- 7) How common was "inbreeding" among ancient (and not so ancient) monarchies?

B) Road trip! Genesis 24:10-14

- 1) Why did Abraham's steward take so many camels and goods?
- 2) What did Eliezer do to secure success in his quest?

3) Is this “putting the Lord to the test”?

C) Rebekah’s Arrival - Genesis 24:15-27

- 1) How did God leave no doubt that “she’s the one”?
- 2) What is the relation of Rebekah to Isaac?
- 3) How did Rebekah fulfill Eliezer’s prayer without being prompted?
- 4) What were (and many places are) the rules of hospitality in that area?
- 5) Aren’t septum piercings a “red flag”? What’s with the nose ring?
 - * A symbol of wealth and social status
 - * Nose rings *nezemim* were also “engagement rings”
 - * Eliezer is subtly designating Rebekah as “wifey material”
- 6) Does Rebekah have the authority to extend hospitality to this “sojourner”?
- 7) How does Eliezer respond to Rebekah’s words

D) I have entered into negotiations with her father...we are to be wed - 24:28-54a

- 1) Why did Laban (more on him in lesson 3) come running to the spring?
- 2) Why does Abraham’s servant refuse to eat?
 - Would this violate the rules of hospitality?
- 3) What “escape clause” existed in the oath?
- 4) What’s the point of telling the story again? (Verse 49)
- 5) What was the reaction of Laban and Bethuel?
- 6) What is a “bride price”? How is it like and unlike a dowry?
- 7) So is marriage spiritual, social, political, economic, something else?

E) Here comes the bride 24:54b - 67

- 1) Why did they want Rebekah to stay?
- 2) What “social custom” did Laban overturn?
- 3) What is the blessing given to Rebekah?
- 4) Where was Isaac during all this?
- 5) Was Isaac and Rebekah “love at first sight”?
- 6) “He took her into his mother’s tent”
 - * How did these two “get married”?
 - * What does entering the tent of Sarah (passed 3 years earlier) signify?
 - * What “passing the baton” traditions do we hold to?
 - * Why mention Isaac’s love and comfort?
- 7) So was this “a marriage made in heaven”?

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Part 2 - Sibling Rivalry

We should talk:

- 1) What is *primogeniture*?
- 2) How does birth order shape personality?
- 3) How common are twins?

II) A tale of two brothers

A) The birth narrative - Genesis 25:19-28

- 1) What was the issue with Rebekah? (See also Gen. 29:31)
- 2) What was Isaac's response to this "problem"?
- 3) How is that different from how other generations of his line handled it?
- 4) What did the LORD say about what was growing in her womb?
- 5) What does the name "Esau" mean?
- 6) What does the name "Jacob" mean?
- 7) How would Jacob live up to his name throughout his life?

B) But it's my right! - Genesis 25:29-34, 27:1-40

- 1) What is a red stew?
 - * According to recipes.com it is a pottage - a pot with bits of this and that
 - * Ingredients include: red lentils, vegetable broth, onion, carrot, celery, garlic, cumin, parsley, cilantro, and lemon juice
 - * We have no idea what was in the pot, only that it was red
- 2) How would Esau's "nickname" come back to haunt the Israelites?
- 3) If Esau was such a great hunter, why sell his birthright for stew?
- 4) Why did Isaac favor Esau?
- 5) Who was the "mastermind" of Jacob's deception?
- 6) What was the importance of a final blessing?
- 7) Was Jacob being deceitful (27:39) given Esau sold his birthright in 25:33?
- 8) How does this reversal of blessing upset the social order?
- 9) How did Isaac's second blessing become a prophecy?

C) I hate you! - Genesis 27:41-28:5

- 1) How long can you stay angry at someone?
 - * Amalek was a son of Edom (Amalekites were violently opposed to Moses & co.)
 - * Agag, the Amalikite was spared by Saul, who was supposed to kill all Amelikites
 - * Agag would be the ancestor of Haman, who wreaked havoc in Esther's time
 - * As Esau married an Ishmaelite, some might argue the sibling rivalry continues now
- 2) How serious is Esau's death threat?
- 3) What is Rebekah most afraid of? (27:45) Why?
- 4) How does Rebekah convince Isaac to go along with her plan? (See chapter 29)
- 5) What's the difference between a Canaanite and a Hittite (Cimmarian)?
- 6) What further blessing does Isaac bestow on Jacob?
- 7) Why would "uncle Laban" be a safe place for Jacob?

D) The stone of Destiny - Gen. 28:10-22

- 1) Why use a rock as a pillow? That doesn't sound very comfortable.
- 2) Is Jacob's dream the origin of Led Zeppelin's "Stairway to Heaven"?
- 3) How does this dream show God is active in the day to day affairs of His people?
- 4) How are the LORD's words reminiscent of Genesis 15:5?
- 5) According to verse 17, 19 where did this dream take place?
- 6) What are the terms of the covenant Jacob makes with God?
- 7) Where is the stone Jacob dreamed on now (allegedly)?

Next week: The two wives of Jacob and Jacob sheep - Chapters 29-30

HE WRESTLES WITH GOD
A Study of the Patriarch Jacob
Part 3 - A Family Affair (Jacob's wives and children)

Let's Talk About It:

- 1) What did you have to do to "land" your spouse?
- 2) What part did / does "social custom" play in weddings / marriages today?
- 3) What is a "Jacob Sheep" (a rare / heritage breed)?
- 4) Matching game: Match Jacob's sons with their mother

_____ Judah	
_____ Gad	A) Rachel
_____ Zebulun	
_____ Simeon	B) Leah
_____ Reuben	
_____ Levi	C) Bilhah
_____ Naphtali	
_____ Asher	
_____ Dan	D) Zilpah
_____ Gad	
_____ Issachar	
_____ Joseph	

III) Jacob's wives and children

A) Rachel and Leah - Genesis 29:1-30

- 1) How does Jacob meeting Rachel parallel Isaac meeting Rebekah?
- 2) What was Rachel profession?
- 3) What is the relationship of Rachel and Leah to Jacob (mother's brother's daughters)
- see Leviticus 18 & 20 for consanguinity laws in the Old Testament
- 4) What does it mean that Leah had "weak eyes"?
- 5) What was the "bride price" for Rachel? (A long engagement?)
- 6) Is verse 25 the oldest recorded example of waking up next to someone and not remembering how they got in your bed? (Jacob the Frat boy?)
- 7) Why did Laban deceive the "heel grabber"?

- 8) How long did the tradition of the older sister must be married first survive?
* Shakespeare's "The taming of the Shrew" is predicated on this tradition
- 9) What did Jacob have to do before discussions concerning Rachel could begin?
* see also Deuteronomy 21-25 for the "rules" about newlyweds
- 10) What did Jacob have to do to "win" Rachel?
- 11) How was this "contract" different from the first?
- 12) What issue with *polyamory* did Jacob run into?

B) The 12 sons (and one daughter) of Jacob - Genesis 29:31-30:24

- 1) What "family issue" recurs with Jacob and Rachel and, later, Leah?
- 2) Which 2 tribes of Israel are not from Jacob's 12 sons?
- 3) What is Leah's "goal" in bearing sons?
- 4) What was Rachel's reaction to Leah's fertility?
- 5) Is 30:3 the Old Testament equivalent of surrogate motherhood?
- 6) How did Leah try to "even the score"?
- 7) What is the use and purpose of mandrakes?
- 8) How does 30:16 paint a very different picture of marriage than we have today?
- 9) Who is the only son born to Rachel?
* This will lead to problems and blessings by the end of Genesis

C) Jacob the Shepherd - Genesis 30:25-31:3

- 1) Why does Jacob suddenly wish to return to Canaan?
- 2) How does Laban recognize Jacob's value?
- 3) What are Jacob's "wages" to be?
* Was this "a good deal" for Laban?
- 4) How did Laban try to deceive Jacob (again)?
- 5) How did Jacob "stack the deck" in his favor?
- 6) How else did Jacob practice "livestock husbandry"?
- 7) What was Laban's reaction to Jacob's success?

Next week: Run for your life! Jacob runs from Laban, then meets Esau