

Genesis

Creation, Covenants, All Grace – study 23



NATION — & NATIONS

WHAT A TANGLED WEB WE WEAVE ... (27:41-28:9)

27:42-46 *What recent compromises come back to haunt Isaac, Rebekah and Jacob?*

(1) Isaac's continued preference of Esau is a sad commentary on his spiritual discernment this late in life. He seems to have completely ignored Esau's barter of the birthright and his grievous marriages (26:35). Isaac's natural desires were evidently more important to him than spiritual and moral values. This dependence on his senses turned out to be his undoing. ... Isaac's dependence upon his five senses resulted in his deception, and this provides a rather subtle warning to all who would depend solely on empirical evidence for truth! -- **John J. Davis, Paradise to Prison** p.236

(2) As a result of the deception, Esau deeply hated Jacob and fully intended to slay him after Isaac died ..., not realizing that Isaac would live another 43 years (35:28). Rebekah heard about Esau's intentions and suggested to Jacob that he flee to Haran and reside with her brother Laban "a few days" (vv. 43,44); she apparently agreed that the death of Isaac was not far away. -- *ibid*, p.238

(3) The last sentence, it has been well remarked, refers to the varying success of the future struggles between Israel and Edom, and introduces into the blessing of Jacob an element of judgment. And when we compare the words of Isaac with the history of Israel and Edom, down to the time when Herod the Idumean, possessed himself of the throne of David, we see how correctly the whole has been summed up in ... Hebrews (11:20): "By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come." -- **Alfred Edersheim, op. cit**, p.119

(4) 'Be sure your sin will find you out.' This message is writ large on every line of the story. All four found this out to their cost, as we see in the subsequent history of Isaac, Rebekah, Jacob, and Esau. They were never the same afterwards, and their sins in some respects dogged their footsteps all the rest of their days. If only Isaac had realised that at the outset, how much he might have saved himself and his family! 'Oh! What a tangled web we weave, When first we practise to deceive.' [Walter Scott, *Marmion*] -- **W.H.G. Thomas, op. cit**, p.41

28:1-5 As with Abraham, upon what does Isaac make God's full blessing depend? (24:1-4)

(5) The scriptural account itself abstains from all comment – but the history of aftertimes passes the severest criticism upon Jacob's conduct. The government of God which can make even sin subserve its purposes, soars so high above this tangled web that, without infringing human freedom, nothing comes to pass but what He has foreseen and predetermined. **Franz Delitzsch** *New Commentary on Genesis* vol.2 p. 158

28:6-9 Isaac's posterity is expanding – but in the desired direction?

STAIRWAY to (or is that from?) HEAVEN (28:10-22)

28:10-15 *Blessings promised Jacob are tied to what? (12:3; 18:18)*

(6) Jacob had been inclined to localize God in his father's tents: as many localize Him now in chapel, church, or minster; supposing that prayer and worship are more acceptable there than anywhere beside. Now he learned that God was equally in every place, on the moorland waste as well as by Isaac's altar, though his eye had been too blind to perceive Him. In point of fact, the difference lay not in God, but in himself; the human spirit carries with it everywhere its own atmosphere, through which it may see, or not see, the presence of the Omnipresent. If your spirit is reverent, it will discern God on a moorland waste. If your spirit is thoughtless and careless, it will fail to find Him even in the face of Jesus Christ. ... The difference is not in the place, or in the degrees of God's presence; but in the keenness of the spiritual eye, since all places are equally hallowed, and God is everywhere. **F.B. Meyer** *Israel* p 59

Do we, like Jacob,
fail to discern God is
everywhere?

28:16-22 *Certainly Jacob seems anxious to secure God's 'house' blessing. How is he with the blessing of all nations?*

(7) In the morning he acted in such a way as to manifest the two sides of his nature. His deep religious conviction and faith were indicated by his setting up of a stone, his anointing it with oil, and his naming of the place Beth-el, which signifies the house of God. His restless activity and keen managing meanness were manifested in the bargaining spirit in which he expressed himself. ... It was faith assuredly, but it moved on a low level. **G. Campbell Morgan** *Analysed Bible: Genesis* p.181

(8) ... Jacob is the typical Jew. His life is the epitome of that wonderful people, who are found in every country and belong to none; who supply us with our loftiest religious literature, and are yet a by-word for their craft, their scheming, and their love of money; who have supplied us with our highest ideals of nobility, and our lowest types of villainy; who have played so great a part in the history of the past, and are only waiting now for the final catastrophe which is to replace them in the van of the world's progress. No thoughtful man can ignore this

wonderful people. Their history is, without doubt, the key to the complications of modern politics; and it may be that their redemption is to be the fruit of that mighty travail, which is beginning to convulse all peoples, announced as it is, by throes of earthquake and the rumours of war. If we can understand the life of Jacob, we can understand the history of his people. The extremes which startle us in them are all in him. Like them, he is the most successful schemer of his times; and, like them, he has that deep spirituality, that far-seeing faith, which are the grandest of all qualities, and make a man capable of the highest culture that a human spirit can receive. Like them, he spends the greatest part of his life in exile, and amid trying conditions of toil and sorrow; and, like them, he is inalienably attached to that dear land, his only hold on which was by the promise of God and the graves of the heroic dead. But Jacob's character was purified by tremendous discipline. **F.B. Meyer** *Israel* p 11

CONSOLATIONS & LIMITS of HUMAN 'LOVE' (29:1-30)

29:1-20 We certainly see here Jacob's natural clan or tribal attachment, growing quickly into emotion, affection (vv 4,10,11); also we soon observe Rachel's (v 12); then Laban's (vv 13,14). Jacob's affection soon blossoms into eros as well (vv 17,18,20)

(9) The Oriental likes a woman's eyes to be lively, to glow, and therefore eye makeup was used from most ancient times. **Gerhard von Rad** *Genesis* p. 286

29:21-30 The problem with human bi-lateral covenants: they start from self-interest – a self-serving spirit which will stoop to deceit

(10) Next to the love of God comes the love of man or woman, as a factor in the education of a human spirit. Each one of us is capable of giving out a vast wealth of love; we must love and be loved; and almost everything depends on the twin-spirit whom we choose as the object of our affection; and as the hearth at whose fires we may warm ourselves, when chilled and repelled by an unfriendly world. That love may make or mar us; may transfigure or degrade us, and which it shall be is settled by the objects whom we choose, and the way in which we treat them. Jacob's encounter with Rachel at the first well he came to, reminds us that though there is nothing more important than the union of heart with heart, there is nothing into which people drift more heedlessly. A fancy, a look, a smile, a touch, a moment's talk in a crowded room, amid the excitement of an evening's gaiety – any of these is deemed sufficient to justify a choice, which may affect the destiny of the spirit for evermore. **F.B. Meyer** *Israel* p 65



GERHARD VON RAD
Less how she
looks than what
she regards!

BIRTH of a NATION (29:31-30:24)

29:31-35 Rather than envy other's gifts, let us praise the Lord for what we have

(11) And let Christian women lay aside all idea of attracting men to themselves. Let them quiet their hearts as weaned babes. Let them constitute themselves the wards of God: leaving Him to choose for them the one who shall give them strength for sweetness; defence for weakness; protection for helplessness; and love for love. **F.B. Meyer** *Israel* p 67

30:1-8 Envy breeds bitter fruit. A woman's natural desire will finally bite like a serpent (49:16-18; Rev. 7:4-8)

(12) It deserves special notice, that in the birth of at least 3 of these sons, Leah not only recognized God, but specially acknowledged Him as *Jehovah*, the covenant-God. ... we mark [Rachel's] gratified jealousy of her sister; and that, although she owned God, it was not as *Jehovah*, but as *Elohim*, the God of nature, not the covenant-God of the promise. **Alfred Edersheim** *Bible History* vol. 1 pp. 126-27 (italics in original)

30:9-18 How do both Rachel and Leah attempt to manipulate Providence?

(13) The mandragora is a plant frequently found in Palestine and also in Aramaea, its fruit and root are esteemed as a means of promoting fertility, and as an Aphrodisiacum in general ... **Franz Delitzsch** *Genesis* vol.2 p. 177

30:19-24 Despite their wavering faith (and trust in their plans), God remembers Rachel, and endows and honours Leah

(14) But Rachel must have been equally miserable: true, she had her husband's love, but she could not be sure of keeping it; and she had the mortification of seeing her sister's children growing up as her husband's heirs. How eagerly she prayed, and fretted, and proudly chafed! What wonder, then, that the children grew up wild and bad? - Reuben, unstable as water, excitable and passionate; - Simeon, quick to obey, but quick to desperate cruelty; and - Levi, a willing accomplice in his crime. When children turn out badly, and the beautiful gate of childhood does not lead to the fair temple of mature life, it is generally the fault of the home-training; and it is more often the result of what they see than of what they are taught. Whatever Jacob may have been and I fear that his example was none of the best, yet the impressions received in the women's tents, of high words and evil passion, would be enough to ruin any child. Beware how you act at home. Remember what keen little eyes are watching you; and with what absolute mimicry they will repeat what they see. **F.B. Meyer** *Israel* p 76