

Lesson 10: Genesis 28–33, “Surely the Lord is in This Place”

Jacob Travels to Haran

Isaac asks Jacob to travel back to Haran to find a wife

Gen 28:1-4

1 And Isaac called Jacob, and blessed him, and charged him, and said unto him, Thou shalt not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan.

2 Arise, go to Padan-aram, to the house of Bethuel thy mother’s father; and take thee a wife from thence of the daughters of Laban thy mother’s brother.

3 And God Almighty bless thee, and make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, that thou mayest be a multitude of people;

4 And give thee the blessing of Abraham, to thee, and to thy seed with thee; that thou mayest inherit the land wherein thou art a stranger, which God gave unto Abraham.

Why did Isaac tell Jacob to leave Canaan and go back to their homeland to find a wife?

To marry someone who was under the covenant

George Q. Cannon

“Isaac sent Jacob back to his mother's people, and commanded him not to take a wife of the daughters of Caanan; but to marry into his mother's family. He did so; he married... the daughters of Laban. And from these families and from that blood sprang the promised seed. It was the lineage through which the Priesthood ran; it was the lineage that was entitled to the blessings of the father, and on this account they were very particular as to whom they should marry. Isaac was the promised seed, and his father and mother were exceedingly desirous that he should marry in the right direction.” (JD, 25:360)

Russell M. Nelson

“Stalwart women have shown the strength and courage that covenant-keeping women always demonstrate. It would be impossible to measure the influence that such women have, not only on families but also on the Lord’s Church, as wives, mothers, and grandmothers; as sisters and aunts; as teachers and leaders; and especially as exemplars and devout defenders of the faith.” (CR, Oct. 2015)

Jacob has a vision, often referred to as Jacobs Ladder, that has a lasting impact on him

Gen 28:10-17

10 ¶ And Jacob went out from Beer-sheba, and went toward Haran.

11 And he lighted upon a certain place, and tarried there all night, because the sun was set; and he took of the stones of that place, and put them for his pillows, and lay

down in that place to sleep.

12 And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it.

13 And, behold, the LORD stood above it, and said, I am the LORD God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed;

14 And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.

15 And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.

16 ¶ And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the LORD is in this place; and I knew it not.

17 And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.

What made Jacob conclude that this place was the house of God?

Marion G. Romney

“When Jacob traveled from Beersheba toward Haran, he had a dream in which he saw himself on the earth at the foot of a ladder that reached to heaven where the Lord stood above it. He beheld angels ascending and descending thereon, and Jacob realized that the covenants he made with the Lord there were the rungs on the ladder that he himself would have to climb in order to obtain the promised blessings—blessings that would entitle him to enter heaven and associate with the Lord....

“Temples are to us all what Bethel was to Jacob. Even more, they are also the gates to heaven for all of our unendowed kindred dead. We should all do our duty in bringing our loved ones through them.” (“Temples—The Gates to Heaven,” Ensign, March 1971)

In what way is the house of God the gate of heaven?

John Taylor

“When I visited that holy Temple, accompanied by my brethren who were with me, we experienced a sacred thrill of joy, and a solemn, reverential sensation. As we entered its sacred portals, we felt that we were standing on holy ground, and experienced, with one of old, ‘Surely this is the house of God, and the gate of heaven.’ That is not simply a metaphorical expression, but a reality, for it is in that House, and it will be in the House to be built on this ground, that the most sacred ordinances of God are to be performed, which are associated with the interest and happiness of the human family, living and dead.” (JD, 19:34)

Note that the Lord reaffirms to Jacob that he and his seed will be the recipients

of the Abrahamic covenant

Jacob is more committed than ever keep commands and covenants that he has made

Gen 28:18-22

18 And Jacob rose up early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put for his pillows, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it.

19 And he called the name of that place Beth-el: but the name of that city was called Luz at the first.

20 And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on,

21 So that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the LORD be my God:

22 And this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee.

What did Jacob vow to do when he got to his father's homeland?

(all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee)

Dallin H. Oaks

We should not think that the payment and blessings of tithing are unique to members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Tithing is commanded in the Bible. Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek. Jacob covenanted to 'give the tenth' unto God. After the children of Israel were brought out of Egypt, the prophet Moses commanded that they should give a tenth to the Lord. ("Tithing," Ensign, May 1994)

How is this a lesson that when we pay our tithing we are just returning a portion of what the Lord has given to us?

Howard W. Hunter

"Jacob, at Bethel made a vow in these words: 'If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on... of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee.'

"[This] is in connection with the Levitical law. The Lord spoke through Moses: 'And all the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land, or of the fruit of the tree, is the Lord's: it is holy unto the Lord' (Lev 27:30.)" (CR, April 1964)

Jacob, Rachel, and Leah

Jacob agrees to work for Laban for 7 years so he can marry Rachel

Gen 29:15-21

15 ¶ And Laban said unto Jacob, Because thou art my brother, shouldest thou therefore serve me for nought? tell me, what shall thy wages be?
16 And Laban had two daughters: the name of the elder was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel.
17 Leah was tender eyed; but Rachel was beautiful and well favoured.
18 And Jacob loved Rachel; and said, I will serve thee seven years for Rachel thy younger daughter.
19 And Laban said, It is better that I give her to thee, than that I should give her to another man: abide with me.
20 And Jacob served seven years for Rachel; and they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her.
21 ¶ And Jacob said unto Laban, Give me my wife, for my days are fulfilled, that I may go in unto her.

Laban tricked Jacob into marrying Leah first and Jacob needed to work for Laban another 7 years before he could marry Rachel

Gen 29:26-30

26 And Laban said, It must not be so done in our country, to give the younger before the firstborn.
27 Fulfil her week, and we will give thee this also for the service which thou shalt serve with me yet seven other years.
28 And Jacob did so, and fulfilled her week: and he gave him Rachel his daughter to wife also.
29 And Laban gave to Rachel his daughter Bilhah his handmaid to be her maid.
30 And he went in also unto Rachel, and he loved also Rachel more than Leah, and served with him yet seven other years.

Leah bore the first four sons of Jacob

Gen 29:32-35

32 And Leah conceived, and bare a son, and she called his name Reuben: for she said, Surely the LORD hath looked upon my affliction; now therefore my husband will love me.
33 And she conceived again, and bare a son; and said, Because the LORD hath heard that I was hated, he hath therefore given me this son also: and she called his name Simeon.
34 And she conceived again, and bare a son; and said, Now this time will my husband be joined unto me, because I have born him three sons: therefore was his name called Levi.
35 And she conceived again, and bare a son: and she said, Now will I praise the LORD: therefore she called his name Judah; and left bearing.

Rachel couldn't have children so she gave Jacob her handmaiden, Bilhah, so that she could have children by her. The next two of Jacob's sons were born by Bilhah

Gen 30:1-8

1 And when Rachel saw that she bare Jacob no children, Rachel envied her sister; and said unto Jacob, Give me children, or else I die.
2 And Jacob's anger was kindled against Rachel: and he said, Am I in God's stead, who hath withheld from thee the fruit of the womb?
3 And she said, Behold my maid Bilhah, go in unto her; and she shall bear upon my knees, that I may also have children by her.
4 And she gave him Bilhah her handmaid to wife: and Jacob went in unto her.
5 And Bilhah conceived, and bare Jacob a son.
6 And Rachel said, God hath judged me, and hath also heard my voice, and hath given me a son: therefore called she his name Dan.
7 And Bilhah Rachel's maid conceived again, and bare Jacob a second son.
8 And Rachel said, With great wrestlings have I wrestled with my sister, and I have prevailed: and she called his name Naphtali.

Leah also desired that her handmaiden, Zilpah give children to Jacob. His next two sons were born to her

Gen 30:9-13

9 When Leah saw that she had left bearing, she took Zilpah her maid, and gave her Jacob to wife.
10 And Zilpah Leah's maid bare Jacob a son.
11 And Leah said, A troop cometh: and she called his name Gad.
12 And Zilpah Leah's maid bare Jacob a second son.
13 And Leah said, Happy am I, for the daughters will call me blessed: and she called his name Asher.

Leah bore Jacob two more sons

Gen 30:17-21

17 And God hearkened unto Leah, and she conceived, and bare Jacob the fifth son.
18 And Leah said, God hath given me my hire, because I have given my maiden to my husband: and she called his name Issachar.
19 And Leah conceived again, and bare Jacob the sixth son.
20 And Leah said, God hath endued me with a good dowry; now will my husband dwell with me, because I have born him six sons: and she called his name Zebulun.
21 And afterwards she bare a daughter, and called her name Dinah.

Jacob now has 10 sons by 3 of his 4 wives. But Rachel still has not had any children. Finally the Lord blessed her with Joseph who would fulfill a great blessing for all the family of Jacob

Gen 30:22-24

22 ¶ And God remembered Rachel, and God hearkened to her, and opened her womb.
23 And she conceived, and bare a son; and said, God hath taken away my reproach:
24 And she called his name Joseph; and said, The LORD shall add to me another son.

Mary Pratt Parrish

“Surely during those long, barren years, the Lord was preparing Rachel for the great responsibility of teaching Joseph and training him in the ways of the Lord. He must be taught well if he would remain faithful, for in his chartered course he would be subjected to the contaminating influence of a heathen nation for the greater part of his life.

“Rachel must not fail! Nor did she fail, for Joseph emerged not only as a champion of righteousness but as one who was noble, kind, forgiving, virtuous, and faithful to his God and to his people. He was a credit to a noble mother. Even though he was next to the youngest of his father’s children, the birthright was his, to be realized through his son Ephraim.” (“Guardians of the Covenant,” Ensign, May 1972)

Spencer J. Condie

“It may at times seem to us as though a loving Heavenly Father has misplaced our precious promises or He has put them on hold or filed them under the wrong name. Such were the feelings of Rachel.

“But with the passage of time, we encounter four of the most beautiful words in holy writ: ‘And God remembered Rachel’ And she was blessed with the birth of Joseph and later the birth of Benjamin. There are millions on earth today who are descendants of Joseph who have embraced the Abrahamic promise that through their efforts ‘shall all the families of the earth be blessed, even with the blessings of the Gospel, which are the blessings of salvation, even of life eternal’ (Abraham 2:11.)

“When heaven’s promises sometimes seem afar off, I pray that each of us will embrace these exceeding great and precious promises and never let go. And just as God remembered Rachel, God will remember you.” (CR, Oct. 2007)

Jacob Returns to Canaan

Jacob work for Laban for 20 years before he took his family, his flocks and herds, and all of his positions and returned to the land of Canaan.

Gen 32:22-29

22 And he rose up that night, and took his two wives, and his two womenservants, and his eleven sons, and passed over the ford Jabbok.

23 And he took them, and sent them over the brook, and sent over that he had.

24 ¶ And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day.

25 And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob’s thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him.

26 And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go,

except thou bless me.

27 And he said unto him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob.

28 And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed.

29 And Jacob asked him, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, thy name. And he said, Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name? And he blessed him there.

It seems that Jacob was wrestling with a messenger from the Lord who had been sent to bless him

Andrew C. Skinner

“President Joseph Fielding Smith offered the following: ‘Who wrestled with Jacob on Mount Peniel? The scriptures say it was a man. The Bible interpreters say it was an angel. More than likely it was a messenger sent to Jacob to give him the blessing’...

“At Jabbok, Jacob was brought to the limit of his faith and understanding. He stood figuratively in the place his grandfather, Abraham, had stood when God asked for the life of Isaac... Abraham had been obedient in the face of a test that shook him to his very core. Jacob likewise was obedient in the face of his ordeal, but he desired a blessing from the being with whom he talked—a blessing to strengthen his faith and guide the course of his life. He wanted and needed light and knowledge.... So in faith Jacob petitioned and worked with a divine being all night long to obtain the blessing he needed....

"The crisis at the river Jabbok pushed him to the limits of his faith. It caused him to wrestle for a blessing, just as Enos, Zacharias, and others would do. Jacob's wrestle resulted in the Lord's bursting the veil to reveal His glory. Indeed, the story of Jacob's wrestle discloses the ultimate blessing that can be given. Years later, as he was blessing the sons of Joseph... the aged Jacob referred to events on the night of his wrestle when he mentioned 'the Angel which redeemed me from all evil' (Gen 48:16.)" ("Jacob: Keeper of Covenants," Ensign, March 1998)

After Jacob arrives home the Lord appears to Jacob and confirms the blessing of Abraham. It appears that Rachel dies while giving birth Jacob's 12th son, Benjamin.

Gen 35:9-20

9 ¶ And God appeared unto Jacob again, when he came out of Padan-aram, and blessed him.

10 And God said unto him, Thy name is Jacob: thy name shall not be called any more Jacob, but Israel shall be thy name: and he called his name Israel.

11 And God said unto him, I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall be of thee, and kings shall come out of thy loins;

12 And the land which I gave Abraham and Isaac, to thee I will give it, and to thy seed after thee will I give the land.

13 And God went up from him in the place where he talked with him.
14 And Jacob set up a pillar in the place where he talked with him, even a pillar of stone: and he poured a drink offering thereon, and he poured oil thereon.
15 And Jacob called the name of the place where God spake with him, Beth-el.
16 ¶ And they journeyed from Beth-el; and there was but a little way to come to Ephrath: and Rachel travailed, and she had hard labour.
17 And it came to pass, when she was in hard labour, that the midwife said unto her, Fear not; thou shalt have this son also.
18 And it came to pass, as her soul was in departing, (for she died) that she called his name Ben-oni: but his father called him Benjamin.
19 And Rachel died, and was buried in the way to Ephrath, which is Beth-lehem.
20 And Jacob set a pillar upon her grave: that is the pillar of Rachel's grave unto this day.

We are promised that if we live worthily we can be partakers of the blessings of Abraham

Russell M. Nelson

“We all have our agency. We can choose to be of Israel, or not. We can choose to let God prevail in our lives, or not. We can choose to let God be the most powerful influence in our lives, or not.

“For a moment, let us recall a crucial turning point in the life of Jacob.... Jacob wrestled with a serious challenge. His agency was tested. Through this wrestle, Jacob proved what was most important to him. He demonstrated that he was willing to let God prevail in his life. In response, God changed Jacob's name to Israel, meaning ‘let God prevail.’ God then promised Israel that all the blessings that had been pronounced upon Abraham's head would also be his.” (CR, Oct. 2020)