

The Jacob Cycle (Genesis 25:19-37:1)
Genesis: The Foundations of Our Faith
April 14, 2024

1. Opening Prayer

2. Review

3. Introduction to the Jacob Cycle: The Isaac Story

4. The Structure of the Jacob Cycle¹

A Introduction: Rebekah *struggles* in childbirth; *prophecy concerning Jacob and Esau given* (25:19-34)
-----B Jacob's father and a foreign king: *deception*; wife endangered; *foreign conflict* (26:1-33)
-----C Jacob vs. Esau: *Jacob steals blessing*; leaves land; *brotherly conflict* (26:34-28:9)
-----D Jacob and God: angelic messengers; *God promises blessing* (28:10-22)
-----E Jacob vs. Laban: Jacob comes to Haran; *deception; conflict* (29:1-30)
-----F Rachel vs. Leah: *conflict; Jacob's wives fertile* (29:31-30:24)
-----F' Jacob vs. Laban: *conflict; Jacob's flocks fertile* (30:25-43)
-----E' Jacob vs. Laban: Jacob leaves Haran; *deception; conflict* (31:1-54)
-----D' Jacob vs. God: angelic messengers; *God bestows blessing; conflict* (32:1-33)
-----C' Jacob and Esau: *Jacob returns blessing*; returns to land; reconciliation (33:1-20)
-----B' Jacob's sons and a foreign king: *deception*; sister endangered; *foreign conflict* (34:1-31)
A' Conclusion: *Prophecy concerning Jacob and Esau fulfilled*; Rachel *struggles* in childbirth (35:1-29)
Epilogue: *The Family History of Non-Elect Esau* (36:1-37:1)

*Twelve units // Jacob's twelve sons

Themes:

- A. Election
- B. Deception**
- C. Conflict
- D. Blessing

Main Message: *God is faithful to bless His elect people despite their sin and the conflicts it causes.*

5. An Overview of the Jacob Cycle

- A. Election: God Choses Jacob over Esau (25:19-28)
- B. Deception: Jacob Robs Esau (25:29-34; 27:1-46)
 - 1. Jacob Seizes Esau's *Birthright* (25:29-34)
 - 2. Jacob Seizes Esau's *Blessing* (27:1-46)
- C. Payback: Laban Deceives Jacob (chs. 29-31)
- D. Transformation: Jacob Wrestles with God (ch. 32)
- E. True Blessedness: Jacob and Esau (ch. 33)

¹ Adapted from Michael Fishbane, *Biblical Text and Texture*, 40-62; Gary Rendsburg, *The Redaction of Genesis*, 53-54; Todd Patterson, *The Plot-Structure of Genesis*, 136-37.

6. Foreshadowing in the Jacob Cycle

A. Jacob's Biography Foreshadows Israel's History

| Jacob's Biography | Israel's History |
|--|---|
| <u>Oppression in Laban's House</u> : After leaving Canaan, Jacob sojourns in Laban's house; Laban tricks him into serving him, changes his terms of service (Gen. 29) | <u>Oppression in Egypt</u> : After leaving Canaan, Israel sojourns in Egypt; Pharaoh deals shrewdly with Egypt, forcing them to serve him and changing their terms of service (Exod. 1) |
| <u>Divine Blessing in Haran</u> : Jacob's children multiply and his possessions increase beyond measure (Gen. 29-30); Laban no longer shows Jacob favor (31:1-4) | <u>Divine Blessing in Egypt</u> : Israel's children multiply and become great beyond measure (Exod. 1:7, 9-10); Pharaoh no longer shows Israel favor (1:8-11) |
| <u>Exodus</u> : Jacob demands that Laban "let me go" with their children, but Laban insists that he stay (Gen. 30:25-26); God sees Jacob's affliction (31:42) and promises to be with him as he returns to Canaan (31:3) | <u>Exodus</u> : Moses demands that Pharaoh "let my people go" with their children (Exod. 3:12), but Pharaoh refuses; God sees Israel's affliction (3:7; 4:31) and promises to be with Moses when he returns to Pharaoh (3:12) |
| <u>Acquisition of Wealth</u> : Jacob departs with livestock that the Lord plundered from Laban (Gen. 31) | <u>Acquisition of Wealth</u> : Israel departs with livestock that the Lord allowed them to plunder from Egypt (Exod. 3:22; 12:32-38) |
| <u>Flight from Laban</u> : Jacob's family "flees" from Laban (Gen. 31:20, 21, 22, 27) | <u>Flight from Egypt</u> : Israel "flees" from Egypt (Exod. 14:5) |
| <u>Laban's Pursuit</u> : Laban is told that Jacob fled, so he takes relatives with him, pursues and overtakes Jacob, and asks him what he has done (Gen. 31:22-26) | <u>Pharaoh's Pursuit</u> : Pharaoh is told that Israel fled, so he takes his army with him, pursues and overtakes Israel, and asks them what they have done (Exod. 14:5-11) |
| <u>Divine Deliverance</u> : God delivers Jacob by telling Laban in a dream not to harm him (31:24) | <u>Divine Deliverance</u> : God delivers Israel by parting the Red Sea and destroying Pharaoh's army (14:15-15:21) |
| <u>Divine Encounter</u> : Jacob encounters God "face to face" and barely escapes with his life (Gen. 32:22-32) | <u>Divine Encounter</u> : Israel encounters God at Sinai and barely escapes (Exod. 32-34); Moses knows God "face to face" (33:11) |
| <u>Run-In with Esau</u> : Jacob sends messengers to Esau, who meets him with 400 men, yet Jacob survives | <u>Run-In with the Edomites</u> : Moses sends messengers to the Edomites, who threaten to meet him with the sword, yet Israel survives (Num. 20:14-21) |
| <u>Dwelling in Booths</u> : During his journey from Haran to Canaan, Jacob makes "booths" for his livestock (Gen. 33:17) | <u>Dwelling in Booths</u> : During their journey from Egypt to Canaan, Israel lives in "booths" (Lev. 23:43) |
| <u>Foreign Conquest</u> : In retaliation for sexual immorality, Simeon and Levi kill every male in Shechem and plunder the city; afterwards, Jacob rebukes them (Gen. 34) | <u>Foreign Conquest</u> : In retaliation for sexual immorality and idolatry, the Israelites kill every male among the Midianites and plunder them; afterwards, Moses rebukes them (Num. 31) |
| <u>Purification</u> : At Shechem, Jacob commands his household to remove their foreign gods (Gen. 35:2) | <u>Purification</u> : At Shechem, Joshua commands Israel to remove their foreign gods (Josh. 24:14, 20, 23) |

B. Jacob Wrestling with God (Gen. 32) Foreshadows Jesus Christ²

7. Closing Prayer

² Note also that in John 1:51, Jesus references Jacob dreaming of a "stairwell" stretching from heaven to earth in Gen 28:10-21. The point of the comparison is that Jesus, the "Son of Man," is the stairwell—the only one who came down from heaven, and the only one through whom we can go up to heaven.