



What characteristics have we seen so far in this episode of Jacob's life?

This is not to say that this stage of Israel's life is free of strife. His sons turned out to be every bit as devious as he was and showed a propensity for violence that we did not see in Jacob. Israel is twice deceived, firstly in chapter 34, where his sons take a disproportionate revenge on the people of Shechem, much to his chagrin Genesis 34:30. Secondly, when his older sons capture and sell Joseph, his favourite son, as a slave. They tell Israel that Joseph is dead, killed by a wild animal, but surely Israel suspects that his sons were in some way responsible. During this period, Rachel dies giving birth to Benjamin, Israel's last son. Isaac also dies. Israel settles in Hebron, where Abraham and Isaac were buried.

This period in Jacob's life is dominated by the account of Joseph, the longest single narrative in the First Testament. Israel takes a back seat while God removes Jacob from his children. It is the loss of Joseph and the famine that ensues that is the last crisis in Jacob's life.



The last phase of Jacob's life.

Read Genesis 46:1-7

The last episode in Jacob's life is in Egypt.



Jacob meets with Pharaoh, the most powerful man on the planet.
What does he do? Genesis 47v10
What does this tell us?

Jacob adopts Joseph's two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. This makes up the twelve (+Levi) tribes of Israel. The future is established.



What does he do to Manasseh and Ephraim?
How does he bless them?
What does he do next?
What does he do next?

Genesis 48:9
Genesis 48:12-20
Genesis 49:1, 28
Genesis 49:29-33

The New Testament see this as a prophetic act. Hebrews 11:22.

What characteristics have we seen so far in this episode of Jacob's life?



Jacob is

The Deceiver in Beersheba.
The Servant in Paddan Aram
The Saint in Hebron.
The Seer in Egypt.



Read Isaiah 43:1

Jacob and Israel are the same person. In this verse, both mean the people of Israel.
Why are both names used? What is the point?

Jacob and Israel are the old and new nature. God cares about both; He knows who we were, who we are and who we will be.



Does God still work in people's lives the way he worked in Jacob's?
Which stage of Jacob's life are you at?

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Jacob - Part 6 - Finding God.



Jacob's life falls conveniently into three episodes. Each of these episodes takes place in a different location. Each comes to an end with some kind of crisis and an encounter with God. In each episode, we see something different in Jacob's character; we also see him grow. So far:



Jacob at home in Bethesda.

What is he like?
What is the crisis?
How does he encounter God?



Jacob at Laban's house in Paddan Aram.

What is he like?
What is the crisis?
How does he encounter God?

Jacob is now returning home. He has sent messengers ahead to tell Esau he is coming and has heard back that Esau is now heading in his direction with 400 men. So he divides his household into two, thinking that if one is captured, the other may survive. He now sends three large herds of sheep, goats, camels, cattle and donkeys to Esau. With instructions that when Esau asks, 'Who do you belong to, and where are you going, and who owns all these animals in front of you?' They are to say, 'They belong to your servant Jacob. They are a gift sent to my lord Esau, and he is coming behind us.' Jacob does not meet Esau until the following day. That night he wrestles with God at Paniel and God changes him. This is effectively Jacob's salvation experience.



Why does Esau have 400 men with him? What does he plan?
Given the circumstances, if you were Jacob, what would you do?

It is possible that Esau has not yet decided what he will do and is planning to see what Jacob's intentions are. But 400 men look aggressive and this is certainly how Jacob interprets the situation. Genesis 32:7.



Why do you think Jacob sends a messenger and three gifts and then waits a day before he meets Esau?

In such issues, time is often an important factor. Angry people need time to calm down. People who don't like change need time to come around to an idea. Negative responses tend to come immediately; more positive ones take time. There is a time to act straight away, but there is also a time to wait. Maybe Jacob knew that Esau needed time for the gifts to work and to think through his response.



www.freedom.gen.nz
studies@freedom.gen.nz
Pastor Ray Moxham



Read Genesis 33:1-3.

What do you make of the order of the family members?

What is Jacob expecting?

What does Jacob himself do?

Jacob protects the part of the family that means the most to him, but he puts himself at the front. Is this bravery or perhaps of taking responsibility?

What do you make of his behaviour?



Read Genesis 33:4

Is this what you expected?

Is this in line with Esau's character?

In a strange way, it is. The Esau we have seen is impulsive and emotional.

Do you think Esau planned this, or was it spur of the moment?

Sometimes we surprise ourselves. We have in mind a course of action that might be pretty or vindictive, we play over in our mind what we will do and say. Then, when the moment comes, suddenly we find ourselves doing the right thing!

Why do you think this is?



Read Genesis 33:5-7

Why did Esau forgive Jacob?

What did it cost Esau to forgive?

What did he gain by it?

We assume that if he brought 400 men, he still had bad feelings towards Jacob.

What did he lose from 20 years of bitterness?

What is the Bible's teaching on forgiveness?

What do you think about Esau's act of forgiveness?

What effect do you think the children played in this?



Maybe the presence of Jacob's family, along with his humbling himself, gave tangible proof that Jacob had changed.

Should we only forgive those who are sorry? - Why? Why not?

Did you notice that the past grievances are not mentioned?

Is this significant?

Has Esau grown through the years?



Read Genesis 33:8-11

Verse 8 suggests that Jacob understood the giving of the flocks as a kind of restitution.

Is verse 8 an apology?

If it is, along with v44, it as much is as Esau is going to get. It is certainly an admission of guilt. That Jacob realises that Esau has reason to be angry with him.

Why does Esau first reject the gift and then accept it?



Read Genesis 33:12-17

During Jacob's absence, Esau has moved from Beersheba to Mt. Seir, which would later be called Edom and is the southern part of modern-day Jordan. It is outside of the borders of the land promised to Abraham. The implication is here that Esau expects Jacob to accompany him. Jacob agrees to this but never does it.



What excuses does he make?

Where does he go instead?

Why do you think he does not go with Esau?

What might happen if he did?

Are Esau's motives good in suggesting Jacob come to Mt. Seir?



We have no reason to be suspicious of Esau's plan (Yet we are, if only a little bit. Perhaps it is the reference to leaving men v15, but along with Jacob, we know this will be disastrous. It is only a matter of time until the old animosities resurface. Just because the grievances of the past are unmentioned and Esau has genuinely forgiven, it does not mean they are forgotten or dealt with. It does not take long for Jacob's sons to fall out with the inhabitants of the land where they do settle (Gen 34). Mt Seir is dessert and there is no way the land will support two wealthy people. (As both Abraham and Isaac discovered. Gen 13:5-7, 26:13-16.)



Did Jacob make the right decision?

What is the connection between forgiving and forgetting?

Can we force ourselves to forget?

What can we do?

Is forgiveness always permanent?

Make sure we don't dwell on past hurts .

Remind ourselves we have forgiven.



How would you paraphrase verse 15b?

What is Jacob saying?

"But why do that?" Jacob asked. "Just let me find favour in the eyes of my lord."

Genesis 33:15b

Does Esau know Jacob is not going with him?

How do you think he feels about his no-show?



Read Genesis 33:18-20.

Shechem is in the North of Israel, several hundred kilometres North of Beersheba. This is perhaps the climax of the story. Jacob builds an altar.



What does he call it?

What does this mean?

Who is Israel at this point?

El, Elohe Israel, means God, the God of Israel. Sometimes when Hebrew repeats a word, it makes it a superlative. This is why the footnote in some bibles includes the word mighty, (lit. the Godly God, or supreme God.)

Why is this important?



Read Genesis 28:20-22.

He has not yet returned to Bethel. But he has just acknowledged that the LORD is his God. Jacob has made it.



Read Genesis 35:1-14

What is Jacob's attitude towards God? How does it contrast with what it had been?

What is the significance of the altar at Bethel? v6 & 14-15

Is it significant that God blesses Jacob with Abraham's blessing a second time?

The first time it was a promise of what would be. Now it is real, Jacob can start to live in it.