

Title: Leaving home and returning; changing fear for faith

Biblical Text: Genesis 27-46

Objectives:

1. Contemplate the life of Jacob as a pilgrim and contemplate his personality (i.e., God, people, healing, and perspectives of Jacob).
2. Fleeing back home and the role of Jacob's wives.
3. Understand broken and restored relationships as a line of history and wellness.

Introduction

Leaving home is not the most comfortable experience. Jacob began a new adventure, there were a lot of questions for which answers could not be given until he had his own experience. He is alone and has to find ways to resolve his own problems. He is no longer under the care and direction of his mother.

The advice here is to pay attention to the entire process. Observe how Jacob is living a unique adventure full of uncertainties, fears, and raging emotions; however, there is a desire to do what is needed. He is willing to face any situation head on in order to survive and gain a better life.

1. Contemplate the life of Jacob as a pilgrim and his personality (i.e., God, people, healing, and perspectives of Jacob).

Supporting Scripture: Ge. 27:41- 30:24

Fear is the word that describes the situation. If someone is threatened by death, the most rational decision would be to remove oneself from the situation.

Rebecca heard that Esau planned to kill his brother, and she became scared.

Her favorite son is threatened, and it seems like she believes the threat. Now, Esau is not confronted for his intentions; in fact, Rebecca knows how dangerous Esau can be. Once again, Rebecca is stressed and automatically, she seeks a solution.

She is looking for Jacob's wellness and trusts that a good place, with pacific people (her brother and his family), and a potential wife could provide balance in Jacob's life.

Does she trust God? The text does not state anything about her trust; however, she received the miracle of pregnancy, and we could conclude that her purpose is to put Jacob in the Divine blessing. In this case, Rebecca's faith is leading her to provide a safe way for the receptor of the Blessing.

Rebecca's solution meant a pilgrim path. Her son had to leave home and explore an unknown world. All we can observe in the text now is that Jacob is scared and facing a big challenge. He must start on a new journey.

His pilgrim path starts with a new blessing from Isaac, which represents, once again, the power of God invested in him. The prophecy from his mother, receiving the first blessing from his father, and now his need to leave home all become the foundation for Jacob's faith. Is he scared to take the next steps? We could respond: yes, he is! But, at the same time, his faith started supporting his life. His faith implied not just the blessings. We see that he also was obedient to his parent's suggestions, we observe this when they told him not to marry a Canaanite woman, but to marry one of his cousins. His parents' suggestions and his obedience to their suggestions mark the new horizon of his character; that obedience is what will reflect his success.

He left home with doubt and uncertainty. On his first night away from home, Jacob had an encounter with God through a dream. According to the text, God himself talks to Jacob. What Jacob heard makes total sense: Rebecca's prophecy, the (polemic) Isaac's blessing, the departure's blessing, and the journey, all together form a path that creates confidence for him to continue, confidence in his parents, and overall, confidence that God is leading him. Faith is the biggest factor in Jacob's life.

As far as we read the passage, the clearest thing we can see is how Jacob finds people and all the factors to contribute to his success. His exile contains lots of fear, but at the same time, we can read the ways God is providing for his life and wellness.

When Jacob wakes up, he takes a moment of reflection and imagination; it is a moment to take advantage. Jacob believes that God is showing himself up and sees the moment as a great opportunity. While he is worshipping God (Ge 28:20), he creates a mutual commitment where he offers his continued worship to God but demands provision for himself.

In chapter 29 Jacob arrives at his uncle Laban's home. His uncle shows him great hospitality and offers him a salary. Jacob finds a wife (2 in reality).

Jacob is deceived by his uncle because Laban changes his decision and gives Jacob a different daughter in marriage and creates a new "contract" to give Rachel to Jacob. Was Jacob blind, was it really hard to see the difference between the two women? Is Jacob "humbled" to receive a different wife although he and Laban had a previous agreement? What are Rachel's feelings? What are Jacob's feelings? What are Leah's feelings?

Jacob's life is set in a completely different way. He now has two spouses who are not loved equally, they cannot conceive babies for a while. With time, the wives became pregnant but they created rivalry and involved their servants in the expansion of the family.

Jacob who fled home because he was in death danger now finds himself with two wives (four in reality) and twelve children.

2. Fleeing back home and the role of Jacob's wives

Supporting Scripture: Ge 30:25-32:2

Supporting Text: According to the text (Ge 30:25-26), there is a need for a new agreement (perhaps permission from Laban) to move back home. Laban understands and sees Jacob as a blessing and the key to his prosperity. Laban did not let Jacob leave, but he offered him a new "contract." Does Jacob believe in Laban's word? Is Laban honest?

Jacob offered Laban a proposal that allowed him to leave with his family. God gave prosperity to Jacob but the difficulties did not stop for him. Now, with the growth of cattle, Rachel's brothers' envy and jealousy grew. They accused Jacob of stealing from their father. A new threat was presented to Jacob, with the difference that now it comes from his brothers-in-law and it is against him and his entire family.

In this moment there is a new theophany and God asked Jacob to go ahead and return to his parent's home and that He would grant the protection needed.

Jacob did not doubt; he trusted God. He prepared his family to leave (Ge 31:4-13). This time, his faith was stronger, yet with fear, he knew that God would protect his family on this new journey. God's role in Jacob's first journey, the protection, the provisions, and the blessings he received on his first journey gave Jacob the clarity and security to start on a new adventure. He was confident to travel.

Ge 31:14-16 seems key in demonstrating Jacob's growth, his confirmation of entering the new chapter in his life. The wives responded positively, and they were ready to put together their efforts and support their husbands' decisions. The wives' answer created peace in Jacob's heart:

consistency between his family and the revelation of God and harmony to face the dangerous challenge of fleeing and looking for a new destiny.

Laban did not stop (Gen 31:24 declares Laban got a warning from God to not make any threat against him) and he chased Jacob. Ge 31:27-30 narrates the complaint of Laban, but it was not enough to stop Jacob. Verse 31 shows that Jacob recognizes his fear of Laban. Jacob got some encouragement and faced Laban firmly (Gen 31:36-42) and talked about his argument based on his faith and the role of God in his life.

At the end of chapter 31, Jacob and Laban swear in the name and God's presence to mutually respect their fellowship. Laban left on good terms and saved relationships with Jacob and the whole family.

Jacob will continue his travel under the promise and the blessing of God and a new encounter with angels (Ge 32:1-2), perhaps, marked his joy and desire to conquer the trip.

3. Understand broken and restored relationships as a line of history and wellness.

Supporting Scripture: Ge 32:1-

Supporting Text: Gen 32:1-2 perhaps became Jacob's foundation of the new project, restorations of relationships with Esau. The text does mention that, as readers, we need to understand that Jacob had to think for a long time about how to renovate, negotiate, and restart the brotherhood. Was the confidence in God what moved Jacob to make this decision? Was Jacob in prayer? Did Jacob love Esau enough to find forgiveness? Was all of this plan to restore relationships with Esau just a form to come back and establish Jacob with his family in Canaan?

Jacob sent messengers (Ge 32:3-5) to offer compensation to Esau. Did Jacob feel guilty about stealing the blessing, ruining the reputation, and creating something as a course for his brother? We may say, yes! He did! Now, his experience, his journey out of home, and his relationship with God prepared him for repentance and starting a new chapter of peace with Esau, perhaps we can answer, yes! He is ready for peace and harmony!

Esau responded to the messengers with "I am coming to him" (V6)

Jacob shows a big anxiety, his family and his life is under death threat again. The distress does not stop and Jacob imagines this can be the end of everything.

Where is God? Is God going to protect us? What about my faith and trust in God? Should I fight Esau? Those could be Jacob's questions in the middle of uncertainty.

Jacob started with strategy (V7); according to the text, the second thing was prayer.

In his prayer, Jacob shows that he knows God very well. He understands and declares that God has been working in his life and now he needs the Divine power to survive. At the end of the prayer, Jacob (of course from a human perspective, but with deep value) "pressures" God because he appeals that God cannot fail. If God made the promise (28:13-15; 31:3) he has to do it! Jacob is proving God; for him, this is the moment where God can reveal himself with power and protection. Now, was Jacob's faith turning to demand? Is it a moment where Jacob's faith (and the reader's) can be confirmed?

It looks like Jacob, after his prayer, had some inspiration and created more strategy. He sends a gift to his brother as a form to create an impression of peace, but at the same time, Esau can see there is a way to negotiate (V20). Peace was the main goal. Restoration can be a big process!

The night before Jacob meets Esau, he has an encounter with a character (Ge 32:24-30) whom Jacob recognizes as a divine one. The scene shows Jacob as a strong man who does not defeat easily. In this scenario, it reveals that Jacob is ready to face any problem in his life. Is God confirming that Jacob has had good training in the last couple of decades (maybe more) and overall, his faith is big and the relationship with God is strong? Is this fight proof that Jacob can face Esau in whatever way he needs to do it?

Plus, God provides a new blessing, and "Peniel" now is a component of faith, power, hope, future, and spirituality.

Jacob kept his strategy (33:1-3) in order to express his repentance and provoke mercy in Esau. Esau could not resist the love for his brother and he hugged him. Even with that emotive encounter, the strategy continued because his family and everyone who was with Jacob had just shown respect for Esau. At this point, Esau's heart melted.

Jacob does not stop, he is brilliant (is God inspiring him? Totally!) He insists on the gifts until Esau accepts them, plus Jacob makes arrangements in the conversation that keep Esau far away from him and his family (33:12-16). Jacob does not want any threat now or in the future.

Jacob made his faith concrete by building an altar and making public the worship of the God who saved him (33:20), restored the relationships, and provided a life of peace and harmony for his family and future generations.

Conclusion

Jacob left his home because his life was in danger. It seems like his mother's role in his life ends here. Jacob has to forge his own future. He must go alone. He started a journey, he followed the directions of his parents. He found wives for himself, he had children, he worked hard, and he gathered up assets. All of these things became elements used by God to shape Jacob's faith. Jacob's experience is an example of how one can find God through life and allow Him to transform a life. Jacob left with almost nothing to his name and returned with immeasurable blessings. He brought back with him wives, children, and; cattle, and overall, gained peace with his brother.

I hope you enjoyed Jacob's journey. You could have a similar story. Ask God to let you follow in a journey where you can experience a spiritual transformation.

Discussion Questions

1. How would you describe Jacob's faith while he was a pilgrim?
2. In what way do you think Laban participates in the development of Jacob's faith?
3. Explore the results of Jacob's life in terms of fears, anxiety, peace, family, and offspring.