

NOON BIBLE STUDY: GENESIS 28

WHEN WE LAST LOOKED AT GENESIS, WE READ THE INTERESTING RECORD OF JACOB AND REBEKAH'S DECEIVING OF ISAAC. JACOB, THE YOUNGER SON OF ISAAC AND REBEKAH, WAS PROPHESED TO BE THE CHILD THAT WOULD BE BLESSED AND RECEIVE THE ABRAHAMIC PROMISES. YET, JACOB'S BLESSING BY HIS FATHER ISAAC IN CHAPTER 27 SEEMED TO BE MORE A RESULT OF HIS MOTHER'S CRAFTINESS AND HIS OWN TRICKERY THAN GOD'S PLAN. NEVERTHELESS, THE WAY THINGS WENT, JACOB GETS THE ABRAHAMIC BLESSING, ESAU DOES NOT. ESAU, WHO HAD ALREADY INDICATED THE BLESSING OF ABRAHAM WAS NOT SOMETHING HE WAS INTERESTED IN OR CONCERNED ABOUT, NOW IS DEVASTATED - AND NOW IS DETERMINED TO GET BACK AT HIS BROTHER.

THE CLOSING VERSES OF GENESIS 27 EXPLAINED THAT REBEKAH PLANNED TO SEND JACOB AWAY TO HER BROTHER LABAN TO KEEP HIM SAFE FROM HIS BROTHER'S PLANNED VENGEANCE. SHE TELLS HER HUSBAND ISAAC SHE IS SENDING HIM AWAY TO LABAN TO LOOK FOR A WIFE. AND WITH THAT WE TURN TO GENESIS 28.

GENESIS 28:1-5

ISAAC SEEMS TO OVERLOOK THE FACT THAT JACOB HAS DUPED HIM A FEW VERSES BEFORE. HAS HE ACCEPTED THAT JACOB IS NOW THE BLESSED SON? HAS HE ACCEPTED THAT EVEN THOUGH IT CAME ABOUT THROUGH SHADY DEALINGS, JACOB WAS THE ONE GOD WANTED TO BE BLESSED? HAS HE RISEN ABOVE THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF CHAPTER 27 BECAUSE HIS SON IS ABOUT TO GO FIND A WIFE AND THAT'S THE MORE PRESSING ISSUE? WE DON'T KNOW FOR SURE. BUT, ISAAC DOESN'T HOLD BACK OR WITHHOLD LOVE TO HIS YOUNGEST SON.

VERSES 3 & 4 ARE SOME OF THE MOST POWERFUL WORDS ISAAC, THE PROMISED SON OF ABRAHAM COULD SAY TO HIS CHILD. THE STRANGE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THIS FAMILY ARE AMAZING. IT'S FILLED WITH BROKENNESS, SIN, DECEPTION AND MORE AND YET HERE THEY ARE RISING UP TO MEET THEIR MOMENT AS THE FAMILY GOD HAS CHOSEN TO WORK HIS REDEMPTION THROUGH.

GENESIS 28:6-9 - ESAU'S SPITEFUL DECISIONS

AS JACOB LEAVES WITH ANOTHER BLESSING FROM HIS DAD, ESAU SITS ON THE SIDELINES STEAMING. I THINK IN SOME SENSE ESAU REPRESENTS THE LOGICAL AND REASONABLE RESPONSE THAT WE MAY EVEN SHARE. *"WHAT IS GOING ON HERE! THE KID JUST DUPED YOU DAD, AND NOW HE'S GETTING A BLESSING - THIS TIME WITH YOU WELL AWARE OF WHO IS STANDING IN FRONT OF YOU! OHHHH THAT JACOB, HE BETTER WIPE THAT SMIRK OFF HIS FACE IF HE KNOWS WHAT'S GOOD FOR HIM. LOOK AT HIM WITH HIS EYES CLOSED AND HANDS RAISED LOOKING ALL ABRAHAMIC AS HE GETS ANOTHER BLESSING. I CAN'T WAIT TILL MY RED AND HAIRY FISTS PUNCH HIM IN HIS FAIR SKINNED FARMER FACE."*

AND SO FUELED WITH THIS ANGER AND FRUSTRATION, SOME OF WHICH WAS UNDERSTANDABLE, ESAU MAKES SOME POOR AND DISHONORING DECISIONS.

GENESIS 28:8-9 (NLT) - IT WAS NOW VERY CLEAR TO ESAU THAT HIS FATHER DID NOT LIKE THE LOCAL CANAANITE WOMEN. 9 SO ESAU VISITED HIS UNCLE ISHMAEL'S FAMILY AND MARRIED ONE OF ISHMAEL'S DAUGHTERS, IN ADDITION TO THE WIVES HE

ALREADY HAD. HIS NEW WIFE'S NAME WAS MAHALATH. SHE WAS THE SISTER OF NEBAIOTH AND THE DAUGHTER OF ISHMAEL, ABRAHAM'S SON.

IT APPEARS THAT ESAU IS INTENTIONALLY OFFENDING HIS FATHER BY MARRYING WOMAN THAT WOULD TICK ISAAC OFF. ALSO, IT'S NO ACCIDENT WHERE HE FINDS THESE WOMEN - BY CONNECTING WITH ISHMAEL AND HIS FAMILY. REMEMBER ISHMAEL WAS ISAAC'S HALF-BROTHER, BORN THROUGH ABRAHAM'S SERVANT HAGAAR. ESAU IS PUSHING ALL THE RIGHT BUTTONS IF HE WANTED TO HURT, ANGER, OFFEND AND ALIENATE HIS DAD.

BUT YOU'VE GOT TO IMAGINE THAT THESE ACTIONS, THOUGH DESIGNED TO HURT ISAAC, WERE ESAU'S ATTEMPT TO FEEL BETTER ABOUT HOW HE FEELS. SOMETIMES HUMANS DO STUPID THINGS, THINKING THAT IT WILL MAKE US FEEL BETTER. WE BELIEVE THAT TWO WRONGS WILL MAKE US (FEEL) RIGHT. THIS PERSON HURT ME, SO IF I HURT THEM, I'LL FEEL BETTER. BUT THAT'S A LIE. ULTIMATELY SINING DOESN'T EVER MAKE US FEEL BETTER.

WE THINK THAT GETTING DRUNK WILL TAKE AWAY THE PAIN OF THE BROKEN RELATIONSHIPS, OR THE EMPTINESS INSIDE. BUT THEN WE WAKE UP WITH A HANGOVER, REGRETS, AND SHAME. WE THINK THAT HAVING SEX WITH THAT OTHER PERSON WILL BE PAYBACK FOR THE PERSON WHO HURT US, BUT WE WAKE UP WITH REGRET, SHAME AND IN SOME CASES PREGNANT OR WITH DISEASE. WE THINK BUYING SOMETHING WILL MAKE US LOOK BETTER OR FEEL BETTER BUT THE DEBT CRIPPLES US WHEN THE CREDIT CARD BILL IS DUE. WE THINK THAT YELLING AT SOMEONE WILL MAKE US FEEL BETTER, BUT EVENTUALLY WE HAVE TO AVOID PEOPLE, ARE ABANDONED BY PEOPLE WHO DON'T WANT TO BE AROUND US, AND WE ARE ALONE. WE THINK BRUSHING PROBLEMS UNDER THE RUG, AND AVOIDING PEOPLE, ISSUES, SITUATIONS, MAKE THEM GO AWAY, BUT WE ALWAYS HAVE TO EVENTUALLY DEAL WITH THOSE THINGS, AND SOMEHOW UNDER THE RUG THEY GROW BIGGER, STRONGER AND MORE CHAOTIC.

SO YEAH, ISAAC PROBABLY FELT EMOTIONAL PAIN BY HIS SON MARRYING CANAANITE WOMEN FROM UNCLE ISHMAEL. BUT ESAU WASN'T GOING TO BE BETTER BECAUSE OF THIS. THE PAIN WAS STILL THERE. THE FEELING OF REJECTION BY HIS PARENTS WAS STILL THERE. THE FACT THAT JACOB WAS THE SON WITH THE BIRTHRIGHT AND THE BLESSING WAS STILL A FACT. SO WAS IT REALLY WORTH IT? WE WILL EACH HAVE TO ANSWER THAT SAME QUESTION FOR OURSELVES.

GENESIS 28:10-17 - JACOB'S TRAVELS & JACOB'S LADDER

JACOB IS ON HIS WAY TOWARDS LABAN'S HOUSE IN HARAN. ALONG THE WAY HE STOPS FOR THE NIGHT AND SLEEPS ON A ROCK. AS HE SLEEPS, THE LORD SPEAKS TO HIM THROUGH A REMARKABLE DREAM. IN THE DREAM, THE LORD, FOR THE FIRST TIME, PERSONALLY EXTENDS THE ABRAHAMIC PROMISE TO JACOB. HIS MOTHER WAS TOLD ABOUT THIS WHILE JACOB WAS IN THE WOMB AND HIS FATHER ISAAC BLESSED HIM WITH THESE WORDS, BUT NOW GOD HIMSELF IS PRONOUNCING THESE TRUTHS OVER JACOB'S LIFE.

JUST LIKE HIS FATHER AND GRANDFATHER BEFORE HIM, JACOB IS TOLD THAT THE "LAND ON WHICH YOU LIE, I WILL GIVE TO YOU AND YOUR DESCENDANTS (28:13)" AND THAT HIS DESCENDANTS WILL BE "LIKE THE DUST OF THE EARTH...SPREAD(ING) OUT TO THE WEST AND THE EAST AND THE NORTH AND SOUTH" - BRINGING AND EXTENDING BLESSING TO THE WHOLE WORLD (28:14)

LASTLY, THE LORD SPEAKS THOSE TRANSFORMATIVE WORDS TO JACOB FOR THE FIRST TIME "I AM WITH YOU AND WILL KEEP YOU...I WILL NOT LEAVE YOU..." (28:15). JACOB WAKES UP AND DECLARES "SURELY THE LORD IS IN THIS PLACE - AND I DID NOT KNOW IT!" WHAT A MOMENT.

THE IMAGERY HERE IS POWERFUL. JACOB DREAMS OF LADDER THAT STARTED ON EARTH AND REACHED TO HEAVEN WITH ANGELS GOING UP AND DOWN ON IT. AT THE TOP OF THE LADDER WAS A VISION OF THE LORD HIMSELF. JACOB IS SEEING THAT RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD AND CONNECTION TO THE KING OF HEAVEN IS POSSIBLE. ACCESS TO GOD IS NOT SHUT, BUT THERE IS A WAY TO GET TO HIM. IN FACT, THE ANGELS, REPRESENTATIVE OF GOD'S MESSENGERS AND HIS WORD ARE GOING BACK AND FORTH - BRINGING WORDS FROM GOD AND BRINGING WORDS FROM THE EARTH BACK TO GOD.

WE'RE NOT TALKING ABOUT ONE OF THE LIFELESS CANAANITE DEITIES HERE - WE ARE TALKING ABOUT YAHWEH, THE POWERFUL GOD OF HEAVEN, WHO WANTS HIS CREATION, AND SPECIFICALLY FOR THIS MOMENT JACOB, TO HAVE ACCESS TO A RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM. JACOB SEES THIS POWERFUL VISION AND THEN HEARS THE LORD SPEAK "I AM WITH YOU..." GOD DOESN'T JUST WANT JACOB TO COME UP THE LADDER TO BE WITH HIM, HE WANTS TO COME DOWN THE LADDER AND BE WITH JACOB!

AS A RELEVANT SIDE NOTE, THIS FAMOUS INCIDENT IS ALLUDED TO BY JESUS HIMSELF IN THE GOSPELS. JESUS SAID: "'TRULY, TRULY, I SAY TO YOU, YOU WILL SEE THE HEAVENS OPENED AND THE ANGELS OF GOD ASCENDING AND DESCENDING ON THE SON OF MAN (JOHN 1:51)" REFERENCING TO THE JEWISH NATION HE FIRST CAME TO THAT HE AS MESSIAH IS NOW THE WAY FOR HUMANITY TO HAVE ACCESS TO AND RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD.

GENESIS 28:18-22 - JACOB COMMITS TO THE LORD AT BETHEL

JACOB RESPONDS IN GOOD ABRAHAM AND ISAAC FASHION BY WORSHIPPING GOD AFTER THIS ENCOUNTER AND ALSO COMMITTING TO GIVE TO THE LORD A 10TH OF ALL HE HAS (CP. ABRAHAM IN GENESIS 14:20). HE CALLS THE PLACE WHERE THIS ALL HAPPENED "BETHEL" WHICH MEANS "THE HOUSE OF GOD." BETHEL WILL BECOME A SIGNIFICANT PLACE FOR GOD'S PEOPLE IN GENERATIONS THAT FOLLOW. HE MAKES A VOW TO BE FAITHFUL TO THE LORD IF THE LORD WILL INDEED BE WHO HE HAS JUST PROMISED TO BE. (WE'LL LEARN IN THE LATER CHAPTERS THAT GOD IS FAITHFUL, SURPRISE SURPRISE.) JACOB THEN EMBARKS ON THIS JOURNEY TO LABAN'S HOUSE TO FIND A WIFE. AS WE WILL SEE IN THE COMING CHAPTERS, THIS IS NOT GOING TO BE AN EASY AND SIMPLE JOURNEY, BUT GOD WILL BE WITH JACOB AND JACOB WILL COME TO KNOW THE LORD INDEED.

WE'RE ALREADY SEEN A NUMBER OF LESSONS FROM THIS CHAPTER. WE'LL CONCLUDE WITH ONE MORE. AS WE HAVE JUST READ, THIS CHAPTER DESCRIBES A FOUNDATIONAL MOMENT AND EVENT FOR JACOB AND HIS FAITH. AND MAYBE GIVES US SOME INFORMATION THAT WE MAY HAVE OVERLOOKED AS WE HAVE READ AND CONSIDERED HIS STORY. WE HAVE READ SO FAR ABOUT JACOB BEING A DECEIVER, HOW HE TOOK ADVANTAGE OF HIS BROTHER AND THE TIME HE TRICKED AND LIED TO HIS DAD. WE'VE BEEN A BIT PERPLEXED AS TO WHY THINGS STILL SEEM TO GO WELL FOR JACOB, WHY HE STILL INHERITS THE PROMISES AND GETS THE BLESSINGS.

THERE IS ONE WORD WHICH EXPLAINS WHY. GRACE. YEAH, GRACE. THAT'S THE REASON. IT'S SO EASY FOR US TO LOOK AT JACOB AND CONCLUDE THAT HE "DOESN'T DESERVE" THE BLESSINGS AND PROMISES BECAUSE OF WHAT HE HAS DONE. HE HAS SINNED, NO IF'S, ANDS, OR BUTS ABOUT IT. AND SO WHY DOES HE NOT GET KILLED BY THE ENRAGED ESAU THE SKILLED HUNTER? WHY DOES HE STILL GET AN ADDITIONAL BLESSING FROM ISAAC? WHY DOES HE GET TO LEAVE THE LAND AND HEAD TO UNCLE LABAN'S HOUSE SCOTT-FREE? AND WHY IN THE WORLD WOULD GOD MEET HIM IN BETHEL, NOT TO REBUKE AND CHASTISE HIM BUT TO MEET HIM AND COVENANT WITH HIM? GRACE.

THE THINGS THAT JACOB HAD DONE BEFORE THIS MOMENT WERE WRONG. AND HE'S GOING TO DO SOME THINGS AFTER THIS CHAPTER WHICH ARE WRONG. HE'S EVEN GOING TO LIKELY HAVE SOME DIRECT CONSEQUENTIAL RAMIFICATIONS BECAUSE OF THINGS HE'S DONE (ESAU'S STILL OUT THERE SOMEWHERE, DON'T FORGET). BUT SOMETHING HAPPENS IN GENESIS 28 THAT HASN'T HAPPENED YET IN HIS LIFE. DO YOU KNOW WHAT IT IS? IT'S FUNNY BECAUSE I DIDN'T REALIZE IT MYSELF UNTIL WE LOOKED VERSE BY VERSE AT THIS CHAPTER.

WHAT HAPPENS IN GENESIS 28 THAT HASN'T HAPPENED YET AT THIS POINT IN JACOB'S LIFE WAS THAT FOR THE FIRST TIME JACOB MEETS GOD FOR HIMSELF. DID WE REALIZE THIS? IT ISN'T UNTIL GENESIS 28 THAT GOD APPEARS TO JACOB DIRECTLY. IT'S IN THIS CHAPTER THAT JACOB ENCOUNTERS AND EXPERIENCES GOD. AND THAT HELPS EXPLAIN WHAT HAS GONE WRONG BEFORE THIS MOMENT AND IT IS GOING TO CHANGE HOW THINGS GO AFTER THIS MOMENT.

WHAT WAS INTERESTING FOR ME AS I READ THIS IS THAT I THINK I HAD HIGHER EXPECTATIONS OF JACOB BECAUSE OF WHOSE SON HE WAS, WHOSE GRANDSON HE WAS, HOW HE GREW UP, THE RELIGIOUS ENVIRONMENT HE GREW UP IN. BUT THE REALITY OF IT IS - JACOB MAY HAVE KNOWN A LOT ABOUT THE LORD, BUT HE DIDN'T KNOW THE LORD. AND THAT'S A BIG DIFFERENCE.

UP UNTIL NOW, YAHWEH HAS BEEN HIS PARENTS' GOD - NOW YAHWEH WILL BECOME JACOB'S GOD. THAT'S HOW THINGS GO WITH THE LORD EVEN IN THIS CHAPTER - HE SPEAKS TO JACOB AND SAYS "I'M THE GOD OF YOUR FATHER ABRAHAM AND ISAAC" (28:13) AND THE CHAPTER ENDS WITH JACOB SAYING THAT "THE LORD WITH BE MY GOD."

AND SO JACOB ISN'T ABSOLVED OF SINS HE'S COMMITTED OR THE FOOLISH THINGS HE'S DONE - BUT NOW WE CAN MAKE A LITTLE MORE SENSE OF WHY THESE THINGS HAVE HAPPENED. JACOB DIDN'T KNOW GOD YET. HE HADN'T EXPERIENCED HIS POWER, HE HASN'T BEEN TOUCHED BY HIS GRACE - WHAT DO YOU EXPECT FROM SOMEONE WHO HASN'T HAD THAT MOMENT IN THEIR LIVES YET?

WELL, THAT'S A GOOD QUESTION. WHAT DO WE EXPECT OF OUR KIDS BEFORE THEY ARE BORN AGAIN? WHAT DO WE EXPECT OF NON-CHRISTIANS IN OUR LIVES? WHAT DO WE EXPECT OF THOSE ATTENDING OUR CHURCH AND FELLOWSHIPS WHO ARE SEEKERS BUT HAVEN'T YET FOUND THE GRACE OF GOD? INSTEAD OF BEING ANGRY, FRUSTRATED OR DISAPPOINTED, PERHAPS WE CAN DO A BETTER JOB OF POINTING THEM TO THE LORD, THE ONE WHO CAN BRING ILLUMINATION, TRANSFORMATION, REDEMPTION AND GRACE. MAYBE THAT'S THE PRAYER WE NEED TO PRAY FOR OUR KIDS, CO-WORKERS AND COMPANIONS - "GOD, OPEN THEIR EYES SO THEY CAN SEE YOU AND KNOW YOUR LOVE AND POWER AND GRACE".

FOR ONCE SOMEONE HAS SEEN, KNOWN AND EXPERIENCED GOD, AND HIS GRACE, ONCE SOMEONE MOVES BEING KNOWING ABOUT GOD TO KNOWING GOD, LIKE JACOB DID THAT NIGHT IN BETHEL, THINGS BEGIN TO CHANGE.

GOD WANTS A RELATIONSHIP WITH EACH OF US. HE LOVES US AND WANTS US TO KNOW WE CAN COME TO HIM AND FIND GRACE, FORGIVENESS, LOVE AND DELIVERANCE. THERE IS STILL A LADDER STANDING FROM EARTH TO HEAVEN, WITH ANGELS DESCENDING AND ASCENDING. OPEN THE EYES OF YOUR HEART AND SEE.