



**St. Mary and St. Mina Coptic Orthodox Church,
Syracuse, NY**
St. Stephen the Archdeacon Bible Study Group



Bible Study Aids for the Book of Genesis
Part III
Chapters 25 - 32

The Jacob Cycle (Genesis 25:19 – 35:29)

The focus of these chapters (Chapters 25 – 35) is on the life of Jacob (what we call the Jacob Cycle). The previous couple of chapters began wrapping up the life of Abraham, where we read about the death of Sarah in Chapter 23, the marriage between Isaac and Rebekah in Chapter 24, and the death of Abraham in Chapter 24. Jacob is born to Isaac and Rebekah, as the younger of a set of twins and given the name Jacob (Yakob, in Hebrew, which means “he grasps the heel”). Jacob buys the right of the firstborn from his brother Esau who despised it and sold it to Jacob for only a pot of stew. Rebekah helps Jacob tricks his father, Isaac, into giving him the blessing that should have accompanied that birthright (Genesis 27).

Chapter 28 – Isaac sends Jacob away to Padan Aram

In this chapter, we see Isaac blessing Jacob and asking him to go to his mother’s household to take a wife for himself. On Jacob’s way there, God appears to him in a dream at Bethel, confirming the Abrahamic blessing and renewing the covenant. Jacob builds a shrine to the Lord there and continues to Paddan-Aram.

Questions for Reflection on Chapter 28:

1. What did Isaac ask Jacob to do?
2. What is the significance of the dream or vision that Jacob saw at Bethel?
3. What vow did Jacob after the vision he saw?

Chapter 29 – The Sign of the Covenant

In this chapter, we see the meeting between Jacob and Rachel at the well. Jacob falls in love with Laban’s daughter Rachel, but Laban tricks him into marrying Leah first, and then he marries Rachel. In return, Jacob serves Laban for fourteen years.

Questions for Reflection on Chapter 29:

1. What does Jacob do at the well when he sees Rachel and learns that she is Laban's daughter?
2. Who was the first-born son to Jacob? Please also name the second, third and fourth sons born to Jacob from Leah?

Chapter 30 – Jacob's Sons

In this chapter, we learn about more children born to Jacob. Rachel has been barren, and therefore she gives her maid Bilhah to Jacob, as a wife, and Bilhah conceives and bears two sons to Jacob. After this, Leah gives her maid, Zilpah, to Jacob and Zilpah bears two more sons to Jacob. Leah then conceives and gives birth to two more sons to Jacob (a total of six sons from Leah), and then to a daughter (Dinah). Finally, the Lord opens the womb of Rachel and she gives birth to two more sons to Jacob.

Questions for Reflection on Chapter 30:

1. Name the two children born to Jacob from Bilhah and from Zilpah.
2. Who is the first son born to Jacob from Rachel?
3. How many years did Jacob have to serve Laban for the cattle?

Chapter 31 – Jacob leaves Laban to return to his father's house

In this Chapter, we learn that Jacob took his wives, children and possessions and left to go back to his father's house. Laban follows Jacob trying to get his daughters and the cattle back, but God warns Laban in a dream not to harm Jacob by any means. Finally, Jacob and Laban make peace by means of a "covenant".

Questions for Reflection on Chapter 31:

1. Why did Jacob leave Laban?
2. Who stole Laban's gods?

Chapter 32 – Jacob prepares to meet Esau and struggles with God

In this Chapter, we learn how Jacob was worried about meeting his brother Esau and how he tried to appease his brother's anger by offering him many gifts. Toward the end of the Chapter, we hear about a mysterious heavenly being appearing to Jacob, and about how Jacob fought with that heavenly being. He emerges from this wrestling with a divine blessing and a permanent physical injury.

Questions for Reflection on Chapter 32:

1. Whom did Jacob meet at the beginning of Chapter 32?
2. What were some of the gifts Jacob offered to his brother Esau?
3. What does Jacob tell his heavenly visitor?