

Exegetical Notes – Genesis 28:1-9

“Jacob’s Wife”

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(Genesis answers three basic theological questions. The first question is, “Whose world is it anyway?” The text answers the question by affirming that it is God’s world by right of creation. It is God’s world because God made it. The second question Genesis asks is “How do we get along in God’s world God’s way?” The answer is by trusting God and obeying Him. Family becomes the concern and Genesis begins to answer the third question, “How do we get along in God’s world God’s way particularly with the members of our own family?” In Genesis 25, we visited the family of Abraham, and we have seen how Abraham’s family was fractured because Abraham did not trust God completely and did not follow the plan of God for marriage. We saw how the family of Isaac, Abraham’s heir, was divided by parental favoritism. So far, we have not seen a family that remained healthy and intact. This text continues by showing what happened in Isaac’s family.)

Genesis 28:1-9

Verses 1-5

¹ So Isaac called for Jacob and blessed him. Then he commanded him: “Do not marry a Canaanite woman. ² Go at once to Paddan Aram, to the house of your mother’s father Bethuel. Take a wife for yourself there, from among the daughters of Laban, your mother’s brother. ³ May God Almighty bless you and make you fruitful and increase your numbers until you become a community of peoples. ⁴ May he give you and your descendants the blessing given to Abraham, so that you may take possession of the land where you now reside as a foreigner, the land God gave to Abraham.” ⁵ Then Isaac sent Jacob on his way, and he went to Paddan Aram, to Laban son of Bethuel the Aramean, the brother of Rebekah, who was the mother of Jacob and Esau.

- Isaac’s family was a mess (see exegetical notes for Genesis 26 and 27). Jacob, Isaac’s second son, had stolen the birthright blessing due the firstborn of Isaac’s children, Esau. Jacob had done this with the help of his

mother, Rebekah. Together they had connived to deceive Isaac. As a result, Esau and Jacob were divided.

- Esau had married two women who were not Hebrew. Their inclusion into Isaac's household further disturbed the order of Isaac's house.
- Because Esau was angry and had threatened to kill Jacob, Rebekah had told Jacob to flee to her father and remain there until she told him that it was safe to come home.
- As Jacob prepared to leave Isaac's household, Isaac called Jacob to him. (Note Rebekah's involvement in all this. Genesis 27:42-46.) Isaac blessed Jacob again and told Jacob to marry a woman from the family of Rebekah's father.
- Then Isaac sent Jacob away.

Verses 6-9

⁶ Now Esau learned that Isaac had blessed Jacob and had sent him to Paddan Aram to take a wife from there, and that when he blessed him he commanded him, "Do not marry a Canaanite woman,"⁷ and that Jacob had obeyed his father and mother and had gone to Paddan Aram. ⁸ Esau then realized how displeasing the Canaanite women were to his father Isaac; ⁹ so he went to Ishmael and married Mahalath, the sister of Nebaioth and daughter of Ishmael son of Abraham, in addition to the wives he already had.

- Esau was aware of where Jacob had gone and why he had gone there. He knew that Jacob went with their father's blessing. He knew that Isaac had commanded Jacob not to marry a Canaanite woman as he had done. Esau then understood that his father did not approve of his marrying Canaanite women.
- Hoping to gain his father's blessing, Esau went to Ishmael, Isaac's older brother and married a woman from Ishmael's line. He did not divorce either of his wives but married a third woman. So, he had three wives.
- Isaac's family was a divided mess.

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