

Jacob

Wrestling with the Profound

Jacob takes on the seed of Abraham's beginning in realistic living of a human relation with Profound Reality. This seed grows a tree that takes in Profound Reality and puts forth obedience to Profound Reality. Abraham was an exodus from the unrealism of putting forth our own reality and expecting others to obey that. Jacob dramatizes how taking in Profound Reality and putting forth obedience to Profound Reality involves major transformations in your life and doing the hard careful work of living realistically.

Jacob having cheated his brother Esau and fooled his father Isaac with help from his mother Rachel is now at about the age of 16 fleeing alone on foot from the wrath of his brother and father on this way to the house of his uncle Laban with only a rod and some sandwiches. The first night out, while sleeping with a rock for his pillow, he has a vivid dream about a staircase or ladder extending to the top story of Reality. In this dream Jacob hears again the promise made to Abraham. The next morning he made a pact with "the God of his fathers" to devote himself and his gifts back to the Giver, if he could just be kept safe until he got to Laban's house. So in this personally intense way, Jacob became the custodian of the Abrahamic legacy.

Isaac was not a very good father. He favored one son over the other. Perhaps he thought Esau would be a better carrier of the Abrahamic faith. The storytellers also suggest that Isaac identified more with Esau's hairy outdoor ruggedness than with Jacob's more smooth-skinned body and scheming thoughtfulness. Rebecca (and Reality too, apparently) disagreed with Isaac. As this unusual biblical story goes, the woman character had a better grasp of Reality than the man had. With help from Rebecca, Jacob tricked Isaac out of a blessing intended for Esau. The story proceeds with Jacob carrying on the Abrahamic legacy. Herein is a lesson for us: *We never know what Profound Reality will do, or who Profound Reality will choose to do what.*

Laban had two daughters: Rachel, whom Jacob dearly loved, and Leah, whom Laban tricked Jacob into marrying first, and then working another seven years for Rachel. Years later, Jacob left Laban, taking his two wives, many children, and a big flock of sheep that Jacob had "fleeced" out of Laban. On his way, he learns that he was going to intersect with his estranged brother coming his way with three hundred men. So this was the night for his all-night wrestling match with an angel of Profound Reality. He persisted in this struggle until he was given a new name "Israel," which means "striver or struggler with Yahweh." The next morning Jacob arose limping because of a dislocated hip to meet Esau. His old name "Jacob" was associated with the life style "trickster." So this event was a massive repentance and fresh start.

This fresh start was dearly needed to meet Esau. With Jacob's diplomatic realism in full operation, he made friends with Esau, and then got on his way before Esau changed his mind about fighting him. This is a story worthy of many sermons that I will not include. The main point of this story is that Jacob found his essential freedom that he then used to talk carefully with his brother—giving up his old trickster lifestyle and taking on the wrestling-with-God life style "Israel"—one who strives with Profound Reality and thereby wins realism for a new life.

So what does biblical sainthood look like? It means seeing yourself out of control by a Mystery you don't understand, and yet seeing yourself responsible for everything that happens to you. This Genesis sainthood means seeing yourself as a dialogue with a Power infinitely greater than you, and yet seeing and obeying that Reality as a friendly Power that is giving you the freedom you then use with all your alertness to choose your still unknown and undecided destiny.

That is a second strong picture of Biblical sainthood..

Here is a list of other stories and personages of Old Testaments sainthood we will visit in the other monthly publications of Realistic Living Pointers for 2022.

Jan: Adam & Eve

Feb: Abraham & Sarah

Mar: Jacob

Apr: Joseph

May: Moses

Jun: Joshua

Jul: Amos

Aug: Isaiah

Sep: Jeremiah

Oct: Ezekiel

Nov: Second Isaiah

Dec: THE CONTEMPORARY ADDRESS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT