

The Jacob Cycle in Genesis

Jacob's story takes up 20% of the book of Genesis. It is underlined by a theological tension throughout: "How can the "trickster" Jacob become the father of God's people?" "How can Jacob receive Abraham's promise if he leaves the land?" The passages reveal Jacob's character flaws early on with his name (*ya'aqob*) linked to "cheat" ('*aqab*) and "heel" ('*aqeb*). Despite these issues, God continues to press forward with his program of revelation just as he did with Abraham. Working around the flaws of Jacob, God continues to create his covenantal people to bless the world.

The Unchosen Son (Ishmael) (25:12 – 18)

- A. Beginnings: Birth, prediction, early conflict between Jacob & Esau (25:19 – 34)
- B. Relations with indigenous population (26:1 – 22)
- C. Blessing obtained – "He took away (*laqah*) my blessing (*beraka*)" (27:1 – 40)
- D. Jacob's flight from Esau (27:41 – 28:5)
- E. Encounter with God's agents (28:10 – 22)
- F. Arrival in Harran: Rachel, Laban (29:1 – 30)
- G. Children: Jacob acquires a family (30: 1 – 24)
 - Jacob's return to Canaan begins as soon as Joseph is born***
 - G'. Flocks: Jacob acquires wealth (30:25 – 43)
 - F'. Departure from Haran: Rachel, Laban (31:1 – 55)
 - E'. Encounter with God's agent (32:1 – 2)
 - D'. Jacob's approach to Esau (32:3 – 32)
 - C'. Blessing returned - "Accept (*laqah*) my blessing (*beraka*)" (33:1 – 20)
 - B'. Relations with indigenous population (Ch. 34)
 - A'. Endings: Death, fulfillment, Jacob & Esau together (Ch. 35)

The Unchosen Son (Esau) (Ch. 36)

From "Jacob Narrative" in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 3, 599 – 608: Doubleday – 1992.