1. **This week (Feb 28–Mar 6): Genesis 28-33.**

**Next week (Mar 7-13): Genesis 37-41.**

1. **History. Read BD entries for: Genesis, marriage, Abraham, Abrahamic Covenant, birthright, firstborn, Isaac, Jacob, Esau, Edom, Sarah, Rebekah, Laban, Leah, Rachel.** **Isaac pronounces on Jacob the blessings of the Abrahamic covenant and sends him away to find a worthy wife. Jacob marries Leah & Rachel in the covenant. Cultural differences. Recall last week’s discussion handout with the modern example: “We went to the temple Friday afternoon.” Jacob & Esau reconcile to some degree. Note that the CFM readings skip Genesis 34-36. Chapter 34 relates some “dark side” stories . Chapter 36 contains the generations of Esau. Chapter 35 will be covered some below.**
2. **Principles & points of doctrine. Oaths, vows, & covenants. Abrahamic covenant. Marriage in the covenant, eternal marriage, temple marriage. Birthright. Firstborn. Patriarchal order of the Priesthood. Consecration & tithing. Jacob’s vision of a ladder into Heaven with angels ascending and descending. Joseph Smith compared Jacob’s ladder to one of Paul’s visions and the degrees of glory [TPJS, p. 305]. New name Israel. Seeing God. House of the Lord. Twelve sons of Israel. The number 12 occurs frequently in the stories of the Patriarchs (e.g., 12 descendants of Nahor, 12 princes of Ishmael, 12 descendants of Esau, 12 tribes of Israel).**
3. **Personal application. Consider first this excerpt from the CFM manual, then the excerpts from Pres. Nelson’s Gen. Conf. talk “Let God Prevail,” and then the comments & questions that follow.**

Somewhere in the wilderness east of Canaan, Jacob nervously awaited an encounter with his twin brother, Esau. The last time Jacob had seen Esau, about 20 years earlier, Esau was threatening to kill him. Jacob had spent all night wrestling in the wilderness, seeking a blessing from God. As a result of Jacob’s faith, persistence, and determination, God had answered his prayers. That night Jacob’s name was changed to Israel, a name that means “he perseveres with God” ([Genesis 32:28](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/ot/gen/32.28?lang=eng#p28), footnote *b;* see also [Genesis 32:24–32](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/ot/gen/32.24-32?lang=eng#p24)).[1](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/#note1)

This is the first time the name *Israel* appears in the Bible, and it’s a name that perseveres throughout the book and throughout history. The name soon came to refer to more than just one man. Israel had 12 sons, and their descendants were collectively known as the “house of Israel,” the “tribes of Israel,” the “children of Israel,” or the “Israelites.”

Throughout history, the children of Israel attached great significance to their descent from one of the twelve tribes of Israel. Their lineage was an important part of their covenant identity. The Apostle Paul proclaimed that he was “of the tribe of Benjamin” ([Romans 11:1](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/nt/rom/11.1?lang=eng#p1)). When Lehi sent his sons to Jerusalem to retrieve the plates of brass, one reason was that the plates contained “a genealogy of his fathers” ([1 Nephi 5:14](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/bofm/1-ne/5.14?lang=eng#p14); see also [1 Nephi 3:3](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/bofm/1-ne/3.3?lang=eng#p3)). Lehi discovered that he was a descendant of Joseph, and his posterity’s understanding of their connection to the house of Israel proved important to them in the years to come (see [Alma 26:36](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/bofm/alma/26.36?lang=eng#p36); [3 Nephi 20:25](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/bofm/3-ne/20.25?lang=eng#p25)).

In the Church today, you may hear about Israel in expressions like “the gathering of Israel.” We sing about the “Redeemer of Israel,” the “Hope of Israel,” and “Ye Elders of Israel.”[2](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/#note2) In these cases, we aren’t talking or singing only about the ancient kingdom of Israel or the modern nation called Israel. Rather, we are referring to those who have been gathered from the nations of the world into the Church of Jesus Christ. We are referring to people who persevere with God, who earnestly seek His blessings, and who, through baptism, have become His covenant people.

Your patriarchal blessing declares your connection to one of the tribes of the house of Israel. That’s more than an interesting piece of family history information. Being a part of the house of Israel means that you have a covenant relationship with Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ. It means that you, like Abraham, are meant to “be a blessing” to God’s children ([Genesis 12:2](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/ot/gen/12.2?lang=eng#p2); [Abraham 2:9–11](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/pgp/abr/2.9-11?lang=eng#p9)). It means, in the words of Peter, that “ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light” ([1 Peter 2:9](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/nt/1-pet/2.9?lang=eng#p9)). It means that *you* are one who “perseveres with God” as you honor your covenants with Him.

**…………………….**

For the more than 36 years I’ve been an Apostle, the doctrine of the gathering of Israel has captured my attention.[1](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/#note1) *Everything* about it has intrigued me, including the ministries and names[2](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/#note2) of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; their lives and their wives; the covenant God made with them and extended through their lineage;[3](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/#note3) the dispersion of the twelve tribes; and the numerous prophecies about the gathering in our day.

I have studied the gathering, prayed about it, feasted upon every related scripture, and asked the Lord to increase my understanding.

So imagine my delight when I was led recently to a new insight. With the help of two Hebrew scholars, I learned that one of the Hebraic meanings of the word *Israel* is “let God prevail.”[4](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/#note4) Thus the very name of *Israel* refers to a person who is *willing* to let God prevail in his or her life. That concept stirs my soul! … At the place Jacob named *Peniel* (which means “the face of God”),[6](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/#note6) Jacob wrestled with a serious challenge. His agency was tested. Through this wrestle, Jacob proved what was most important to him. He demonstrated that he was willing to let God prevail in his life. In response, God changed Jacob’s name to *Israel,*[7](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/#note7) meaning “let God prevail.” God then promised Israel that *all* the blessings that had been pronounced upon Abraham’s head would also be his.[8](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/#note8) … With the Hebraic definition of *Israel* in mind, we find that the gathering of Israel takes on added meaning. The Lord is gathering those who are willing to let God prevail in their lives. The Lord is gathering those who will choose to let God be the most important influence in their lives.

For centuries, prophets have foretold this gathering,[11](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/#note11) and it is happening right now! As an essential prelude to the Second Coming of the Lord, it is *the most* important work in the world!

**……………**

**Genesis 28:1-22 – Isaac instructs Jacob to marry in the covenant, in particular, to go to Bethuel’s house and to marry a daughter of Laban. What are the family relationships here? Jacob blessed to be fruitful. Esau marries a daughter of Ishmael. Motivation? Jacob travels toward Haran. He has his dream/vision of the ladder (the word could also be translated stairway). The Lord extends His promise to Abraham now to Jacob. Jacob called the place Beth-el, because it was the house of God and gate of heaven. See footnote 19a. List the elements of the vow Jacob then makes to God. Compare chapter 35 comments below.**

 **29:1-35 – How does Jacob meet Rachel? What is their family relationship? Is there some significance of the stone & well to the story? Cultural assumptions that we miss? Is Jacob being presumptuous or over-eager? What comes out of his meeting with Laban? Describe Leah & Rachel. Any comparison with their being switched with Rebekah’s switch of Esau & Jacob? How would Leah & Rachel have felt throughout all this? Cultural attitudes? Note that after Leah’s week of wedding festivities, Jacob is allowed to marry Rachel, although he still has to work another seven years for Laban. How does verse 20 describe those years and Jacob’s love for Rachel? Laban gives Zilpah as a handmaid to Leah; and Bilhah, as a handmaid to Rachel. Leah is “hated” (i.e., loved less – compare Luke 14:26) and her womb is opened while Rachel is barren. Who is responsible for this? The sons of Leah are listed (Reuben, Simeon, Levi, & Judah). Note the meanings of their names are given in the footnotes.**

 **30:1-43 – Rachel envies her sister Leah and gives Bilhah to Jacob to be his wife. Bilhah gives birth to two sons, Dan & Naphtali (again see footnotes for meanings of these names). The competition continues as Leah gives Zilpah to Jacob as a wife, and she bears two sons (Gad & Asher – check footnotes). So what’s the story with mandrakes? Check BD entry. Leah bears two more sons (Issachar & Zebulum – again check the footnotes) and a daughter (Dinah). Then the Lord remembers Rachel, and Joseph is born. Note the extended footnote 24a about Joseph. Jacob requests that Laban allow him to depart in peace. Note how Laban recognizes that the Lord had blessed him for Jacob’s sake, and thus he does not want Jacob to leave. Laban accepts Jacob’s suggestion of wages for Jacob of off-color (“speckled & spotted”) cattle & sheep, which Jacob (& the Lord?) manipulates to his advantage despite Laban’s own attempt to cheat Jacob (verse 35). Note Jacob employs an old and persistent superstition with the animals, but gives God the credit in the next chapter.**

 **31:1-55 – Laban & his sons become angry with Jacob because of their loss of animals to him. The Lord tells Jacob to return to the land of Canaan, so he tells Leah & Rachel they must depart. Note the dream & angel referenced in verse 12. What does it mean in verse 13 to say the God of Beth-el? Leah & Rachel tell Jacob to do whatever the Lord has commanded him. They prepare camels, flocks, goods, etc., and depart in secret. Note Rachel takes the “images that were her father’s” (see the BD entry for “Teraphim”). Some have argued that the “images” should be translated “spectacles” (*Times & Seasons,* Feb 1, 1841). Apparently both Leah & Rachel felt their father had cheated them & Jacob out of their rightful inheritances. So Jacob & his family fled with all they had without telling anyone else. A few days later Laban discovers they’re gone, and it takes him another week to catch up to them. Laban is his usual variable self, but he & Jacob are finally reconciled enough to make a covenant & go their separate ways after 20 years.**

 **32:1-32 – Jacob goes his way, meets angels, and proclaims “this is God’s host.” See footnotes 2a and 2b. He sends messengers to Esau to try to prepare for their reunion. Esau will come with 400 men to meet Jacob, who is worried about what will happen & splits his group into two parts in preparation. He prays that all will go well with Esau & prepares a series of gifts for him & sends them ahead. Consider the content of Jacob’s prayer in verses 9-12 and observe Jacob did his part to honor the prayer. That night he sends everyone over a brook & away from him, so he is alone. He then “wrestles” the rest of the night with a messenger from God. Nibley & other LDS scholars have argued the word “wrestle” can also mean “embrace” (e.g., in Nibley’s book *The Message of Joseph Smith Papyri,* or commentary by Ogden & Skinner) and that this is an “endowment experience” since Jacob receives a new name, receives power, and sees God. Note footnotes 28b, 28c, and 30a. The new name for Jacob is Israel, which means “he perseveres with God” or “let God prevail.” Recall the quote from Pres. Nelson above. Are there differences in Jacob’s life after this? Is he a changed man? Are we changed people after going to the temple? Compare this “endowment experience” at Peniel with the “endowment experience” he had 20 years earlier at Bethel (go back to chapter 28).**

 **33:1-20 – Jacob honors Esau in a traditional & ritualistic way. He puts the women & children out front to signify friendship & peace, and he bows 7 times to signify complete honor & respect. Esau declines Jacob’s gifts, saying he has enough, but Jacob insists he accept the gifts. Esau goes his way, and Jacob travels on & settles in various parts of Canaan. [Note “before the city” means “east of.”] He builds an altar and calls it El-elohe-Israel, which means “God (El) is the God of Israel.” See footnote 20a. What do we do when we move? Apparently Jacob also dug a well there that is the same as that found in John 4:1-12.**

 **35:1-29 – God sends Jacob back to Bethel for a renewal of the experience & promises that Jacob had there. Jacob tries to purify & consecrate the lives of his people to God. The travel southward to Ephrath (Bethlehem). Rachel has another son, named Benjamin, but she dies in childbirth. See footnotes 18b & 18c. What did Jacob do at Rachel’s grave? To this day, there is a monument to Rachel near the entrance to Bethlehem. Note the transition to using the name Israel. The wives & sons of Israel are listed. Isaac dies at the age of 180 and is buried by Esau & Jacob. The stage is set for the rest of Biblical history (OT & NT), as well as the gathering of Israel in the last days. How do we fit in? Do we feel kinship to these OT patriarchs?**