

Week 3

Names are very important indicators of a person's character in the Bible. In Exod 2.10, Moses' name is given as meaning "to be drawn out." How is this name suited, not only to his being drawn out of the water, but to his whole career? (*focus for Genesis Group*)

- I can think of at least two or three reasons why Moses name is appropriate. The first is, of course, Moses was drawn out of the water. The second, Moses draws his people out of Egypt. And the third, Moses draws his people together to find the promised land and gives them the law.
- I can see how his name also could be about his personal development. Moses in the beginning was unsure of his ability to lead, his cowardness, and his speech problems. However, he raised up from a slow beginning to become an amazing leader. Moses was able to gain the hope and faith and strength that he needed to be a leader from God and from within.

The Exodus account is told, of course, from Israel's perspective. How would you imagine this story would be told from an Egyptian perspective? (*focus for Exodus Group*)

- I would imagine the Egyptians would think of themselves as the victims.
- The palace reports that a "small" foreign labor force was dismissed today. Despite rumors surrounding the dismissal, the crew was not worth the food we had to give them and we are better off without them. The Pharaoh's construction office reports that they wouldn't work every 7th day and had other silly union rules. No more details are available at this time.
- I imagine there was oscillation between victim and oppressor as the situation deteriorated and then seemed to recover. There was probably a good dose of "de-Nile" mixed in for good measure brought on by these periods of recovery!
- How many Egyptians did know what was going on? I took it for granted that they would have an idea of the conversations between Pharaoh and Moses (you know, through the ancient Egyptian Internet) but that probably wasn't the case at all. (Except the internet thing...we know that existed well before the creation story. The Egyptians were just too busy playing computer Solitaire to read the headlines. ;-p) Thus assumptions spawned by modern technology cloud my analytical skills.

If you were Pharaoh, would you think it appropriate to use such severe measures against a religious/ethnic subgroup in your community or nation that threatened violence? (*focus for Leviticus Group*)

- If I were Pharaoh...haha! This seems to be a bit of a political question regarding our current world situation. Being the young, optimistic, idealistic individual that I am, I'd like to think that violence is never the answer. As I was reading the Biblical text, I didn't notice many signs of Israel being a threat to Egypt. At first, they simply want days away from their service to worship the LORD. Perhaps I missed something in the reading of the text, but I don't see that Israelites did anything to bring on violence towards them.
- First, I would never be a Pharaoh given my gender...but if I were I suppose I would think it okay to use "severe measures" against others, especially those that threatened us. If we're talking about being a Pharaoh in Old Testament times I think that would just be upholding the norm as a "best practice" or at least a standard practice for protecting what

you believe to be rightly yours, be it your sovereignty or actual possession of something tangible. I think if we're talking about modern times, we still have somewhat of a "Pharaoh Culture" in a lot of countries, particularly those that are undeveloped or underdeveloped. Though in today's world there are more tried and true best practices for protection that include diplomacy, peacemaking, and peacekeeping. Violence continues to occur, but unilateral actions taken against another country tend to hold more significant repercussions today than they would have in OT times. (unilateral actions...hmm, can we think of any developed countries doing that these days...)

- The argument can be made that if he had acquiesced to the request to depart, then presumably none of the other actions/re-actions would have taken place. Still further, if God is the Person intervening in both the life of Pharaoh and the lives of His people, then the threat of violence as perceived by Pharaoh was instigated by Someone he ultimately could do nothing about, nor that he could eventually succeed against. The actions of the part of Pharaoh were counterproductive to the goal he possibly had in mind. Therefore, these actions were extreme and as we now have the biblical record, futile. Were they the correct course of action? In view of what eventually took place, I would have to say "No".
- Objectively, I would say that his actions were over the top. Subjectively, there were no tasks due to the overall purpose that God was bringing to fruition.

"One may read the story of Jacob's family as one of family alienation and reconciliation." (p94)
 How does this theme fit into the larger biblical scheme? (*focus for Numbers Group*)

- I have trouble with the TIOT quote because, although there is a lot of alienation in the story of Jacob, I don't see much reconciliation. . . Having said all this, it's time to contradict myself. Perhaps "alienation and reconciliation" is precisely the larger biblical scheme, but maybe we need to interpret this as simultaneous, rather than consecutive. In other words, maybe the larger biblical theme is that we are at the same time alienated and reconciled, not that we are alternately alienated and then reconciled. ("A&R" vs. "A-->R".) How can this be? Well, it is certainly the case that because of sin, we sometimes feel alienated from God. However, according to Paul, "while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God" (Rom 5:11). Notice the passive voice! We are not in control of the reconciling! Even though we may feel alienated from God, reconciliation is not about how we feel. It's about what God has already done! Thus, we are back to the gospel, which is exactly the larger biblical scheme. . . . And finally, back to Jacob. If we use the "A&R" sense rather than the "A-->R" sense, then "alienation and reconciliation" is indeed the story. As pointed out in item #1, Jacob's story is mostly alienation. However, God's story in this is one of reconciliation, because regardless of the level of Jacob's alienation, God continues to meet Jacob where he is to reassure him that the promises of God still hold true.

Promise, covenant, conflict, accommodation, providence, alienation, reconciliation (p97): These themes are deeply embedded throughout the story of Abraham/Sarah, Isaac/Rebekah, Jacob and his wives and sons. They are, in general, a pretty messed up family. Does this encourage or discourage you? (*focus for Deuteronomy Group*)

- Absolute encouragement! People who have alcohol dependencies don't go and hang out at the bar to quit, they go to AA. The same is true for us. If we only saw the OT God of power and rage what hope would there be?

- As a child, it discouraged me because in my upbringing, God's judgement was emphasized. If He was acting like that to His chosen people, what would He do to the rest of us?! Yikes! Now, I find it encouraging. We are all messed up in some way-some of us in more than one way! These stories illustrate how God just keeps coming back to us and trying again. He fixes, we mess up, He fixes, we mess up.... He never gives up on us, just as we never give up on our children.
- At the risk of sounding like a true "via media" Episcopalian, I find it both encouraging and discouraging. Discouraging from the standpoint of the fact we seem to have very little hope for learning our lessons and evolving into better beings; hence, the fact that we are in need of salvation as we cannot save ourselves. This is encouraging from the perspective that no matter how messed up we are or continue to be, God never gives up on us. If our being "good" was a condition of God's love, there would have been no need of redemption and Christ's sacrifice would have been unnecessary. Along those same lines, if we could just be good enough, what need would we have for God?
- Both. I get discouraged seeing that we don't seem to learn from these cycles and that it seems inevitable for us to experience repeated cycles of dysfunction and broken relationships. I find encouragement with the knowledge that God loves us anyway and as in Hosea, recommends the forgiveness and reconciliation process in our lives and practices it in his relationship with us.
- In order to better understand, I will order the concepts as on page 97, "promise into covenant, conflict and accommodation, providence, alienation and reconciliation." With this order, I will help explain how the darkness of life is encouraging. First, all families are a mess, and I suggest anybody who wants to know alienation and conflict to go to the bar and talk with the alcoholic. These conversations have enlightened me. Unless a better alternative to a drunken life is presented, they won't stop. The fact is that God loves us. No matter what I do or who I am, God will not love me more and will not love me less. God has bound this in multiple covenants. When reconciliation occurs, a person is allowed to see the beauty of their trials. In providence, God's grace has allowed us to care for others and to prepare for the moment. God's love is present in messed up families so that we may be drawn out into God's family. This fact gives me great encouragement for my future.

"Jacob becomes Israel because of his ability to stand successfully in conflict with God." (p91)

Do you agree? Is this a broad biblical theme? (*focus for Joshua Group*)

- I think that Jacob has all the characteristics of a very headstrong child. For those of us who are parents with this type of child or who were one of them ourselves we know what it feels like to actively struggle. I think God honored the tenacity of Jacob but still maintained the right to the "last word" as God.
- Many times I have questioned how God is able to deal with each of us as we test his will consistently. From my perspective in dealing with my sons, the parent/child relationship develops far beyond expectations when the child finally accepts the parent's role and realizes the amount of grace and love which was showered upon him came unconditionally and unselfishly. My son stood in conflict with me on a daily basis, just as we stand in conflict with God. Thank goodness God is willing to expend energy on us!!

- Jacob does not "become Israel because of his ability to stand successfully in conflict with God." Indeed, it is difficult to see in what way(s), if any, Jacob achieved victory over God... In a more broad sense of 'success', that of bending God to his will, Jacob also fails, if he in reality ever tries. ...The idea of standing in conflict with God is indeed a recurrent theme in the Hebrew Bible, notably Gen. 18. If the idea of standing in conflict with God is expanded to include disobeying God's commands and pursuing their own designs, then Israel is in conflict with God for centuries--and they NEVER enjoy 'success,' save for those instances when a mediator such as Moses saves them from God's wrathful punishment of their willful disobedience (i.e, Ex. 32 and Num. 21).
- Anda, great point you raise about God wanting to verify Jacob's leadership potential. I had never considered that. The ideas of God wanting to personally inspect a situation and of God choosing to manifest a physical presence in a relationship makes me think of the 'three men' who came to Abraham before proceeding to investigate the outcry against Sodom.
- God strengthens the relationship with God's chosen people by changing Jacob's name to Israel because Jacob was able to stand successfully in conflict with God. This was a win-win situation. God wins a chosen people. And Jacob 'wins' (continues) in the promises/covenant with God.
- Is the moral of this tale that God can (and will) make the choices of with whom he will wrestle?
- I think that Jacob reminds me of my younger brother. He tried everything to push my parents to their limits while at the same time he loves them and he knows that they will always be there for them. Jacob is the kind of person that has a lot of questions. He pushes his limits. He and God battle it out...and eventually Jacob stands with God.
- Jacob was not able to "stand successfully in conflict with God" and therefore "become Israel" because God knocked Jacob's hip out of his socket and it was probably not very comfortable for Jacob to "stand." Therefore, he could not "stand successfully." But I am just attempting a stab at humor.
- ...If Jacob stands successfully, it is not of his own doing, but because of the works of God (and I think this is how many of the interactions between God and certain individuals play out in the Bible). So, God allows Jacob to stand successfully with him, but it is not of Jacob's own doing... but because of God's choosing.