

ISAAC and JACOB

- ◆ Holding on to the faith
- ◆ Isaac: a picture of Christ
- ◆ Family quarrels
- ◆ Marrying the right person
- ◆ Jacob's vision of heaven
- ◆ God changes people

THIS BOOK teaches about the work of God in the life of two great men of faith in God, Isaac and Jacob. They were the son and grandson of Abraham. All three were used by God to begin the nation of Israel and to prepare the way for the coming Messiah, Jesus Christ. Isaac was a type of Christ but Jacob was a cheat whom God changed from his old ways.

MANNA PUBLICATIONS supply Bible commentaries written by Fred Morris (USA). For many years Fred, and his wife Lorna, travelled round the world teaching and preaching. When they returned home they wrote these notes for printing and selling wherever there was a need for basic Christian teaching.

THIS REVISED UK edition is written in easy-to-read Worldwide English which will add understanding and also speed up translation into other languages. It gives basic teaching for all readers plus additional notes for Bible students, teachers and pastors.

THESE BOOKS are to use on your own or to study in a group. They will teach you God's truth. They will help you to know God's Son, Jesus Christ. They will help you to talk about your faith in God. They will stop you from going the wrong way in life. They will tell you what is right and what is wrong. They will help to lead you closer to Christ. They provide food for life.

WE PRAY that you may have a new peace and purpose in life as you read the Bible and use these commentaries.

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FOUNDATIONAL BIBLE COMMENTARIES

"The truth of God is mystery and wonder and revelation – like Bread from Heaven."

Isaac & Jacob

A Bible Commentary in easy-to-read
Worldwide English for personal or
group study

by Fred Morris



GENESIS Part 3:
Chapters 22 to 36

To the reader or leader

These Bible commentaries explain the truth about God's Word in a way which is easy to read and understand. You can use these books to study the Bible on your own or with others in a group. In a group study, each person should have his or her own book and a Bible if possible.

There is a lot of information in this book. Please study it slowly and thoughtfully. Ask God to help you apply the things you learn into your own life and situation.



Where you see this sign, it means you or your group leader should always read the Bible passage first before reading the words in this book.



Talk about. Where you see this sign, it gives questions that can be used in a group study. They also help the reader to understand the Bible verses. Use the questions as a test.



Multiple choice questions. Where you see this sign there are questions with three possible answers; some are right answers, some are wrong answers. These questions help you think carefully about what you are reading. The answers to these questions are given at the back of the book.



Where you see this sign inside ruled boxes, the information is mainly for Bible students, teachers and preachers.

- **Extra Bible readings** are included to give you important information. God will use them to speak to you. This is why you should check all readings now or later and use them for study at home. Some readings are from the New Testament (NT), the part of the Bible written after Jesus Christ lived on this earth. These link with the Old Testament (OT) which begins with the book of Genesis.

These Bible commentaries give the truth of God as a foundation for all believers. The people leading the study should add applications and experiences from their own Christian life and culture.

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ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Genesis 22 – 24:

1.b 2.a 3.c 4.c 5.b 6. There are no correct answers given

Genesis 25 – 31:

7.b 8.a 9.b 10.a 11.c 12.a and c

Genesis 32 – 35:

13.c 14.b 15.b 16.b 17.a 18.a

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ESAU'S FAMILY LINE

Esau helped Jacob bury their father. Then Esau and his family went back to where they had settled, in the hill country of Seir, later called Edom.

A short history of Esau is added to the record. This history probably came from Esau's family records. The account in the first eight verses continues in later verses.

First, we have the names of Jacob's sons, then the names of Esau's sons and his wives, then the names of their families (36:15). Judith's name (one of the wives of Esau) is not in this list. There is a difference in names because some records may have been Israel's and some Esau's.

The families of Esau were called Edomites and they had kings over their cities. Israel's tribes had no king until the days of Samuel.



Talk about:

1. Where did Jacob bury Rachel (35:19)?
2. What happened when she died (35:18)?
3. Who were the Edomites?
4. Where were Jacob and most of the other Patriarchs buried (49:29-30)?

ABRAHAM'S FAMILY LINE

Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were Israel's first leaders - we call them the Patriarchs. God had a special purpose for these men. He showed the people how to live by faith in Him, through what he taught these men.

Through His Covenant promises to the Patriarchs and through their faith in Him, God explained the relationship between God and man and established it for future generations. In this way the blessings of God's Covenant passed from generation to generation through men and women who kept faith in Yahweh, the one true God.

In later Bible commentaries, we will read of more great men of faith, such as Joseph, Moses and David. They all spoke of a time in the future when Jesus Christ, God's Son would be born. He would offer salvation to the whole world through faith in Him.

[Genesis 3, English, Feb 2007

ISAAC AND JACOB

Dear Reader, this is our third commentary on the first book of the Bible. It is mainly about the work of God in the life of Isaac, the only son of Abraham and Sarah, and in the life of Jacob, the second son of Isaac. Jacob was later called Israel.

THE STORY OF GENESIS SO FAR

In our first commentary 'Beginnings', we talked about the beginning of the world. We said that God (Yahweh) made the world and He made it well. He also made the people and all living things and He was pleased with what He had made.

We also talked about the sins of men and women and how the people turned away from God. They were selfish people and they did things that did not please God. He was sad and angry and He was sorry that He had made them. So God decided to destroy everyone with a great flood of water. But He saved Noah and his family of three sons, because Noah worshipped and believed God and He loved him. One son, Japheth, moved into Europe with his family. One son, Ham, went south to Africa with his family. Shem moved east into Asia with his family. Shem's children were the most religious of all peoples. The Jews came from them and then the first Christians and then later the Muslims and many other religions. But the Jews and Muslims do not believe that Jesus is God's Son. Christians believe that Jesus is the Son of God and is the Christ, God's Saviour for the whole world. They also believe that one day Jesus will return.

In our second commentary 'Abraham', we told you that God chose Abraham to teach the truth about Himself. Noah and Shem were still alive when Abraham was a young man. He knew that God had punished the world with a great flood. Abraham believed God. And God chose him to become the father of millions of people who believe in the one true God.

ABRAHAM, ISAAC AND THE RESURRECTION

After Noah, Abraham is the main starting point of God's plan to bring people back to Himself. Abraham is known as the father of all people who believe and worship the one true God (Romans 4:11).

Isaac was one of the sons of Abraham and God chose him because he was Abraham's only son by Sarah. Isaac was special to God. The promises that God made to Abraham started to come true through Isaac. The apostle Paul says in Galatians 4:22, 'It is written that Abraham had two sons. The

slave woman gave birth to one of them. The free woman (not the slave) gave birth to the other one. Abraham's son (Ishmael) to the slave woman was born in the usual way. But his son (Isaac) by the free woman was born because of God's promise.'

We told you that Abraham was ready to offer up Isaac back to God. He believed that God would save Isaac or raise him from death. Because of this, we say that Isaac was a type of Christ - Jesus was the chosen Son of God and He sacrificed His life but God raised Him from death (God resurrected him). Jesus went back to Heaven and received the full inheritance from God His Father. God saved Isaac, too, from death and Isaac inherited all things from his father, including the covenant promises that God first gave to Abraham. God saved Isaac so that many, many people would trust in God and receive His salvation.

Now Jacob was one of the twin sons of Isaac. We find that his life was changed from the 'old sinful man' to the 'new righteous man'. He, too, was 'a son of God's promise'. This was the same promise first made to Abraham.

It is important to read our Bibles and learn about great people like Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. In the people of the Bible, we often see pictures



BIBLICAL TYPOLOGY

Throughout the Old Testament, Bible teachers tell us that there are many people who are types or likenesses or 'pictures' of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Isaac was a type of Christ. He was the only child of Abraham and Sarah and God chose him for sacrifice even though he had done nothing wrong. The life of Jesus Christ, God's only Son, was sacrificed. God spared Isaac, and Abraham sacrificed a ram instead. But God did not spare Jesus. Jesus had done nothing wrong but he died because God had planned it. This is why Jesus is called the Lamb of God. God's plan was to forgive the people's sins by spilling the blood of the special Lamb of God. God also forgives our sins when we believe that Jesus is the Son of God and when we obey His teachings.

So Isaac is a type of Christ and Abraham is a type of God the Father. Also Abraham's servant is a type or likeness of the Holy Spirit. Jacob shows the changes that the Holy Spirit can make in a person's life. The Father sent the servant to find a wife for his son. The Holy Spirit focuses our attention and thoughts on the Son, Jesus Christ, and on the Father, God, but not on Himself. God sends the Holy Spirit to find all those who are to be joined to His Son, Jesus. They will become members of The Body of Christ, the True Church of Jesus Christ.

The families of the other 11 children of Israel all had a part to play in the history of the Jews and the nation of Israel.

QUESTIONS ON GENESIS 32 to 35

(Answers are given at the end)



Which sentences are correct?

- Jacob's name was changed to Israel because —
 - he won the fight with God's man;
 - he ended up with a limp;
 - he fought well with God and men.
- When Esau met Jacob he —
 - welcomed Jacob and went with him to his home;
 - accepted Jacob's gift and left him to follow later;
 - wept and kissed Jacob and his wives.
- The sons of Jacob —
 - wanted Shechem the Hivite to marry their sister;
 - tricked the Hivites and killed them;
 - were told by Jacob that they had done the right thing to the Hivites.
- God told Jacob that —
 - only Rachel's children would be blessed;
 - his name would mean God's ruler;
 - Rachel would die in childbirth.
- Which sentence is true:
 - Rachel died giving birth to Benjamin; Isaac died at Bethel;
 - Reuben married Bilhah.
- Esau moved from Canaan because —
 - he was not happy at home;
 - both him and Jacob had too much livestock;
 - he wanted his own country, Edom.



Genesis 35:16-29

JACOB CONTINUES HIS JOURNEY AND RACHEL DIES

Jacob's large family lived in many different places and moved around to find food for their flocks. They were near Bethlehem when Rachel gave birth to a son. It was a difficult birth. The midwife tried to help and comfort the mother. Rachel was alive until her son was born. She whispered Ben-Oni (son of my sorrow) for the baby's name, then she died.

Jacob called the boy Benjamin (son of my right hand). Benjamin grew up to be a fine lad and he was very close to his older brother, Joseph.

Jacob buried Rachel, his true love, in a tomb beside the road to Ephrath (Bethlehem).

JACOB RETURNS TO ISAAC

Jacob continued his journey again, going south. While he lived in the Negev, Reuben, his oldest son, 'slept with his father's concubine, Bilhah, and Israel heard of it' (35:22). Reuben's sin cost him God's blessing (I Chronicles 5:1).

Then Jacob came at last to his father's old home in Mamre, near Hebron. Many years had passed since Jacob left Laban, his uncle, in Haran and much had happened to his family. We have a list here to tell us that all Jacob's sons arrived safely in Hebron and they met Isaac.

Jacob always thought of Joseph as his firstborn son, because he was born to Rachel, the girl that he loved when he was young. Many years later, Joseph's sons inherited a double part, which was normally given to the firstborn son.

Jacob's father Isaac died. He was 180 years old. Esau came from Seir to help Jacob to bury their father. Together, they cut out a new tomb in the rocky cave of Machpelah and laid Isaac's body there (49:29-31). Esau did not stay with Jacob.

The main record of Jacob's life ends here. He lived quietly for many more years. His sons took care of him in his old age and he blessed them before he died (49:1-28).

JACOB'S FAMILY LINE

The Bible gives special mention to Judah, Jacob's fourth son by Leah. Judah was a young lion and the promised Messiah of God, The Lion of Judah, would come through his family (49:9-10). We shall study this in our next commentary.

of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. Christian teachers call this likeness 'Biblical typology'. We should look for the qualities of God in people like Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and also Abraham's servant.



Talk about:

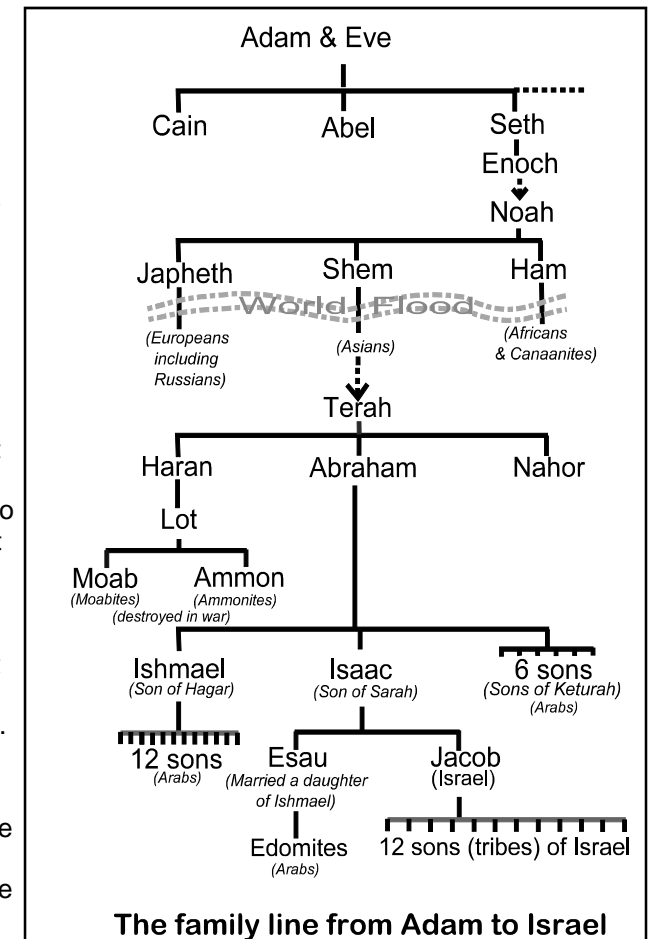
1. What did the angel of the Lord promise Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3; 13:14-17; 15:13-21)?
2. Who are Abraham's true children (Hebrews 11)?
3. Why is Isaac like a type of Christ Hebrews 11:19)?

JACOB, GOD'S CHOICE, BECOMES ISRAEL

We read that Isaac's son Jacob became one of the most important people in the Old Testament.

God called him to be part of His new agreement for the salvation of mankind. He is the grandson of Abraham and the son of Isaac, and he is the third of the great patriarchs. The Bible often says 'the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob'. Like his father and grandfather, he had weaknesses. He often failed to do what was right and in this way, he hurt those who were close to him. But like Abraham and Isaac, he grew in faith in God. God was able to use him to fulfil part of the promises made to the other patriarchs.

The key to understanding this man Jacob is to realise that as he grew older he was more and more aware of his failings.



His guilt was mainly due to the way he treated his parents, his twin brother and his own children. And yet God was with Jacob and God chose him to become the father of 'the twelve tribes of Israel'.



Genesis 22

TRUE FAITH SURRENDERS ALL

It was not God's will for Abraham to sacrifice his son, Isaac, because human sacrifice was strictly forbidden by God. Abraham's test of faith pointed to God's better plan. Later on Jesus Christ, God's Son, would die instead - for the sins of the whole world (John 3:16).

All true faith includes surrender. This means giving back to God all His gifts to us, all the time (Matthew 6:33). Abraham 'came out of the world' in the fullest sense of the word. He surrendered worldly interests; he left behind . . .

- a) Ur and his father's comfortable house to become a tent dweller, always on the move;
- b) the attractive things and places of this world, as chosen by his nephew Lot,
- c) Ishmael, who was a picture of Abraham's 'efforts in the flesh' to raise a family (Hebrews 4:12).

God prepared Abraham to surrender even those things that were promised — the closest and dearest - his only true son, Isaac. God-given blessings must be given back to the Giver for Him to use as He chooses.

Abraham was ready to accept the death of Isaac as being God's command. His faith was in God's ability to 'raise him from the dead', if that was necessary. Abraham was ready to kill his son Isaac. But the angel of the Lord called to him, 'Do not lay a hand on the boy. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from Me your son, your only son' (Gen. 22:12).



Talk about:

1. What is the foundation of our faith?
2. True faith surrenders everything to God. True or False (Deuteronomy 6:5)?
3. What did Abraham really give up?

ABRAHAM AND ISAAC OBEYED GOD

All true sacrifice must include:

a) *The soul or spirit of sacrifice.* Abraham had already 'in his heart' surrendered Isaac to God (Hebrews 11:17). It is not the things we do that

no one chased them' (35:5). This was part of God's protection. His army of angels was still with them. Many people in Shechem wanted to pursue them to hurt them.

'You are my hiding place,' David wrote, 'You will protect me from trouble' (Psalm 32:7). God's protection was not something that would come and go. Jacob could have it as long as he lived under the Covenant blessing of the Lord God.



Genesis 35: 9-15

JACOB FINALLY COMES TO BETHEL

When Jacob arrived there, he built an altar to El Bethel, the God of Bethel. It was there that God had appeared to him and said, 'You will no longer be called Jacob; your name will be Israel' (35:10). Jacob's first altar was an altar of fear. This was an altar of faith.

Jacob's blessing did not come because he was in Bethel. It was a blessing from the God of Bethel, El-Shaddai, God All Sufficient, who kept him safe!

God reminds Jacob of his new name and his new nature. He is now Israel, blessed of God, not Jacob, the deceiver. Jacob had always known that the elder brother would serve the younger brother (25:23) and that God would bless him. But he made the mistake of trying to do God's will in his own way. Jacob was slowly finding a new life pleasing to God. We must remember that it is a work of the Holy Spirit to give us new life that is like Christ's life.

When God stopped talking to Jacob, Jacob knew that God's presence had left him, so he gathered stones and built a pillar. He poured a drink offering on it and an offering of oil to God. There, he offered himself as a servant of El-Shaddai, the God who helps us when we need Him.



Talk about:

1. When God speaks to us in some special way, we must offer ourselves again to Him (Romans 12:1-2).
2. Why did Jacob leave Shechem (35:1)?
3. Why did God change Jacob's name to Israel?



THE NAMES OF GOD

The God of the Christian faith is One God in three forms or Persons: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. Christians call this the Trinity. The Patriarchs knew God the Father by the letters of His Name, YHWH. This name for God is usually written today as Yahweh. The Jews call God Adonay when they read these letters. Yahweh is the God of the Hebrews. He is the Holy God of Israel and the God of the Christians.

Yahweh sent His Son to earth as a human being to die upon the cross as a substitute for our sins. God's Hebrew name for His Son is Yeshua, which means Salvation. He is known today as Jesus. He is the second Person of the Trinity.

The Third Person of the Trinity is God the Holy Spirit who is known in Hebrew as the Ruach HaKodesh.

- The Old Testament gives other names for God:
- Yahweh Elohim: God of Power, the Creator God
- Yahweh Jireh: God who provides **continued next page**
- **The Names of God — Continued**
- Yahweh Rophe: God who heals
- Yahweh Shalom: God of Peace
- Yahweh Nissi: God my Banner (Protector)
- Yahweh Sabaoth: God of Hosts
- Yahweh Roi: God, my Shepherd
- Yahweh Tsedkenu: God our Righteousness
- El Shaddai: The All Sufficient God
- El Elohe Israel: God, The God of Israel
- Ehyeh asher Ehyeh: I AM that I AM or I WILL BE what I WILL BE

GET RID OF YOUR IDOLS

'Get rid of the foreign gods that you have with you. Purify yourselves and change your clothes,' Jacob told his sons and servants. 'Then come, let us go up to Bethel, where I will build an altar to God' (35:2-3).

Jacob's family still had idols in their tents. So they gave Jacob all their foreign gods and their earrings and Jacob buried these things.

Perhaps their earrings were to protect against evil spirits - a superstition that was common in the Middle East. Almost everyone wore charms. People often paid a lot of money for them. Mothers put charms on their babies as soon as they were born to protect them from evil spirits.

Then Jacob gathered his family together and they set out for Bethel. Notice that 'The terror of Yahweh God fell on the towns around them so that

makes a sacrifice, but the purpose in our hearts (Isaiah 1:10-13). God accepts the worship of our hearts, not what we do with our hands. Many people go to worship on Sunday, but their hearts are far away from God! They have 'a form of godliness but deny its power' (2 Timothy 3:5).

b) *The victory of the sacrifice.* The victory is not in the death of the sacrifice, but in forgiveness and in new life. The true and final goal of all Old Testament sacrifice was peace with God and His blessing. Abraham spoke words of faith and victory when he said to his servants: 'When we [the boy and I] have worshipped, we will return' (Genesis 22:5; Hebrews 11:19).

Old Testament sacrifices are prophetic. They point forward in time to the sacrifice of Jesus (Luke 23:33) when we look and see that God was offering Jesus Christ, His special Lamb. Jesus died on a cross at Calvary in the will and purpose of God (Romans 8:28-39), as God had promised when sin first came into the world (Genesis 3:15). Calvary is a part of the mountain of Moriah, the place where God told Abraham to sacrifice Isaac. This, too, was where the Jerusalem Temple was built many years later.

And what about Isaac in this story of Abraham and his faith in God? Isaac submitted to his father's will and went with him to be offered up on the altar. He trusted his father, Abraham. This is another reason why Isaac is a type of Christ. Jesus went to Calvary's cross and He did his Father's will. He became the Lamb of God in His sacrifice for us. The words of Abraham, 'God will provide the lamb', were prophetic (Gen. 22:8).

Isaac learnt about the care and will and provision of his earthly father and of his heavenly Father. He inherited all of God's promises to Abraham, as well as his earthly provision from Abraham.



Genesis 23

THE DEATH OF SARAH

Abraham had wandered back northwards to Hebron, at that time called Kiriath Arba (Joshua 14:15). He was, and always would be, a Bedouin - a nomad living in a tent, 'an outsider and a stranger' - his own words (23:4).

Abraham and Sarah had shared a long life together. She died at the age of 127. Now Abraham needed to find a resting place for her body.

A local tribe called the Hittites owned land with a cave in it. Abraham bought the land and buried Sarah's body in the cave. It became the family burying place for (49:29-31):

- | | | |
|------------|------------|----------|
| a) Sarah | b) Abraham | c) Isaac |
| d) Rebekah | e) Leah | f) Jacob |



Genesis 24:1-9

A WIFE FOR ISAAC

Abraham and his family lived in Canaan. All the people living around them worshipped idols. The Canaanites did not know the one true God, Yahweh, and they were very wicked. Because Abraham loved God, he wanted his son, Isaac, to marry a girl who also loved God.

The Lord had blessed Abraham in all things. Now God would bless Abraham with the right wife for Isaac. Parents need to be concerned about life-partners for their sons and daughters and Isaac was special! He could not marry a heathen Canaanite girl.

Abraham trusted his servant to go on a long journey. He would visit Abraham's brother's family to bring home a wife for Isaac. The servant probably knew the area and Nahor's family.

Before the servant left Abraham, he asked, 'What if the woman will not come back with me?' (24:5). This reminds us that everyone who accepts Christ freely chooses to do so. God does not put pressure on anyone to believe, though He may cause things to happen that make us think of Him. The Holy Spirit prompts us to do the Father's will.

Abraham believed that God's Spirit would guide his servant (24:7). Abraham reminded his servant that God brought him out of Ur, spoke to him and promised to be with him. He assured his servant that the same God would 'send His angel before you' (24:7). Father Abraham was using his servant to prompt a response to his will.

In the same way, Father God uses His Spirit to prompt us to obey Him. We can then choose to do what is right or we can disobey and choose to go the wrong way.

The servant obeyed Abraham and loaded the camels for the journey. So the servant set out for Haran to find a wife for Isaac. He went to Abraham's own brother Nahor. The servant took with him all kinds of good things from his master. Abraham was very rich and he gave his servant gold, clothes and fine food to take with him. These were presents to give to Abraham's brother and to the members of Nahor's family.

their father condemned them for it (49:5). God says, 'It is Mine to avenge; I will repay' (Romans 12:19).

Jacob knew that it was wrong to let his sons and daughters marry into the Canaanite families. Jacob's own brother, Esau, had fallen into sin in this way (26:34).



Talk about:

1. Jacob's family lived close to the people of Shechem, and so Jacob's family were tempted to live like them: true or false?
2. What was the cost for Jacob of being a weak father?



Genesis 35:1-8

JACOB RETURNS TO BETHEL

This chapter is a mixture of pieces of history, not necessarily in the order in which they happened. Jacob knew that many things in his life needed to be put right:



- a) His sons did evil.
- b) He needed to be holy in his own life.
- c) God's promise and His blessing must pass to one of his sons, but to which one?
- d) He needed God to show him what to do because his name was a 'bad word' in Shechem.

God spoke to Jacob and He told him, 'Go up to Bethel and settle there' (35:1). 'Build an altar there to honour God, who appeared to you when you were running away from your brother' (28:13).

Jacob obeyed God. He told his family to make themselves holy (35:2). As head of his family, Jacob had to lead them in the things of God.

God's blessing brings responsibility with it. God says to us, 'Be holy in all that you do . . . Be holy for I am holy' (1 Peter 1:15-16).

Esau was not expecting this! He ran to meet Jacob, threw his arms around his neck and kissed him. And they cried together (33:4).

'Who are these people with you?' Esau asked Jacob when he saw all the women, children and servants. Jacob answered, 'They are the children God has kindly given to me' (33:5).

Then all the families came forward in order and bowed before Esau: the maidservants and their children came first, Leah and her children next and Rachel and Joseph last.

Jacob had to admit that he was afraid and he had prepared the gifts to please Esau. Esau told Jacob, 'I already have plenty. Keep what you have for yourself!' (33:9).

God was working in Jacob's heart, changing him into a new man. God was building character into Jacob's life.



Genesis 34:1-31

DINAH AND THE MEN OF SHECHEM

When Jacob and his family arrived in Canaan, he settled near the city of Shechem and put up his tents there. Shechem, son of Hamor the Hivite was 'king' of the area where Jacob camped.

When Jacob's daughter Dinah was a teenager, she went out to visit the local girls. They were heathen women who did not know the God of Jacob and she should not have gone out alone in that foreign land.

What happened shows that Jacob was foolish to stay in Shechem. He should have obeyed God and gone on to Bethel, where he first met God.

The king's son saw Dinah, took her and raped her. This made Jacob's sons angry. Levi and Simeon, two of Leah's sons, punished the men of the city. Because they could not attack the city alone, probably all Jacob's sons joined in this attack. Jacob's sons did a deceitful and wicked thing. And later



A CLEAN HEART AND LIFE

All believers need to be holy in the way they live! We want the blessing of God, but we carry sins from our past lives. Some things look harmless enough – self-pity,

impure thoughts, gambling games, worldly books and films. They belong to our flesh life. Be a friend of this world and you become an enemy of God (James 4:4).



Talk about:

1. Why did Abraham send his servant to Nahor's place in Mesopotamia?
2. What did Abraham say to encourage his servant (24:7)?
3. What did Abraham's servant promise not to do (24:9)?



Genesis 24:10-59

AFTER MANY DAYS OF TRAVEL

After travelling many days, the servant came to Haran. God led him straight to the right place. It was evening, 'the time when women go out to draw water' (24:11). Abraham's servant made his camels kneel down near a well and he waited for someone to come and draw water for them.

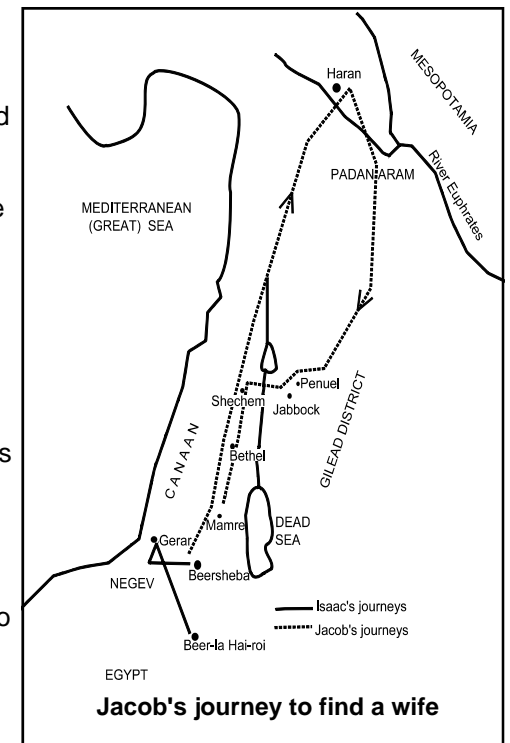
He prayed, 'O Lord, the God of my master . . . help me . . . I am standing beside this spring and the girls of the village are coming out to draw water . . . When I ask one of them for a drink and she says "Yes", let her also say "And I will give your camels water, too." Let her be the one. . .' (24:13-14).

He asked God to give him these signs: the woman would be . . .

- a) kind-hearted;
- b) ready to help a traveller;
- c) kind to animals;
- d) good at her work.

Then the servant looked up and saw a very beautiful young girl. She was carrying her water jar on her shoulder. She was a virgin. He watched her as she filled her jar with water. She was strong and willing. She spoke the words he had asked to hear. This was the sign that he had asked God for. And God gave him the sign. He knew that this was the right girl. And then she told him that she was a granddaughter of Nahor, Abraham's brother.

Abraham's servant was filled with joy. Then he bowed his head and thanked God. He gave her two gold bracelets and sent her





GOD WILL GUIDE US TOO

God will guide us if we ask Him. He will show us the way to the person that we should marry. Yes, He will find a husband or wife for you. And He will direct all parts of our lives. Jesus said, 'You can ask Me for anything in My Name and I will do it' (John 14:14).

But like Abraham's servant, we must know what is necessary to please our Father in heaven. We must ask and expect the Holy Spirit to guide us. The Holy Spirit directs us towards the will of the Father and the example of the Son.

Jesus was the perfect servant. He came down from Heaven. He came to find us and lead us to God. He came to tell us of the Father's purpose. He knew what God wanted to do. God is rich in blessings and all God's promises and blessings can be ours if we turn from our wrong ways, follow Jesus and obey God's commands. Rebekah left everything to go to Isaac. And we leave all to follow Christ. Why? Because He loved us and gave Himself for us. 'For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life' (John 3:16).

running to her mother. God had guided him to this place and had given him a wife for Isaac.

At Nahor's house, the servant talked with the girl's father and mother. He told them how God had blessed his master, Abraham. He told about the young man, Isaac. Isaac's faith was like his father's and Isaac wanted a godly woman to be his wife. Notice how the servant speaks only about Abraham and Isaac. In the same way the Holy Spirit directs us away from Himself towards God the Father and God the Son.

The servant's prayer was simple (24:12-14):

- He prayed in faith for success for Abraham's son.
- He knew what was needed to please Isaac's father.
- He asked God to do it in a way that he could easily understand.
- He believed that God would choose a wife for Isaac.



Genesis 24:60-67

ABRAHAM'S RELATIVES AGREED TO THE MARRIAGE

The family tried to stop Rebekah leaving immediately. But the sign of a true disciple is the immediate response to God's call (Matthew 4:22). When they asked Rebekah if she would leave immediately she said 'Yes' and so they

Jesus said to His followers, 'If anyone wants to come after Me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for Me and for the gospel, will save it' (Mark 8:34-35).



Talk about:

- What happened to Jacob's independence when he was alone with God's angel?
- In times of trouble, what should we do if we have total faith in God?
- Is the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac your God, too?
- What promises of God are important to you to remember?
- Why did God wrestle with Jacob all night but not destroy him?



Genesis 33:1-20

JACOB MEETS ESAU

'Jacob looked up and there was Esau, coming with his four hundred men . . .' As Jacob came near to his brother, he bowed to the ground seven times (33:3).



WALK AND TALK GOD'S WAY

It is easy to choose God now and then choose Jacob's old way the next time that a test comes! This will not make you happy. If you choose God's way in every test and not your own way, you will grow in your faith.

Paul wrote, 'I delight in God's Law (Torah); but I see another law at work in ... my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of sin' (Romans 7:23-24). 'Who will rescue me ...?' Paul cried. He knew the answer. 'Thanks be to God - through Jesus Christ our Lord!'

Jacob would succeed, not in his own strength but in the strength that God gave him.

The Christian's 'walk' and 'talk' must agree. 'Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness' (2 Timothy 2:19). He must also turn away from trusting in himself. Jacob gave testimony, 'I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared' (32:30).

This can be our testimony, too. Because of the death of our Saviour Jesus Christ, we are allowed into God's presence. Because we are made clean, God can say to us, 'Come boldly to My throne of grace' (Hebrews 4:16).

Jacob. His fears were stopping a true life of faith in God. Jacob prayed (32:9) but he still lacked faith.



Genesis 32:22-32

JACOB WRESTLES WITH GOD

In the evening, Jacob sent his family and his flocks across the River Jabbok without him. While Jacob sat alone, a man came and began to wrestle with him. Jacob did not know at first that this was God's angel. One of the angels had left the camp and he had come to wrestle with Jacob.

Jacob 'wrestled with him till daybreak' (32:24). The angel did not overpower Jacob and Jacob did not surrender. Jacob had faced hard things before. He had been in difficult situations and he had always succeeded. Perhaps he thought that he was going to win in this struggle!

So Jacob struggled on. He begged for a blessing with tears. He knew that this was God's man and he knew that only God could bless him.

Near morning the angel asked, 'What is your name?' (32:27).

Then the angel gave Jacob a new name, 'Israel', which means 'ruling as a prince with God' (32:28). 'You have struggled with God and with men, and have overcome.' Jacob had struggled with God, gained his blessing, but ended up limping. His limp was a constant reminder of who was really in control!

Jacob saw that his 'old nature' had to surrender to God's control.

We can struggle like Jacob or follow God's way of openness and honesty. We can trust in ourselves or in God's care for us. We each have the same choice, but it takes a strong faith to follow our Lord all the way.



GREAT LEGS AND GREAT FAITH

Some years ago, I visited the Macu tribe in the Amazon jungle. The first day that I was there, several people pulled up my trousers and felt the calf of my leg, so I asked the missionary, 'Why are they feeling my leg?'

'You are probably the oldest man they have ever seen,' she told me.

'When a warrior gets very old, it is his legs that give out first. His strength is in his legs!'

I understood as I remembered the angel who touched Jacob's thigh.

The angel of God blessed Jacob with a new name. 'Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel.' (Israel means 'he struggles with God' or 'He rules as a prince with God'). Many other meanings have been suggested. Jacob had now become a man of faith like his father and his grandfather.

blessed her. 'Our sister, may you increase to thousands upon thousands; may your offspring overcome the gates of your enemies' (24:60). Isaac married Rebekah. He loved her and took her into his tent which had been his mother's tent.



Genesis 25:1-18

THE DEATH OF ABRAHAM

After Sarah died, Abraham married again and had several sons by his wife Keturah. God did not consider Keturah to be Abraham's real wife. When Keturah's sons grew up Abraham gave them their share of his inheritance and he sent them all far away to the east (v.6). They had their own large families who gave a lot of trouble to Isaac's grandchildren later. They were unfriendly people.

Abraham died (v.8). He had lived 100 years in Canaan (12:4; 25:7). There was a meeting between Isaac and Ishmael when they came together to bury their father.

Isaac received God's blessing (v.11) and God's covenant promises, as well as his inheritance from Abraham (v.5). The covenant promises passed to Isaac and then to Jacob (Genesis 28:13-15; 35:12). God chose to give His covenant to Isaac and to Isaac's son, Jacob. God made the covenant promise with Abraham pass to Isaac and not to Ishmael, nor to his half-brothers by Keturah, nor to Jacob's twin brother Esau.



QUESTIONS ON GENESIS 22 to 24

(Answers are given at the end)

Which sentences are correct?

1. God wanted Abraham to sacrifice Isaac —
 - a) as a form of worship like other nations;
 - b) to see if he would do everything God asked;
 - c) to prove that an angel would always provide for him.
2. The angel of the Lord said that God would bless Abraham by —
 - a) giving him many descendants to bless the world;
 - b) giving him many cities and wealth to bless his family;
 - c) giving him many children to bless him when he was old.
3. Abraham told his servant —
 - a) to take Isaac to Abraham's old country to find a wife;
 - b) to find a wife for Isaac from his servant's relatives;

- c) to find a wife for Isaac from Abraham's relatives.
4. Abraham's servant knew that Rebekah was the right woman to be Isaac's wife because —
- he had prayed;
 - she accepted the gold jewellery;
 - she gave his camels some water to drink.
5. Rebekah —
- did not want to leave her family;
 - went willingly to meet and marry Isaac;
 - disobeyed her brother.
6. Abraham died —
- soon after burying his wife Sarah;



FAITH AND GOD'S COVENANT BLESSINGS

Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and then Joseph had faith in the living God and they all shared in the same Covenant blessings. Each showed a different kind of faith and different amount of faith. If we take the four men in the order in which they were born, they can represent our own personal growth in faith.

- Abraham's faith was a seeking and finding faith. He looked for a land, then for an heir, and finally for a 'city' (Gen. 12:1; 15:3; Hebrews 11:10).
- Isaac's faith was an enduring and resting faith. He endured the test at Mount Moriah. He had to re-dig all his father's wells. They had been filled in by the Philistines. Then he had to give up his right to some of the wells in order to keep the peace.
- Jacob's faith was a serving and fruit-bearing faith. God loved him more than his brother because He knew that Jacob would have faith (Malachi 1:2; Romans 9:12-13). But Jacob had wanted to do much in his own strength and God needed to break him. After many years of service, God blessed Jacob with a large family and many possessions.
- Joseph's faith (see the next Commentary) was a suffering but triumphant faith. He never lost his trust in God's promises. When he was rejected and when he was in power in Egypt, Joseph also was a type or picture of Christ. There is no record that Joseph sinned.

All four men, taken together, display the principle of 'growth in faith'. Faith begins with seeking and finding Christ. The Father calls us and we respond. Between the beginning of our faith and the end of our faith journey, lies a life of serving and enduring.

The records of these four men of faith are a very important part of Israel's history and of God's purposes for all peoples.

JACOB WANTS PEACE

Jacob wanted very much to be friends with his brother. This is always the desire of a true Christian. Jacob sent a humble message to Esau. He called himself 'your servant Jacob' and prepared a gift for Esau. He did this to please Esau (32:5). He was putting himself at Esau's service. Jacob was not running away now. God had blessed him and he could support his large family and flocks. But he was still afraid of Esau!

The messengers came back and gave Jacob a frightening report: 'We went to your brother Esau and now he is coming to meet you with four hundred men' (32:6).

'In great fear and distress' Jacob divided his wives and children and animals into two groups (32:7). He was afraid that his brother Esau would attack and hurt the mothers and children (32:11).



Talk about:

- Why did God show Jacob his army of angels (32:11)?
- What was Jacob most afraid of?
- What did his fear make him do?

JACOB SHOWS HIS FEAR

Jacob did not trust completely in God. He sent a gift and a blessing to Esau. He trusted more in himself than in God. We, too, must do all we can to be united with other believers. But we must also trust God to prepare a way for us.

Jacob's gift was a group of animals in the charge of a herdsman. Jacob's message to Esau was, 'From your servant Jacob'.

God wanted all of Jacob's trust but Jacob was trusting in his own wisdom and strength to get his brother's blessing. God wanted to see the faith of Abraham and Isaac working in



JACOB'S PRAYER

Jacob prayed: 'O God of my father Abraham, God of my father, Isaac ...' (32:9). First he joined himself with the God of his fathers, the Lord, Yahweh! For Jacob was also under the Covenant blessing that God had given to Abraham (Genesis 13:16; 22:17-18).

Then Jacob reminded God of His Promise. 'Lord, You are the One who said to me, "Go back to your country . . . and I will give you success". It is a good thing to remind ourselves - and God - of His promises to us. When God makes a promise, He keeps it. God is well able to perform all that He has promised (Romans 4:21). He wants to do so! That is the Covenant kindness of God. Jacob was truly humble and he agreed with God: 'I am unworthy . . .' (Genesis 32:10).

4. Jacob's two wives gave him —

- a) six sons;
- b) twelve sons;
- c) no daughters.

5. Laban wanted Jacob to stay longer —

- a) so that he could give Jacob some more sheep;
- b) because he did not want his daughters to leave home;
- c) because God had blessed him through Jacob.

6. God told —

- a) Jacob to return to his own land;
- b) Rachel and Leah to stay with their father;
- c) Laban to be friendly to Jacob.



Genesis 32:1-21

JACOB PREPARES TO MEET HIS BROTHER

At last Jacob felt free to move on toward Canaan. He was going back to his own country and taking his large family and all his animals with him. They were passing through strange country. There were many robbers and violent people who might attack them, but Jacob had God's promise, 'I am the God of Bethel (31:13), I will be with you' (31:3).

Jacob did not have any soldiers or armed men to protect his family, but as he went on his way an army of angels met him (32:1). What a great thing to have God's angels with us! (Hebrews 1:14).

Jacob knew that God was with him, but he still trusted in himself. He was still very afraid because he had cheated Esau. He sent a messenger ahead to meet his brother Esau who was also coming to meet him.



ANGELS MEET JACOB

Jacob called the place where he met the angels Mahanaim. The word means 'two camps'.

1. Here at Mahanaim, east of Jordan and north of Jabbok brook, God showed Jacob His protection. Angel armies were all around him and his family.

2. Jacob now knew that his camp was not the only camp. There was his camp and God's camp. God's 'army' of angels would go with him and they would take him and his family safely to Canaan (2 Kings 6:16).

3. The angels could easily do this without showing themselves. But Jacob was so full of his own problems that he still failed to believe fully in God's wonderful protection.

- b) soon after taking another wife;
- c) without seeing Isaac's wife.



Genesis 25:19-34

THE FAMILY OF ISAAC

Here we begin to see the things that will affect the future of Jacob in this record of the family of Abraham and Isaac.

First we have the promise made to Rebekah, Isaac's wife (25:23). It is more than a promise, it is prophesy, spoken by God in direct answer to her prayer. God told Rebekah about the twins that she would bear, what they would be like and what would happen to them.

Then we have the record handed down by the Jews which is mentioned by Paul in his letter to the Romans (9:11-16). Paul say that Jacob was God's choice and quotes from the holy writings (Genesis 25:23; Malachi 1:2,3).

As they grew up, their outward looks and behaviour seemed to match their natures and characters. We list what we know about them at this stage of the story:

Esau

First born
Rough skin with red hair
Physically strong
A man of the soil, (like Cain)
Isaac's favourite twin son

Jacob

Second born
Smooth skin
Emotionally strong
A shepherd, (like Abel)
Rebekah's favourite twin son

JACOB AND ESAU

As the boys Jacob and Esau grew up, their characters began to show. Esau was a man of the soil, like his father, and a hunter. Jacob was a quiet man. He was a shepherd. But he was also a schemer, like his mother.

Isaac was now 60 years old. He enjoyed eating good food. He liked the meat and the food that Esau provided.

Rebekah wanted Jacob to have the eldest son's birthright and she believed that it would be his. Jacob wanted to have it also. (In those days, the largest inheritance from the father, called the birthright, went to the eldest son.) We do not know if Rebekah told Isaac the things that God said to her.

One day, Jacob was at home making stew when Esau came in from hunting. Esau was very hungry and he said to Jacob, 'Quick, let me have

some of that stew!' (25:30-31). Then Esau foolishly promised to sell his birthright to Jacob in exchange for some food.

How foolish it is for a person to reject his inheritance in exchange for any goods that this world can give him (Hebrews 12:16b). How foolish it is for a person to reject his inheritance in Christ in exchange for the pleasures of this world.

Esau did not value his birthright. In this way, he was a picture of all those who do not value Christ's death for them. By rejecting or falling away from Christ, they 'crucify the Son of God all over again and bring shame on Him in front of everyone' (Hebrews 6:6).



Genesis 26:1-22

GOD PROVIDES FOR ISAAC

'There was very little food in the land' (v.1). This famine was a test for Isaac. Was the Land of God's Promise not so promising after all? Trials and testings are part of this world, but Jesus said, 'I have won the battle over the world . . .' (John 16:33).

God told Isaac that he did not need to move down to Egypt to escape the famine (v.2). God would provide for him and his family in the land that He had promised to Abraham (v.3).

Many chapters tell of Abraham, Jacob and Joseph, but there is little about Isaac. Chapter 26 tells us what we know of Isaac's life. Many details match those of Abraham's life. We learn that the divine promise is given to each generation (v.4). We learn more of Isaac's character. He was not a man of war or a man who demanded his rights. Isaac met trials in the Promised Land, but God was still faithful. He will always give us peace in our hearts as we trust in His goodness and mercy, even in times of difficulty.



Groups of people

The Genesis record gives the following groups living in the land of Canaan (the Promised Land) which was promised to Abraham:

1. The original inhabitants, the Canaanites (descendants of Ham), and several smaller tribes (Chapters 1-24)
2. Ishmael's family line (Chapters 12-18)
3. Abraham's descendants by Keturah (Chapter 25:1-4).
4. Esau's family line (Chapter 36)
5. The families of Jacob (Israel), called the Children of Israel or the Israelites (Chapters. 27-50).

felt that she needed them. She grew up with idols around her and perhaps she thought of them as charms. Some people say that it was an old custom to keep the idols in the family. If a son-in-law had the household gods he was a true son and he would rightly share in the family inheritance.

The long line of people and animals crossed the River Euphrates and 'headed for the hill country of Gilead' (31:21).

When Laban's men told him what Jacob had done, Laban was surprised and very angry. He gathered his men and pursued Jacob. Seven days later he came to Jacob's party who were camped in the hills of Gilead. Before Laban met Jacob, God warned Laban to be careful with him.

Laban told Jacob, 'I have the power to harm you. But last night the God of your father said to me, "Be careful not to say anything to Jacob, either good or bad"' (31:29).

Laban did not worship the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, but he was under God's control. Jacob then knew that God had protected his family. God even protected Jacob and Rachel in the problem of the missing family idols (31:32-35). Laban searched their things but did not find his 'gods'.

The two men made a covenant and they had a covenant meal there. Jacob made a heap of stones as a witness (31:45-53). He called it 'Mizpah' or 'The Lord keep watch between you and me.'



QUESTIONS ON GENESIS 25 to 31

(Answers are given at the end)

Which sentences are correct?

1. Jacob and his mother tricked Isaac —
 - a) because they hated Esau;
 - b) because they wanted Jacob to have Isaac's blessing;
 - c) because Jacob had been born last.
2. After being tricked, Esau —
 - a) wanted to kill Jacob;
 - b) didn't mind that Jacob had taken his blessing;
 - c) took a wife from the Hittites.
3. Jacob had a dream in which God told him —
 - a) to build an altar;
 - b) that his descendants would be like dust;
 - c) to give back to God a tenth of what God gave him.

to go back to Israel and go home. He heard Laban's sons say, 'Jacob has taken everything that our father owned . . .' And Laban, his uncle, was not as friendly to Jacob as before.

Then the Lord said to Jacob, 'Go back to the land of your fathers and your own people, and I will be with you' (31:3).

Jacob called his wives to the field where he was working. He told them how many times Laban had tricked him and changed his wages ten times! (31:7). But 'the God of my father has been with me,' he told them. This was Jacob's testimony. He was far from home, but not far from God.

His wives did not worship God as Jacob did. Jacob told his wives how God had blessed him. He told them things that they did not know. He explained to the women that God had given him special help with the flocks. Then he told them of an angel visitor who said to him, 'I am the God of Bethel . . . [where Jacob made a vow to God] . . . Now leave this land and go back to your own land' (31:13).

'Do whatever God has told you' (31:16), they said to Jacob. They were ready to trust Jacob's God and not their own gods.



Talk about:

1. Why did God bless Jacob by giving him 12 sons?
2. Why did God bless Jacob by giving him many flocks and servants (31:9)?
3. Why did God make it difficult for Jacob to stay with Laban, his uncle (31:2)?
4. Why did God make Jacob's wives agree to leave home (31:16)?
5. God works through the ordinary things of life: true or false?
6. Did Jacob give God the glory for everything that happened (31:5-13)?



Genesis: 31:17-55

JACOB LEAVES PADDAN ARAM

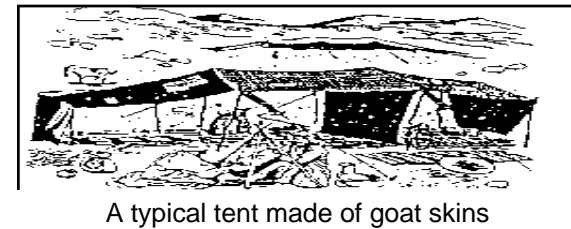
Jacob was afraid that Laban would not let him go (31:31). Jacob waited for Laban to go away, then he packed up his things and left Paddan Aram secretly. Jacob's wives, servants and children rode on camels (31:17). His men drove the flocks of sheep and goats. Jacob followed behind them as they moved forward. All that he took with him really belonged to Laban.

Before they left, Rachel 'stole her father's household gods' (31:19). Perhaps she



However, as we shall see, Isaac did not always learn from the mistakes that his father Abraham made. It is a sad fact that men do not learn lessons from the mistakes of history. This is because we are all born with a sinful nature. This is why God prepared a Saviour for the world through the family line of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and then Judah, through King David to Jesus.

One of the difficulties that Isaac experienced was this: the Philistines had filled with rubbish all the wells that his father Abraham had dug (26:15). Water is a source of life. Spiritually, it is a symbol of the Word of God. The enemy of God tries to weaken the Word of God for the children of God.



A typical tent made of goat skins

Today, many churches weaken the Word of God by allowing false teaching, false prophecy, distractions with lying signs and wonders or through not believing in a God who answers prayers.

Isaac moved to a fertile area near the Philistine city of Gerar and he became a farmer (26:12), as well as the owner of sheep, goats and cattle. Because God made him prosper, the Philistines did not like him. The Philistines lived in Canaan and they occupied the coastlands along the Mediterranean Sea until the days of King David. King Solomon made them part of Israel.



Talk about:

- a) There was a famine in Abraham's day and he went down into Egypt without asking God (Gen. 12:10).
- b) 'There was a famine in Isaac's day and God told him, 'Don't go down to Egypt . . .' (Gen. 26:2).
- c) There was a famine in Jacob's day and God told him 'Go down into Egypt . . .' (Gen. 46:3).

What would be the result of a), b) and c)? Use these words in your answer: God's promise; God's provision; God's purpose; God's power.

REBEKAH AND ABIMELECH

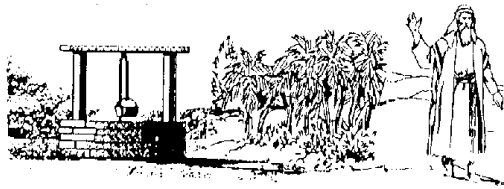
Rebekah was not in danger of being taken into Abimelech's harem, but she was in danger of being taken by the men of Gerar. When they asked Isaac about Rebekah, he told them, 'She is my sister,' because he was afraid to tell them that she was his wife. They might kill him (a stranger) and take Rebekah. 'The results of your lie could have been very bad for your wife,' the King told him (26:10).

In this way, Abimelech protected Isaac's family. God used him to protect the family line of Isaac so that they would not mix with other tribes. God blessed Isaac with good crops, cattle and servants. Then the local people became fearful and jealous. These feelings finally came out and the Philistines drove Isaac away (26:13-16).

ISAAC DIGS NEW WELLS

Isaac's men opened the wells that his father had dug and he gave the wells the same names Abraham had given them. His servants also dug new wells (26:18). But when Isaac's men dug a new well which had plenty of good water, the herdsmen of Gerar Valley made a fuss.

Isaac gave up his rightful claim to the well and moved on. Finally, Isaac dug a well which he named Rehoboth. He said, 'Now the Lord has given us room and we will do well in the land' (26:22).



The lesson for Christians is this: Sometimes you must let go of what you think are your rights and you must trust God to provide for you. He is the one who makes the way level before you and He adds His blessings as you move forward (Isaiah 26:7).



Genesis 26:23-33

GOD SPEAKS TO ISAAC

Then Isaac went up to Beersheba where his father had dug a well (26:23). This was a good move. There the Lord appeared to him and gave Isaac His own special covenant promise. God had blessed Abraham at Beersheba (Gen. 21:33) and God would speak to Jacob at Beersheba (46:2).

'Don't be afraid, for I am with you,' God told Isaac that night. Isaac needed this word from God for he was not a bold or warlike person.

God would bless Isaac, not because of anything that he had done, but because of the faith of Abraham (26:24).

God gave Isaac the same promises that he gave Abraham. And God told him not to be afraid. So when the Philistines visited Isaac again, he had a new boldness - through faith in God.

We are blessed also because we share the same faith in the living God that the Patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob had before us (26:24). And we can share the same boldness that we have in Christ. It will take away the

Having children was very important in those days. All the women wanted to give birth to sons, to carry on the family line. Leah felt that Jacob did not love her and so she tried hard to make her husband love her. Soon Leah gave birth to a son. She named him Reuben. This first son gave her new hope. God gave her four sons: Reuben, Simeon, Levi and Judah.

Rachel and Leah followed local custom by giving their maids to their husbands as 'wives'.



Talk about:

1. Did Laban have another reason for playing this trick on Jacob?
2. Was Laban being honest with Jacob (29:26)?
3. Can a man love two wives equally?
4. What is God's plan for marriage (Genesis 2:24)?



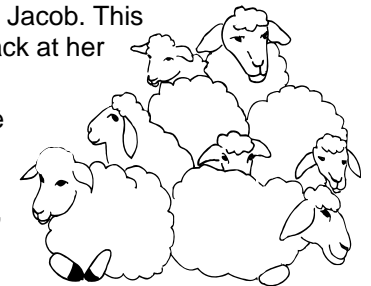
Genesis 30:1-43

JACOB'S FAMILY AND FLOCKS INCREASE

Rachel, like Abraham's wife Sarah, was barren. Rachel had no children and she was jealous of her sister. Most of us are jealous of someone, sometime. Jealousy rises everywhere. It comes on us when we least want it. So Rachel was angry with Jacob.

'Give me children or I'll die!' she shouted at Jacob. This made Jacob upset. 'Am I God?' he shouted back at her (30:2).

Every child is a gift from the Lord and in the Middle East a son was a very special gift. God heard Rachel's prayer and He gave her a son. But this was after Jacob had six sons by Leah, two sons by Leah's maid and two sons by Rachel's maid. Jacob had 12 sons in all.



Jacob worked hard looking after Laban's sheep and God blessed him. But he chose the best sheep to increase the flock. The Bible says that in this way Jacob came to own large flocks as well as maid-servants, men-servants, camels and donkeys (30:43). He became very rich at Laban's expense. He was a cheat



Genesis 31:1-16

JACOB LEAVES LABAN

Jacob finished his time with Laban. He believed that this was the right time

Laban was as cunning as Jacob had been with Esau. He saw how Jacob could help him with his sheep.

'I'll work for you for seven years,' he told Laban, 'in return for your younger daughter, Rachel' (29:18).

We think Laban had only two daughters. Leah was the elder and Rachel the younger. Leah was not so pretty as Rachel.

Laban could not think of any reason to refuse Jacob's request, so he replied, 'It is better that I give her to you than to some other man. Stay here with me' (29:19).

Jacob was faithful in everything that he did for Laban. The time passed quickly for him. The years seemed like only a few days because of his love for Rachel (29:20).



Genesis 29:21-35

'PLEASE GIVE ME MY WIFE!'

After seven years, Jacob asked Laban for Rachel to be his wife. So Laban called all the family together and they planned a week-long wedding feast. That night, when the feasting ended, Laban played a trick on Jacob. He gave Leah to Jacob as his wife, instead of Rachel.

'What is this that you have done to me?' Jacob cried when he woke up the next morning and found Leah in bed with him.

Laban said, 'It is not our custom here to give the younger daughter before the older one' (29:26).

It was the same sort of trick that Jacob had played on his father, Isaac! Jacob did not fight back. He trusted God. He now believed God's promise. God has His own way of teaching us to see our weaknesses!

After a week with Leah, Laban gave Rachel to Jacob as his wife. But he had another deal to make with Jacob. 'I am giving you Rachel in return for another seven years work,' he told Jacob (29:27).

JACOB LOVED RACHEL MORE THAN LEAH

Jacob loved Rachel more than Leah (29:30). This was understandable. He had loved Rachel when they first met. And he only had Leah as a wife because of Laban's tricks.

fear of our enemies. Then God will open the eyes of our enemies to see how God blesses His people (26:28).

GOD PROTECTS AND PROVIDES

Abimelech, the enemy king of Gerar, came to visit Isaac with his commander Phicol.

Isaac asked, 'Why have you come to me . . . since you sent me away?' The surprising answer was, 'We saw clearly that the Lord was with you' (26:28).

So God used these heathen men to give a testimony to His Covenant blessing on Isaac.

Notice how they used soft words to speak to Isaac. They had come to talk peace.

They ate and drank, then Isaac sent them on their way (26:30,31).

That same day, Isaac's servants came to him and said, 'We've found water!' The blessings of the Holy Spirit's supply could not have been greater.



Talk about:

1. Why did Isaac build an altar and worship the Lord (26:25)?
2. When the enemies of Isaac returned, why did they talk peace and not war?



Genesis 26:34-35

ESAU'S HEATHEN WIVES

Esau was still living in the family home. Some people believe that he was almost seventy years old. Esau's first marriage (26:34) may have happened before some of the things that happened to Isaac in Chapter 26. Now Esau married again, but it was still outside the line of God's promise. This greatly displeased Isaac and Rebekah and may have started a break in the family which led to much heartache in the days ahead. Later on, Esau tried to put things right by marrying someone within Abraham's family (28:6-9).

It is a big worry for parents when children from Christian families marry non-Christians. These children are often lost to us. We wonder why Isaac and Rebekah did not find a godly wife for Esau. Perhaps because there was no harmony between Isaac and Rebekah. They each favoured different sons.



Talk about:

1. Esau grieved his parents by marrying heathen women (26:34-35). Did Isaac have any control over Esau?
2. Did Isaac and Rebekah seek a godly wife for Esau?
3. Esau went to Ishmael and took more wives (28:9). Was he trying to please his parents?



Genesis 27:1-13

REBEKAH'S PLAN FOR JACOB

Rebekah preferred Jacob, the younger of the twin sons. And she knew that Esau 'didn't care at all about the rights that belonged to him as the eldest son' (25:34).

Isaac knew that God said that He would bless Jacob (25:23). But Isaac liked Esau because he was a man of the soil and he liked the food that his son produced. Esau was a hunter, a woodsman. He would often kill a deer and make his father some stew from it.

Isaac thought that it was time to bless his elder son. It was the custom then, and it still is, in many countries. (Actually Isaac lived for another forty years.) So Isaac called Esau to give him his final blessing. He would do this while he feasted on Esau's special stew.

REBEKAH'S DECEIT

Isaac's wife, Rebekah, heard what Isaac said to Esau. Rebekah listened at the tent door and she thought of a way to get Isaac's blessing for Jacob, her favourite son. She knew that Jacob had earlier 'stolen' the birthright. He had tricked Esau into giving the birthright to him. Now she would get him the elder son's blessing too, the final blessing of Isaac. Her plans, and the lies she told to bring it about, were wrong.

But God had already said that Jacob and not Esau would be blessed. So nothing could change God's plan! And nothing needed to be added to it. God had said, 'The elder shall serve the younger' (25:23). Rebekah knew this and she thought that she was helping to make it happen.

What she did was not right, but the result was still in God's hands. And she was even willing to risk God's curse to get her own way!

GOD'S PROMISE TO JACOB

The calling and promise that God gave to Jacob was not because of anything that Rebekah or Jacob did or did not do. It was because of God's grace. God knew that Jacob would have faith to obey Him. Esau looked

Jacob called that place Bethel. Then he made a promise to God (28:20). If God watched over him, so that he returned home safely, he would give God a tithe, that is a tenth of everything, and he would worship God (28:20-22).

Bethel means House of God. Jacob learned things there. He learned that God is everywhere. He learned that it was not enough to trust his father's faith in God. He needed to know and trust God for himself.

We cannot run away from God, no matter where we go or how bad our future looks. In God's presence, the loneliest place becomes special.



Talk about:

1. What did Jacob ask God to do for him (28:20-21)? Was it in line with God's will?
2. What promise did Jacob make to God (28:22)?
3. Have you ever made a promise to God? Was it in line with God's will?



Genesis 29: 1-20

JACOB REACHES PADDAN ARAM

Jacob continued his journey until he came to the land of the eastern peoples (where Abraham used to live). He saw a well in a field and so he sat down (29:2). A well was a sign that people were living nearby. Shepherds with their sheep were resting under the trees.

It was the middle of the day, but the shepherds did not move the stone that covered the well so that Rachel (who was Laban's younger daughter) could get water for the sheep. They were waiting for other flocks to come.

Jacob waited for Rachel to come up. When he saw his cousin he was full of joy. He went over to the well, 'rolled the stone away . . . and watered his uncle's sheep' (29:10).

'Then Jacob kissed Rachel and began to weep loudly' (29:11).

'I am a relative of your father's and a son of Rebekah's,' he told her. So Rachel ran to the house and told Laban.

At this report, Laban came running out to see his nephew. It was many years since there had been any contact between the two families.

'YOU ARE ONE OF US!'

'You are my own flesh and blood,' Laban told Jacob (29:14). Laban took Jacob into his family. This family no longer worshipped the One true God.

- a) begin a great nation through Jacob having many children;
- b) give Jacob the blessing that God promised to Abraham;
- c) enable Jacob to take over the land that God promised to Abraham.



Prompted by Rebekah's anger, Isaac was now acting fully in God's will by sending Jacob to find a wife among Abraham's relatives – with the words of God's promise sounding in his ears!

It was a journey of about 400 miles to Paddan Aram, now Syria. The landscape was dry and barren and Jacob was tired.

Jacob came to Bethel as night was falling. He found some rocks for a pillow and lay down to sleep.

JACOB'S DREAM

While Jacob slept, he had a dream. In his dream, Jacob saw a stairway or ladder resting on the earth, with its top in Heaven. Angels of God moved up and down upon it (28:12). Notice that . . .

- a) God's blessings come from above and are spread around by His divine messengers.
- b) The Lord stood above it and He is the source of all blessing (28:13).
- c) God's goodness produces His perfect will.
- d) His wisdom comes from above and He directs everything and everybody on the earth below.

For Christians, the ladder represents Christ who is the One who brings us close to God (1 Timothy 2:5). He is our 'stairway' to Heaven. His human nature was planted firmly in the earth, His divine nature is in Heaven. Men and women have no way of getting to Heaven except through Christ (John 14:6).

In Jacob's dream, God spoke to him and He repeated everything that Isaac had promised him – and more! God promised that . . .

- a) Jacob's family would possess the land and spread out in all directions;
- b) all nations would be blessed because of his family;
- c) God would take care of him and bring him back to that place.

When Jacob woke up, he thought, 'The LORD is certainly in this place, and I didn't know it' (28:16). God was with Jacob. No evil would come to him. God would protect him from Esau's threats and from the long journey in the desert.

down on his birthright. He gave up the birthright because he did not value the covenant promises that God made to his forefathers, Abraham and Isaac.

Rebekah's plans, and what Jacob did, got him the blessing but it separated him from his father and mother and it made his brother his enemy.

Jacob told his mother that he did not like her tricks. She was even prepared to risk being separated from God. This is a warning to us to trust God more and to trust our own methods less.



GOD CHOOSES JACOB

God's promise rested on the younger boy, Jacob (Romans 9:7-18).

God was fair when He chose Jacob and not Esau. He knew the future of these two people and He chose Jacob for the faith he would have. Jacob was patient and he was able to suffer difficulties. One day he would be father of the twelve tribes of Israel. He would suffer the difficulties his sons would cause him to have.



Talk about:

1. Isaac preferred Esau. Did this affect what God had planned for Jacob?
2. Rebekah preferred Jacob. Did this affect what God had planned for him?
3. Jacob tricked Isaac into giving him the blessing. Did this affect what God had planned for him?
4. When Jacob acted wrongly, how did this affect the family of God?
5. When Esau gave his birthright away and also married heathen women, how did this affect the family of God?

Satan can never destroy God's plans but he (Satan) causes trouble within the family of God if we listen to his voice instead of God's voice.



Genesis 27:14-46

ISAAC BLESSES JACOB

Isaac did not see that God's covenant was with Jacob and not with Esau. However, Isaac spoke his blessing on Jacob in the words of God's covenant. The old man explained what he should have told his son years before! He spoke of 'taking possession of the land where you now live' as it had been promised to his father Abraham many years before (13:14-17).

The blessing that Isaac gave to Jacob was wide-ranging and included . . . plenty, power, blessing on his friends and curses on his enemies.



Esau was blessed too, but it was not enough to comfort him and he cried a loud and bitter cry (27:34). The New Testament writer said that Esau wanted to repent, but it was too late (Hebrews 12:17).

All who do not ASK and SEEK and KNOCK now, will cry later. Not all those who cry 'Lord, Lord . . .' (Matthew 7:21) but only those who do the will of God as it is revealed to them, will receive mercy and enter into God's blessing.

So Jacob received the blessing. Esau was 'cut off' from the inheritance and the blessing.

ESAU HAD NO BLESSING

The Esaus of this world will say, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your Name, and in Your Name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' But Jesus will answer, 'I never knew you. Away from Me, you evildoers!' (Matthew 7:22-23).

Esau cried again for a blessing (27:38). There are many who will not have the blessing of Christ our Lord, but will choose instead the blessing of 'the Church' and they seem quite content to have that alone.

Esau wept loudly. Isaac replied: 'You will live far away from the earth's richness . . . You will live by the sword, and you will serve your brother' (27:39-40). Later, Esau's sons, called the tribe of Edom, went into the mountains. They found that the crops would not grow, so they stopped farming and started fighting.

For many years, Israel ruled Edom in the generations that followed (2 Samuel 8:14). Finally, Edom rebelled (2 Kings 8:20,22) and freed themselves from Israel (Genesis 27:40).

Esau did not see all that happened to him as his fault! Few of us look into the mirror of life and say to God, 'I'm sorry! It was my own doing.'



Talk about:

1. Do we always have time to repent?
2. Why was it wrong for Isaac to want God's covenant for Esau?
3. Is it unfair for the eldest son to get most of the father's inheritance?



ARE YOU AN ESAU?

'Those who reject what God offers in grace or do not value it, but seek instead the honours, wealth or pleasures of this world, even if they love God's blessing, they have already judged themselves unworthy of it.' Matthew Henry (adapted).

JACOB PAYS A HIGH PRICE FOR HIS BLESSING

Esau was so angry with Jacob that he said that he would kill him. When Rebekah heard this, she told Jacob to go quickly to his uncle's house in Mesopotamia and stay there until Esau's anger passed. She may have thought that he would be away just a few months.

Jacob's schemes got him the following . . .

- a) He never saw his mother again.
- b) He deceived and hurt his father.
- c) He was treated badly and his uncle Laban tricked him.
- d) Quarrels and wickedness divided his family.
- e) He was afraid of his brother and his brother's family.
- f) Later, his brother's tribe became the enemies of Israel.

People often cause their own problems as Jacob caused his own problems. We reap what we sow (Galatians 6:7). If a man spends too much money, he gets himself into debt. If a man looks for too many good things, what will happen to him? (Proverbs 30:7-9).

Rebekah stayed at home with Esau, the son she did not love, the daughters-in-law she hated and the husband she helped to deceive. Then Rebekah said to Isaac, 'I'm sick of living because of these Hittite women. If Jacob takes a wife from among the women of this land . . . my life will not be worth living' (27:46).

So Jacob prepared to run off to his uncle's family in Paddan Aram in Mesopotamia.



Talk about:

1. What was the result of Esau's actions?
2. What was the result of Jacob's actions?
3. What was the result of Rebekah's actions?
4. What was the result of Isaac showing favour to Esau?
5. What was the result of God showing favour to Jacob?



Genesis 28:1-22

JACOB RUNS AWAY TO PADDAN ARAM

Isaac told Jacob, '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 . . .' (28:2). Then Isaac added a blessing for Jacob which was more important than any material blessing or inheritance that he had promised before. This blessing was similar to (in line with) God's own covenant promise to Abraham and Isaac. Isaac prayed to God to ...