

Bi 121 Old Testament

Lesson Bi121- 12 Jacob's 12 Sons (Genesis 27-31)

The conflict between the twins, Jacob and Esau, only increased as they grew older. They struggled in their mother's womb and they continued without stopping as they grew up. It was obvious to all that Isaac favored Esau, and that Jacob was his mother's special boy. Their fighting knew no bounds. One day Jacob tricked even his father, taking advantage of him when he was blind and near death. With his mother's help he got from Isaac the blessing due to the firstborn son, his brother Esau. Remember, in the previous lesson Jacob persuaded Esau to sell this same birthright to him for a bowl of stew when he was hungry. When Esau learned about Jacob's deception, he was so angry that he said, "After my father dies, I will kill Jacob, and be done with him forever!"

Rebekah overheard his threats and told Jacob, "You must leave here at once and go to my brother's house! I will send for you when Esau gets over his anger. Why should I lose both of you in one day? Go now, quickly!"

Now Rebekah knew that Jacob would need Isaac's permission to go to his uncle Laban. She decided to approach the problem in a way that Isaac would agree to.

"Isaac, the women of this land cause me distress. Would it not be better for Jacob to get a wife from among our relatives?" She asked her husband.

Isaac did not have to think long on this subject. He called to Jacob and gave him this command. "Now listen carefully. You are not to marry a Canaanite woman, but go back to your mother's family and find a wife there. Don't forget the God who gave his blessings and promises to your grandfather Abraham!" So Rebekah packed some food and kissing her son good-bye, sent him off to her distant family never realizing that she would never see her favorite son again.

One evening on his journey Jacob found a place to sleep on the ground, using a stone for a pillow. During the night he dreamed of a shining stairway reaching to heaven. Angels were going up and coming down on it with the Lord Himself standing above the stairs saying, "I am the God of Abraham and your father Isaac. I will give this land to you and your descendants. All the earth will be blessed because of them! I am with you and will watch over you as you go. I will bring you back to this land."

When Jacob awoke he was terribly afraid and he said, "God is here and I did not know it! This is the house of God, the gate to Heaven!" So he took the rock he had used as a pillow and built an altar upon which he poured oil. He called the place Bethel, meaning 'the house of God.' "If God will watch over me and keeps His promises so that I return safely, then the Lord will be my God and I will give him a tenth of all He gives to me." Jacob proclaimed.

Jacob continued traveling for hundreds of miles until he reached the city of his mother's brother, Laban. Jacob discovered that his uncle had two daughters. The older was Leah, and the younger was Rachel—who was very beautiful. After a few days Laban said to Jacob, "Why don't you work for me and I will pay you whatever you want."

Jacob thought for only a moment as he replied, "I will work for you seven years and all I ask in return is to be allowed to marry your daughter Rachel." Laban quickly agreed, and so Jacob began overseeing the flocks of Laban for seven years. The seven years quickly passed and to Jacob seemed like but a few days because of his love for Rachel. When the time came, Laban invited many to the wedding feast. Then, late that night, after everyone had drunk much wine, he brought his veiled daughter to Jacob. In the morning Jacob awoke to find Leah, and not Rachel next to him.

"You deceived me!" Jacob yelled as he stormed out of his tent and went in search of his uncle. "You know I love Rachel! I served seven years for her. Why have you done this?"

"In this country, a younger daughter cannot marry until the older sister is married." Laban answered trying to calm Jacob down. "But look, I have an idea. Fulfill Leah's bridal week, and then I will give you Rachel. She can be your wife too. But I am giving you two wives and in return I will expect another seven years of work." Jacob had no choice but to agree. And seven days later, he married his true love Rachel. a

Jacob tended the flocks of his uncle Laban a total of fourteen years for his two wives. But it was obvious to all that he loved Rachel more than he loved Leah. When the Lord saw that Leah was unloved, he kept Rachel from having any children. By the time Leah had four sons, Rachel was so jealous that she finally yelled at Jacob, "Give me a son or I will die!"

"Am I God, who has kept you barren?" Jacob replied in frustration.

With this, Rachel did the same thing that Isaac's mother had done to Abraham, she gave her maidservant Bilhah to Jacob. "Sleep with my servant. She can have children for me." Jacob agreed and soon Bilhah bore him two sons.

When Leah saw she was no longer bearing children, she gave her servant Zilpah to Jacob. The jealousy between the two wives had no limit. Before long Jacob had 10 sons and a daughter. At this point God allowed Rachel to give birth to a son. She called him Joseph, and he became the favorite of his father. Jacob then went to Laban saying, "I want to return to my home with my wives and children."

"Please don't leave. I have learned by consulting spirits that the Lord is blessing me because of you. Name your wages." Laban said. He knew that Jacob was making him rich and he did not want to lose him, his daughters, or his grandchildren. In his eyes they were all part of his wealth.

So Jacob agreed to work for Laban six more years in return for a portion of the increase that he brought to his father-in-law. Jacob's flocks continued to increase more and more even though Laban cheated him by changing the wage agreement 10 times. One day he overheard his brothers-in-law. They said, "Jacob has built his wealth by taking what belongs to our father." He also noticed that Laban's attitude had changed towards him.

At that point the Lord said to Jacob, "Go back to the land I gave to your fathers, and I will be with you." So Jacob secretly gathered his wives and children, his flocks and goods and

fled from Laban. God had prospered and protected Jacob for 20 years, but soon he would face even greater challenges.

This story is important because it illustrates the truth, “God cannot be mocked. A person reaps what he sows” (Gal 6:7). If a person uses deception, they will be deceived—as was the experience of Jacob. One cannot pursue God’s blessing using unholy behavior and expect a reward from God. The only way to have the blessing is to have a personal relationship with God.

The main truth of this story is that God has a plan that He will accomplish even through using imperfect people. His promises are sure because of His unchanging love and power.

To review this lesson, answer these questions.

1. What did Esau say that made Jacob flee to his mother’s family?
 - a. [Pause for 6 seconds.] If you said, “Esau said, ‘After my father dies, I will kill Jacob!’” you are correct.
2. Who spoke to Jacob in his dream?
 - a. [Pause for 6 seconds.] If you said, “The Lord God of Abraham and Isaac,” you are correct.
3. What promise did God make to Jacob when he fled from Laban?
 - a. [Pause for 6 seconds.] If you said, “God said, ‘I will be with you,’” you are correct.

Your assignment for this lesson is to listen to the story at least three times. As you hear the story each time, imagine how it happened; see the events in your mind. Then tell the story in your own words as you remember it. Then listen to the story again and retell it until you feel sure you are repeating the circumstances and actions correctly. You should spend at least 45 minutes in learning the story. You may need to have someone check that you are telling the story correctly.

Now go and tell the story to someone who has never heard it. At the end of the story ask the person, “How do you think God will respond if we deceive people to get ahead in life and then ask God to rescue us when things go wrong?” God can rescue us, but first we must repent of our sin and turn in faith to Him.