

Patriarchs Study and Discussion Questions

Lesson Six: Jacob the Deceiver – Genesis 27-31

Read Genesis 27:1-40.

- 1) Jacob and his parents had two character flaws that resulted in the surprising drama of Chapter 27. What were these flaws? See Genesis 25:26, 25:28, 27:35-36 and any text notes in your Bible that clarify translation or word meaning (text notes differ from the commentary in study Bibles). **Jacob's deceit and his parents' favoritism**
- 2) What information did Rebekah have (see 25:23) that might have influenced her attitude and her behavior in chapter 27? **The Lord had told Rebekah that her older son would serve the younger. This might be why she favored Jacob and decided to aid him in gaining his father's blessing.**
- 3) Read Romans 9:10-13. Consider the fact that God's foreordained will, with regard to the twins, was fulfilled through the channel of their parents' sinful manipulation. Was God *forced* to choose Jacob over Esau, on the basis of what He knew Rebekah and Jacob would do? Did He *tempt* Rebekah and Jacob to act deceitfully in order that His will would be accomplished (Jacob would inherit his father's position and blessings)? If not, how should we understand the relationship between God's will and the sin of these family members? See Romans 9:11, 16, 18, 21, and James 1:13. **God never tempts us to sin (James 1:13), nor are God's actions "forced" by human choices (Romans 9:11, 16, 18, 21.) God's foreordained decisions (to use Jacob rather than Esau and that Esau would serve Jacob) would have been fulfilled, even if Jacob and Rebekah had not chosen to force the matter through deceit. They should have waited for God's time and way. Our manipulations will neither stop nor change God's ultimate, predetermined purposes, but they will determine the way in which He deals with us. In this situation, all four family members suffered as the result of their wrongs.**

Read Genesis 27:41-28:22.

- 4) Was Rebekah's complaint over the possibility of Jacob taking a wife from the local Hittites legitimate, or was it an excuse to serve another purpose? Explain your answer. See Genesis 26:34-35. **It was both a legitimate concern and an excuse. Genesis 26 tells us that Esau's Hittite wives were a source of grief to Isaac and Rebekah. She had a legitimate concern that Jacob find a God-fearing wife, rather than marrying a local woman (women) as his brother had. (Later, Esau married a daughter of Abraham's son Ishmael in an attempt to please his parents [28:8-9].) But Rebekah also used this real concern as an excuse to protect Jacob from his brother's threats (27:41).**
- 5) The account of Jacob's dream tells of his first personal encounter with God. Consider the visual in the dream and God's words to Jacob. Why do you think God gave Jacob this dream at this time of his life? **Jacob, a home-loving son (25:27), was suddenly forced to leave his father and mother, estranged from his only sibling. At the time of the dream, he was sleeping alone outdoors, en route to a foreign land. God encountered Jacob at a time when he was probably feeling more vulnerable than he ever had. Jacob's dream forced a decision on him: would he make the Lord (the God of his parents) *his* God? The ladder (stairway) in his dreams seems to have shown Jacob that God was reaching down to him and that Jacob had access up to God. It also opened Jacob's eyes to the realities of the invisible world. God transferred the promises He had given Abraham (land, descendants and blessing) to Jacob and assured Jacob of His continual presence ("I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go...I will not leave you..." [28:15]). God knew the timing was perfect for the lonely, vulnerable Jacob to embrace a relationship with Him. (Some people also see a "type" of Christ in the ladder: In John 10:7, Jesus called Himself "the gate," and in Genesis 28:17, Jacob called the location of his dream "the gate of heaven." Hebrews 4:14 says that Jesus is "our great high priest who has gone through the heavens.")**
- 6) Have you recently had an encounter with God in which He spoke to you in just the way you needed? Tell about it. **Personal sharing**

Read Genesis 29:1-30.

- 7) What do you think caused Jacob's weeping in verse 11? Perhaps Jacob's tears expressed his relief and gratitude. He had found his relatives and God kept His promise to watch over him on his journey.
- 8) How was Laban's treatment of Jacob similar to Jacob's treatment of his own brother and father? God allowed Jacob to experience the sting of the same mistreatment he had previously given to others. Just as Jacob tricked his father and brother, Laban now tricked him. Surely, God was working to drive Jacob's deceptive nature from him.
- 9) What kind of suffering is God currently allowing to reshape your character? Personal sharing

Read Genesis 29:31-30:24.

- 10) Make a list of Jacob's wives, with the names of the children belonging to each. For the twelfth son, see Genesis 35:16-18. Leah bore Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun, and her servant Zilpah bore Gad and Asher. Rachel bore Joseph and later, Benjamin. Rachel's servant Bilhah bore Dan and Naphtali.
- 11) According to the genealogy in Matthew 1, which son of Jacob had the privilege of being the ancestor of Christ? Who was his mother? Is this surprising? Why or why not? Jesus Christ descended from Judah, son of Leah. What a precious gift God gave the unloved Leah, to be the ancestor of the Promised Messiah. While this may surprise us, since Leah was the unloved wife of Jacob, it is not surprising from a heavenly perspective, because God is loving and just. He cares for the downtrodden.
- 12) The Bible is very honest about the faults of its heroes. Imagine the on-going tension in Jacob's household. Which personal failure or weakness will you trust God to redeem? (The question assumes that you have already confessed and repented of any sin that was involved.) The Bible presents its characters' flaws straightforwardly, which is in itself evidence of authenticity. Why would its writers have included such stories about their heroes and heroines unless they *were* true? These stories encourage us to realize that since God has chosen to use such weak people in great ways in the past, He can do the same with each of us today, despite our many failures and weaknesses. Personal sharing

Read Genesis 30:25-31:55.

- 13) From Genesis 30:25-31:21, explain *in general terms* the reasons given for the increase of Jacob's flocks. Jacob used his own knowledge (a form of selective breeding, which may have involved superstition) to make himself prosperous. Yet in 31:5, 7 and 9, Jacob gave God the credit for protecting his interests, for protecting him from Laban, and for making him prosper. In 31:11-13, Jacob also said the "angel of the Lord" told him in a dream that God was behind his prosperity.
- 14) What mutual agreement did Jacob and Laban finally reach? Cite verses to support your answer. Jacob agreed not to mistreat Laban's daughters and not to transgress the stones that marked Laban's country to harm him. Laban also agreed not to pass his side of the stones to harm Jacob (Genesis 31:48-53).
- 15) God watched over Jacob, as promised (Genesis 28:15). How does it comfort you to know that God is watching over you today, just as He has promised (Psalm 1:6, 121:3-8)? Be specific to your own circumstances. Personal sharing